

ALBERT ELIAS COHEN recalled. (No 28.)

196. *The Chairman.*] You are aware, I presume, that the House has referred to us the question of a further publication of evidence in the columns of the *Evening Star* of the 27th August?—I am aware that a motion was carried in the House of Representatives to that effect.

197. Are you prepared to inform this Committee of how the *Evening Star* became possessed of that evidence?—I assume the same attitude that I assumed on the previous occasion.

198. Then, you wish the Committee to understand that your written memorandum is practically duplicated in regard to this second publication?—Yes.

199. In point of fact, your reply is that you became possessed of the information yourself in what you claim to be an honourable way, that you did not obtain it from any officer of the House, and that you decline to say from whom you got it?—That is the position, sir.

200. You know that a Committee of the House has power to call for persons and papers?—Yes.

201. And that in absolutely declining to give the name of the person who gave that information to you it is the duty of the Committee to report that circumstance to the House?—I am aware that the Committee has that power. I think I made it distinct before that the matter was published for the good of the public, and that in my refusal to give the information there is no attempt in any way to show the slightest disrespect to the Committee. It is merely a question of journalistic practice.

202. You are also aware that the Committee is set up not of its own volition, and that its duty is to report what takes place here?—I am aware of that.

203. *Mr. Guinness.*] You decline, I understand, to answer the question from whom and by what means you became possessed of the information that was published in the paper of the 27th August?—Yes; we take the responsibility of publication, and I do not think I ought to be placed in a false position. I do not wish to appeal to the Chairman for protection; but, from what I understand, the House passed a resolution declaring that the *Evening Star* has committed a breach of privilege, and therefore I am in the position of an accused person. Mr. Guinness is a member of the Bar, and knows himself that it is not the right thing to suggest that a witness should be called upon to give evidence that may incriminate himself.

204. *The Chairman.*] Is it not a case of incriminating some other person?—Possibly you might put it that way. I wish again to emphasize as much as I possibly can the fact that the information reached our hands in good faith. I think Mr. Pirani, in his speech in the House on the point, showed what vital importance to Otago and the dredging industry generally the matter is, and if ever there was a question in which publicity was required this seems to be one. I might say before I leave that if the Committee could see its way in any form to relax the rule with reference to Committee proceedings it would be of great advantage not only to the public generally, but to other reporters. Information is brought to us about matters of public import, and, because the Committee has not reported, we are liable to be brought up for a breach of privilege; while if we refuse to publish matter given to us by a member on one occasion he may refuse to give us other matter on a future occasion. A good feeling has always subsisted between members of the House and myself, and I should be glad if this rule, which is an arbitrary one, and is more honoured in the breach than the observance, were relaxed. I merely throw out the suggestion for what it is worth.

THURSDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER, 1901.

Mr. JAMES ALLEN, M.H.R., examined. (No. 29.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Are you a member of the Goldfields and Mines Committee of the House?—Yes.

2. Were you present at a meeting of that Committee held on the 15th August?—Yes.

3. Were you also present at a meeting held on the 22nd August?—I was.

4. After the meeting held on the 15th, was there laid upon the table of the Committee a typewritten copy of the evidence taken that day?—I believe there was; I could not say definitely.

5. Did you or did you not communicate to the reporter of the *Evening Star*, or to any other person, the evidence taken?—No.

6. Do you know who did?—No.

7. *Mr. Guinness.*] Did you receive a typewritten copy of the evidence given by Mr. Easton for correction?—I received one. I will not be sure whose evidence it was. I had it from Mr. Herries, I think, but I will not be sure.

8. *Sir J. G. Ward.*] You brought the matter up before the other Committee?—I did. I noticed the report in the *Evening Star*, of which I think I had a copy with me, and I drew the attention of the Committee to it.

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