

(To the Board): His fellow-officers did not know at that time that he had made a communication to Mr. Fisher. Their first knowledge was after the publication of the newspaper report of the debate in the House—the debate on the Imprest Supply Bill. It was at witness's suggestion that his fellow-officers were taken to make affidavit. He had personally written out the telegram, had shown it to Larcombe, and had got the consent of Larcombe and the others to it. He had written out the telegram on his own motion, and consulted the others afterwards. Larcombe was the only man who knew the exact wording. He had told the others he thought it absolutely necessary to send the telegram, considering the then state of affairs, so that they should have a further inquiry.

RICHARD BRABAZON MORRIS, Chief Clerk of C.P.O., Christchurch, sworn.

*Witness* (To Mr. Rose): The officers concerned in this inquiry had all worked in his Department. He invariably pointed out to every officer who worked under him that the duties were of a confidential nature. He was clear that he had told the four officers this. He knew they had all signed the book of regulations. Previous to this matter he had had absolute confidence in them.

Mr. Stringer appeared for the Post and Telegraph Department.

Charge No. 6 against J. Willis: "That in the month of December, 1904, while discussing with Mr. F. M. B. Fisher, at Christchurch, a case then pending in the Supreme Court, you informed him that to your knowledge as Post officer, Captain Seddon had received a payment to which he was not entitled, meaning thereby the alleged payment of £70 for reorganizing Defence Stores."

This had been denied by Willis, and allowed to stand over. The Post and Telegraph Department, by Mr. Stringer, now signified that it was their wish to withdraw the charge.

WILLIAM JOHN LARCOMBE SWORN.

Charge read. Declaration signed by Mr. Larcombe and Regulations 1 and 44, also signed by Mr. Larcombe, were put in. Mr. Larcombe's defence was also put in. He would adhere to this subject to some explanations he would give later on—that is, he admitted all four charges, subject to explanation.

*Witness* (to Mr. Joynt): He had been twenty-two years in the service. Before he took part in this giving of information, the charges had been previously made in the House by Mr. Fisher. He had been waited upon by Mr. Fisher at his (witness's) private house. Mr. Fisher was accompanied by Mr. Taylor and Mr. Willis. Previous to this the idea of making any statement had never entered his mind. Practically the statements made then were made on the spur of the moment. Mr. Fisher said he had derived some information from Willis in connection with the charges made in the House, and he knew that witness was in possession of that information also; and he asked witness whether the Anderson voucher had anything to do with the Seddon voucher. He (witness) told Mr. Fisher it had not, and that he was prepared to make this statement before any competent tribunal. He had told Mr. Fisher that there was a voucher payable to Captain Seddon. This was all that passed at the interview. He was not aware that he had committed a breach of the regulations—the matter was then public property. In any case, he had had no time to look into the matter. He was now thirty-eight years of age, married, with one child; there was not a single black mark against him in the whole of his twenty-two years of service. He had always been employed in the public service, and knew nothing else.

(To Mr. Stringer): He did not know, prior to Mr. Fisher and Mr. Taylor calling upon him, that Willis had given them any information. He did not know where they got their information from. He knew this on Monday, after the charges were made in the House, when Mr. Fisher called upon him, not before. Probably for a month or two after they first saw the voucher, they discussed it occasionally amongst themselves. "Reorganize" had become a "gag" term. Apart from this he had not discussed the voucher with Willis. The only other person to whom he had mentioned the matter was his wife. He was not in the habit of communicating office matters to his wife. To the best of his belief, he first saw the voucher in the early part of the year 1904—during the first six months. The voucher was interesting because of Captain Seddon being well known, and he had happened to mention it to his wife when he went home to tea. The information he gave his wife was: That Captain Seddon had received a payment of £70-odd for reorganizing Defence Stores that day. He knew by the voucher that Captain Seddon was in Christchurch—not otherwise.

(To the Board): It was part of his duties to clear the basket in the Chief Postmaster's room, and take it into the Chief Clerk's room. He drew Willis's attention to the voucher because he had been in the Volunteer corps, and it would therefore interest him. Willis and witness had decided that Captain Seddon must have made a special trip to get this money. He believed it had been mentioned in the papers at the time that Captain Seddon was in Christchurch then. He had not seen Captain Seddon, but concluded he had been in Christchurch because the voucher was receipted on that date. The voucher was receipted when he saw it. He did not know Captain Seddon. The voucher was receipted on the day he mentioned it to his wife. He would not swear it was dated; he believed this was the case, because it was in the basket. As far as he knew, this was a perfect and correct voucher. He would swear it was a complete voucher. He would not swear it was stamped, he would not swear to all the stamps being on it; he would swear it was not a bogus voucher. He did not know Captain Seddon's signature. There was no cheque accompanying the voucher, only the bare voucher receipted. He would take it upon himself to swear it was not a bogus voucher. If it were a hoax, the joke would be played upon the Chief Postmaster. He cleared the basket two or three times a day, and therefore assumed that the voucher had left the hands of the Postmaster within an hour or two. Neither he nor his wife could fix the date of the voucher. He had stated to the Auditor-General that it was twelve or eighteen months ago. The voucher was payable to Captain Seddon; he would not swear to the signature on it. He would swear that he had handled a voucher payable to Captain