

but he would, if necessary, take the risk again, as he considered it necessary in the public interest. When he entered the public service he did not forfeit his rights as a private citizen. He did not claim the right to inform *any* person of such a payment as this, but he thought he was justified in taking the information to a member of the House of Representatives. Not for a moment did he ever contemplate giving information on departmental matters to an outsider, but he considered then, as now, that a member of the House was a public trustee and entitled to the information. He believed his action had been necessary, and, outside the Civil Service Regulations, justified. He still believed the Board should take cognisance of the existence or non-existence of the voucher in considering his case. If it did not exist, he could not have imparted information gained in his official capacity. He contended that the Auditor-General's inquiry had been a perfect farce, but would not stay to demonstrate the point. With reference to the telegram: no specific regulation had been quoted. No. 44, by no stretch of imagination, could be made to apply. It was not right to judge of the merit of his action in sending the telegram by the contents of the telegram. Such a course he considered an interference with his rights as a citizen. He contended that the telegram had nothing to do with office matters. The only thing he intended to imply in the telegram was that their honour had been involved by their statements being questioned, and he was anxious to prove these statements true. His anxiety for the public inquiry was to establish his own veracity. If the Department's contention were correct, the head of the Department could hold the staff in terror—no man would be safe. He also referred to the fact that he had been misled by the fact of other telegrams being sent about this same matter by other officers. For example, Mr. Fisher had received a telegram from Williams, Dunedin clerk, and other men had done the same thing—forming precedents by which he was guided. He thought he should take all the responsibility for that telegram, and he wished to do so. It was made out entirely at his suggestion. It had been suggested that, where the Post Office Regulations did not apply, the ordinary relation between master and servant would hold good. The cases were entirely different. In private employment his master's interests were his own. In this case the Department's interests were not necessarily his interests: his interests were those of his real employers: the State, the people. The Premier of the colony had nothing whatsoever to do with him. He contended that the inquiry had not been into his alleged breach of regulations; but rather as to whether he had conspired with Messrs. Taylor and Fisher to prove the existence of a certain voucher for a political purpose. He considered that far too much account had been taken of the political aspect of the question, and that he had been examined from that point of view. The Premier's connection with the voucher had nothing to do with the charge nor with the divulgence of information, but the Board seemed to consider—as it appeared to him—that this connection did aggravate the offence. Reference had been made to the disturbance they had caused; the disturbance was not of their causing. The Premier should have dealt with the matter as an innocent man should deal with such a matter, and there would have been no disturbance. The Premier was responsible for the delay and disturbance—not the officers charged or those to whom they had imparted this information. He claimed that, although charged with breach of the Post Office Regulations, he had all along been treated under the Civil Service Regulations. He would also call the Board's attention to the fact that, when making the affidavits, the officers concerned had been informed by Mr. Salter that they were not breaking their declaration.

*Mr. Stringer* addressed the Board as follows: He contended that Mr. Willis's time had been mostly occupied in trying to get away from the issues involved, and in importing irrelevant and, in some respects, quite improper matter. He had had specific charges made against him, and admitted the facts, but pleaded ignorance of the regulations. It was extraordinary how such an intelligent man could put forward such a plea, especially after signing a certificate under his own hand that he had carefully read the rules, &c. After all, the regulations relied on were simply ordinary rules of honour, and it was hard to believe Mr. Willis did not know that he was violating them by his action. The only questions for the Board to consider were: Had violations of the regulations been committed, and, if so, were they grave violations. Mr. Stringer called the Board's attention particularly to page 11 of Willis's evidence: "In conclusion he would only repeat that he considered he was giving this information for the public good, and that he was not aware that he was committing a breach of any regulation by so doing." Also, on page (11), "He had not made the information public: he had merely given it to a member of the House of Representatives as a trustee for the public. He contended that he deliberately gave this information to a member of the House of Representatives (Mr. Fisher), knowing that he might use it for political purposes." Page 11: "As a private citizen he had a right to comment on payments made. He did not claim the right to attack any officer, or the Minister, or anybody else, through the information gained in the performance of his duties, but he did claim this right: that when he saw a large sum of money paid out of the public funds to a person he considered incompetent he had a perfect right to supply information anent the matter to a member of Parliament, who was for the time being one of the public trustees." Page 13: "He believed that Mr. Fisher intended to make an attack upon the Government through this payment." These passages showed the spirit in which Mr. Willis made these disclosures. He submitted that nothing could be more in contravention of the spirit of the regulations than such disclosures. Mr. Willis contended he had a right to sit in judgment upon the heads of the departments who have sanctioned payments, and, if in the plenitude of his wisdom, he considered a transaction "shady," he had a right to put a member of Parliament "on the track." Nothing could be more vicious than that contention, and public confidence would be destroyed by the retention in the public service of such unscrupulous persons. It was impossible for Mr. Willis to know what services Captain Seddon had performed in this instance, and he (Mr. Willis) merely assumed