

place at Te Aotea are not in any sense private telegrams. It was of just as much importance to have Te Ngakau in the House as to have had Rewi in the Council. We hoped to have a polling-place at Te Aotea, so as to induce the Natives to break up their isolation, and come in to vote, and take an interest in the election. We were so far successful that Rewi went down. The idea was to have them do something which would be an act of submission to the Government of the colony, and if it could have been managed, and we had got Te Ngakau to stand, it would, more than anything that has taken place these last seven years, have broken down the isolation of the King party utterly. The rest are all of that kind, "Payment not demanded," but in respect to which I cannot say much until I see the receipts. There is one from "John King to Mr. Sheehan." This appears to be the only one from John King to myself included in the list, and I should be almost afraid to tell the Committee how many I received from him during the election. The extraordinary fact that only one is marked as charged to Public Account is worthy of note. I may add that I have a communication from Mr. King, at Auckland, in which he positively asserts that every telegram he sent was paid for by either himself or his clerk before being transmitted, and I think the fact that I received so many from him, and only one is marked as charged to Public Account, is evidence that there must be some mistake on the part of the clerks. There is a telegram from Mr. Young to me in which he says that Hans Tapsell is about to stand for the East Coast, and that he wants to be allowed to draw on account of his land under negotiation to the Government, with a view of providing himself with funds to meet the expenses of the election. That is not in any sense of the word an electioneering telegram; it is nothing more than one of many telegrams which a Minister receives in the course of Native land purchases. If a chief dies we are at once apprised that his relatives want funds as an advance on account of a block of land in order to defray the expenses of his funeral, the object being, in acceding to these requests, to induce the Natives to accept money. There are many people who refuse to accept money for a year or two, but who are on such occasions induced to do so, and afterwards to complete the sales. I may add that there were three candidates for the Native District of the East Coast, and that, so far as I had anything to do with the election, my efforts were directed to the return of Henare Matua. The last on this list is one from Sir George Grey to R. Wakelin, Greytown. I think the Committee will remember that this wire was produced, franked by me. The whole of it is in my handwriting. I can only say in regard to it that the fact of my having used the words "O.P.S. only" must have been by pure inadvertence, and very likely arose from the fact that I was at that time sending a number of other wires on public service. At any rate I had no instructions from Sir George Grey to send it on public service. That is as far as I can go with these, pending reference to the receipts. I would also like to have along with the receipts the originals of the wires that have been sent to me. These are only copies, and I understand they have been produced to-day. The originals will show how much of the wires were written in the place itself, and what instructions, if any, were given by the transmitter.

*Mr. Wakefield:* I do not think that is disputed. We are anxious to get to the conclusion of this inquiry, but shall prolong it with a view to get the originals. There is no doubt that everything you say is obviously the case.

*Mr. Sheehan:* I want to satisfy the Committee, so far as I am personally concerned, that I did not knowingly or willingly send one single telegram on public service which was a private telegram.

360. *The Chairman.* Then I understand all telegrams sent by you on election business were marked "Private wire," with the view of being paid for?—Yes. With regard to the two or three cases I have referred to in this list, I will call attention to the fact that there are none in my handwriting, but they are all in the handwriting of my clerk.

361. You also say that during the elections you despatched 146 electioneering telegrams, all of which were paid for except those now in question?—All of which are admitted to have been paid for.

362. Have you any idea of the amount you paid altogether in respect of these?—I should say about £60 perhaps. I remember keeping an account of it up to £37.

363. Then Johnson and Berry were your clerks, and the shorthand writer had special instructions to pay for all private wires?—Yes.

364. They were all sent by them?—Yes. (Order of reference.) That reference to public cost appears to me to be of the very essence of the evidence I am now giving. The allegation that these telegrams were sent at the public cost—I want to show that, except in two or three instances, that were mistakes and matters of inadvertence, those telegrams were paid for by me. In regard to the great majority of the telegrams, I say they were private telegrams, so marked by me, and paid for at my instance.

365. I understand you to say your instructions were that all private telegrams were to be paid for, and, if they were not paid for, the fault lies with the Telegraph authorities?—I was going to say that I propose to call Mr. Berry and Mr. Johnson, if the Committee will agree, for the purpose of proving that was the regular course in which these wires were sent in every instance; that they had express instructions to separate public and private wires, so that the private wires should be paid for; and they will also prove that wires marked "Private" were sent from the office, and paid for by cheque or cash out of my account. I want to call Mr. Brodie, because he happened to be in my house on two or three occasions on other business, and heard me on several occasions giving those instructions, and wondered why I was so express and particular about it. I hope I have made myself understood. I desire to see those original telegrams and receipts, and hope I shall be able to show that several of those telegrams were improperly marked as Government telegrams by the Telegraph Department.

366. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne.* I understand you to say that you are fully aware of that report of 1871, that electioneering telegrams were to be considered private telegrams?—No, I could not say that I was. I was not in the House in 1871, but I heard reference made to it in the debate on this question.

367. But at any rate, acting upon that understanding, you gave instructions to your secretary and shorthand reporter?—Yes, I did.

368. Do you consider that Resident Magistrates in Native districts are in a different position from those in European districts?—Yes.