

154. Did you expect that newspapers could circulate over all that district, and at the same time give people sufficient time to forward their nominations to you, if necessary, between Saturday and Wednesday?—Yes; I thought so. Any candidate proposed or contemplated would have seen the advertisements.

155. Your advertisement of Saturday?—Yes.

156. In time to place in your hands his nomination on the Wednesday?—Yes.

157. It must be a very easily worked district?—The people away out in the furthest end of Pahaua would not have seen it, even if I had extended it till Friday, until after the nominations were closed.

158. Did you not think that that was the reason why you should have given the utmost limit you could?—I did give the utmost limit I could.

159. The law permitted you to extend the time till the following Friday, and still you closed on the Wednesday?—I, no doubt, would have closed it on the Friday afternoon if I had had time.

160. Do you wish this Committee to believe that any one in that district could have seen your advertisement of Saturday in time to place his nomination in your hands on the following Wednesday?—I do not wish the Committee to believe everybody within the district could have seen it, even if I had not closed till Friday afternoon.

161. Do you not think they would have had a better chance?—No.

162. That is a most extraordinary statement to make, Mr. Armstrong?—The mails go down to Pahaua, and you have to post letters in Carterton on Thursday to catch the mail leaving Martinborough at 9 o'clock on Saturday morning, the mail only going to Pahaua once a week. It also goes to Pirinoa and right round the Coast.

163. When did you draft the advertisement?—The night I got the writ.

164. What night was that?—Friday.

165. Could you not have notified Pahaua by mail at that time that your nominations closed on the following Wednesday or Friday?—No; even if I had wired, the mail would have gone before the telegram reached Martinborough.

166. Did not you think it was your duty, as far as possible, to have let all the district know, and sent messengers?—No; I thought it was my duty, as far as possible, to give publicity to the fact.

167. The people in the district had a right to know when the nominations closed, and it was your business to inform them of that fact and give them an opportunity to send in nominations if they desired?—My duty is to give public notice. I am not authorised to go and send special messengers to every part of the district.

168. You did not think in exercising your discretion you should have done so?—No.

169. You have instanced Pahaua. Could the other portions of the district have known between Saturday and Wednesday?—Yes, the greater part of the other portions.

170. Do you not think that the larger part could have known if you had extended the time till Friday?—No.

171. How many polling-booths had you?—Twenty-one or twenty-two.

172. How long was it before you got the last return in after the close of the poll?—About twenty minutes past 11 on that night, I think.

173. You got the last one in at twenty minutes past 11?—Yes.

174. Do you mean to tell us you could get your returns back in a few hours, and it was a matter of weeks sending out your notices?—There were special arrangements made for getting in the poll. All the telegraph-offices were open throughout the district. For instance, there is a polling-booth at Homewood, and another down at Flat Point, and there is a road going one way from each to the Wharau, about twenty miles from Gladstone. There is a telegraph-office at Gladstone. I instructed a man at Wharau to wait until those two from Homewood and Flat Point came in, and then he had his fresh horse to go on to Gladstone and wire me the result of the poll. The same was done at Pahaua, Waipawa, and Pirinoa. These places are all about twenty miles from Martinborough, where the telegraph-office is. One man came on his bicycle, and the other rode by horse. Further up the coast there was a poll at a place called Whareama, about seventeen miles from Blairlogie Junction, and the Returning Officer came as quickly as he could to Blairlogie Junction, and wired the result to me.

175. The offices were open all night on that occasion; during the other times only on office hours?—Yes.

176. I suppose you made use of them for sending instructions, and so on?—If it was necessary. I made use of them as far as I possibly could. If I could send a letter by post I did it. If not, I wired instructions.

177. If it was a question of a man getting a wire in time and a letter not in time, did you send the letter or the wire?—I would have sent the wire.

178. You have said during your evidence that it was necessary for you to close the nominations on the day you did in order to enable you to prepare and distribute your voting-papers to the various polling-booths?—Yes.

179. It took you eight or nine days to distribute the papers, and you got the returns back in two or three hours?—You forget that I had the ballot-papers to get printed.

180. That is not a very large undertaking?—It is more in my district than a large place. I wanted some of these at least by Friday afternoon, so that I could send away by post to the outlying places.

181. You sent them all by post; none by messengers in the case of necessity?—I sent to the outlying places by post; I did not send special messengers.

182. Have you any idea as to what the cost of the general election was. You must have worked it very economically if you availed yourself of post entirely and did not send any special messages?—The only special messages I paid for was the amount of £1 10s. for boys going to polling-booths and bringing in the results on bicycles.