

recollection—the whole thing from beginning to end was a terrific week's rush, and he could not profess to remember details like that. He had gone with Mr. Taylor and Mr. Willis to the houses of Larcombe and West, and thought they were quite justified in doing so. It was entirely wrong to say that they had got the men to commit themselves on oath just to protect them (the members). They had every confidence in the men, but wanted to establish their own *bona fides* in the House. He knew Willis too well to suppose that they would "go back on them." They had no communication with witness about the affidavits as far as he could remember—it was all a rush. To Willis, he thought, the whole circumstances of the case were altered when witness became a member of Parliament. This belief was entertained by some officials; others were perfectly satisfied they should not give information to anybody. Some officials submitted that they were justified, when they saw fraud, in informing a member of Parliament. These officials submitted that the declaration they took did not bind them to anything immoral. As to what was or was not immoral, they would have to form their own judgment. They regarded the matter in the same way as had been done in this case: that a member is a public trustee, and he must check public expenditure; and it was never intended, in the spirit of the declaration, to allow Civil servants to knowingly cover up what they knew to be an improper transaction. As to what was improper, these Civil servants would form their own judgment. They were not entitled to do so on "anything" and "everything," in his opinion; that was a point entirely at the disposition of the individual. Some men had not sufficient brains to recognise an improper transaction. Other men would see anything go through, on account of their financial obligations to their wives and families. But there were men who, when they saw something that was not right, in their opinion, would certainly "blow" about it. It was a question for the individual, they took their different views about it: he was certain of that. Some men really think that a member of Parliament stands in a different position from that occupied by a private individual. He was not concerned in this payment till he became a member of Parliament. Any conversations he had were certainly after his election. Other matters had been brought to his notice since by men who took up a similar position to that taken up by Willis; and, speaking as with his finger on the pulse of the public at a large meeting, the majority of the public, he knew, would say that a public servant is not bound to cover up what he believes to be an improper transaction. He was sure that was the common view. Of course, Willis had not known he was anxious to get information *re* the Seddon voucher until witness had communicated with him. He had no special wish to get *that* information; he had brought up a similar matter with regard to a man he had never seen; he had a right to express his opinion upon public payments. He himself thought many of the "rows" in the House were the result of information supplied from the various Departments. If the thing was "clean" there was nothing in it.

To Mr. Willis: He had not informed the Premier of the fact that he had visited the houses of Messrs. West and Larcombe, except in so far as replying affirmatively to a question put by the Premier across the floor of the House. The Premier had the information first. The Premier knew that witness had driven down in a cab, and everything else; his perfect system of espionage enabled him to have possession of these details.

*Mr. Willis* addressed the Board as follows: In considering this breach of regulations the Board had said it was not their duty to allot punishment, but he would ask them to remember that the punishment to a great extent rested with them. There were men in the service, he contended, guilty of far more serious breaches than his: he considered drunkenness more serious, and other matters. He asked the Board to take into consideration his length of service—sixteen years—without one black spot upon it. The Department's case against him rested on one regulation, and it was peculiar that they did not consider so much that breach itself as the circumstances surrounding it. Mr. Rose had stated the breach was more serious because of subsequent charges made against the Government based on the information he had supplied. He would ask the Board to put aside the political aspect of the question. The fact of these charges having been directed against the Premier, or the Premier's connection with them, made them neither more nor less serious than if they were directed against the lowest person in the land. He would call the attention of the Board to the fact that he had broken the regulations, if at all, when supplying the affidavits, but the Department took no action until after the Auditor-General's inquiry. Had the voucher turned up, apparently the Department would have considered he was justified in giving information about it. For the purpose of this inquiry it was assumed that the voucher existed—or, rather, as the Board preferred to put it, that his belief in its existence was an honest belief. He referred to the great delay in making the inquiry, and said that he had never asked for an elaborate inquiry. He would have been quite satisfied to take the ruling of the head of the Department as to whether or not he had committed breaches of the regulations in taking the action he had done. He had been suspended five weeks already, and was necessarily involved in a further term—a severe punishment in itself. No doubt the delay was to some extent unavoidable, but it also savoured to some extent of persecution. He contended that the first words of the declaration, on which the Department relied, were general words—of general application to postal packets, or other matters specifically referred to. This opinion he had had backed up by legal advice. There was no penalty attached to breach of trust mentioned in declaration, and he contended the latter should be read in conjunction with the regulation; without that it was useless. Apparently he had broken Rule 44, but not knowingly or wilfully. The regulations were issued and read in a haphazard fashion, and it was difficult to be conversant with so many. Mr. Morris's special instructions to him had reference to a leakage of information that had taken place at the time Mr. Morris gave those instructions. They were special in relation to a staff matter. Witness was not aware his instructions were meant to apply to such cases as the present. He admitted that apparently he had broken the regulations,