

JOHN PAYNE, M.P. for Grey Lynn, sworn.

1. *Mr. Sherrett.* I will read these words to you: "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." Is there a word of truth in that suggestion or charge?—Not a single word.
2. You were in Napier?—Yes.
3. Did you see Mr. Vigor Brown?—Yes.
4. Did you see Sir Joseph Ward?—Yes.
5. Was there any discussion as between Sir Joseph Ward and yourself with regard to your politics, or your action in the possible political crisis?—None whatever.
6. Was a single word said on the subject?—Not a single word.
7. May I put the same question with reference to Mr. Vigor Brown?—My answer will be the same—not a single word.
8. *Hon. Mr. Millar.*] Have you at any time been approached by Ministers asking you to change your vote?—No.
9. Neither directly nor indirectly, by any Minister of the Crown?—Neither directly nor indirectly.
10. *Mr. Lee.*] Have you at any time told any person that there had been any offer to square you?—Yes.
11. Whom did you tell?—I told Mr. Massey in this building.
12. Any one else?—Mr. Dickson was present.
13. Any one else?—No one else.
14. What offer were you referring to, then, when you said you were supposed to have been squared? Why did you make that remark?—I did not make that remark.
15. What did you say, exactly?—Mr. Massey told me that I was supposed to have been squared by Sir Joseph Ward and Mr. Vigor Brown at Napier.
16. But before Mr. Massey said that, did you say to Mr. Massey that you were supposed to have been squared?—No.
17. You had heard nothing up to that time about your having been squared in any way?—Yes, I had.
18. What had you heard?—I heard that rumoured up in Auckland. This meeting in Mr. Massey's office took place perhaps a week later.
19. Before you went to Mr. Massey's office you had heard the rumour in Auckland: from whom had you heard it?—From the chairman of my committees, Mr. Cathie, and the chairman of my Richmond committee. I may say in explanation that the reason why I heard it was that I mentioned the matter myself. Presumably they thought it too delicate a matter to mention it to me.
20. Whom did you hear it from—the suggestion that you had been squared?—I told them that I had been told by Mr. McMaster that he was authorized to give me £500 or £1,000 to vote for the Ward Administration, and then they said that that was the rumour in the town—that I had been squared.
21. When was this?—Last Friday fortnight—9th February, in the evening.
22. *Mr. Veitch.*] When you admitted to Mr. Massey in his office that it had been suggested that you should accept some money, was that in any way connected with the other rumour that you had been squared by Sir Joseph Ward and Mr. Brown?—It will be necessary for me to state exactly what took place there. Mr. Massey said, "It is rumoured that you were squared by Sir Joseph Ward and Mr. Vigor Brown at Napier," and I said, "There may be some colour for that, and you would open your eyes if you knew who it was." The reason why I said that was that immediately after making that statement Mr. Massey had produced a blue letter, signed, I think, by Mr. Maurice O'Connor, in which he told Mr. McMaster that he would be willing to give £100 to his (Mr. McMaster's) nominee. I do not remember the wording of it, but it was to that effect, I think, and was written in view of a possible general election. Mr. Massey showed me that letter, and, seeing that Mr. McMaster was evidently working up to Mr. Massey, I said, "It would make you open your eyes if you knew who it was that had made that offer in Auckland." Mr. Massey was not then told who it was.
23. Have you any reason to believe that Sir Joseph Ward and Mr. Vigor Brown had any connection with the offer made to you in Auckland?—As soon as I said "You would open your eyes," Mr. Massey suggested Mr. Brown. Mr. Massey's words were, "Mr. Vigor Brown?" I said "No, you are miles out."
24. I am asking you for your own conception of the position, not Mr. Massey's. Have you any reason to believe that there was any connection between Sir Joseph Ward and Mr. Brown and the Auckland offer?—None whatever. I was quite surprised to hear it.
25. *The Chairman.*] Did you go to Mr. Massey of your own accord?—No, Mr. Dickson came for me and said that Mr. Massey wanted to see me.
26. Where did Mr. Dickson meet you?—Over in the Parliamentary Building, I think.
27. Who were present during that interview?—Mr. Massey was present, and Mr. Dickson; and Mr. Guthrie came in and went out almost immediately.
28. Did any one except Mr. Dickson hear the conversation that took place between you and Mr. Massey?—No, no one.
29. Can you tell me what was the statement made by Mr. Massey with reference to Mr. Vigor Brown?—Mr. Massey said, "They say that you were squared by Mr. Vigor Brown and the Premier when you were at Napier."
30. Was that all the reference to Mr. Vigor Brown's name and Sir Joseph Ward's?—There followed the incident of the letter and Mr. Massey guessing that it was Mr. Vigor Brown.