

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

· MONDAY, 7th OCTOBER, 1872.

W. H. HARRISON, Esq., a Member of the House of Representatives for the Grey Valley District, was in attendance, and on being sworn was examined as follows:—

Mr. Harrison.

7th Oct., 1872.

1. *The Chairman.*] You are here to give evidence with regard to a certain interview which took place between you and Mr. Holt, the purport of which was communicated by you to the Speaker. Before putting any questions to you, perhaps you would prefer making a statement of what took place on the occasion referred to?—On Monday morning last, Mr. Holt, Mr. Brogden's secretary, called at my house to see me, before I was up. As near as I can form an opinion, this would be about half-past nine o'clock. I came down to the Government Buildings about half-past ten. After I left home, Mr. Holt called at my house again. I met him in the lobby of the House at about ten minutes to eleven the same day. He stated that he had been looking for me, as he wished to see me. I told him I was going down his way to see some experiments that were to be made with a flax machine, and would walk down with him. After talking upon some general subjects, he said that it had occurred to them, —meaning, as I understood, the firm of Brogden and Sons—that arrangements might be made for securing my services in furtherance of some of their undertakings; such as the water supply scheme, construction of railways, and such other works as they might bring forward. I gave him to understand that I saw no objection to make some arrangements with them. By this time we had reached the reclaimed ground. I agreed to go down during the day to see him about it. I told him that I was then going to Mills' foundry, but that I would call and see him later in the day. He said he had an engagement with Mr. Tribe, a Member of the House of Representatives, at two o'clock, and after some further consideration I arranged to call at his office between three and four o'clock, and that, as it might be too late to finish our conversation there, it was agreed he would come and dine with me, and we would finish it then. I then proceeded on to Mills' foundry, where I saw Mr. Tribe, who told me he had an engagement with Mr. Holt, at two o'clock, with regard to business connected with Mr. Brogden's firm. I returned to the Government Buildings about half-past two, and sent word home to Mrs. Harrison, by one of the House messengers, that Mr. Holt and I would be to dinner that afternoon. I went down to Brogden's office about twenty minutes or half-past three o'clock. Mr. Tribe was then there. He left in a few minutes. Mr. Holt and I resumed the conversation we had begun in the morning. He told me that what was wanted was, that I should write certain articles for publication, explaining generally and advocating such works as might be contemplated by the firm, with a view of having them ventilated. I stated that my own opinion was in favour of the original proposal of Messrs. Brogden to construct railways in New Zealand, but that, as editor of the *Independent*, I could not recommend such in that journal until after the Session. I further told him, that as the newspaper was looked upon as the organ of a certain political party, I did not feel at liberty to express my own individual opinions upon such matters, because they might be regarded as the opinions of the party. I further stated to him that I believed I could obtain the publication of my articles upon these subjects in most of the newspapers published in the Colony. In regard to my declining to publish these articles in the *Independent*, I stated that I had no option in the matter. I stated that I could not possibly consent to do anything which might compromise the party with which I was connected, and which the paper of which I was editor supported, but if I had not been a Member of the House the thing would be different. Mr. Holt replied, "It is because you are a Member that your services will be useful." I then said, that under no circumstances would I agree to any arrangements which might fetter my action as a Member of the House; to which Mr. Holt said, "We have no desire to control your vote in any way, but we thought you might use your influence to prevent any motion being brought forward by the Opposition this Session which might lead to a change of Government." His exact words, as near as I can recollect, were, "You have considerable influence with Vogel, and you can persuade him not to bring any vote against the Government this year." He (Mr. Holt) proceeded to say: "Hang it, man, you have had your turn; let them have their innings. We want no further change to take place this Session. Mr. Brogden," he said "had kept aloof from party politics during the late debate; but now that they had got a Government that they could work with, they were anxious that they should remain in power this Session." Some conversation then ensued with respect to proposals I stated I had heard Brogden had made to the Government with regard to the construction of railways. When the conversation assumed this phase, I thought that he had no idea of the gravity of the proposal, and said that the conversation should now be dropped. I simply regarded Mr. Holt in the matter as the representative of Messrs. Brogden. The conversation was not again referred to, nor have I had any opportunity of conversing with Mr. Holt since we parted on the Monday evening. At the time I left Mr. Holt, I did not realize the gravity of the proposal made to me; and it was only after certain other facts had come to my knowledge, that I felt that an attempt had been made to influence me as a Member improperly. I was strengthened in this opinion by what fell from Mr. Tribe, to whom I told in general terms what had taken place. I said to him, "I suppose that something of the sort was suggested to you." He said, "Yes, something of the same sort." I wish to make one statement which I have omitted from the consecutive narrative: I told Mr. Holt that I thought Mr. Brogden was foolish in taking up the position he did; that I thought he was more likely to receive fair treatment from Mr. Vogel, who had brought him out, than with a Ministry which I thought was not favourable to the Public Works policy. To which Mr. Holt replied, that Vogel had not behaved well, that he had