

If you had been able to get that Private Journal, what would it have revealed?—It would have revealed all the transfers from the different accounts. It would have given particulars, probably, of the depreciation—the rates of depreciation—on any accounts. I do not know what truth there is in it, but mention has been made that a certain account for repairs to the “Admiral Codrington” was carried off to the cost of construction of the vessel. It should have been a profit-and-loss item. With respect to those items the transfer would come through the Private Journal.

And then you would have been able to trace it?—It would have been interesting to see the reason why these repairs were capitalized.

We think it might also have shown why a certain item for depreciation was written off one year and the entry reversed next year.

Evidence was given by Mr. Porter, formerly the accountant of Mr. Lysnar’s company, which tends to show that in the year 1924 he had received this book, together with the company’s Private Ledger, from Mr. Hamilton, who is Mr. Lysnar’s private secretary; that Mr. Hamilton came to Mr. Porter’s house and obtained the books from Mr. Porter. Mr. Hamilton said that he had obtained from Mr. Porter’s house a parcel which he thought contained papers, and which might have contained the missing Private Journal. He stated that he gave this parcel to Mr. Lysnar at Mr. Lysnar’s house. There was no further satisfactory evidence given before your Commissioners which threw any further light upon the whereabouts of this book. Mr. Porter impressed us as an honest and disinterested witness, and it is much to be regretted that this book was not available to the Commission in connection with the inquiries made into the financial position of the company. Your Commissioners were not favourably impressed by the manner in which Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Lysnar’s private secretary, gave his evidence.

CONCEALED STENOGRAPHER.

On account of the considerable amount of importance apparently attached by Mr. Lysnar to an oft-referred-to episode in connection with the taking of certain notes by what he termed a “hidden lady” at a certain interview which took place by arrangement between certain of the directors of Mr. Lysnar’s company and the Chairman of the New Zealand Meat-producers’ Board, we, in company with Mr. Lysnar and Mr. Jones, inspected the room where the notes were taken.

The furniture in the room consists mainly of a long Board table, a very small side table, and an ordinary roller-topped desk. Mr. Lysnar admitted that no special furniture or screen had been brought into the room on the occasion complained of; but he said that by a manipulation of the location of the roller-topped desk an attempt to conceal the presence of the young lady from Mr. Lysnar and his co-directors was successful.

We find it difficult to believe that any arrangement of the furniture could be made so that the stenographer would not be visible to a party entering the room by the door through which it was agreed by both sides that the directors entered. Both sides admitted that the stenographer was seated at the ordinary roller-top desk which we saw, and that there was no screen save that used. It is true that there is a framed diagram hung upon a side wall, and that from a certain position at the Board table a faint reflection of the stenographer could be seen. The framed diagram is to the side of and not behind the agreed-upon location of the desk.

The episode may appear trivial and unworthy of special notice, and we would not have thought fit to make any mention of it had it not been for the frequency with which Mr. Lysnar referred to it.

The fact that a stenographer was detailed for the purpose of taking a record of the interview shows that the Chairman of the Board considered—and we are not prepared to say, wrongly considered—the advisability of having, as he says, a record of any interview at which Mr. Lysnar was to be one of the party, especially in view of the difference of recollection on the part of Mr. Lysnar and Mr. Jones. At the same time it is unfortunate that the stenographer had not been prominently situated at the long Board table, seeing that the fact of her having been placed at the ordinary sitting-place of the roller-top desk has created in the mind of Mr. Lysnar and his co-directors a feeling that she was purposely placed there in the hope that her presence would not be noticed by the directors of the company. The importance of the matter to some extent disappears when it transpires that counsel for the Poverty Bay Meat Company admits the virtual correctness of the stenographer’s notes.