

19. Have you put it about Wellington that Briscoe, MacNeil and Company have been proved to have been swindling the Government, and getting vouchers passed?—I have not said it was proved.

20. Did you refer to any special charge?—I have said that a lot of charges were made, and were being investigated.

21. Have you made any communication to the Press in any part of the colony about this?—No.

The witness, having obtained leave to make a statement, said: I would like to explain how it was that Mr. Jenkins has spoken to me on the matter. On Thursday, the 16th of May—I am able to fix that date promptly, because on that day the 'Frisco mail left, and I came down to the Post Office and met Mr. Jenkins in the street. At that time he had been in Briscoe, MacNeil and Company's employment, but I had not seen him for some time; and I said, "What are you doing out at this time of the day?" He said, "I have got the sack." I said, "What have you been doing now?" He said, "Have you an hour to spare?" I said "Yes," and we walked along towards the Government railway-station. He said that he had found an overcharge in some of the items charged to the Government, and had informed the manager, and had got discharged; and he asked me what I would do under similar circumstances. I said, "Put it in the hands of the Public Works Department." His reply was that he had done so already. Some days after I met him again, casually, and asked him if he had done anything in the matter, and he said that he was between two difficulties, an action for libel on the part of Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co., and an action for conspiracy to defraud the Government. He asked me if I could help him. I thought that a Parliamentary Committee was the best thing to inquire into it, and I went to Mr. George Hutchison. I afterwards met Mr. Hutchison, and he asked me to give him further details about the matter with Jenkins. I got the details from Jenkins, and from my copy of that, and from the schedule of prices of Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co., I made up the three last columns of the statement. That is what I mean by saying that the document was made up from information partially received from Jenkins.

22. Did Jenkins tell you anything about Bridson having altered slips of paper as to weights?—He told me, as far as I can remember, that the weights in the two books did not tally. But he did not tell me how it was they did not tally.

23. Did he mention that he had put the correct weights on slips of paper, and that Bridson altered the weights on the slips of paper and told him to enter them? Did he ever tell you that he objected to Bridson about the overcharges?—He never mentioned Bridson's name to me.

24. Did he ever tell you that he had told anyone about these overcharges?—He merely said he had written to Gellatly on the matter.

CORRAN BRIDSON sworn and examined.

25. *Mr. Skerrett.*] What are you?—I am an ironmonger.

26. What position do you occupy in the employ of Briscoe, MacNeil and Company?—I have charge of the town trade and contract work.

27. Did you ever have any conversation with Jenkins while in the employ of Briscoe, MacNeil and Co., as to false charges in respect of weights?—No.

28. In respect of any other false charges?—Never.

29. Did he ever hand you slips of paper on which the correct weights were stated, and did you alter the correct weights by increasing them, and hand back the slips to him?—No.

30. Was the journal called over with the rough book or the order-book?—With the rough book; at times it was called back.

31. Who held the rough book?—I did.

32. Who had possession of the journal?—Jenkins.

33. What was the object of calling back?—Just to see that the entry was made.

34. To see that there were no omissions of any articles supplied?—Yes.

35. Were the weights compared?—The weight was very rarely in the rough book.

36. Where was the weight obtained from?—Of certain lines, from the iron-yard book.

37. Who would obtain that weight?—Jenkins.

38. Did you have a conversation with Jenkins as to scrim on one occasion?—I did.

39. What conversation was that?—On looking through the book I found that he had squared the yards of scrim where it should have been lineal yards. I told him so, and the remark he made was to put it down to the new clerk; the voucher had gone in, and perhaps it would pass.

40. Was that the only conversation you had with him on the subject of excessive charges?—I believe it was.

41. Did you know that weights had been carried in from the yard-book into the journal, and from your book into the journal at increased weights?—No; I did not.

42. Not until the commencement of this inquiry?—No.

43. The entry in regard to the glass is in your handwriting?—Yes.

44. Do you remember the entry to which I refer?—Yes.

45. Will you explain how 380ft. was charged instead of 180ft.?—That is a blunder on my part. I computed the number of feet at 280 before I got the invoice; and on going through it after I got the invoice I have noticed the mistake, and, instead of taking off the hundred feet, I have evidently added another hundred.

46. You swear that that was purely a clerical error?—Yes.

46a. The only other alteration in your handwriting is with regard to some sheet lead?—Yes.

47. Now, that sheet lead was altered so as to charge the Government that weight?—Yes.

48. That is the principle of that alteration?—Yes.

49. Will you explain why you made that alteration?—It was an awkward piece of lead, and we had to cut the sheet and leave a lot of waste that was of no use. I believe I told some of the Public Works employes that they could have the waste lead if they liked.