

said : On Friday the committee of inquiry received a note from Mr. O'Connor stating his desire that greater expedition should be used, if possible, in connection with the copying of the extracts from the minute-book, ledger, and so forth.

Mr. O'Connor : I object to that. Read the whole of my letter.

Mr. Macdonald : I am chairman, and will not be interrupted. If you continue to interrupt I shall simply adjourn this inquiry.

Mr. O'Connor : You are not chairman.

Mr. Miles : A chairman was necessary, and Mr. Macdonald was duly elected by the committee.

Mr. Greenland : Not with any more power than to lead the committee. He is reading extracts from the letter and not the other parts.

Mr. O'Connor : I want my letter read ; otherwise you can mix matters up as you like.

Mr. Macdonald : I will not be dictated to by you or allow you to say in what terms I shall express myself in putting this matter before the meeting. The committee have not only power to make this inquiry, but to exclude you if you do not behave yourself.

Mr. Greenland : If you read one portion of a paper, why not read another?

Mr. Macdonald : When I was making a statement Mr. O'Connor interrupted me. I have told Mr. O'Connor I will not be interrupted. He will have an opportunity of making any reasonable statement after I have finished. But, so long as he is here and I am in possession of the chair, he must obey the rules of order. I went on to say that Mr. O'Connor desired that greater expedition should be used in connection with the copying of these extracts, and Mr. Miles, Mr. Greenland, and myself met to consider the matter. Unfortunately, the other avocations of the company's secretary necessitated his absence from the city on Friday and Saturday, and we were unable to get the keys. Mr. Miles then applied to the company's agents, Messrs. Johnston and Co., and they sent the following telegram : "C. A. Deacon, Racecourse, Hutt.—18/11/92.—Committee Mokihinui require immediate access to company's books and accounts in order to obtain copies to-day of certain evidence adduced by O'Connor. The safe is locked ; please send in key at once." The key was not available then, but access to the books was got a little later in the day, and Mr. Arthur Kember and another clerk were engaged to make copies. Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Greenland were sitting here with them in order to expedite the making of copies and to assist with the work, which was continued all Saturday up to a late hour at night. Yesterday (Sunday) Mr. O'Connor called upon me at my house and handed me a copy of the notes taken by the shorthand-writer of his statement, with the certificate attached. [See page 16.] I pointed out to Mr. O'Connor that that was no certificate as to the correctness of the statement made by him. When a witness in Court makes a statement he has to sign it as correct, and the report of his (Mr. O'Connor's) evidence was correct or it was incorrect. His certificate was neither one thing nor the other. But I said that I would put it before the committee on Monday morning and see what value they attached to it. Mr. O'Connor also handed to me a letter. That letter requires some explanation. I pointed out to Mr. O'Connor when he waited upon me with this document that he had not furnished me with a copy of the extracts which had been made under the directions of the committee by two clerks employed by the committee, and the arrangement was, as I said, that not only a signed correct copy of his statement should be furnished, but also a copy of the extracts. He dissented from that view, and said that he declined to furnish these extracts or aid the committee in any way, and—later on—that his reference to them in his statement was quite sufficient. I suggested to him that, as the two clerks had been employed under the committee, they were the servants of the committee, and that the documents prepared were the property of the committee—that if he had obtained possession of the documents and extracts he had obtained them wrongfully. He might for his own reference retain one of the copies, but the other ought certainly to be handed to the committee so as to be furnished, with his statement, to the chairman of the board of directors and his colleagues. But he dissented from that view, and his letter repeats in writing what he said yesterday. I may mention that when Mr. O'Connor called upon me on Sunday in company with the shorthand-writer Mr. Greenland, it appeared, was outside waiting for Mr. O'Connor, who went out and called him in, and we threshed this thing out. It was nearly 6 o'clock when they left, and I said nothing could then be done till Monday morning. I could not place myself in communication with the board of directors until we all met here, and therefore it has been impossible to comply with the understanding that the directors should be placed in possession of that evidence on the Friday, and it is for you now to consider what course we shall adopt.

Mr. Miles [to Mr. O'Connor] : The chairman holds a statement of charges made by you against the directors of the Mokihinui Coal Company, Mr. O'Connor?

Mr. O'Connor : Yes, sir.

Mr. Miles : Is that a correct statement?

Mr. O'Connor : What do you mean, sir?

Mr. Miles : I want an answer.

Mr. O'Connor : I want you to indicate what you mean by your question.

Mr. Miles : Here is the shorthand-writer's transcript of notes taken of your statement, to which you have appended a certificate.

Mr. O'Connor : Yes.

Mr. Miles : Is it a correct report of the statement?

Mr. O'Connor : On the whole, it is.

Mr. Miles : Is it a correct statement or not?

Mr. O'Connor : On the whole it is, but not word for word. It is impossible for any man to guarantee the verbal accuracy of a statement. I could not remember the words to check them, and I am quite certain no shorthand-writer could take them down. The fact is shown by the