

136. *Right Hon. Sir J G Ward.*] Did you give that letter to Mr. Jennings before he came to see me?—Yes. I gave it to Mr Jennings immediately I saw him.

137 Did he part from you with the letter?—I do not remember him having done so.

138. *The Chairman.*] Did you get the letter back?—I must have had the letter back, because I had it when I got back to Stratford.

139. *Right Hon. Sir J G Ward.*] Did you give Mr Jennings that letter to take it to me?—No, sir.

The Chairman There is no suggestion, Mr Myers, that the Premier saw this letter?

Mr Myers: No, sir The questions were asked in the ordinary course, and not with a view of making any insinuations at all. This is an inquiry, and surely it is in the interests of everybody that the matter should be inquired into fully.

Right Hon. Sir J G Ward I am not objecting

Mr Myers I understand from what Sir Joseph says, he assumes, and it is the idea in some quarters, that every question that is asked conveys or implies some insinuation against somebody. That is not the case. This is an inquiry, and is the same as a nautical inquiry, where you go into everything.

Right Hon. Sir J G Ward: As Mr Myers has made that statement, I am entitled to say this: This is a charge against Mr Symes of having done something which the Committee is inquiring into, and in the course of the evidence a statement is made suggesting that I, as Minister in charge of the Advertising Department, had cognizance of what took place by Mr. Symes, and that I did something which I should not have done.

Mr Myers The point is that the Government were right in giving the advertisements to the paper there, but that Mr Symes was wrong in sending the letter he sent—that that was the intimidation.

Right Hon. Sir J G Ward It is quite clear, Mr Chairman, that if the facts were different from what the questions have elicited, I should be charged in some way directly or even indirectly with collusion with Mr Symes in connection with a letter that I had no knowledge or connection with in any respect whatever

The Chairman There is no evidence so far establishing any such insinuation, and Mr Myers makes no insinuation on that point. That is perfectly clear

Mr. Skerrett I wish to point out that if the charge is against Mr Symes for having sent that letter, then it was utterly irrelevant to ask any questions as to whether the letter was shown to the Premier or whether the contents of the letter were explained to the Premier. Those facts are entirely irrelevant if the subject of the charge is the letter, and the letter only.

Right Hon. Sir J G. Ward: May I put in a return showing the amounts paid to the *Stratford Evening Post*. [Statement Exhibit Z handed in as follows:—

' Return of Amounts paid to the Stratford Evening Post for Government Advertisements during Undermentioned Years

	£	s.	d.	
" Year ended 31st March, 1896	2	3	6	<i>Egmont Post.</i>
" " 1897	10	1	0	"
" " 1901	58	4	11	"
" " 1902	35	18	6	"
" " 1903	97	13	0	"
" " 1904	{ 41	7	6 }	<i>Stratford Evening Post.</i>
" " 1905	{ 62	8	6 }	<i>Egmont Post.</i>
" " 1909	{ 7	7	0 }	<i>Stratford Evening Post.</i>
" " 1910	104	12	3	" "
	106	15	3	" "
	73	3	3	" "

' NOTE.—This paper was published as the *Egmont Post* up to the 17th July, 1903, on which date its name was changed to the *Stratford Evening post*."

I also put in a similar exhibit [marked Exhibit A A], showing,—

" Return of Amounts paid the Egmont Settler, Stratford, for Government Advertisements during the Undermentioned Years

	£	s.	d.
" Year ended 31st March, 1896	29	18	3
" " 1897	82	1	6
" " 1901	74	14	9
" " 1902	79	8	3
" " 1903	115	12	6
" " 1904	31	4	8

" The *Egmont Settler* ceased publication and was incorporated with the *Stratford Evening Post* on the 31st October, 1903 "

The Chairman That concludes that particular charge.

Mr Reed I would suggest that Mr Anderson be recalled to prove what happened to this letter, Exhibit Y. We have had evidence given just now that that letter was given into his possession, and I think it would be important if we could trace it.

Right Hon. Sir J G Ward: Yes, I agree.

Mr Reed: I ask that he be called for that purpose.

Mr. Massey I suppose, Mr Chairman, that Mr Symes does not deny having written the letter, and I fail to see why it is necessary to prolong it.