

146. And you say the ordinary precautions at this election were the same as you took at the other election?—I took exactly the same precautions as at the general election, and I consider that I took every precaution.

147. All that was necessary?—All that was necessary.

148. Excepting that you might have sent the boxes to the police-station?—Yes. It has occurred to me since that they might possibly be left with the police.

149. All the Returning Officers are supposed to use the same means of distributing the ballot-boxes?—Yes; but it would not be possible to put the ballot-boxes in charge of the police in a country district.

150. You have already stated that you could not account for any one wanting to take the ballot-paper?—I do not see that a ballot-paper would be of any use to any one.

151. Excepting to get at the Returning Officer: that must be the object, to show gross carelessness?—Of course, it might have been done with that object; but so far as making use of the ballot-paper is concerned I do not see how it could be done. Supposing a person did abstract a hundred ballot-papers, before they could be made use of they would have to get the official stamp at the back of them, and then at the final count the officers would see that they had more papers than there ought to be.

152. When you send the papers out by a carter or carrier are they tied up in bundles?—In the country districts they are wrapped up and sealed, I believe.

153. Have you ever heard of a similar application to that you received asking for samples of used ballot-papers?—I never have; but that was my first election. I had not been Returning Officer before.

154. You could not give the Committee any idea of the object of making such a request?—I cannot say what the object would be.

155. Can you tell us whether all the ballot-papers used, with the exception of the names, would be similar to this ballot-paper?—They would be all the same, but the heading would be a little different. The name of the district is at the top in this case, and that is not according to the schedule.

156. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Did you accompany these ballot-papers from your office to the various booths?—I did.

157. You accompanied the carters on this occasion?—Yes; and delivered the boxes with the papers myself.

158. Supposing it was alleged here that those boxes were standing outside one of the hotels for about an hour, would you admit that allegation?—No; I deny that statement.

159. *Rev. Mr. Isitt.*] Did you collect the ballot-boxes as well as deliver them?—No, I did not.

160. How were they collected?—There were three expresses, one starting from the top of Newtown. I forget the order in which the boxes were collected, but one of the poll-clerks was on each express. When collecting the ballot-boxes some of the booths were finished much earlier than others.

161. Do I understand that you collected both the Wellington and Newtown boxes?—No; I had nothing to do with the Newtown election.

162. Were they private expressmen who were employed, or were they employed by the Public Works Department?—They were private expressmen, but the Public Works Department engaged them.

163. Were instructions given that a poll-clerk should accompany each box?—Yes; that one clerk was to stay in each booth until the ballot-box was delivered to the expressman.

164. And after the delivery to the expressman was one of the clerks to accompany him?—Yes; either one of Mr. Smith's men or one of my officers had to accompany the express.

165. Then, you think it would have been impossible for an express loaded with ballot-boxes to have been standing at the Western Hotel?—There certainly should not have been, but one express would have to be at Morrah's polling-booth, which was just about that spot.

166. Could an express full of ballot-boxes have stood at the Western Hotel door?—I think it would be possible, because they would have to wait just about there where Morrah's booth was.

167. Would any of them be there as late as 9 o'clock?—Yes. If I remember rightly, it was pretty well 12 o'clock before we got the ballot-boxes from Morrah's booth.

168. You said that there were two public-school rooms used?—Yes.

169. Both for the local-option and the parliamentary poll?—Yes.

170. Do you know how many doors there would be to those schools?—No; but they would all have keys.

171. You do not know whether the secretary of the School Committee or the charwoman would also have a key?—I do not.

172. If evidence was given that the charwoman or the secretary of the School Committee had a key would you be surprised?—No.

173. Would you think sufficient care was taken in depositing ballot-boxes in a room without knowing how many people had keys to the outer door?—Unless there was something to lead me to believe there were other keys I would be satisfied.

174. Did you examine the windows?—No.

175. Have you any general knowledge as to the security or otherwise of schoolroom-windows?—No.

176. If a schoolroom-window had no catches on them do you think the schoolroom would be sufficiently safe for ballot-boxes?—No.

177. Do you think it is sufficient security to leave ballot-boxes in such a room?—No, I do not think so.

178. Was the key open, or sealed up in any way?—It was just inside the boxes.