

voucher?—Apparently it has—it cannot be anything else, because the officials stated that the services were not performed. At the time I handled the voucher I did not know there was anything fraudulent or improper about it, otherwise my search would have been different.

56. I understood you to say that it was improper or next to fraudulent?—No, sir. I thought it was a shady transaction. I would like to explain why I thought so: the peculiar fact was that it was for services rendered in Wellington, and it seemed a strange thing that the voucher should be sent to Christchurch at all.

57. Then, why did you not inform your superior officer?—Well, my superior officer, Mr. McBeth, I considered would be absolutely the last man in the world to handle such a thing as that, and I also thought of this fact—and I feel pretty satisfied now—that if I had informed my superior officer that I considered a payment going through our office was improper, fraudulent, or irregular, I should have been put out in the street, and should not have had the chance of an inquiry.

58. Do you not think it would have been your duty to call the attention to it, at all events, of those above you?—You must remember, at the time I saw this voucher I did not know there was anything improper about it except the fact that, in my opinion, Captain Seddon was not a competent person to perform the services.

59. Did you and Mr. Larcombe read the contents of the voucher carefully?—Certainly. I held it for five or six minutes in my own hands before the window.

60. Did any of you take a copy of it?—No.

61. Or any memorandum of it?—No.

62. Is it possible that you are mistaken as to the amount and payee?—No, it is impossible that we could be mistaken so far as the name of the payee is concerned. As far as the date is concerned, I cannot fix actually the date, or I cannot fix the actual amount except that it is for £70-odd.

63. You say you could not have been mistaken after looking at it so carefully for several minutes?—I could not be mistaken.

64. Did neither of those details fix themselves on your mind if you thought it was irregular?—The details that fixed themselves on my mind were as I have stated—the fact that it was payable to Captain R. J. S. Seddon, that it was for reorganization of Defence Stores at Wellington, and that it was payable at Christchurch.

65. If you looked at it so carefully, why could you not give some further details before the Auditor-General?—I gave all the details to the Auditor-General that I am mentioning now.

66. Well, after looking at it for several minutes you do not seem to recollect anything further than that there was a voucher some time last year?—I recollect everything but the figures, and any student of history will tell you that figures and dates are the hardest things for any man to remember.

67. When and where did you first mention the voucher business to Mr. Fisher?—So far as my recollection of the matter goes, I mentioned it first to Captain Fisher, I should think, immediately after this session opened, but apparently, from what I can gather from Captain Fisher, I dropped a hint to him or led him to believe that there was something of the sort a considerable time before that, but I have no recollection of it. Captain Fisher, in the House, stated that I gave his information with reference to this payment, or I had said it was so. He put it this way: he said that there was an improper payment made to Captain Seddon, and I said "Yes, that is so; I knew of one." He said it was during the time he was captain of the Civil Service Rifles in Christchurch and I was lieutenant, and it was during the time a case was pending in the Supreme Court. Captain Fisher's recollection must be faulty, because he left the Civil Service Rifles in October, 1903, and the Seddon-Taylor case was in November, 1904, if I remember rightly, and I left the Civil Service Rifles in October, 1904.

68. Did you not mention this matter to Mr. Fisher before he was elected to the House?—No, not so far as I can remember. I never mentioned the payment to Captain Fisher before, although he says that I dropped a hint to him or apparently gave him some idea that I knew of some voucher.

69. Was there any special reason for telling Mr. Fisher in preference to telling an officer of the Department?—Yes, because, as far as I knew, Captain Fisher at that time was a member of the House of Representatives, and also he was a personal friend of mine, and I knew that he would not use information that he got in that way to my disadvantage.

70. And do I understand you to say that it was not correct Mr. Fisher stating that you had told him this matter previous to the case you referred to occurring in Christchurch?—As far as my recollection goes, it is not correct. If he got a hint from me it must have been in a very general fashion. I knew Captain Fisher very well, and at that time he was not in the House of Representatives, and it may be I dropped a hint to him.

71. Do you remember what you said?—No. I recollect what I told him at the time I gave him the whole thing.

72. Has there been any charge made against you in the Department for divulging this to Mr. Fisher?—Yes, there has been. I am at present under suspension for a breach of the regulations for having supplied Captain Fisher with certain information, which information I was asked not to put on record by Mr. Warburton, because it was against me.

73. Have you admitted it?—I have admitted the first series of charges, and I have denied the further charge with reference to my having given information to Captain Fisher in reference to this amount during the time that a certain case was pending in Christchurch; the others I have admitted.

74. Have you been notified that the Civil Service Board is to hold an inquiry into your alleged breach of the regulations?—No.

75. Only been suspended?—Only been suspended, and given a statement to the effect that I have broken certain regulations under the Civil Service Act of 1866.