

communication with the Prime Minister, and I do not think I communicated at all with Mr. Poynton. It seemed to me that the only function I was discharging was attempting to remove an objection to the loan based on formalities which I thought, looking at the circumstances, should be removed as soon as possible.

5. *Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] At that time were you a member of the Ministry?—I was Attorney-General and Minister of Justice.

6. Did you at any time, on behalf of the Remuera Road Board, make any representations to the State-guaranteed Advances Board asking them to consider a loan or urge them to give facilities for granting a loan?—I had no communication whatever with them. I intervened in this matter in no way. I used no influence of any kind, nor did I desire to.

7. You were interviewed as a Minister of the Crown?—Yes, and I sent the telegram the day I arrived in Auckland. I arrived in Auckland, I think, about the 1st November.

8. In that telegram you said, "Kindly let me have a reply as early as you can, which I may use." What did you mean by that?—I told those persons present at the interview that I would communicate the reply I got. You are aware that frequently one Minister communicates with another and he gets a confidential reply or a reply in such terms which could not be communicated, and I wanted the reply framed in such a way that I could give it to those people, so that the strikers would understand that there was nothing in the shape of concealment between the Remuera Road Board and the Advances Board.

9. That telegram was not sent for political purposes?—The best answer to that is this: that telegram and my connection with the matter were never referred to right through the election which ensued. It was not referred to at any meeting in my support throughout the campaign, and the idea that it would be used for the purpose of promoting my candidature was not thought of.

10. If the statement was made in the House, in reply to an interjection by a member, that this payment was authorized three days before the election, and when the district was asked for the reply was "Ask Sir John Findlay," can you make any further statement on the point?—No. I apprehend that refers to some interjection of Mr. Allen's, and I do not complain at all of the construction which apparently he put upon the telegram. He did not know the special circumstances—he did not know what I have stated just now—and quite possibly a hurried perusal of the telegram would justify the apparent suspicion he had about the matter; but I have stated the facts, and I think, in view of those facts, I have given an answer to the question put to me.

11. Did you ever during your term of office make any representation to a member of the Board for a loan on behalf of a public body or any one?—Never. I felt it was my duty as a Minister to communicate what happened at that deputation to you as Minister of Finance. The words in that telegram meant that I was going to use whatever reply I got—that I was going to communicate it to those people. It was not used in any other way, either on the platform, in the Press, or elsewhere.

12. In that telegram to me application was made for an advance of £10,000. Was that granted or refused by me?—It was refused. Your answer shows you refused it.

13. In your telegram you say, "If the whole loan cannot be authorized at present, £10,000 is urgently needed to carry on the work in hand, and that immediately contemplated"?—Yes. They said, "Do not let the work be stopped on Monday. All these men believe they will be put on. Get us enough of the loan-money at least to start the work and carry it on until whatever difficulties there are in regard to the form of the debentures can be removed."

14. *Mr. Lee.*] In asking, Sir John, for the £10,000 mentioned in your telegram, were you asking that as an advance from the Advances Board or from the Treasury?—Frankly, I do not know. I did not appreciate the distinction. I thought the Department advanced on account of a loan which I understood had been approved by the Board.

15. You were aware at that time that the technical difficulties had not been got over by the Board—that matters had not been settled?—Yes. The Chairman of the Road Board represented that those technical difficulties were mere red-tape difficulties and of no substance. There was some difficulty as to the formalities.

16. But you had come to the conclusion that they were difficulties which should be got over?—I did not know what they were. I could not pass any judgment upon the reasonableness or otherwise of them. I was told there was nothing in the objections.

17. You sent that telegram in your capacity as a Minister of the Crown?—Yes.

18. Would you suggest that the Board should advance £10,000 until all the technical difficulties had been got over?—I think if £10,000 could have been safely advanced to relieve the tension then existing, it would have been very wise to do it, assuming the security was good, and assuming the difficulties were only red-tape difficulties. I think, as a body of business men, the Board might very well have advanced £10,000 to relieve the position.

19. Who was the member for the district at that time, do you remember?—Mr. Lawry. He did not wait upon me as a member of the deputation.

20. When you received the reply from Sir Joseph Ward, what did you do?—I think a copy of the reply was sent by my secretary to the Chairman. I know Mr. Semple called upon me personally either that day or the next day, and I assured him there was no want of good faith on the part of the Board. They were anxious to get the money and start the men at work, who were suspicious of the *bona fides* of the Board.

21. Was there any account of this in the newspapers after you received the reply?—I have not looked, so I do not know whether there was or was not. I have not had much time lately to look into the matter, and I did not even look up the telegram I sent.

22. As you told us, you had no intention in any way of getting this money from the Board in order to assist you in your political campaign?—None.