

the 15th August?—The date I refer to was the Monday following the publication of the evidence by the *Star*. It struck me as being strange that a member should know so soon, and I asked Mr. Cook if he would kindly tell me the name of the member who told him, but this he declined.

32. *Mr. Guinness.*] Is there not a lock to the door of the Committee-room?—Yes; but we cannot keep the room locked up, because the members of the other Committees that meet in that room want to get in. Then, again, that room is an exceedingly cold one, and if it is locked no one can get in to light a fire. If a fire is not lighted till we get there in the morning we have to sit in a room that has not been warmed.

33. *Mr. Fisher.*] I understood you to say that you had a large number of books in the Committee-room?—Yes; two cases of books were brought up from Dunedin by Mr. Holsted, one of the witnesses, and a very large tin case, full of books, was sent up from Dunedin through the Express Company.

34. Do you require the cases to hold your minute-book?—The books that I refer to are those produced by witnesses.

35. But the minute-book?—No, we do not require cases to hold that.

36. Could not the clerk take possession of the minute-book and the documents after the proceedings of the Committee had terminated?—He had possession of that book, and also the letter-book.

37. Did you not say that those books were left about in the room?—No; the clerk had charge of them. I referred to the books exhibits in the evidence.

38. You say that copies of the minutes of evidence were left lying about?—Yes; I have seen them.

39. When the Committee was not sitting?—Immediately after the rising of the Committee.

40. You say that minutes of evidence, if not the minute-book, were left lying loosely about after the Committee had finished its sittings?—Sometimes we finish our sittings after 1 o'clock, and the members hurry off to lunch. We do not care to stay and see about the books then.

41. I understood you to say that, after the business of the Committee was over, you have seen the evidence lying about on the table?—Yes.

42. Do you think that is right or wrong?—If you will give us another room, so that we can lock it up when we go away that will get over the difficulty; but to stay behind to collect the books and evidence and do without dinner is a thing that I, at any rate, am not going to undertake to do.

43. Did you not think it part of your duty as Chairman to see that the clerk took possession of the evidence and the minute-book?—He always had possession of the minute-book, except when he handed it to me to be signed.

44. And the evidence also?—The clerk would not always have possession of the evidence, because he had to hand it round to the different members. I am a member of several Committees, and I may say that the clerk to the Mines Committee is more particular about the evidence than the clerks of most of the Committees that I am on.

45. I think I am not getting a definite answer to my question. I ask the Chairman of the Committee whether to his knowledge, after the proceedings of the Committee had terminated, the evidence was allowed to lie loosely about in the Committee-room?—I told you, and cannot explain any better than I have, that after the Committee had risen sometimes the evidence was left for a while on the table in the Committee-room.

46. You say that, in consequence of the inconvenience of the room and the want of proper accommodation, the evidence was allowed to lie about loosely on the table in the Committee-room?—If we had had a room entirely to ourselves it would not have mattered how the evidence was allowed to lie about. I could have locked the room and gone away with the key in my pocket, leaving the evidence perfectly safe.

47. I quite understand that different things could have been done under different circumstances: what I want to know is what actually happened?—I will tell you what happened. One day, when the clerk had been called away, we rose at about ten minutes past 1. I was called away to the Upper House, and the room was left for, I suppose, twenty minutes. The witnesses had not all left on that occasion when I went away. I could not say what happened then.

48. Can you tell us what date that was?—No, I could not. When I came back I found all the witnesses had gone, and I put the key of the room into my pocket.

49. You could not say, I suppose, whether the evidence was there or not when you left?—No.

50. Do you think it was a proper thing to leave the room open in that way?—We were doing our best under adverse circumstances. We had been sitting from 10 o'clock in the morning, and could not be expected to go back after dinner.

51. Who made the complaint to you about the publication of the evidence?—Mr. Cook.

52. On the Monday morning?—Yes.

53. Who brought the matter before the Committee?—Mr. J. Allen. He moved that it was a breach of privilege—or, rather, he moved that I should report it to the House.

54. *Mr. Pirani.*] Who got the copies of the evidence that have been transcribed officially from the Chairman of the Committee?—Each of the members that have asked questions got a copy.

55. Of the whole of the evidence, or only that part of it where the member asked questions?—He got the whole of the evidence, because it was not all noted who asked the question.

56. Have you a record of those who got the evidence?—No, unless the clerk has.

57. Did anybody besides a member of the Committee get a copy?—Yes, Mr. Easton and Mr. Cook got copies of each other's evidence. Mr. Cook said that specific charges had been levelled against him, and that it was not fair to him unless he got a copy of those charges, and I concluded that it was only fair and just to Mr. Cook that this should be done. Mr. Easton made a similar request, and they both got copies of the evidence that you see published in the paper.