

88. *Mr. Hall.*] Do you remember who it was that delivered the ballot-papers to you?—It was a boy, who brought them along on a hand-barrow.

89. When you received the papers were they properly tied or sealed up?—As far as I can remember, they were—in one big parcel.

90. Is the printer bound under any kind of obligation to regard everything as secret?—No; there was no written bond or agreement drawn up in this instance.

91. So that he could, if he thought proper, allow any ballot-papers, or a few stray ballot-papers, to be spread about without incurring any penalty?—I could imagine such a thing, but it would not be the right thing to do.

92. But he is under no obligation with regard to secrecy?—He makes no declaration of secrecy.

93. Is he under any legal penalty?—I do not know of any section in the Act which deals with that. I cannot speak offhand.

94. Would it not be a much better system to have the ballot-papers printed by the Government Printing Department?—I was anxious to get them printed by the Government Printer, but I think the outside printing-offices object very strongly to any little work of that description being done in the Government Printing Office. The Government Printer could not undertake the work at the time. I might say that it was not Government work exactly, because the City Council had to pay for getting it done.

95. In order to prevent a recurrence of a thing of this kind, would it not be better that the printer should be under some bond to prevent any ballot-papers going to any one but the Returning Officer?—Yes. I think all the printers consider themselves bound in honour at present; but only bound in honour, so far as I know.

96. There is some inference that this ballot-paper came from a polling-booth?—Yes.

97. What is your opinion?—I could not possibly say. I have no knowledge of the facts, or anything that would lead me to a conclusion.

98. Is there any possibility of one of these ballot-papers coming from any of the polling-booths?—I could not say there was no possibility. The ballot-boxes, with the papers, were put in the booths on Tuesday evening for use next morning, and it would be possible for any one to break into the rooms, open the ballot-boxes, and abstract papers.

99. *Mr. E. G. Allen.*] Would it be possible for any ballot-papers to be taken from your office without your knowledge?—Not without the knowledge of either myself or Mr. McKenzie.

100. You never left the place open?—No; when we left at night it was locked. It was always locked when nobody was in the room. When we went away to lunch in the middle of the day it was locked, and when it was open either Mr. McKenzie or myself was present.

101. How can you account for more ballot-papers being returned to you in some cases than were given out?—There must have been a mistake in the count either by ourselves or by the deputy when returning the papers.

102. Were public tenders invited for the printing of these ballot-papers?—Not by advertisement. I got prices or estimates from several different printers.

103. And you accepted the lowest offer?—Yes.

104. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Do you think it would be any improvement if these ballot-papers were printed in book form, with butts, and consecutively numbered—the number on the corner of the form and also on the butt?—It would be a very bad practice in some respects, because it would be possible to identify the voter by the number.

105. You said there were some police reports left in your possession?—Yes.

106. You cannot account for what became of them?—No, not in any other way than I mentioned before. The report was on the question whether any of the men in the barracks knew anything about the matter.

107. Can you account in any way for Mr. Isitt getting possession of the ballot-paper?—No.

108. You did not give it to him?—No.

109. Did you leave it on your table?—No. I knew nothing about it until Mr. Isitt told me about it himself on the afternoon of the election.

110. It has come to the knowledge of the Committee that you and Mr. Isitt had several interviews?—That is not so.

111. Is this a correct statement: “Whilst the ballot-papers were at the Court they appear to have been deposited either in Mr. Thomson’s room or in a room allotted to Mr. McKenzie to count them into the boxes, and although Mr. Isitt is said to have called on Mr. Thomson several times about this time it is questionable if he could have got possession of a ballot-paper, the boxes and ballot-papers being always carefully locked up during the absence of Mr. Thomson and Mr. McKenzie”? So it is alleged that Mr. Isitt interviewed you several times while you were counting those ballot-papers?—Mr. Isitt was never in the Court-room, so far as I remember, until the afternoon of the election, and it was only when I made a special appointment with him to come down and tell me about the difficulty.

112. When did you count the ballot-papers?—On the Monday.

113. And when was the election?—On the Wednesday.

114. And do you swear that Mr. Isitt never visited you on the Monday or Tuesday before the election?—I do.

115. What time is allowed for petitioning against an election after the day of the election?—Twenty-eight days, I think it is.

116. Not forty?—Forty is the period for a parliamentary election; but I would not speak positively without looking up the statute.

117. You have already stated that Mr. Isitt applied to you for sample ballot-papers?—I received a letter to that effect. I do not know who signed it, but I know it was from the temperance people, and I replied by letter stating that I could not hand over any of the papers left.