

19. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] There is only one voucher for £15 paid to N. Seddon, and the receipt is included in schedule A. There is a voucher there without any receipt. But I wish you to notice, Mr. Guinness, that this voucher for which no receipt is given is entered there as for the 10th March, 1878, while the other commences in 1879?—That is so. That is for a period during which the auditors seem to have found no fault with the earnings and the payments.

20. Now, if you will turn to the report (page 28, Exhibit E) you will find these words: "Nathaniel Seddon, day labourer. We find on most careful examination that this man was paid in full up to the 25th December, 1879, after which date confusion begins?"—That covers the period for the £15 for which there was no voucher. As I replied to Mr. Morrison, this question as to the alleged overpayment to Mr. N. Seddon was not a matter of importance to be brought out on a trial of charges for embezzlement or larceny as a bailee.

21. I asked you when you were last under examination whether you knew that there was a Chinaman by the name of Bun Tuck?—Yes, he was well known.

22. You had business with him as a solicitor and with his party?—Yes.

23. Any statement that I was the person implied would be regarded as what?—It would be regarded as a joke, and without any truth in fact.

24. *Mr. Morrison.*] But it might be more serious than a joke; it might be malicious?—Yes.

25. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] You have gone through the reports, and I ask you whether there was any evidence or anything that came out before and during the trial that would justify you in saying that a reflection was cast upon me or my uncle?—I have already answered that. In my opinion there was not the slightest scintilla of evidence to cast any reflection upon yourself or your uncle, or implicating you in any way in the alleged defalcations of James Wylde.

WILLIAM BARNETT, Chemist, sworn and examined.

26. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—William Barnett.

27. What are you?—A chemist.

28. Where?—In Christchurch.

29. Do you understand the purpose for which you were called before this Committee?—Yes.

30. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] You were for some time a resident on the West Coast?—Yes.

31. Where?—Kumara.

32. Were you a member of the Borough Council in 1881?—Yes.

33. Were you also Mayor of Kumara in the latter part of that year?—Yes, from November, 1882.

34. Who was the Town Clerk at the time you were a member of the Borough Council?—Mr. Wylde.

35. Were you Mayor at the time an information was laid against him: was it before or after that when you became Mayor?—Before.

36. Who laid the information?—I cannot remember.

37. Were you Mayor at the time the information was laid?—Yes.

38. Had there been a special audit of the accounts?—Yes.

39. Was a special audit asked for on two occasions?—Yes.

40. Who asked for it in the first instance?—A man named Simmonds.

41. Who was he?—He was a tinsmith.

42. Was he a member of the Borough Council?—He was. I think after that, but not at the time.

43. Did anything occur as to his name dropping off the roll and preventing his being eligible as a candidate?—I know there was something of that kind.

44. Was there a grievance between him and the Town Clerk?—Yes, a considerable grievance.

45. Simmonds asked for a special audit, and obtained signatures to a petition?—Yes.

46. Were there any forged names in that petition?—Yes, I understood that was the reason why the prayer of the petition was not granted. There were some four or five signatures out of thirty-two required by the Act.

47. Taking away signatures signed without consent or forged, there was not a sufficient number required by law?—That was the reason.

48. There was a second petition, was there not?—Yes.

49. Who promoted that?—I did myself.

50. Do you remember my attitude in reference to that petition—do you remember consulting me upon it?—Yes.

51. And what took place?—I was on one of the committees of the Council—I think it was the Finance Committee—and after this first petition had been refused considerable talk took place in the town about the accounts of Mr. Wylde. I did not myself believe there was anything really wrong with his accounts, and I did not take a great deal of notice, but seeing that there was so much talk, I spoke to Wylde in the office, and I said I thought he had better have an audit, and get matters cleared up. He seemed to approve of the suggestion—so much so that I said I would get a petition prepared, and I did so and took it to him thinking he might sign it first. But he demurred, and my opinion was to some extent changed. Before going any further I went and had a long talk with you about these matters. I saw there was going to be a good deal of bother, and I was not inclined to go further with it. That was the simple truth. But you suggested that I could not drop the matter now, and said I had better go on with it. So far as you were personally concerned you did not think there was anything wrong.

52. In other words I said the best thing to do was to go on and have a special audit?—Yes, that was the position at that time.

53. You went on with it, and a special audit was granted?—Yes.