

1903.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC PETITIONS A TO L COMMITTEE:

REPORT ON THE PETITION OF FRANK W. ISITT, NO. 720; TOGETHER WITH THE POLICE COMMISSIONER'S REPORT AND MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

(WALTER SYMES, Esq., CHAIRMAN.)

Report brought up 21st November, 1903, and ordered to be printed.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

FRIDAY, THE 3RD DAY OF JULY, 1903.

Ordered, "That a Public Petitions A to L Committee, consisting of ten members, be appointed to consider all petitions that may be referred to it by the Petitions Classification Committee, to classify and prepare abstracts of such petitions in such form and manner as shall appear to it best suited to convey to this House all requisite information respecting their contents, and to report the same from time to time to this House, and to have power to report its opinions and observations thereupon to this House; also to have power to call for persons and papers; three to be a quorum; the Committee to consist of Mr. E. G. Allen, Mr. Hall, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Lethbridge, Mr. R. McKenzie, Mr. Remington, Mr. Symes, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Wood, and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. HALL-JONES.)

REPORT.

No. 720.—Petition of FRANK W. ISITT and 6 Others, of Wellington.

PETITIONERS pray that inquiry be made into the abstraction of a ballot-paper, and that steps be taken to prevent a recurrence of such.

I am directed to report,—

1. That the Committee, having taken evidence from various witnesses, finds that Mr. Isitt at 8.53 a.m. on the morning of the day of the election for the Licensing Committee in the City of Wellington, and prior to the opening of the polling-booths thereat, was illegally in possession of a stolen ballot-paper, such paper being printed for and intended to be used at the said election.

2. That the Committee examined Mr. Isitt as to the manner in which the said ballot-paper came into his possession; but, though he alleges that it was given to him, he at different periods of the inquiry absolutely declined to give the Committee the name of the person from whom he received the said ballot-paper.

3. That the Committee is of opinion that the said ballot-paper was stolen for the purpose of manipulating the result of the said election, and thus defeating the will of the electors.

4. That the Committee finds that Mr. Isitt on or about the 29th day of December, 1902, wrote to eleven of the Returning Officers in the colony requesting them to supply him with copies of the ballot-papers used in their respective districts at the local-option poll. Mr. Isitt admits having received such ballot-papers from three of these Returning Officers, but at the inquiry positively declined to give the Committee the name of any of these Returning Officers who had thus illegally supplied him with such ballot-papers.

5. That the Committee is of opinion that these ballot-papers would have been used as a ground for upsetting the local-option poll in some of the electorates.

6. That the limited time at the disposal of the Committee makes it impossible to fully investigate, at this late period of the session, the serious import of the issues involved in the prayer of the petition.

7. The Committee therefore recommends that the prayer of the petition, with the evidence taken thereon, together with the report of the Commissioner, be referred to the Government for consideration, and further recommends that the Government be requested to make further investigation into the matters above referred to, and into the other irregularities as prayed for by the petitioners.

21st November, 1903.

WALTER SYMES, Chairman.