

10. I understand you to say that you could not have obtained the money at that time?—No.

11. What would have been the effect on the people in your district if you had not been able to obtain the money for water and drainage purposes?—The effect would have been a serious one—loss of life. That is the opinion of the District Health Officer. The system had been to drain the sewage into gullies, and these were a foot deep with stinking sewage. They had to be removed, and we were urged by the Health Department to do something, and we did it. That has been the salvation of Remuera.

12. When you were summoned to attend here by the Chairman of this Committee, you advised him that you were not able to come on account of illness?—Yes.

13. Were you ill?—Yes. When I received the wire from Mr. Hine I was suffering from influenza, and my eyes were running with water. I also had had a touch of bronchitis. I received the wire from Mr. Hine about 10 o'clock on the 18th October. I conferred with the Chairman of the Board, and I wired to Mr. Hine asking him to put the date off, and I received a wire to say that it was postponed till a later date. On account of the state I was in I did not care to risk crossing the slip on the line.

14. Had you any reason for desiring to remain away from the Committee?—None at all, sir. When I read the reports in the papers I desired to come.

15. Do you know Mr. Wilson, engineer for some local bodies?—Yes.

16. What local bodies is he engineer for?—He has been turned out of most of them. I think he is in the Remuera Board now. He was with me in the Waitemata County Council once.

17. Did you take part in the last general election?—Yes, at the eleventh hour I took part in it.

18. Were you a member of Sir John Findlay's committee?—No, I was not. I was presumed to be, but I never attended a committee meeting.

19. I understand you addressed the men who were working in Remuera?—Yes.

20. And you gave them a holiday?—Yes, that is so; I gave them a holiday.

21. What was your reason for giving them a holiday?—At that time I did not know I was falling into a trap. I received a communication from the waterworks foreman—a man named Wilson—to go up and address these men. I did not know what the men belonged to, and after three or four consultations I went up about 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning. I addressed them on different things, and during that time it came down to rain in torrents. They were lined up round the pit, and when I had finished we walked up to the top. Wilkins then said, "What about working to-day?" and I said, "It is not very humane to keep them there wet to the skin—give them a holiday." I never interfered with the foreman at all.

22. Did you make any statement to the men when addressing them that you proposed to give them a holiday on pay?—No, nothing of the kind.

23. Did you tell the men that at any time?—No. In the course of my remarks I made no reference to a holiday. When the men were standing there wet to the skin I thought, of course, that they were men and not dogs, and it was the most humane thing to do to give them a holiday. It was about 12 or half past then.

24. Did you tell Mr. Wilson, the engineer, at his office, in reply to a question as to who was to pay for the men, that you assumed Sir John Findlay would pay?—I had no authority from Sir John Findlay to say so, and I give an emphatic denial to any statement that I had any conversation with Wilson on that point. I have been at loggerheads with Wilson for probably twelve months past. Several matters took place on the Board between us, and I tabled a motion to put him off the Board, and he has left no stone unturned to damage me for it.

25. Did you have any authority from Sir John Findlay or any one on his behalf to pay the men at Remuera?—Absolutely not.

26. Did you know of two men at your works who were engaged to do canvassing at that election?—I do not know of their names, and I knew nothing of the matter until I read it in the Press as the outcome of this inquiry.

27. As a matter of fact, have you paid any of those men their wages outside of the Board?—No, sir, I have not.

28. By whom were their wages for the day referred to paid?—I understand they were paid by the Remuera Road Board.

29. Was there any delay in connection with the payment of the men?—I do not know. My recollection of the matter is this: on the Friday afterwards this same man came to me again and said, "What about the payment for the men?" and I said, "That is not a matter I am concerned with." He said, "Wilkins is going to pay them." I said, "I do not know whether that is right," and he came back to me with a story and said, "If I am asked the question, all I can say is that I have paid them; it is an act of grace to pay them, because the men were wet to the skin." The waterworks foreman said that.

30. I understand there was a strike of the workers engaged by the Remuera Road Board?—There was a strike of the general labourers of Auckland, and sympathy extended amongst the men to our works, and the Federation of Labour called out our men as well.

31. Did you apply to the State-guaranteed Advances Board for an advance of £10,000?—Might I explain the position? These works were absolutely a matter of urgency. We feared that if we had another hot summer the result would be disastrous. I had arranged with the Bank of New Zealand for an overdraft, and I have all the correspondence here. With the State-guaranteed Advances Department there was delay in getting the money. Mr. Poynton, who was the Superintendent, was particular over red-tape, and he wanted all sorts of preliminaries fixed up. In order to get on with the work I hypothecated a loan out of the General Account, and we were paying the men out of the General Account when the strike came. The strike came as a godsend, because in any case we should have had to dismiss the men. We had not obtained the money from the Government. The legal steps were being taken with the Department, and I