

37. You were never consulted with regard to the election of directors or officers?—No; not during the time I was connected with it.

38. Do you know what becomes of the entrance-fees paid into it?—I understand they are paid into a fund—a “fighting fund”—to the account of the Association after every meeting—so it is stated; but I do not know whether the statement is well- or ill-founded; but that is the opinion of many people who are connected with it.

39. Have you ever received any report of the directors?—No, never.

40. You have referred to some charges originally made in the shape of entrance-fees?—Yes; I have known it as low as £25.

41. Do you know how these have increased?—Yes; they have increased for Hawera, as I have pointed out, to £138. I have known in other places that it has increased, as at Masterton, where the entrance-fee is £100 for a daily evening paper; but the proprietors did not comply with the demand.

42. Then, you say, from you own knowledge, that the entrance-fees have been multiplied?—Take the ratio where it was fixed at £500, it is now £1,000, which of course shuts out all opposition in the way of enterprise in this country.

43. Are you aware of any circumstances to warrant these increased charges?—None whatever. In view of the rapid growth of the Association one would suppose it would be their interest to reduce them; but, instead of that, their revenue has increased enormously. The effect on the revenue of the colony is considerable, for, if an easy entrance-fee only were demanded, all the country papers would be receiving the telegrams and cable news: as every country paper would be receiving telegrams, the general revenue would be so much improved.

44. During the Holt and McCarthy régime, were there any entrance-fees?—No, none at all.

45. How were they paid for then?—I do not think there were any cablegrams then. The cables came into operation at the formation of the Press Association. They only charged me some £20 a year as subscription-fee for the *Ashburton Mail*.

46. That was for telegrams?—It was about the same for the cables—it was very moderate.

47. Does the Press Association require you to act for them as literary contributors?—Yes, to act as correspondents.

48. Was this work carried out in a satisfactory manner?—Perfectly.

49. What, in your opinion, has been the effect of the Press Association on the newspapers?—Restricting enterprise, controlling public opinion in the various centres.

50. Have you had any complaints from newspaper-proprietors?—Yes—even those who are actively associated with newspapers. It would be invidious to mention names of those outside the large centres who complain of the heavy rates charged, and for the useless messages that are showered upon them, and for which they also have to pay; indeed, any relief in these respects would be hailed with satisfaction by the country papers.

51. You think there is a great deal of dissatisfaction?—I have no hesitation in expressing my opinion to that effect.

52. *Mr. Pinkerton.*] What rights did the payment of that £138 confer upon you?—The right to be supplied with cables for a yearly fee.

53. That does not go to pay for any part of the supply?—No; if the paper were to close you would lose it.

54. Then, they may send you what they like and you must pay for what they send?—You must pay, provided you agree to pay the yearly subscription.

55. And full wire-charges in addition?—Yes, that is so.

56. *Mr. Massey.*] You say that any relief would be satisfactory to the country Press?—Yes.

57. What form do you think that relief should take?—The abolition of the exorbitant fee for entrance. If that were done away with the country Press would be willing to pay the yearly subscription.

58. *Mr. Carnecross.*] I understood you to say that you made the arrangement to send the telegrams to Stratford?—Yes; and they refused.

59. Was that agreement in writing?—The draft was accompanied by the application that the wires should be sent to Stratford; I made that “special,” but they sent the wires to Hawera.

60. Did you get no intimation of the receipt of application and the money?—The first intimation received was the receipt of the wire at Hawera. The paper was machined at Stratford, eighteen miles distant.

61. Have you had any experience in the other colonies?—Yes; I had four years’ experience of papers in New South Wales.

62. Is there any entrance-fee there?—There is no Press Association on the same lines. There are associations which collate the news and send it to the country newspapers. There is some kind of protective cable there; but it is of such a mild character that it does not operate to the disadvantage of any one.

63. There is no monopoly?—No monopoly. This is the only colony where there is a monopoly.

64. There is more than one source from which you can get the news there?—Yes; there are several. For a small sum they will supply the country newspapers.

65. *The Chairman.*] Do they wire it, or send it in other ways?—They wire it. I believe there is a special rate.

66. Is there no special protection?—It is of a very mild character. You can get the telegrams out of the daily morning papers.

67. Do you think that the high entrance-fee is the means of preventing papers being established?—I am quite sure of it.

68. That means a loss of employment in the colony for “unemployed” persons, and for compositors?—Yes, decidedly.