

169. Would you allow the deliberations of the Committee to be open to members of the Press as well as the evidence?—No. Take the Supreme Court proceedings and those of all local bodies, for instance. The deliberations are always private, but the evidence is public.

170. Do you think it would be a proper thing to allow members of the Press to report day by day part of the proceedings before the Committee had time to consider the evidence and draw up the report?—I can see no harm in it.

171. *Mr. Fisher.*] Do you think that if the Standing Orders were abolished, and the members of the Press were admitted to all meetings of Committees of Parliament, there would be greater safety to the public?—I think so. I will give you an instance: The Local Authorities Bill is before Parliament now. Parliament is anxious to get the feeling of the districts on the matter, and by the evidence being published in the newspapers fresh evidence can be obtained.

172. Do you think that reports of proceedings of parliamentary Committees, if they were open to the Press, would be likely to be any more fair than the reports of Parliament itself?—That is the proper way to do it.

173. Do you think the reports of Committees would be more fair than the reports of Parliament?—I think the reports of the newspaper reporters would be fairer than the reports of individual members of the Committee.

174. *The Chairman.*] In your evidence at the last meeting of this Committee I think you stated distinctly that you did not supply, either orally or in writing, the evidence which appeared in the *Dunedin Evening Star*?—I said so.

175. Were you aware before Parliament was aware—that is, before the copy of the *Evening Star* containing the evidence reached Wellington—that the report would be published in the *Star*?—No, I was not. Of course, I was aware that the report to the House would be published.

176. You were not aware that the evidence was going to be published?—No.

177. Was the Right Hon. Mr. Seddon, who is a member of the Mines Committee, and who has not yet been examined, at any time present at any of the meetings?—No.

178. Was he supplied at any time with a copy of the evidence?—No, he was not.

179. Then, I presume you would say it was impossible for him to have given the information?—Yes; it would be impossible.

180. Mr. James Allen was present?—Yes; at several of the meetings.

181. Mr. Allen, I understand, complained of the publication of the evidence to you?—Yes.

182. And moved a resolution in the Committee that the matter be reported to the House?—Yes, that is so.

183. Then, I presume you would consider it improbable that Mr. Allen would himself supply the information?—Most improbable, I think. Mr. Cook mentioned the matter to the Committee, and Mr. Allen then moved that it be reported to the House.

WILLIAM RICHARD COOK recalled. (No. 27.)

184. *Sir J. G. Ward.*] The copy of the evidence you handed to the clerk this morning was Mr. Easton's evidence?—Yes.

185. It was held by you under authority of the Committee, and we asked you to return it here?—Yes.

186. And you have had it in your possession all the time since you received it?—Yes, all the time.

187. Do you know if Mr. Easton had a copy of your evidence as well as his own?—Not to my own knowledge, but I understand that he had.

188. Then, I presume it would be a certainty that during the possession of Mr. Easton's evidence by you a similar copy of that evidence must have been sent to him?—Yes.

189. So that your copy and his copy would be out of the possession of the Committee at the one time?—Yes; I have not the slightest doubt about it in my own mind that it was so.

190. *Mr. Guinness.*] Did I understand you to say, the last time you gave evidence, that the clerk sent to you two copies of Mr. Easton's evidence?—No; one copy of Mr. Easton's evidence, and one of my own.

191. Where did you get the second copy?—I never had a second. The clerk sent me a copy of the petition, a copy of Mr. Easton's evidence, and a copy of my own evidence, with a covering-letter asking me to return my evidence when it was corrected. I corrected my own evidence, and returned it, and retained Mr. Easton's evidence, which I returned this morning.

192. *Sir J. G. Ward.*] Did the clerk write and tell you that, under direction of the Committee, you were to retain that?—No; the clerk posted the evidence to my hotel. Everything I had I have returned to the Committee.

193. *Mr. Pirani.*] I have been looking through the evidence and see no permission from the Committee to you to retain that copy of the evidence?—It should be in the evidence. I asked distinctly that I might have a copy of the evidence to look at during the following week, to which the Committee adjourned.

194. That was the understanding?—Yes; it was more than an understanding. I could not possibly reply to anything in the room, and asked to be allowed to have this evidence to enable me to look up documentary evidence.

195. The reason I asked the question was because the clerk stated that he received no instructions to allow you to retain any portion of the evidence, so that if it was in the evidence it would be in contradiction of the clerk; but from what I can understand it was evidently an understanding with the Committee?—Yes; it was distinctly understood.