

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 1903.

JOHN LIDDEL KELLY, Editor of the *New Zealand Times*, examined on oath. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] In the *New Zealand Times* of Saturday, the 5th, and Monday, the 7th September, there appeared certain articles with regard to education. Were those articles published with your knowledge and consent?—Yes.

2. Have you seen the proposed new State-school syllabus?—No.

3. Have you seen the proposed new regulations with regard to training-colleges for teachers?—No.

4. Have you seen the proposed new Education Bill?—No.

5. Then, how did you become possessed of the information contained in those articles?—One of our reporters brought the information to the office in the ordinary course of his work.

6. Which reporter?—I would rather not answer the question. I look upon it that as conductor of the literary department of the *New Zealand Times* I am solely responsible, and I have no wish to shirk that responsibility or to involve any subordinate.

7. You became possessed of that information through one of your reporters?—Yes.

8. Do you decline to give his name?—Yes; if pressed I shall decline. I would ask you not to press it. I do not think it is a fair question. The legal responsibility, as, of course, you are all aware, rests with the editor and publisher; and it is quite unusual, unfair, and opposed to all journalistic ethics to shunt that responsibility on to a subordinate.

9. He was a servant of the company, was he not?—Yes.

10. We desire to ascertain how this information was obtained, and it is not an unfair question to ask that you give the name of your reporter who gave you the information upon which you based your articles?—I do not think it is a fair question.

11. Perhaps, later on, you will give us the names of your reporters?—Yes; I can provide you with a list of them.

12. Were you aware, at the time of the publication of those articles, of the existence of a Standing Order which prohibits the publication of anything which is before a Committee?—I knew there was such a Standing Order, but I cannot say that I remembered its exact terms.

13. You knew there was a Standing Order in existence which prohibits the publication of any matter before a Committee until it is dealt with by the House?—I understood it to be proceedings of Committees.

14. You know that, prior to this, newspapers have been punished for dealing with matters which are before a Committee?—Yes; for publishing evidence or proceedings of Committees.

15. Were you aware at the time of the publication of these articles that a Select Committee had been appointed and was dealing with educational matters?—I knew that a Committee had been set up with a general reference on educational matters.

16. So that at the time of the publication you were in full possession of the knowledge that those things were going on?—Yes.

17. The Committee had been set up, they were dealing with educational matters, and yet you published those articles with a full knowledge that that was the case?—Yes; but with also a firm conviction that these documents were not in the nature of proceedings of the Committee. I do not know that I can correctly define the papers, because, as I have said, I have not seen them; but I took it that they were Government documents which may or may not have been referred to the Committee. I did not know. These had been in circulation, had been discussed and talked about, and handed about; and I thought that, our man having become possessed of a copy, they were fair matter to be published. I had no knowledge that in publishing these I was committing a breach of privilege.

18. *Right Hon. R. J. Seddon.*] Having stated that you had not seen the regulations containing the syllabus, how do you know that they were brought to your office by a reporter?—I do not know that they were brought. The reporter brought the information. I do not know that he had the documents.

19. Not having seen the new proposals for training teachers, how do you state that your reporter brought them to the office?—The reporter brought the information—written. I do not know whether he himself actually saw the documents or not.

20. With regard to the proposals in the Bill dealing with secondary education, you say you have not seen that?—I have not seen the Bill, and I do not know that the reporter saw it.

21. You do not know that the documents were brought to the office at all?—I do not know that the originals of them have ever been in our office.

22. As far as your knowledge is concerned?—Yes. The reporter may have got them second-hand.

23. You said just now that it was your town reporter who brought this information?—No; I said it was one of our reporters.

24. Who are the parliamentary reporters for the *New Zealand Times*?—We have had five men doing parliamentary work this year.

25. What are their names?—Mr. Nolan was for the first few weeks our principal man in the gallery. Then, we have had Mr. Schwabe, Mr. Barr, and Mr. G. P. Brown; and Mr. J. Oakley Browne has also been doing work.