

P E T I T I O N S .

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives.

THE humble petition of the undersigned Joseph Willis, William John Larcombe, and Thomas Walter West, of the City of Christchurch, sheweth:—

1. That your petitioners are on the staff of the Civil Service of New Zealand, and are employed in the General Post Office in the City of Christchurch.

2. That your petitioners are informed that your honourable House has appointed the Auditor-General to hold an inquiry with reference to an alleged payment to Captain R. J. S. Seddon of a sum of £70 or thereabouts for reorganizing the Defence Stores at Wellington.

3. That your petitioners have reason to believe that they are likely to be called as witnesses at such inquiry.

4. That your petitioners believe that in the interests of all parties concerned such inquiry should be open to the Press, and that the witnesses thereat should be cross-examined by or on behalf of Captain F. M. B. Fisher, a member of your honourable House.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that your honourable House will be pleased to direct that the said inquiry shall be open to the Press, and that all witnesses thereat may be cross-examined either by Captain F. M. B. Fisher or by some person on his behalf.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

(Signed)

J. WILLIS,
W. J. LARCOMBE,
T. W. WEST.

The Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives.

THE petition of your humble petitioners, Joseph Willis, William John Larcombe, Thomas Walter West, and David Hobson Lundon, clerks employed in the Chief Post Office, Christchurch, sheweth:—

We have carefully perused the whole of the evidence which accompanied the report of the Auditor-General dealing with a voucher connected with the payment to Captain R. J. S. Seddon of a sum of money for reorganizing the Defence Stores, and, after careful perusal, we again affirm that the evidence we gave is absolutely true. We do not know why the departmental inquiry has failed to disclose the records, which would, if produced, substantiate our statements.

One of your petitioners, Joseph Willis, was deputed to scrutinise certain vouchers, amongst which we expected the voucher we handled would be found. Not finding it within the limited area of records he was permitted to inspect, he applied to be allowed to see the Treasury books and certain other vouchers which might throw light upon the matter involved. This request was not granted.

We beg to draw the attention of your honourable House to the fact that the recent departmental inquiry was appointed at the request of the Treasury and Defence officers, and to vindicate their honour by ascertaining whether the certificates they had issued regarding the matter in dispute were true in substance and in fact. We have before petitioned your honourable House for the appointment of a full public inquiry with an unrestricted order of reference. We are confident that the evidence tendered by us was true in every particular, and we again pray you to grant the inquiry we have pleaded for all along.

We want the value of all the evidence to be tested by cross-examination. We want the most searching investigation possible. Our honour is involved. If we have been guilty of making false statements we have deserved to be punished with the utmost severity, but if we are truthful witnesses we claim that your honourable House should grant us the immediate appointment of a competent judicial tribunal with unrestricted power of investigation.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

(Signed)

J. WILLIS
[And 3 Others].

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives of the Colony of New Zealand in Parliament assembled.

THE petition of the undersigned electors humbly sheweth:—

That, in the opinion of your petitioners, many elements of uncertainty exist in connection with the recent investigation by the Auditor-General with reference to the existence of the voucher which Messrs. Larcombe, West, and Willis swear they saw, handled, and discussed while it was passing through the office of the Chief Postmaster, Christchurch, and which Mr. Lundon swears to having seen, which voucher the Civil servants named affirm represented a payment to R. J. S. Seddon.

They further consider that these elements of uncertainty should be removed by the immediate appointment of a judicial tribunal, before which a full and unrestricted public inquiry may be held, such tribunal to have power to call for persons, books, papers, &c., to examine witnesses upon oath, and before which tribunal any parties concerned may appear personally or by counsel.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

(Signed)

R. ST. CLAIR MCKENZIE
[And Others, according to Schedule.]