

PETITION.

To the Honourable the Speaker and members of the House of Representatives of the Colony of New Zealand in Parliament assembled.

THE humble petition of the undersigned electors of the Colony of New Zealand sheweth,—

That a Wellington City Licensing Committee election ballot-paper was brought by an elector of Wellington to the Rev. Francis Whitmore Isitt, secretary of the New Zealand Alliance, at the office of the Alliance, 100, Willis Street, Wellington, at 8.53 a.m. on the day of the election of the present Licensing Committee for the City of Wellington—that is to say, on the 25th March, 1903—and was subjected to the inspection of Robert Alexander Wright, printer, Wellington, then a candidate for election to the office of a member of the Wellington City Licensing Committee, at 8.55 a.m. on the same day and in the same place. That this incident and others give reason to believe that great carelessness was displayed by officials responsible for the custody of ballot-boxes and ballot-papers both before and after the poll in connection with the election of a Licensing Committee for the City of Wellington on the date aforesaid, and previously—that is to say, on the 25th November, 1902—in connection both with the parliamentary elections and local-option polls in both the City of Wellington and the electorate of Newtown.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that your honourable House will make strict inquiry into these matters with the object of taking such measures, if it be proved to be necessary, as will tend to prevent a recurrence of such carelessness at any future parliamentary election or licensing poll, or election of a Licensing Committee, or in connection with any declaration of the will of the people by means of ballot-papers at any such election or poll in the City of Wellington or in the electorate of Newtown.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

FRANK W. ISITT, and 6 Others.

REPORT OF POLICE COMMISSIONER.

Memorandum for the Hon. the MINISTER OF JUSTICE *re* Alleged Purloining of Ballot-papers.

5th October, 1903.

WITH reference to this subject, I beg to submit herewith the result of my inquiries, which is as follows, viz. :—

At 8.53 a.m. on the 25th March last (the date of the election of the Wellington Licensing Committee) a gentleman, who is known, but whose identity is at present withheld, called on the Rev. Frank Isitt, Alliance Offices, Upper Willis Street, Wellington, and produced a ballot-paper which he alleged was a genuine one, and said a number of such ballot-papers were in circulation. On the understanding that Mr. Isitt would not divulge his name to any one he left the paper in his possession, saying it had been put on his (the gentleman's) breakfast-table that very morning. Mr. Isitt at once showed the ballot-paper to Mr. R. A. Wright, of Messrs. Wright and Carman, printers, &c., a candidate for election, who called on him, and also to Mr. E. Arnold, J.P., who both indorsed it at the request of Mr. Isitt as having seen it that morning before 9 a.m. Mr. Isitt then had the paper photographed, and took it to Mr. Thomson, the Returning Officer, and informed him how he got possession of it and that a number were alleged to be in circulation. Mr. Thomson examined and compared the ballot-paper with others he possessed, and said it was a genuine one, and he in consequence warned the scrutineers at the various polling-booths that such papers were in circulation, Mr. Isitt taking the document in question to his friend Mr. Arthur Hoby, dentist, Upper Willis Street, who, after it was sealed up, allowed Mr. Isitt to place it in his safe, as he had done with other things previously, Mr. Isitt not then having a safe of his own. Mr. Isitt then proceeded to Lambton Quay Police-station, and reported the matter there, first to Sub-Inspector O'Donovan, and then to Inspector Ellison, who gave directions to Sergeant Twomey to proceed with Mr. Isitt and investigate the matter. Mr. Isitt then positively declined to furnish the name of the person from whom he received the ballot-paper, but said the police were welcome to examine it, although he could not then part with it. Accordingly Sergeant Twomey accompanied Mr. Isitt first to various booths to find Mr. Thomson, and failing to do so went to Mr. Hoby's and carefully examined the ballot-paper, tracings being taken, and the ballot-paper replaced in the safe. The sergeant, who had his vote to record, then went with Mr. Isitt to Herbert Street polling-booth, the sergeant going in and recording his vote, at the same time he compared the tracing with his own paper and found they agreed exactly. The sergeant and Mr. Isitt parted there, and the former went to Shortt's auction mart polling-booth, and there saw Mr. Thomson, with whom he conferred on the subject, Mr. Thomson then stating that he was satisfied the ballot-paper was a genuine one, and that he could not understand how the gentleman who handed it to Mr. Isitt had got possession of it. After informing Mr. Thomson that Mr. Isitt declined to part with the ballot-paper, or tell him from whom he received it, the sergeant returned to Lambton Quay Police-station and reported the result of his inquiry.

About three weeks later this same gentleman, who is well known to Mr. Isitt, told him that on election-day his son handed him the ballot-paper, which he (the son) said had been abstracted from one of the ballot-boxes at a booth where men were drilled, the box having been left there the