

who was unknown to me except by repute, and told him I thought he was entitled to the distinction, and that I would do all I could for him. All subsequent proceedings were of a public nature, such as deputations of Auckland members interviewing the Defence Minister (the Hon. Mr. T. Thompson) and the Right Hon. the Premier (Mr. R. J. Seddon). I wish to accentuate my disclaimer against the imputation of political partisanship that has been set up in connection with this case by certain newspapers in the colony, as both Mr. Wrigg and the gentleman who spoke to me about the Cross distinction hold political opinions contrary to my own. I also wish to state that the conduct of Captain Bower in publishing a letter of mine without my consent, and which letter was never intended for him, is both discreditable and dishonourable, and I leave his conduct to the consideration of all persons who will be prepared to take an impartial view of the matter.

3. *Mr. Hutchison.*] With reference to that letter dated the 14th October, Mr. Jennings, do you recognise this to be a copy?—That is not a copy; that is my handwriting.

4. That is a copy, a photographed copy; you can recognise it, I suppose. The letter is a copy of one which Captain Bower was to send to either the Chairman or myself?—That is a copy of the letter I wrote to Mr. Wrigg. I will put that in as evidence, Mr. Chairman.

*The Chairman:* If you wish to put that in as evidence I will ask the Clerk to read it.

The Clerk then read the letter, dated the 14th October, 1897. [Exhibit No. 27.]

5. *Mr. Hutchison.*] Are the letters you refer to as having seen, before you made up your mind to support the claim, those which have been printed in a parliamentary paper?—Yes, those are the letters.

6. *Mr. Wilford.*] You interested yourself, then, Mr. Jennings, for the purpose of satisfying yourself in your own mind whether the claim was a genuine one or not?—Certainly.

7. And before supporting Mr. Wrigg's claim in the way that you say you have done you satisfied yourself not by the statement from him, but from other outside evidence?—Exactly. I wrote to that gentleman whom I have spoken of, in Auckland, and who asked me to read the opinions, asking if I could make use of his name. I have no doubt that he will allow me to do so.

8. Have you given the information outside, in reference to certain correspondence that has been put before the Committee, for publication?—No; I knew nothing about it until I saw it in the *New Zealand Herald*, the *Otago Daily Times*, and the *Canterbury Press*. That is the first intimation that I had of all this correspondence and my own letter being published with it.

9. Have you had any reason to doubt since you took this step that such was an improper step?—None whatever. I have been acting-lieutenant myself, and, having served eighteen years as a Volunteer in the early days, I know the feeling of anxiety and alarm which existed in those days, and which made me perhaps a little more zealous on Mr. Wrigg's behalf, and also knowing the occurrence of the naval, military, and volunteer land-claims frequently cropping up. It is so often the case that a number of soldiers will not bother themselves at the time about honours or land-claims. They are as a rule very careless, and then some time afterwards they send in their claims. I thought Mr. Wrigg did not bother himself much about it, and then made an application; and I thought he was deserving of it, especially after reading the military opinions.

10. *Mr. Moore.*] Before you took the matter up, Mr. Jennings, you say from the documentary evidence placed before you you were satisfied that Mr. Wrigg was a person entitled to the Cross?—Yes, after reading the evidence, particularly Captain Bower's evidence.

11. In your statement you stated that you relied in a great measure on the recommendation in the letter from Captain Bower?—I may here just state the reason why. He states he was the adjutant in the district at the time, and being conversant with the circumstances I thought strongly that he knew the whole position, and I attached a great deal of weight to what he wrote.

12. In your statement you say Captain Bower has now repudiated his former recommendation?—I have heard that he has done so.

13. In the event of his having done so, would that cause you to alter your opinion, seeing that you based your first opinion on his recommendation?—Now that I have given great attention to the matter, and seeing the position, I am quite satisfied that if Mr. Wrigg and Trooper McDonald conveyed those despatches through the hostile country it was an act a good many men would not care about doing, seeing that Bennett White and the mailman were killed the day before they carried the despatches.

14. You are basing your claim on the evidence?—Yes.

15. You consider that the other documentary evidence you had before you at the time, apart from Captain Bower's, would still be sufficient to justify you in having taken the step you have taken?—Yes. There is Captain Morrow's statement; that gentleman has been a Volunteer for forty years, and knew the alarm that existed in Auckland in those early days. Thirty-five years ago we thought it dangerous to go out to Drury.

16. Was the documentary evidence you had placed before you from persons on the spot at the time?—I endeavoured to get a copy of that evidence. Captain Bower's was the particular statement, and a Mr. George Leaning, who is now in Auckland.

17. And was on the spot at the time?—Yes; and Captain Gwynneth.

18. *The Chairman.*] You say you introduced a deputation to the Minister of Defence *re* the conferring of the New Zealand Cross on Mr. Wrigg?—Yes.

19. Who formed that deputation?—Hon. Major Harris, Hon. W. Kelly, Mr. Holland, and myself. Then, after that, there was a deputation of ten or twelve Auckland members who interviewed the Premier in regard to the Wrigg decoration as to why there was delay in the presentation.

20. Do you recollect who introduced that deputation to the Premier?—The Hon. W. McCullough.

21. Were you one of the deputation?—Yes.

22. Do you recollect the others?—I think Hon. W. Swanson, Mr. Crowther, Hon. W. McCullough, Mr. Holland, and the other names I cannot bring to my recollection, but there were quite ten.