

Seddon for reorganizing Defence Stores. There may have been initials before the name "Seddon," he could not swear to that exactly. To the best of his memory it was "Captain R. J. S. Seddon." He had sworn already that it was under £100. He had told his wife it was over £70. His present belief was that the amount was between £70 and £80. He had had no object in saying to the Auditor-General that the amount was under £100, except to ascertain the truth; they wanted to see all the Christchurch vouchers. They had all believed the voucher to be over £70, but could not fix the exact amount nor the exact date. Previous to seeing Mr. Fisher, he had not discussed the matter, except on the Monday morning after the charges were made in the House. He had made the affidavit at Willis's suggestion, in Mr. Salter's office. The charge had already been made in the House then. He gave the affidavit to prove what he had stated; he knew the Government were denying it. He did not know what Mr. Fisher intended to do with the affidavit. The affidavits were given conditionally: they were not to be used unless the Government would indemnify the Civil servants. That was the understanding—although he did not definitely make this arrangement himself—between Willis and himself. Afterwards he had consented to the removal of those conditions. Willis suggested sending the telegram, and asked witness to sign it. He was not sure that the telegram quoted was the one he signed; Willis may have altered slightly what he had signed. There was no intention that it should be made public. Mr. Willis had asked witness to join in sending the telegram, and witness had signed such a telegram on the back. Willis's suggestion was the only one he knew *in re* affidavits. He had done this to oblige Willis. Willis did not say the affidavits were being made out at the request of Mr. Fisher. He did not realise at the time that it was not a proper thing to do to tell his wife about a voucher; he realised that now. He was perfectly satisfied the matter had not been disclosed by his wife. He did not think Captain Seddon capable of reorganizing Defence Stores; otherwise, there was nothing peculiar to him about the voucher. He did not think it possible the voucher would be a hoax. He knew he had handled a voucher. Politics were not much discussed in the office. His reason for showing the voucher to Willis was that Willis was in the Volunteer corps and was therefore interested in it. He knew nothing about Willis's political feelings. He had seen the voucher prior to the Seddon-Taylor case. Vouchers are addressed to the Chief Postmaster, and usually opened by the Chief Clerk. Treasury vouchers are opened by the clerk in the Chief Postmaster's room. The voucher would go through several hands. He did not think it possible for the voucher to be a hoax. He could not account for its non-appearance. There were forty or fifty members of the staff, and they could all go into Mr. McBeth's room. He had taken the voucher from the basket and had put it on West's table. He thought Mr. West was absent from the room at the time. He did not see the voucher after putting it on West's table. He presumed it was posted to Wellington.

THOMAS WALTER WEST SWORN:—

Charges read.

All four charges admitted subject to explanation. He had not delivered the affidavits himself, but had "caused" them to be delivered.

Declaration and Regulations 1 and 44 (signed by West) put in.

*Witness.*] He was a clerk in the Christchurch Post-office, and the greater part of the time he had been clerk to the Postmaster. His duties concerned vouchers for the most part. He had a very vivid recollection of this particular voucher. To the best of his belief the date was early in the year 1904—within the first six months of the year. He had no means of fixing the date. He had first discussed this voucher with Messrs. Larcombe and Willis. He had seen and examined the voucher at that time, it was then on his table he believed. To the best of his belief it was a genuine voucher, payable to Captain R. J. S. Seddon. As far as he could trust his memory, he would swear that there was a signature to it. He did not then know Mr. Seddon's signature. The voucher would be returned to the Treasury Department. It would be entered by him in the record-book, and returned by him if he were Chief Postmaster's clerk at the time. He could not swear that this was the case then; he could not say that he actually handled the voucher, but it was lying on the desk before him. He had no distinct recollection of picking it up. He believed it was a genuine voucher. It was not possible for any one in the office to perpetrate a hoax, because there were ten or fifteen stamps on every voucher. He would not swear these stamps were on it, but he would swear that he would have noticed their omission. He did not think it possible he could be deceived. He saw a signature, he would not swear whose, nor to any particular stamp. So far as he knew, the signature might have been a forgery. If it had been a "fake" voucher there would have been no stamp. As he had said, he would not swear he did see the stamps, but he would swear that he would have noticed their omission. He had read "Reorganization of Defence Stores," and that it was payable to "Captain R. J. S. Seddon." He would swear absolutely to the latter words, on the top of the voucher. He could not swear absolutely to the amount. To the best of his belief it was a charge against the Defence vote. He said it was impossible for any one in the office to "fake" a voucher. Mr. Fisher had waited upon him on the 31st July, with Mr. Willis and Mr. Taylor, at his (witness's) private house. Mr. Fisher already had information *re* the voucher. This was after Mr. Fisher had referred to the matter in the House. That was the first communication he had had with Mr. Fisher. Mr. Fisher said he knew that witness was aware of certain facts *re* voucher, and asked if he (witness) would tell the truth about these if necessary. Witness said he would. He told them he had seen the voucher in the Postmaster's room. No written record was taken of this interview. He had told Mr. Fisher all he could remember about this voucher. He had signed the affidavit, and caused it to be forwarded to Mr. Fisher, at the instance of Mr. Willis. This was after Mr. Fisher had referred to the matter in the House. He could not say with certainty whether or not he kept a copy of the affidavit. He had signed a duplicate for transmission to Mr. Taylor. This was what the second affidavit was for, although, as a matter of fact, he did not know at the time that the duplicate was for Mr. Taylor; he only knew one was going to Mr. Fisher.