

100. As regards Sergeant Rankin, is it the rule in your corps to allow discharged men and non-commissioned officers to retain their uniforms?—They return everything except their leggings and riding-breeches.

101. Do the men pay for their uniforms on joining—say, five guineas?—Yes, and if a man leaves he retains his breeches and leggings.

102. Can you account for Rankin having a uniform in his possession belonging to your corps?—The only way that I can account for it is that he borrowed it.

103. Have you a storekeeper connected with your company?—Yes, the quartermaster-sergeant.

104. He would have some record of it if Rankin's uniform had been returned to the corps?—Yes; as a matter of fact, it was returned, I know.

105. You do not know of your own knowledge that this man actually borrowed the uniform from any man of your company?—I simply know he must have borrowed one, because he could not have obtained it in any other way.

106. You are satisfied he was in a uniform of your corps?—I am quite sure that it is identical, so far as appearance went. He acknowledges it was.

107. Did you ask him on the steamer, or in Christchurch, how he came by the uniform?—I asked him, and he said he had borrowed it. I think that was his reply.

108. *The Chairman.*] Will you tell me his name?—William Rankin.

109. Where does he live?—At Linton. As regards removing the horses, I would like to say that Colonel Penton gave me a slating for removing them. The fact was that the camp was in a terrible state, and the horses were suffering from exposure, and I rang up the heads of the department—Colonel Newall and Colonel Penton's offices—for some information or instruction, because the men said they would not leave their horses in the park at night, but would take them away. The men came to me repeatedly to know if anything could be done. As Colonel Sommerville was away in town, and as I could get no reply, I then telephoned the Defence Minister for permission to remove the horses. Colonel Penton charged me with complaining to the Defence Minister of the disgraceful state of the camp at Newtown Park, but I did not. I simply asked for permission to remove the horses to the paddocks I had obtained for them.

110. *The Chairman.*] From what you have told us, do you not think there was ground for complaining about the state of the camp at Newtown Park?—I do, decidedly. The Premier asked me as to the state of the camp, and I told him it was very bad. He asked me what I wanted, and I said I wanted to remove the horses to a paddock at the Hutt. He asked me if that was a proper thing to do, and I said I thought it was the best thing, and then he said, "Very well, you do it, if you think it is the best thing, and I will take the blame."

111. What were the arrangements for the officers' mess?—They had a little bit of shelter there. The chief cook had a few sheets of iron over him, and the cooking was, perhaps, not very good; but, considering the weather, it was fair. I think I had every meal in camp, and it was not so bad.

112. Was it that little building we have heard of, about 15 ft. long?—Yes; it might be that, but not more than 15 ft.

113. Was the meat for the officers' mess properly cooked?—Yes; it was not too good; it was rough.

114. Is there anything we have not asked you about this camp that you can tell us, and which you think we should know?—I think not.

115. *Colonel Davis.*] Whom did you ask for permission to shift those horses?—The Defence Minister.

116. Why did you not ask the officer commanding the camp?—He was away. Complaints had been made urging him to allow me to shift the horses, and he told me he would make it his business to go direct to Colonel Penton in town, and about 11 o'clock he would telephone me the reply. That reply did not reach me, and I waited about until half-past 2. I tried to get information from Colonel Penton's and Colonel Newall's offices, and failed; and the only thing I could do, as the men were in a great state of mind, and went so far as to say they would not leave their horses in camp another day, was to ask the Defence Minister's permission. I had already got a paddock for them.

117. Why did you not get an answer from the officer commanding the camp?—That I cannot say.

118. Was he in Wellington at the time?—He was in the town. He said he would telephone me at 11 o'clock; but he did not, because I had a telephone orderly there the whole of the time.

119. Who do you think was the proper person to complain to?—The Officer Commanding the District; but he was in town, away from camp. I informed the senior officer in camp that I had permission to remove the horses before doing so.

120. But you did not have permission from the officer commanding the camp?—No.

121. Of course you know that no one could properly order anything except through the officer commanding the camp?—Yes.

122. And no communication should have gone out to anybody else?—I quite admit that.

123. *The Chairman.*] Was what was true of your horses true of other horses in the camp?—Yes, except the Alexandras, who were not in the mud at all.

124. Were not some of the horses shifted under the trees?—Yes, pretty well all the East Coast horses were.

125. And when you shifted yours out to the Hutt what horses were left in the mud?—Very few indeed. I took the four companies of my battalion with me, and the Pahiatuas also.

126. Do you think the horses suffered much in condition from the exposure?—Yes, very much indeed, and some of them have not recovered yet. There is no question about that.