

234. I asked you the question, Was not Mr. Barnett elected as Mayor distinctly on the account that the ratepayers approved of his action in bringing this case before the Supreme Court?—I cannot say he was elected on that account.

235. Would you dispute the statement which appeared in the *Kumara Times* that he was hoisted on high after the election as a proof that his action had met with the approval of the electors?—I cannot say whether that statement was correct or not.

236. Had Mr. Barnett previously endeavoured to have an independent investigation in the Council before he took this action with regard to getting the borough solicitor's opinion?—I believe he had taken no previous action.

237. Then, this would be incorrect, as stated in the *Kumara Times*: that Mr. Barnett said that when he discovered it was no use asking the Council for an investigation he then caused a petition to be got up for an audit, because he insisted upon the light of day being thrown upon these borough accounts; and was that the reason why he was stated to have no brains?—I do not remember what action he took, it is so long ago; but, so far as I recollect, the man who was put forward to take action was Simmons, a tinsmith. He was the man who appeared before the Council as leading the matter.

238. *Hon. J. McKenzie.*] Your reply to Mr. Rolleston was that the removal of the papers would be in the interest of Mr. Wylde: is it not possible they might assist to prove his innocence?—It depends what papers they were; they might tell one way or the other.

239. *Mr. Massey.*] I think you told us, in speaking of this petition that was sent to Wellington asking for a special audit, that the primary cause was the insinuations made by Simmons: will you tell the Committee what you mean by insinuations?—So far as I remember, it was the talk about the town that Wylde was making use of borough money.

240. Was Simmons a member of the Council at the time?—Yes.

241. What you want us to understand is this: that Simmons simply voiced the opinion of outsiders when he moved for the petition?—A certain party of outsiders; he was a Councillor at the time reflecting their opinions.

242. I think you told us he was ousted from the Council in consequence of his name having been struck off the ratepayers' roll?—To the best of my recollection, the reason he was ousted from the Council was that he had done some work for the borough, and received payment for it, being a member of the Council.

243. And in consequence of that he lost his seat?—Yes. I think he built one or more chimneys for the Town Hall, and, having received payment on that account, he was considered ineligible for the position of Councillor, and had to resign.

244. In your opinion, was the report of the special auditors correct or incorrect?—I knew of two circumstances in which it was alleged that moneys were short, that those amounts had been paid; and I think there might have been other mistakes which would account for some of the other payments if the matter could have been investigated.

245. Do you know if this man Simmons is available as a witness or not?—I believe he is dead. He went away from the place, and is not known in that district now.

246. You told us Mr. Seddon did not block the adoption of the auditors' report?—The general business of the Council was gone on with that night.

247. I am speaking of the second long meeting—the one that lasted till 8 o'clock in the morning?—Mr. Seddon did not block the business of the Council until 6 o'clock in the morning.

248. But did he not block it then?—Well, I think it could scarcely be called blocking, because the object was to come to some unanimous understanding, and arrange that a committee should consider the matter before any action was taken at all. I do not think that could be called blocking because frequent adjournments were made for the purpose of coming to some definite arrangements.

*Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon:* That was between 6 and half-past 8.

249. *Mr. Massey.*] Was there ever any other occasion on which a meeting of the Council lasted so long?—I cannot remember any.

250. You say there was a lot of business?—Yes.

251. What did it consist of?—Well, I refer to the minutes being very lengthy. It was unusual that the Borough Council meeting should last such a time.

252. Is it not a fact that the business consisted principally of motions for adjournments?—Yes, principally.

253. By whom were they moved?—By various members; I do not now remember by whom.

254. Do you remember how many motions for adjournments were moved?—No.

255. Do you remember whether Mr. Seddon moved most of them?—No.

256. Were all these motions discussed?—I cannot remember whether they were discussed or not. Probably they were discussed, or the time must have been occupied in some way.

257. Was most of the time occupied by them?—Yes.

MONDAY, 24TH OCTOBER, 1898.

GEORGE RUDKIN further examined.

1. *Mr. Duthie.*] I want you to make a statement as to the half-yearly balances of the Kumara Borough Council, and to give the names of the several Mayors.—Well, I have prepared a statement.

2. I want to know the half-yearly balances, the amount of interest paid, and the names of the different Mayors during five years.