

298. Then, it follows that you did not present that paper to the Committee or to the Chairman at the meeting on Thursday, the 22nd?—Of course, it follows that I did not. I put all the papers I had before the Chairman, and concluded that that paper was amongst them.

299. You say in your evidence that you are sure you missed that paper four days after the 16th, which would be Tuesday, the 20th. Then you say that on Thursday, the 22nd, you did not notice whether it was there when getting away from the Committee-room in a hurry?—Yes.

300. *Mr. Pirani.*] How did you come to find out that one copy was missing?—When the matter was brought up in the Committee.

301. *The Chairman.*] There appears to be some confusion as to these copies. You say that at some time, at any rate, one of these copies was handed to Mr. Easton and to Mr. Cook for correction?—Yes.

302. And you say, further, that it was the same copy that was handed to both those persons?—Yes, I believe so.

303. A copy of the evidence means two parts?—Yes.

304. Does one part contain the evidence of Mr. Cook?—Yes.

305. Is this part here [produced], which bears Mr. Cook's signature, one-half of the complete copy of the evidence you refer to?—Yes.

306. And is the other half with Mr. Easton's evidence with the Government Printer?—Yes. The one sent to the Government Printing Office is more elaborately correct.

*Mr. Carncross:* With regard to my possessing a key of the locker which has been referred to, I wish to explain that when Chairman of the Goldfields Committee last year I had a key of that locker. I omitted to bring up the key with me this year. I used the locker for putting my typewriter in. I would like further to mention that I never once visited this locker since the Committee met.

HERBERT ERNEST EASTON examined. (No. 14.)

307. *The Chairman.*] I believe you presented a petition this session to the House of Representatives, which was referred to the Goldfields and Mines Committee?—I did.

308. You were present, I believe, at a meeting of the Committee which took place on the 15th August, at which you were heard in connection with your petition?—I was.

309. Did you remain at the meeting during the whole of the sitting?—I did.

310. You heard all the evidence that was given there?—I did.

311. Did you supply to the *Evening Star* newspaper, published in Dunedin, a copy of the evidence that was taken at that meeting?—No, I did not.

312. Do you know who did?—No.

313. Was there ever in your possession a typewritten copy of that evidence?—Yes.

314. By whom was it handed to you?—It came from the clerk.

315. Is it in your possession still?—No. That evidence came to me on the 21st August. I corrected it, and returned it to Mr. Izett at 10 o'clock on the 22nd.

316. Then, neither that copy nor any other copy of the evidence was in your possession before the 21st?—That was the only copy I had.

317. After the copy was presented to you for correction what did you do with it?—I corrected it, and kept it in a despatch-box the night of the 21st, and returned it personally to the clerk on the morning of the 22nd.

318. Did Mr. Perston act as your secretary?—Yes; he is my brother-in-law.

319. Did he make a shorthand report of the proceedings?—No; I do not know that he can write shorthand.

320. Do you know how that evidence came to appear in the *Evening Star* of the 23rd August?—No; I can only presume that it was given to the *Star* by some person interested in drawing attention away from the main issues.

321. It was not given by you?—No.

322. Do you know by whom it was given to the *Star*?—No.

323. Can you in any way assist the Committee to find out who did?—I have no evidence to give on that point; but it has been insinuated very freely over this city—and I heard in the lobby of this House this morning—that I had two copies of the evidence in my possession. I resent very strongly on behalf of myself and my brother-in-law such insinuations. I shall be leaving New Zealand shortly for London, and I wish to leave without any such reflection on my character; and I hope you gentlemen will do your best on my behalf to see that I shall leave New Zealand without any such reflection being cast upon me.

324. There is a copy of the evidence taken missing, and it is our duty to find out by whom it was taken: you say you know nothing about it?—I know nothing about it.

325. *Mr. Pirani.*] Are you aware that the publication of that evidence was in contravention of the rules of Parliament?—Certainly. I consider it a gross breach of privilege.

326. If you had desired the publication of the evidence or of the facts of the case, and you could have done it without committing a breach of privilege, would you have supplied what has been supplied to the *Evening Star*?—I contend that the evidence has been indirectly in the newspapers over my name and address through nearly every paper in the colony.

327. Do you consider what has been published a fair report of what ought to be published about the case?—What I saw in the *Evening Star* was, I believe, a verbatim report of my evidence.

328. You said at the commencement of your evidence that what was published in the *Evening Star* could only have been supplied by a person who wanted to publish a biased account of what took place?—I did not wish to convey that; but to say that what was given away by certain parties was, I presume, given because they wished to draw a red-herring across the scent. But I take it that the report was a very fair one of what took place.