

JOHN PAYNE, M.P., in attendance.

*The Chairman:* We have asked you to come here with a view to your stating, for the information of the Committee, what witnesses you require to be here to establish your innocence regarding this charge, and also what other evidence you would like brought before the Committee in order to have a thorough investigation of the charge.

*Mr. Payne:* That places me in a peculiar position, because I met Mr. McMaster quite alone—

*The Chairman:* We are dealing with the first charge only—that relating to the extract from the letter.

*Mr. Payne:* I was alone with Mr. Dickson and Mr. Massey on both occasions. I saw them first in Auckland, and again in an office here in the Buildings. So I have no witness.

*The Chairman:* Let me read this extract to you so that you shall thoroughly understand. It is an extract from a letter received by Mr. Massey. "You may remember my introducing you to young —, son of —, one my young Catholic party who do not follow Ward. He worked hard and loyally for us in Parnell, Ponsonby, and especially in Grey Lynn. He now assures me that Payne has been squared (£1,000) to support Ward on a confidence motion. So sure is he of the correctness of the information that his dad is offering level money up to £100 on Payne voting against you on such motion, and — does not waste any money on bets without some reason."

*Mr. Payne:* That is a letter that is supposed to have been read by Mr. Massey to me in the office here, but his reading of it yesterday in the House was the first acquaintance I had with it.

*The Chairman:* There is the charge: you know what you have got to meet. What evidence do you wish to bring? Have you any witnesses?

*Mr. Payne:* That letter is supposed to have been received by some one. That has nothing to do with me, only that it contains a charge against me. As regards the McMaster incident, there was only Mr. McMaster and I present. He temporarily took possession of Mr. O'Connor's office.

*The Chairman:* Have you any witnesses?

*Mr. Payne:* I have none at all.

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* Do you want Mr. McMaster called?

*Mr. Payne:* Oh, yes, he had better be called in reference to the offer.

*The Chairman:* You have no witness in regard to the first charge?

*Mr. Payne:* No. Well, in the original letter there will be certain persons' names mentioned, and I want those people here, because they are the people who make the charge. I want Mr. McMaster and the people named.

*Mr. Russell:* But we do not know who they are.

*Mr. Payne:* You have power to get the original document and find out.

*Mr. Russell:* We shall not know until the man who wrote the letter appears before the Committee.

*Mr. Payne:* And you cannot ascertain that man's signature?

*Hon. Mr. Millar:* We can later on.

*Mr. Payne:* When that is known I shall require the writer of the letter, the persons named in the letter, and Mr. McMaster.

*The Chairman:* The other matter—charge No. 2—is in the following statement by Mr. Massey: "Then he said something about whether he was supposed to have been squared, and I said, 'What was stated in Auckland at the present moment was this: that he had been squared by Mr. Vigor Brown and Sir Joseph Ward at Napier.' Now, that was the statement that was made quite openly in Auckland. I think Mr. Payne had begun to see the serious position he proposed to take up, and he said, 'Just let me think this over.'"

*Mr. Payne:* No, that is quite false.

*The Chairman:* But have you any evidence? What do you suggest as to witnesses?

*Mr. Payne:* Mr. Dickson and Mr. Massey were together. I have no evidence other than this.

*The Chairman:* We do not want that. All we want to know is, have you got any witnesses?

*Mr. Payne:* I cannot have, under the circumstances.

*The Chairman:* Can you suggest any witnesses we should call, either for or against you?

*Mr. Payne:* I cannot.

*The Chairman:* Any documents or letters?

*Mr. Payne:* Well, I will tell you of a letter that I want produced: Mr. McMaster's letter to Mr. Massey.

*The Chairman:* Can you give us any idea of the date of the letter?

*Mr. Payne:* I could not say what the date of the letter was, because I did not scrutinize it.

*Mr. Allen:* Did not Mr. Massey hand that to you?

*Mr. Payne:* He showed it to me, and then passed it back.

*The Chairman:* It is in Mr. Massey's possession?

*Mr. Payne:* It was then.

*The Chairman:* By whom was it signed?

*Mr. Payne:* I think, but I would not swear, that it was written by Mr. Maurice O'Connor, of the Thistle Hotel, Queen Street, Auckland, and I believe it was on Mr. Maurice O'Connor's letter-paper. I think the heading "Thistle Hotel" was printed on it.

*The Chairman:* Any other letters?

*Mr. Payne:* That is the only document I have seen—the only document that has been produced. It was a letter to Mr. McMaster, and handed by him to Mr. Massey.

*The Chairman:* Have you any suggestion of any kind to make?

*Mr. Payne:* With reference to my statement as against Mr. Massey's and Mr. Dickson's, I want to point out, as I made a point of doing in the House yesterday, that I have already shown them to be at variance with each other in their statements.