

and that Wylde should be furnished with a copy of the special auditors' report. This invitation was given to Wylde, but he excused himself on the ground that owing to a prior engagement he could not attend. It was resolved that Wylde be furnished with a copy of the resolutions of the Council, and the committee then adjourned till the following afternoon. Wylde was asked if he wished to make any explanation with reference to the special auditor's report, and he claimed that any statement he should make ought to be in writing, and I moved that the request be granted. Later on Wylde informed me that he had not been furnished with a copy of the special auditors' report officially in accordance with resolution. Wylde also stated that he was told by the Mayor that he (the Mayor) had consulted Mr. Perkins as to taking action, and he (Wylde) considered his position to be prejudiced thereby, but nevertheless he was willing to give what explanation he could. He said that all books, papers, and documents had been produced and examined by the special auditors. Now, when that special committee reported to the Council, I noticed that a motion moved by myself to the effect that Wylde be informed that the committee meeting was to be held had been omitted, and I insisted on that being corrected before we proceeded to other business. At that meeting there was a letter from Wylde, in which he stated that he had relied upon a promise that the auditors' report should not be made public until he had had an opportunity of seeing and replying to it. He added that he had made written application to his Worship the Mayor, but had received no reply, and was in the position of being ignorant of what he was being accused of. That letter was dated 8th November, 1882. Looking at the report in the *Kumara Times* of the Council's proceedings at this time, I should say it was fairly correct, and it was really the position that though we passed a resolution that Wylde should be supplied with a copy of the auditors' report it was never done, and he never got any chance prior to that meeting of the Council of having the report before him so that he could go into it and give an explanation. All that I did in respect to the Borough Council was to try to get them to allow the committee to finish its work, and to get Wylde and the local auditors there. Great reflections had been cast upon them, and I thought we should go into the matters temperately and judicially, and find out if we could what was wrong. I knew that the Borough funds had never lost the amounts alleged by the special auditors because we never had the money to lose; if you took £219 and £163, and another £50 out of about a total only of £1,000 a year, it would not leave much to go upon. Take the bank account for 1879 and 1882, if during these periods such sums were withdrawn the Borough funds must have shown it, and they would have been so much in debt.

9. *Hon. J. G. Ward.*] And the Borough funds did not show that?—No. Had those sums been paid, half a year's revenue would have gone. As soon as ever I got the auditors' report I asked the Council to make the inquiry. They seemed to me to have made up their minds what they were going to do. The first night of meeting there was nothing but ordinary business, and it was not at all unusual for us to sit till one o'clock in the morning; in fact, in those goldfield townships in the earlier days there was not much difference between the nights and days for the transaction of business; it was quite different to a rural life. At the second meeting there was strong feeling in respect to one or two other matters, and the Council sat very late, and I should say that the report of the first meeting in the *Kumara Times* is fairly correct, and it was one or two o'clock in the morning before we completed the sitting. Mr. Rudkin was with me in general, and it was he, who at the second meeting, moved for the consideration of the auditors' report in the morning. The other side had a resolution all written out, but it was not put before the Council while we were considering the report itself; in our absence, during a short adjournment, the time of which had not elapsed, the motion was put and carried. It is not likely that, taking such an interest in the matter as I did or Mr. Barnett, that we were likely to make a mistake as to the time of the adjournment, but when we got back to the chamber we found the Council had resumed, and that Mr. Barnett's amendment had been passed. They simply told us on our return what they had done, and I said that, considering the gravity of the matter, I thought that a grave injustice had been done to the Town Clerk. The Borough solicitor's letter bore out the course which I had suggested—to have an inquiry by a sub-committee. He had actually recommended the course I proposed, of an investigation by a sub-committee before finally proceeding to lay an information against the Town Clerk. I may say in respect to the feeling in the Council that there was some bitterness, but the feeling was not general. The first Mayor elected after the trouble was Mr. Barnett, who secured two votes over Mr. Campbell; then, I think Mr. Hannon, whom I supported, defeated Mr. Burger, and every Councillor who voted with me for an investigation was re-elected, and Mr. Nicholson himself was subsequently elected. I only say this to show that the people in the Borough did not consider there was anything wrong. In respect to Nathaniel Seddon, as I have said at the time I asked him about the moneys he had received, and I wish the members to pay particular attention to this, he showed in his pocket-book every payment which he had received. I then went to the new Town Clerk (Mr. Skelton) and said I wanted to go through the account; then, I also went to Sergeant Moller of the police, who was a splendid accountant, and we went through the books, and the result of that was the letter which I wrote to the *Kumara Times*. My opinion is that the auditors duplicated certain of the sums stated in the vouchers and cash-book. I am positive that my uncle had not been paid up to December, 1879, and I do not think that the bill given to him in April paid him up, because they wanted him to wait until the licenses came in about the 30th June. Then the auditors were wrong in assuming that after Nathaniel Seddon had finished as permanent employé that he stopped working for the Council; it was not so. I know too that there were others who had cheques and who had bills, and I know that some of the cheques were discounted by parties in the town; and so far as my recollection serves me, so as not to put itself before the bank as having issued cheques without having money to meet them, new cheques were given. I am satisfied that, what would lead to complication and confusion so far as the auditors were concerned was the issuing of cheques on the finance committee's reports and the giving of bills, and I said then, and I say now, that Wylde's mistake was that, knowing of these complications, he ought to have assisted the auditors—but you have heard that they snubbed him and treated him with