

31. How do you arrive at that conclusion?—I have already related that Mr. Massey showed me a letter from—I believe—Mr. Maurice O'Connor to Mr. McMaster, in which he told Mr. McMaster that he was willing to give £100 to his nominee.

32. That letter was produced by Mr. Massey?—And showed to me.

33. Was Mr. Dickson present at the time?—Yes.

34. Any other person?—No other person.

35. Did you read the letter?—I glanced roughly over it.

36. Was the letter handed to you?—No. Mr. Massey held it as I looked at it.

37. Do you remember the date of it?—I could not say. I did not pay particular attention to that.

38. Do you remember the signature?—I could not swear to that, but I believe it was Mr. Maurice O'Connor's.

39. Did Mr. Dickson see it?—He must have seen the letter. He could not help. He was close handy.

*Mr. M. Myers:* I think that you and the witness are at cross-purposes, sir. The witness is referring to a letter not quite connected with the charge. It is a letter in which, apparently, Mr. O'Connor, writing to Mr. McMaster, said something about being prepared to give £100 for the use of Mr. McMaster's nominee in the event of a fresh election.

*The Chairman:* I want to know all that took place at that interview.

*Mr. Fraser:* A point of order, sir. I submit that that question cannot be asked, because it involves matters which have got to be dealt with and which the Committee determinedly postponed until to-morrow morning.

*The Chairman:* I have no desire to press the question.

*Mr. Fraser:* I submit that anything with reference to paragraph 2 is not to be dealt with to-day, and your question involves that.

*The Chairman:* I am endeavouring to test the witness's memory as to what took place at an alleged interview with Mr. Massey.

*Mr. Allen:* Speaking to the point of order, I think we are getting to cross-purposes. I think that paragraph 1 is the paragraph that originated in the first place in Auckland, and that is clear from the wording of it: "What was stated in Auckland at the present moment was this." What was the present moment? It was not the moment of the interview with Mr. Massey in his office—it was the previous interview, I understand, in Auckland; and these two things have got mixed up, and we are getting on to No. 1 when we ought to be on the other.

*Mr. Skerrett:* May I say, as counsel for Mr. Payne, that I agree with the contention of Mr. Fraser and Mr. Allen, and I so conducted the examination in chief. It is disadvantageous, really, to Mr. Payne, because his story will be much more consecutive if he is permitted to give it as it actually occurred, consecutively, day by day. Therefore in Mr. Payne's interests I support the contentions which Mr. Fraser and Mr. Allen have urged. I shall, however, ask permission, because of this question, to ask one other question, and that is the one which I have indicated to you—whether the circumstances under which the alleged offer was made were such as to cause him to take the offer seriously. That does not come out in No. 1 inquiry, but the Chairman has permitted all these questions to be asked, and it will be published before the witness's full explanation. I desire only to ask that one question, out of fairness to the witness.

*The Chairman:* You may ask that question.

40. *Mr. M. Myers.*] The only question I want to ask is this. Will you look over the paragraph again [Shown to witness]. You remember that conversation, do you not? You remember a conversation between yourself and Mr. Massey, when Sir Joseph Ward's and Mr. Brown's names were mentioned?—That was in the Parliament Buildings here.

41. Are you not making a mistake, and was not that particular conversation in Auckland?—I have already got Mr. Dickson to contradict himself on that point. It is on record in *Hansard*. No mention of this bribe or anything pertaining thereto was made in Auckland. There was no suggestion of a bribe in Auckland. Entirely different matters were discussed there.

42. Your recollection is that this conversation took place in Wellington?—Not my recollection, but my absolute certainty.

43. *Mr. Allen.*] I should like to know from Mr. Payne whether any conversation took place in Auckland, prior to the meeting in Mr. Massey's room, about Mr. Vigor Brown and Sir Joseph Ward having squared Mr. Payne?—The matter was not mentioned in any shape or form in Auckland. It was first mentioned in Mr. Massey's office here in Wellington.

44. *Mr. Skerrett.*] You have said that you told Mr. Massey in the Parliament Buildings in Wellington that something in the nature of an offer had been made to you if you would go in the direction of the Ward Government. Was the suggestion made under circumstances which would entitle you to take it seriously?—No.

45. *Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] You have already stated that no conversation took place between myself and you at Napier regarding the political situation?—That is true.

46. Nor between Mr. Brown with me, or Mr. Brown separately, upon that same question?—That is equally true.

47. Had you any reason to believe, when the statement was made to you by Mr. Massey in Auckland that you had been squared?—I must reiterate that I deny that it was mentioned by Mr. Massey in Auckland. It was mentioned here in Wellington only.

48. Had you any reason to believe that the suggestion, wherever it came from, emanated in any way, directly or indirectly, from the Ward Government or anybody connected with the Government?—None whatever.

49. *Mr. Vigor Brown.*] I should like to ask Mr. Payne whether I ever, directly or indirectly, or by innuendo, or in any way possible, made any suggestion as to how he should vote at any time?—No, you never even asked my opinion on the matter.