

Mr. O'Connor: Then, this inquiry is at an end, and the shareholders save £20 a day.

Mr. Macdonald: I must ask you whether you are prepared to give effect to this resolution or not.

Mr. O'Connor: I am not. I have said before that I look upon you as one-sided in the matter. I estimate that you are not like the other representatives. You represent nobody else than yourself. I want to hear what Mr. Miles says on behalf of the Wellington shareholders, and Mr. Greenland on behalf of the others. I will hand these records over if I get a written guarantee that they will not be used for the other side.

Mr. Macdonald: The committee of inquiry employed certain clerks, of whom one was placed in charge of the documents, records, and books of the company, in order that certain copies should be made. Mr. Arthur Kember has now stated the basis on which you got those copies.

Mr. O'Connor: Not on oath.

Mr. Macdonald: You are not on oath. I suppose you will give Mr. Kember credit for speaking the truth. Mr. Arthur Kember has stated clearly and distinctly that a certain understanding was arrived at between all parties that these copies were to be handed to me. You deliberately varied that understanding and took the copies away, he being under the impression that you were going to give them to me. In accordance with that understanding I ask you, as an honourable man, to give them up.

Mr. O'Connor: Mr. Kember has made a mistake on his part. The understanding with me is that I shall have these copies—that they should be done for me. In accordance with that understanding I took away the copies when made—the first one at midday and the other in the evening. I hold them, and they shall be in the hands of my solicitor within two hours. I have now all the notes with regard to these charges. I have now the notes with regard to the falsified balance-sheet. The others I am willing to produce for the committee, as the committee knows, to facilitate their inquiry and to save time. But I deny the right of this committee to take these documents—which are my work, done by me to facilitate the inquiry—to place them in the hands of the other side, in order that they may prepare measures to confute them. And I can easily show the committee, the evidence being in my possession, that the minute-book can be altered in order to confute them. I adhere to what I said in my letter, and I want to know what Mr. Greenland has said on the matter.

Mr. Macdonald: The committee are not going to be dictated to either by you or the board of directors of the Mokihinui Coal Company as to the method or manner in which the inquiry is to be conducted. You have deliberately taken away from this committee-room copies of records which the committee ought to have in their possession. If you refuse to give up those copies to the committee, or at least one of those copies which you have taken away, the responsibility will entirely lie with yourself. I say this deliberately: that your action throughout is not the action of a man desirous of furthering the inquiry.

Mr. Miles: I would like to say that I entirely agree with the action taken by a majority of the committee in insisting upon the production of the records which have been taken away by Mr. O'Connor without the authority of the committee. When we put on these two clerks to take the different copies, you (Mr. Macdonald) were at liberty to hand one of the copies to Mr. O'Connor, but I contend that he should not be furnished with the copy of any documents without a copy being also left with the committee. Unless Mr. O'Connor wishes to burke this inquiry, I hope he will see the wisdom of producing these papers which he has no right to detain.

Mr. Greenland: Allow me to point out that Mr. O'Connor says he will do so.

Mr. O'Connor: Do you accept one of these copies, Mr. Greenland? [offering documents].

Mr. Greenland: What I wish to say is that we are in a position to go on with the inquiry without all this unseemly wrangle. With regard to the expense to the company of keeping me here, I think it is absurd to foist on them such charges as I shall have to make on the company. I have been here nearly a fortnight, and nothing has been done at all yet as far as the inquiry is concerned, and all the evidence required has been in my hands over a week. I say we ought to go on at once. As far as the dissensions between gentlemen are concerned, when I first arrived in Wellington I went to Mr. Miles's office, and after a great deal of trouble—against my wish entirely—Mr. Macdonald was appointed chairman. I have a copy of the resolution taken at the time, and the shorthand-writer has a note of the same. If the inquiry is to be fair and just, we ought to have equal rights, and I claim an equal right. The only thing I have to say now is that, as a member of the committee of inquiry, I am prepared to go on with the inquiry at once.

Mr. O'Connor: I hand over to Mr. Greenland a copy of the documents [documents handed over] to do what he likes with them, but I will not give them over to Mr. Macdonald, because I think he is doing what he can for the other side in this inquiry.

Mr. Macdonald: I happen to be the only member of this committee of inquiry who started absolutely ignorant of this business. I am not a shareholder, and knew nothing of the business before the inquiry commenced. Unfortunately my colleagues have had a connection with it. I claim to be the only man connected with the inquiry who is absolutely impartial, and you have no right to make such observations, because you know they are untrue. You have throughout the inquiry made the wildest charges against almost everybody. Whether your charges are true or false against the directors I know not, because I have not yet had an opportunity of examining them in detail; but to accuse Mr. Miles and myself of having formed—

Mr. O'Connor: I have not accused Mr. Miles.

Mr. Macdonald: I say that your statements generally, if what you have said here about the members of the committee are to be taken as a sample of their value and truth, are utterly unworthy of credence, and I am amazed that a man with your public experience cannot understand his responsibilities in such a grave matter as this.

[At this stage the committee adjourned until 2 o'clock, and after transacting some business in private again adjourned till next day.]