

299. If Mr. O'Hagan gave evidence in Wylde's favour, do you think there was any personal animus on his part against Wylde?—There was an imputation in that way.

300. Can you give us any idea as to what was the dividing line between the opposite parties in the Council?—It was much the same as other local bodies. There is always that in these small Councils.

301. In this particular instance?—I could give you details on that. Generally, whatever one side wanted to do the other side did not want, or wanted to do it in another way.

302. Can you remember who was on one side and who on the other?—We were pretty well divided. Mr. Seddon had a strong party before, but about this time he got down to himself and two others.

303. Can you remember the names of the councillors who assisted Mr. Seddon in connection with the stonewall when the Borough Council was kept sitting until 2 o'clock in the morning?—I think Mr. Campbell adopted his views.

304. Did he assist Mr. Seddon?—Yes, I think so. I opposed him.

305. Do you recollect the prayer of the petition that was sent by the Borough Council to the Colonial Secretary?—Yes.

306. Do you recollect the prayer of the petition?—I think there is a form laid down in some Act of Parliament.

307. What were you asking for?—For a special audit.

308. Did the petition go to Parliament or to the Colonial Secretary?—I think direct to the Colonial Secretary.

309. What happened?—Auditors were appointed.

310. There was something wrong in the signatures of the petition?—I had nothing to do with that.

311. I think you stated in answer to a former question that certain signatures to that petition were forged?—Yes. I think there was one of the name of Mrs. Harrison, who could not write at all. I do not say there was absolute forgery, but he had written the names of three or four persons who could not write.

312. You infer that Simmonds in writing these names was guilty of forgery?—Undoubtedly, because when it went to the Colonial Secretary it was refused.

313. Was it made clear to him that these names were forged?—I do not know, but I immediately got up another petition myself.

314. I think the Municipal Act provides that a certain number of names are required to a petition of this nature. Do you remember the number?—I do not, but I think it was thirty-three.

315. Is it not a fact that a number of the petitioners were asked to withdraw their names?—I believe so.

316. Was Simmonds a respectable man?—He was a tinsmith there. I do not know that anything could have been said against his respectability.

317. Do you know whether he is alive or not?—I have not heard of him for ten years.

318. Do you think he could give us information now?—He must be a pretty old man now. He was not in the Council, and I do not know that he would be of much use to you. He was in the Council afterwards.

319. Was he in the Council while you were Mayor?—I think he was elected at the end of my term.

320. Supposing he turns up and gives evidence, will you still adhere to your opinion that he forged these signatures?—The question of forging signatures came from the Colonial Secretary.

321. In the early part of your examination you said that Mr. Seddon never blocked the adoption of the auditors' report. Are you still of that opinion after having had your memory refreshed by the files of the *West Coast Times*, in reference to the stonewalling at the all-night sitting? Was not the question that of adopting the auditors' report? Now, you have told us there was an overpayment to Nathaniel Seddon: are we to understand there was no deficiency through the amount said to have been overpaid to Mr. Seddon?—That I cannot tell.

322. You have told us you have seen the order given by Nathaniel Seddon to Richard John Seddon?—Yes.

323. To collect moneys due to him?—Yes.

324. Do you know whether that order is still in existence?—I do not—it was twelve years ago.

325. In whose handwriting was it?—Richard John Seddon's.

326. And signed by Nathaniel Seddon?—Yes.

327. Was he an educated man?—No.

328. Could he read and write?—Yes.

329. Who were the auditors appointed in response to the prayer of the petition?—Messrs. Palliser and Spence.

330. Were they competent men?—I should say so.

331. *Mr. Duncan.*] It has been said that O'Hagan, without the authority of the Council, communicated with the Government in regard to this affair of Wylde's, and got a special auditor?—I do not know anything about that.

332. You say, party feeling was running very high in the Council between O'Hagan and Wylde?—Yes.

333. Can you tell the Committee what created the ill-feeling in the first instance? Do you know of anything that transpired between them?—No, I do not know of anything.

334. Do you think it was owing to ill-feeling that the Council was determined to prosecute this man without investigation by a committee?—I think now that it might have been so.

335. It might be through ill-feeling that this was done?—Yes.