

- Mr. R. Pearce.** 161. Has the purser access to your cabin?—To my cabin, but not to my papers. My cabin is at the bottom of the companion. I never shut the door unless I leave the ship myself. The cabin doors are open.
162. Where would this telegram be placed after you had opened it and re-sealed it?—In a locked drawer.
163. Had anybody access to that drawer?—No one but myself.
164. Can you remember any rumours—any vague rumours—that were floating about the ship?—I cannot recollect a single one of them.
165. If I were to say that such and such was one of the vague rumours you could not contradict me?—I could not contradict you.
166. When was it you saw Mr. O'Toole, in the morning or at night?—I don't recollect.
167. Supposing there had been another telegram for the *Otago Daily Times* not in your custody, in whose custody would it most probably have been placed during the voyage?—Put in the ship's box. Given to the purser perhaps.
168. *The Chairman.*] Does the ship carry a letter box?—She carries what is called a loose letter box accessible to anyone, into which passengers put letters to be delivered at the post-office when we arrive.
169. *Mr. Lemon.*] Was this special telegram taken out of the loose-letter box when Mr. Larnach opened it?—No.
170. *The Chairman.*] Was it understood that what was in the telegram was to be secret between the persons that saw the telegram?—Yes, distinctly.
171. Do you remember subsequently discussing the matter between yourselves: Mr. Larnach, Mr. Martin, and yourself?—Yes, we discussed it pretty freely, and talked of it as news between ourselves.
172. Is it not possible that while you have been talking about it you may have been overheard by some other person?—I think not.
173. *Mr. Webster.*] But any one of the others apart from you may have continued the discussion about the items?—Yes.
174. *The Chairman.*] You at first were under the impression that Mr. Martin was not present; you subsequently admitted that you could not recall whether he was present or not. Is it possible that Mr. Larnach after having read the telegram along with you may have taken it away and shown it to Mr. Martin, not in your presence?—I think not. He may have discussed the contents of the telegram with Mr. Martin.
175. *Mr. M'Pherson.*] I understand from an answer just given, that you received custody of the telegram at Queenscliff, and it never went out of your custody until you delivered it to its rightful owner?—It left my custody, inasmuch as it was in Mr. Larnach's hands in my presence.
176. *Mr. M'Lean.*] After the severe cross-examination you have gone through, do you still state that you did not divulge to any person the contents of that telegram?—I am confident I did not.
177. You still hold to the statement that you made in the letter?—Yes.
178. *Mr. Vogel.*] I understand it is distinctly the case that Captain Pearce holds to the statement in that letter, but deems it possible he had conversation on the subject of the English news with Mr. O'Toole, and is quite certain he did not refer to any items in the telegram?—Exactly so.
179. *Mr. Vogel* to *Mr. G. M'Lean.*] Are you aware of the *Daily Times* having made any payment to the purser, Mr. Mailer?—I am not aware of any.
180. Are you able to say no payment was made?—No. I was not a director when this happened. I had been to England, and am probably not so well acquainted as others with the affair.

THURSDAY, 5TH OCTOBER, 1871.

Present:—

Hon. Mr. Stafford in the Chair.

Mr. Farnall,
Captain M'Pherson,

Mr. Stewart,
Mr. Webster.

Mr. George Bell in attendance, and examined on oath.

Mr. G. Bell.
5th Oct., 1871.

181. *The Chairman.*] You were the editor and proprietor of the *Evening Star* in September, 1870?—Yes.
182. You stated by telegraph to the Committee that you could give evidence in addition to that given in the Resident Magistrate's Court in the case of *Regina v. Barton*, and which, you also said, would explain the whole matter as to the source from which the English news was telegraphed to the *Wellington Independent* on the 30th September, 1870?—Yes.
183. Would you be good enough to state that evidence?—The first telegram received from the *Southland Times* was at eight o'clock in the morning. The reason we exchanged telegrams was because the Press Association that had been formed excluded several papers from that Association, and the *Evening Star* was one of those. The consequence was that it was necessary we should make fresh arrangements, and I and the proprietors of several other papers, agreed to exchange telegrams with each other. The *Southland Times* was one of these papers. About the same time, Greville's agent wrote to me stating that they were prepared to make arrangements to telegraph English news, and asking me to enter into no permanent arrangement until I had heard from them. They then had not quite completed their arrangements, because they had not appointed agents at the Bluff and Hokitika. It is my practice to write what I have to do, that is any article, during the day, at home; previous to going to the office, and, consequently, instead of arriving at the office at 9 o'clock, I did not get there until 11 o'clock; and I then found a telegram giving some very important intelligence, and stating that they had got the wires, and asking if they should continue sending a message. The telegram I allude to was from the *Southland Times* on the 30th September. That was the time when the important