

ARTHUR EDWARD COPPING sworn and examined. (No. 9)

1. *Right Hon. Sir J G Ward.*] Mr Copping, were you connected with the *Stratford Evening Post* in 1905?—Yes.

2. Were you also representative of the Press Association at that time?—Yes.

3. Are you the representative of the Press Association still?—Yes.

4. Is there anybody else in Stratford authorized on behalf of the Press Association to send out matters of news?—No, there is not.

5. Are you familiar with the letter which has been handed in here from Mr Symes to Mr McCluggage, dated the 4th October, 1905?—I have seen that letter on two occasions.

6. Do you know that Mr Whitlock visited Wellington, as a matter of fact, early in October, 1905, to interview the Government in connection with the *Stratford Evening Post* not receiving Government advertisements?—Yes.

7. Do you know that as a result of his visit the paper did receive Government advertisements?—Yes.

8. As the editor of the paper, was any suggestion made to you by any one, either a member of the Government or by anybody else—Mr Whitlock, Mr Symes, or Mr McCluggage—that as the outcome of receiving Government advertisements the policy of the paper should in any way be changed to be favourable to the Government candidate or to the Government's policy?—Not in the slightest degree.

9. Did the fact of the Government advertisements that were published in the *Stratford Evening Post* cause any deviation from the policy, whatever it might have been, that the paper was committed to or carrying out?—No, not the slightest. We were independent, and we are still independent.

10. What do you regard the paper as, from a political point of view?—Absolutely independent.

11. What was the constitution of the board of directors in 1905?—In 1905 the board was rather strongly Opposition. The majority of the board of directors, I believe, were Opposition, but I only took the position on the understanding that I was left an absolutely free hand in politics.

12. Can you inform the Committee whether, in your opinion, the Stratford Printing and Publishing Company—and in that I include the *Stratford Evening Post*—was fairly treated by the Advertising Department?—Yes, perfectly fairly treated since we were put on the list.

13. Can you inform the Committee whether, as the result of an alteration in the type in your paper, which at one time was set out in long primer, and for which you were making a charge of 2s. an inch, an application was made to have an extra amount paid for the advertisements?—That is so, sir. I made the application, because on Mr Whitlock leaving the paper I took up the managership as well as the editorship.

14. And as a result of that you asked that the Department should pay the higher charge, which was 4s. an inch all round?—No. 3s. was all we asked to charge. It was 4s. for certain other advertising, but we only asked 3s. from the Government.

15. Were you formerly charging 3s. and 4s.?—No; 2s. and 3s.—3s. for the first insertion, and 2s. for the subsequent: but now we are charging 3s. all through.

16. Upon your applying to have that done, was it assented to without demur?—Mr Donne, who was in charge of the Department, asked for further particulars as to why that should be done, and then the matter was agreed to without any difficulty.

17. You had a board which was composed of a majority of Opposition directors, and they considered they had been treated quite fairly so far as the Government was concerned in the matter of advertising?—Yes, I have written and said so.

18. Did you, as the representative of the Press Association in Stratford, send a telegram in connection with the alleged "Tammanyism charges" against the Government, saying that upon Mr Hine's arrival there he had been enthusiastically received by a large gathering of people and a public address presented to him?—I sent a short telegram the day afterwards, but not the long telegram which appeared under the heading of the Press Association in some of the morning papers.

19. Do you know who sent that telegram?—I do not know.

20. Was that an interference with your rights as representative of the Press Association to have a wire of that kind sent down?—When I saw it headed "Press Association," I made inquiries at the post-office to see if any one had used my name, and was told that was not the case.

21. You do not know who sent that message?—No.

22. Was the message a correct representation of what took place?—I was not present on the platform, and could not speak from personal knowledge.

23. Do you know how many people were present when the address was presented?—I have heard it variously stated.

24. Would you state the number to the Committee?—I have heard it said there were twenty people.

25. I should like to ask you, as representing the Press Association, whether you consider that an organization of that kind, which is supposed to be impartial, should be used for party political purposes?—

*Mr Myers.* Is this right, sir—because it is bringing in an association which is not represented here, and I submit that the question has nothing whatever to do with the charges made by Mr Hine?

26. *Right Hon. Sir J G Ward.*] They have a good deal to do with the charges of "Tammanyism" made against the Government?—I think I could explain how that happened, out of fairness to the Press Association—that the papers to whom the long telegram was sent may have put "Press Association" over it on their own account.