

*Mr. Graham* : My suggestion is that if the investigation is to cover the whole of the new matter, of which the men have no knowledge, it is necessary to postpone consideration of the question; but it is for the Committee to decide whether the inquiry shall cover all that matter, or be confined to the charges made against the men of which they have knowledge.

*The Chairman* : I thought that that was what Mr. Maginnity was trying to show.

*Mr. Maginnity* : That is just the point I was leading up to. I do not wish unnecessarily to take up the time of the Committee, but it is only fair to the Committee (as it is to the two ex-constables) that the position should be described to it. What I propose to ask the Committee to do is to limit this investigation to the charges made; but I will also—

*Mr. Lethbridge* : I think the Committee must go into all the evidence which influenced the Government in dismissing these men. I do not see that we can confine the investigation to what you propose.

*Mr. Maginnity* : Would the Committee not be trying men upon charges that have never been made known to them?

*Mr. Lethbridge* : The Committee is quite willing, I think, to let the men see the charges—and I think the Department is, too.

*Mr. Maginnity* : I presume the public will see the charges when the papers are presented. I have not seen the papers. I know there is a compendious file containing charges and innuendoes, which, I may say at once, the men are quite prepared to meet.

*The Chairman* : Perhaps I can settle that matter at once by asking Commissioner Tunbridge if there is anything in the file beyond the charges on which the men were dismissed which influenced the Government in its action?

*Commissioner Tunbridge* : I cannot answer that question. I do not know what influenced the Government.

*Mr. Graham* : The papers have to be printed. If the men are now tried on what they have knowledge of only—although, from a glance through the papers, I believe everything there can be refuted, yet there are statements made which, if not refuted, will come before the Committee without the men having an opportunity of refuting them. I believe, myself, that it will be in the interests of the men that the papers should be printed, and as soon as possible, so as to give them an opportunity of knowing, not the charges, but the statements—the insinuating statements—that have been made against them.

*Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones* : Take another view of the matter: These papers will be printed and circulated broadcast throughout the colony, and in the interests of these young men it is only right that they should have an opportunity of replying to any questions put to them on any points brought out in those papers.

*Mr. Graham* : Or of bringing any evidence to disprove the assertions made.

*Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones* : That is, if those questions are raised before the Committee.

*Mr. Graham* : Exactly.

*Mr. Maginnity* : The difficulty is this: These men are both residents of the Provincial District of Nelson. One is working over at Collingwood, the other is keeping an hotel at Belgrove; and it will be a serious matter to them if they have to come to Wellington again. I would submit that they might be examined now upon any charges that you and the Commissioner might think it proper to examine them on which may be revealed in this correspondence. I do not know what the charges contained in the papers are, but I have such confidence in the men—in their integrity and *bona fides*—that I am prepared to put them at present before the Committee, and let the Committee examine them upon any charge in this file of correspondence, outside the charges referred to in the petition.

*The Chairman* : You are not asking for a postponement of the inquiry?

*Mr. Maginnity* : No, for this reason: it is impossible for these men to attend at Wellington again. That is the difficulty. I am quite satisfied that the Hon. the Minister of Justice is not appearing here in the position of prosecutor, nor is the Commissioner of Police. Therefore I cannot refer to anybody on the other side to ask, "What can you formulate against these men out of this correspondence which has been placed on the table of the House?" I can only leave it to you to say, "Here are various charges; we will examine you men upon this one and this one: what have you to say to this?" That is all I can suggest. The Hon. the Minister of Justice is here, and he might like to examine the men upon any charges outside of the petition, or within the petition—charges in the petition and in the correspondence. I suggest that if he does that the necessity for bringing the men back here again will be obviated.

*The Chairman* : You are placing the Committee in a very peculiar position. You ask at once that we shall decide whether we shall go outside of the charges in the petition, and take the whole file of correspondence. Then you say, on the other hand, that you are quite prepared to go on, and suggest that your witnesses be examined by the Committee upon anything in the file.

*Mr. Maginnity* : I did that for this reason: One of the members of the Committee mentioned that it would be impossible for the Committee to limit its investigation to the charges set out in the petition, and that it must investigate anything which was said that might have influenced the Government in coming to its decision to dispense with the services of the men.

*The Chairman* : The Committee can only take the petition as it stands. When we are deliberating after taking the evidence we will have the file to help us. Anything that you may ask for which can be given will, I have no doubt, be given in the course of the examination; but the Committee are here to deal with the petition.

*Mr. Maginnity* : Just so.

*The Chairman* : Of course, we do not know, and cannot tell, what influenced the Government. We have to get that out in the course of your case. You will have to establish your case. The Committee cannot establish a case for the petitioners. We are not here to do that.