

*City Roll.*

- (1.) That claims, totalling eighty in number, of persons qualified to be on the City roll were put in by the Temperance Electoral Office, and none of such persons' names were inserted upon the said City roll.
- (2.) That a number of persons entitled to vote had their names expunged from the roll without notice at the last moment.
- (3.) That persons whose names were on the 1900 roll were left off the new roll although they voted at the by-election. No notice sent to persons so struck off.

Detailed lists were furnished by the complainants of the names of the persons referred to in these charges, and these lists are inserted herein.

It will be noticed that these charges specifically allege corrupt motive on the part of the Registrar in doing or omitting to do the acts mentioned therein. The two first matters mentioned in our commission might occur without improper motive, and, if such was the case, might be met by the Registrar admitting the fact, and saying that the refusals were the result of a mistaken but *bonâ fide* belief that he was right in his action.

The allegation of corrupt motive makes the matter much more serious, and it was recognised by all parties concerned that the accusation must be supported by proof of corrupt motive although such proof might be furnished either by direct or circumstantial evidence. It might be that such a mass of omissions or acts could be shown as to negative the suggestion of accident, and create an almost certainty that they must be the result of design, and of improper design.

The facts proved to us are as follows:—

In 1898 Mr. John King was appointed Registrar of Electors for the then existing Electoral Districts of Auckland City, Parnell, Manukau, and Eden, at a salary of £100 a year. He also held the office of Deputy Registrar of Old-age Pensions, and the office accommodation was selected and provided by the Departmental Head of the latter branch of administration. As in the course of the inquiry it was said that Mr. King was to blame for the choice of office accommodation, it may be stated at once that he was not responsible for the situation of the office. The position chosen was not, in our opinion, inconvenient or improper either as an office for old-age pensions or for the Registrar of Electors, except that at the period of an election the space for the public was very limited, and only a few could be attended to at the same time. In pursuance of the report of the Representation Commissioners these four electoral districts were redivided. The accompanying map shows how fresh districts were created with widely different boundaries. The new districts for which Mr. King on the 11th September, 1902, was appointed Registrar were named Auckland City, Parnell, Eden, and Grey Lynn; though the first three names are similar to those of districts existing before the redivision, they are, equally with Grey Lynn, new districts. No district of Grey Lynn had previously existed in name, and it was made up of parts of other districts. The boundaries of the new districts were gazetted on the 13th August, but the *Gazette* and plans illustrating the boundaries do not appear to have been received by Mr. King for at least a week later. It was not until the middle of September that Mr. King received from his departmental superior instructions and authority to prepare rolls for the new districts, and he was required to have the rolls ready for printing by the 6th October, 1902. It will be seen that this was a task of considerable magnitude, and the time in which the work was to be done was very short. The rolls for the districts affected contained some thirty-seven thousand names, and there were many thousand new claims for enrolment or transfer to be considered and dealt with. Although in June and July, 1902, a house-to-house visitation had been made by the Registrar's assistants, and as far as possible the existing rolls had been altered, added to, or amended, as occasion required, nothing could be done in advance which could be fairly said to be preparation for the new rolls.

The method adopted in September for preparing the new rolls is fully described in Mr. King's letter, prepared at our request (see Appendix); but it may be summarised as follows: The existing rolls, made up to date for each district, were gone through one by one, and against each name on each roll was placed a sign denoting the new district to which the name belonged. Each name was then written upon a slip of paper and deposited in a pigeon-hole alphabetically. There was a set of pigeon-holes for each district. To these slips were added the names of persons putting in new claims to enrolment, and of persons asking to be transferred from other districts and whose claims had been passed by the Registrar. These slips and claims were then sorted into true alphabetical order, and the names and descriptions were then copied on sheets of paper, which were termed the "MS. roll for printer." The sheets were sent to the printer as soon as written, the first being delivered about the 6th October; and proofs, revises, and advance pulls were sent by the printer to the Registrar as soon as they could be produced. Copies of these advance sheets were placed on the counter in the Registrar's office as soon as received, and were available for inspection by the public. This method of compiling a new roll has been found by experience to be convenient, and is adopted by other Registrars.

The work of examining so many names on four separate rolls and deciding in which of four new districts, the boundaries of which had only just been defined, the names should be inserted was naturally very difficult. Mr. King has extensive local knowledge, and besides the assistance of his office staff he invoked the aid of two gentlemen of great knowledge of the inhabitants and localities. Mr. Fitzpatrick had been many years census enumerator and collector of statistics, and had exceptional facilities for knowing the people and where they lived. Mr. J. R. Walters, J.P., had an almost equal knowledge. These two gentlemen went through the rolls, and to the best of their ability located all the people they knew. It was not suggested that they were other than perfectly *bonâ fide*, and that what they told the Registrar he acted on. But even men who had been all their lives in the district, and who had had special opportunities of knowing the residents, could not be expected to know every individual on an electoral roll based on manhood or womanhood suffrage. The compilation of a burgess roll, or any roll based on a property qualification, would be