

position: Mr. O'Connor has not complied with the request of the committee, and Mr. Greenland has absented himself from the work devolving upon him as a member of the committee of inquiry. The committee has instructed the secretary to forward to Mr. Greenland at once a telegram, requesting to be advised definitely this morning when he can return, or when he will return. We shall be glad to have an answer to that telegram; but until we do—and it appears to the committee that we have to be extremely careful in this matter—it is advisable before taking any further action to adjourn until to-morrow, with a view of having Mr. Greenland's answer. I think that is the view you take, Mr. Miles?

Mr. Miles: I quite agree with the view expressed by Mr. Macdonald. I was rather surprised to learn from Mr. Greenland's letter that he had been suddenly called away to Westport, and that he had gone without seeing the other members of the committee. But, as he is away, I think we should await his reply to the telegram we have arranged to despatch to him before we decide when this inquiry shall proceed further. It does not follow that I am in favour of hanging up the inquiry until Mr. Greenland's return; but if he is likely to return within a day or two, we may decide to wait until we get him with us again. However, when we get his reply we shall be able to fix upon a date for resuming our investigations.

Mr. Macdonald: The committee recognise, of course, that this inquiry has been extended far beyond the time originally contemplated, but that is a matter for which Mr. O'Connor's conduct is entirely responsible.

Mr. Macarthy: I desire to say that the directors are not responsible in any way for the delay. We have done everything possible to facilitate the inquiry, and I think in justice to us that should be recorded.

Mr. Macdonald: I think we agree you are not at all responsible for the delay.

Mr. Miles: I certainly agree with that.

Mr. Macarthy: I submit, in view of the very serious results to the company arising from this delay, that an early period should be fixed for the continuation of the inquiry. I think you, gentlemen, are fully qualified to go on with it. Mr. O'Connor told you that he defied the committee; he had possession of the documents, and the inquiry was over, and he intended to have recourse to the Supreme Court. With reference to Mr. Greenland, I had no intimation that he was leaving here. The matter is a very serious one to the company, and I think his absence should not be taken into consideration at all. If Mr. Greenland has absented himself and neglected his duty I apprehend that the committee are quite competent to go on without him and fully investigate matters. I understand that you have communicated with Mr. Greenland, and propose to adjourn until to-morrow at 10 o'clock.

Mr. Macdonald: Yes, to-morrow at 10 o'clock.

Mr. Macarthy: Can you not say definitely whether you will go on with this inquiry? I may say that I think Mr. Greenland's absence is intended to burke this inquiry, and I apprehend that that is one of the objects he and Mr. O'Connor had in view.

Mr. Macdonald: Of course, Mr. Macarthy, you cannot expect us to make comments upon the action of our colleague of an uncomplimentary character in the absence of definite information. We have to complain of the discourtesy in not having had a personal communication from him before he left the city. But there may be some explanation. I would be sorry to think that Mr. Greenland would lend himself to any tactics on the part of those bringing these charges against the directors for the purpose of burking this inquiry. I think—and I am speaking for Mr. Miles as well as for myself—that the shareholders, having intrusted to us the work of investigating the matters in dispute, whether Mr. Greenland is present or absent, we should go on and arrive at a conclusion which, in our judgment, may seem fair and honest upon the evidence and the records of the company submitted to us. We also feel that every courtesy and attention should be given to our colleague, so that we can, if possible, have an explanation from him as to why he left and whether there is a possibility of his return. When we have done that we are free from any responsibility resulting from his absence; and if he remains away he must be content to rest under the imputation of neglecting the work intrusted to him by the Westport shareholders, and he must be accountable to them for that. We shall not let matters lie where they are, although he is absent; and if the directors say that they are prepared to go on, and there is no immediate prospect of Mr. Greenland's return, we shall probably take up the position that the shorthand-writer's notes can be handed to Mr. Greenland on his arrival in Wellington, thus avoiding further delays and economising expense as far as possible.

Mr. Macarthy: I think you are treating Mr. Greenland with extreme courtesy. We are prepared to go on this morning. The works of the company are stopped, and the men are idle, and the manager of the company's mine is in attendance here. And, further than this, there is a serious matter behind; for, while the inquiry is pending, we cannot tender for the supply of coals, and this delay will have a serious effect upon the affairs of the company. We should like some satisfactory assurance from you that we shall be able to go on with the inquiry to-morrow.

Mr. Macdonald: I think the statement you have made, Mr. Macarthy, is of so grave a character that the committee would not be justified in refusing to go on; and, as I have said, whether Mr. Greenland returns or not, we shall endeavour to save the company as far as possible by probably proceeding with the inquiry to-morrow.

Mr. Miles: The statement made by Mr. Macarthy must influence us with regard to our decision as to the future mode of procedure, but I do not think we can say definitely that we will go on with the inquiry to-morrow morning, as we should like to have a reply from Mr. Greenland before coming to a decision. I think, however, the directors may rely on it that we shall use all expedition possible consistent with the awkward position we are placed in by Mr. Greenland's sudden and unexpected departure. As far as the inquiry itself is concerned, I think the directors