

56. You used the words "turned out"?—Well, I withdraw that word and say "dropped him."

57. Who has dropped him?—The Waitemata County Council dropped him, and I wished to drop him at Remuera, on account of inactivity.

58. I will deal with Waitemata: in what way did you drop him?—In connection with Waitemata, he was asked to resign, and he resigned at the end of the year.

59. You know Wilkins?—Yes, I know about him as a foreman. I know who is Wilkins's right-hand man.

60. Is he a credible man in what he states?—As far as I know. I know nothing whatever about him beyond the fact that he was brought to us as foreman and put on. I can say nothing against him, or nothing about him. He seems a very decent and honourable man.

61. He asked you to address the men?—A messenger came to say that "Mr. Wilkins thinks you should certainly come up and address the men working on the reservoir-pit."

62. That is the first you heard of addressing the men?—Yes.

63. I suppose it seems strange to you that you should be asked to go up and address the men?—Yes, it did at the time, but I see it all now.

64. Did the messenger convey to you on what topics you were to address the men?—No, simply to go up and address the men.

65. You had no idea what subjects you were to address them on?—No. They took me up there in a cart, and I had no lines of argument to follow out.

66. Mr. Wilkins was not particularly well known to you?—I knew him as foreman of the works.

67. And then without any idea as to what abstract question you were going to address the men on, you went up for the purpose of making some address?—Yes, making some address. Of course, it was on behalf of the Government to provide us with money.

68. You thought it would be in that direction?—Yes.

69. What led you to think that was what you were wanted to address the men on?—Because it is a measure I admired.

70. You say you were asked to address the men on no subject whatever: what led you to believe it was on that subject particularly—it might have been to prevent them striking?—Oh, no. Mr. Wilkins knew I was a partisan of Sir John Findlay's at the time, and I suppose his idea was to get me up there to speak on behalf of Sir John Findlay.

71. You came to the conclusion that you were going to address the men on behalf of Sir John Findlay before you left?—Well, the idea was to simply rely on the Government side. As far as I recollect I do not think I referred to Sir John Findlay at all.

72. I am not speaking of the time when you were up addressing the men, but of the time when the message was conveyed to you and you intended to address the men. What subject did you intend to address them on?—Not any particular subject.

73. On politics?—On the financial standpoint.

74. You went up and addressed those men?—Yes.

75. Can you fix the time definitely in any way as to when you concluded your address?—No, I cannot. It is a long time ago, but I think it must have been 11 or 12 o'clock.

76. You said just now that it was 12 or 12.30 o'clock?—Yes, it was between 11 and 12. It was during the morning.

77. Might you have concluded the address as early as 10.30 o'clock?—I do not think so. I was late leaving the house that morning.

78. Then you say you put before the men, I understand, the beneficial effects of this particular statute under which the local bodies were able to borrow money?—Yes. I said that the Government may not be a perfect one, but they had given us these facilities to carry on the public works and to employ a lot of men, and I admired them in that respect.

79. And you suggested to these men, I take it, to support the then Government?—Well, the inference was there from my remarks.

80. That was the point of your speech, was it not?—I did not acclaim any particular candidate—I spoke generally.

81. Was not the burden of your speech to induce those men to support the then Government?—Yes, it was. That was my object in going up there.

82. Conversely, did you suggest to the men that if they did not support the then Government, the next Government would repeal or do away with this measure?—Yes, I did. I said Mr. Massey had always stated he was against borrowing, and he would cut down the advances to local bodies, which I did not think in a young country would be beneficial to works. The primary works in a young country must be the basis of population and settlement.

83. That is your surmise of the policy?—Yes. I might say that Mr. Massey is a friend of mine. I did not attack him, but his policy.

84. That being so, did you think it would influence these men if some of this loan-money was supplied shortly before the election took place?—No, it would have no influence whatever, because I carried out the works on the General Fund. The cessation was for about a fortnight, and the election took place some weeks after. The working-man does not care where the money comes from.

85. But for that £10,000 coming before the election the works would have ceased?—Yes, if the Government had not assured us as soon as legal steps were satisfactory that they would give us the money, the natural consequence would have been that we should have had to comply with the law. If we had not that money or we had no more balance of overdraft, we should have had to stop work. That was put pretty clearly to the strike leaders.

86. That is why you urged the lending Department to send you £10,000 on account?—No, the reason I urged the Department to do that was to have the work prosecuted in the interests of public health. I anticipated a dry summer. The thing uppermost in my mind was the importance of the work being carried on.