

172. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] That is what he tells us?—Yes.

173. You have been inquiring into this matter?—Yes.

174. What conclusion have you arrived at?—I can only say that the precautions taken were the same as the previous precautions in connection with elections, and it is evident now that the contests are becoming so keen that some special precautions will have to be taken. There is no reason why the ballot-boxes should not have been taken out to the booths on the same morning as the election, instead of the previous evening. That, however, could not be done in country districts. And there were no seals used.

175. I take it that from your position you are an expert in criminal matters?—I have had some experience, certainly.

176. Do you think this ballot-paper was stolen?—Undoubtedly it was taken from a ballot-box, but whether it was with the intention of stealing it is another question.

177. Do you think it was taken to be used for election purposes afterwards?—I should think it would be taken for some purpose—probably to be used to show the irregularities.

178. Do you think whoever took it would be interested in the matter?—We can only look to the parties to whom it might be useful, and that would be the prohibition party. It is a very strange coincidence that Mr. Isitt should get possession of that paper at the time, and that is the only paper we can trace. I wish to say I made a mistake in my report with regard to Buckle Street. Two ballot-papers were found to be missing there, and there is every reason to think that this is one of them. Seven hundred were counted out for that booth and only 698 were received. These 698 were fully accounted for, and these two papers might have been extracted from the ballot-box at the drill-hall, where the men were drilling and might easily have had access to these papers. They might have done it for a lark.

179. When Mr. Isitt first gave information about this paper did he inform the police that there were a number of such papers in circulation?—He suggested that.

180. Now, there is a packet of a hundred papers that are supposed to have gone astray?—Yes.

181. Do you think it possible that this is one of the hundred?—I do not think so. I am inclined to agree with Mr. Thomson that the full number was not printed. I saw the printer, and he was satisfied that they had been printed, but I cannot quite agree with his statement.

182. Are you of opinion that the result of the election could have been influenced by the stolen papers. First of all, the Returning Officer has to put his initial on them, and then the paper is gummed down. Now, by getting hold of these papers, could the names be struck out outside and the paper taken into the booth, and a clean one be taken out and used, and the election result be affected in that manner?—I believe a person could go into the booth and get a paper similar to it and put in the dummy paper.

183. And then go back and do the same thing again?—Yes; but if the person in place of whom he voted recorded his vote there would be two papers for the one name, and I understand both would be cast aside.

184. Could not a man go to another booth and vote for the second paper?—Of course, he could do that, but there would be irregularities then.

185. With reference to the papers that Mr. Isitt asked the Returning Officers to send to him, did you make any inquiries about that?—I have not seen the officers concerned, and I do not know who they are.

186. Mr. Isitt admits that three of the Returning Officers sent him papers?—He said that eleven memorandums were sent out, and in three cases he obtained ballot-papers.

187. Do you know who those three persons are?—No; I have no idea.

188. Would an action lie now under the Criminal Code Act against Mr. Isitt for being in possession of this paper?—I am rather doubtful about it. I have not gone carefully into the matter, but I think he cannot be dealt with.

189. Have you referred the matter to the legal adviser of the Crown?—No.

190. He cannot be dealt with under the Electoral Act on account of the lapse of time?—No.

191. You say that an action could not be brought under the Criminal Code Act against him for having possession of stolen property?—No; there must be value in connection with property.

192. If there is any legal power to deal with Mr. Isitt, do you think he ought to be dealt with?—Certainly, and any one else concerned.

193. He ought to be made to divulge his information?—Yes.

194. Do you think that this person who is alleged to have given him this paper has any existence in fact?—He (Mr. Isitt) is an interested party, and this other party may be interested also.

195. Do you not think that Mr. Isitt may have got it himself, and that the other person is a myth?—It is possible, of course. I think there would be a second party in it, because I do not think Mr. Isitt would run the risk himself.

*Approximate Cost of Paper.*—Preparation, not given; printing (1,250 copies), £12 6s.

By Authority: JOHN MACKAY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1903.

*Price, 9d.*]