

He is not afraid because he had the paper in his possession, but only that it might come out that he brought it to me. I think the Commissioner's report abundantly proves that there were means of tampering with the ballot-papers in connection with the election, and that evil-disposed persons could obtain the ballot-papers if they wished.

[Mr. Symes, at this stage, resumed the Chair.]

7. *Mr. Hardy.*] Do you say that the person you got the ballot-paper from is an evil-disposed person?—No. I say that ballot-papers lying in polling-booths with keys attached to the ballot-boxes afford opportunity for evil-disposed persons to become possessed of them; and, if the ballot-papers are allowed to remain in a polling-booth after the poll has been taken, facilities are afforded for the papers to be tampered with then. If the Committee decides to inquire into the matter I shall be glad if the carters who took and fetched away these ballot-boxes and papers are asked to attend.

8. *Mr. Wood.*] I think the proper witness we should ask to attend would be the person who got the ballot-paper and gave it to you?—I do not know the man who got the ballot-paper, but I know the man who gave it to me.

9. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Do you know the man who obtained this stolen property?—I do not say that it is stolen property, so far as the man who gave it to me is concerned. As nearly as I could I gave the particulars to the police, but the man from whom I obtained the paper made me promise that I would not give his name, and before he showed me the paper I gave him my promise.

10. *Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones.*] We have evidence of a ballot-paper having been improperly in the hands of some one. Now, you are the only one who knows who that person is. If we want to go any further we must know who gave that paper to you. Do you see that difficulty?—Yes; but I also recognise the difficulty I am in through giving my sacred promise. I am perfectly sure that the man who showed the paper to me is perfectly honest.

11. *The Chairman.*] I do not think any one's promise ought to shelter a criminal: supposing some one told you that he had committed murder or some other crime, would you consider your promise sufficient to shelter that person from the arm of the law?—Certainly I should not, but if I think and believe, as is still possible, that some young fellows—volunteers, artillerymen, or others—for a lark opened the boxes and took the papers away to show their friends how to vote, and having no recognition of the seriousness of the offence, then I think I am bound by my promise to the father of one of these young men.

12. *Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones.*] That ballot-paper belonged to the State, and was taken out of the ballot-box: have you any witnesses to call?—I have no witnesses to call this morning. I want to call the man who had charge of the ballot-boxes, and my object is to show the difficulties which menace the polls both for the local-option and parliamentary elections.

13. I want to get to the bottom of this matter, and how can we do that?—I think it can be shown that at every polling-booth there were abundant facilities for getting at the ballot-boxes.

14. *Mr. Wood:* I do not care about that at all—that is a matter for us to go into afterwards. The point now is, that some one has taken a ballot-paper out of a booth, and unless Mr. Isitt gives us the name of the person we cannot do anything.

15. *Mr. Commissioner Dinnie.*] Can you enlighten us as to the name of the person who has been dealing with another ballot-paper besides the one that you refer to?—Another Committee of this House is dealing with a question where I think some one has dealt with fourteen different ballot-papers, which were altered between the count and recount.

*Mr. R. McKenzie:* Mr. Isitt must realise that in the eyes of the law he is in the position of being a receiver of stolen property. In the eyes of the law he is a confederate of a thief or thieves, and he must take the responsibility of the theft himself.

16. *Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones.*] I do not take up that position, but I think Mr. Isitt will realise that it is his duty to assist us to find out who obtained this ballot-paper?—I do; but I also realise the position of the man who brought it to me, and who says that his business would be entirely ruined if his name were disclosed.

17. If he came by the ballot-paper honestly, why should he be afraid of being ruined?—His own words to me were that if it were known that he brought the ballot-paper to me political and trade influences would ruin him.

18. This ballot-paper may have been obtained from an employee at the printing-office, for instance, and it is important that we should know where it came from?—I do not wish the Committee to think I am sheltering myself in any way. I am only afraid of the consequences to a man whom I have known for something like thirty years, and who tells me that they would be serious to him if it were known that he had brought the ballot-paper to me.

19. *Mr. Wood.*] Do you think it was a straightforward course for him to take to give you the ballot-paper: should he not have taken it to the police?—I do not think he dare, for fear that it might ruin his business. He thought he had cleared his conscience when he brought the paper to me.

20. *The Chairman.*] You have no further evidence of your own to give?—No.

21. How do you expect the Committee can arrive at any conclusion upon absolutely hearsay evidence?—I do not want them to. I want merely to submit to them abundant evidence that the ballot-papers are dealt with so carelessly as to afford opportunity for abstraction.

*The Chairman:* This is the ballot-paper we are dealing with, and it is the only thing the Committee are here to deal with.

22. *Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones.*] And unfortunately we can only trace it back to you?—I shall have to ask to be allowed to consult with a legal adviser, because I cannot see that it is possible for me to accept the responsibility of involving a man in ruin.

23. From whom did you receive that ballot-paper?—At present I cannot answer.