

leaving Stratford last year I made a bonfire of all those letters and everything I had politically I made a huge bonfire of them, saying, "This is the last I am going to have to do with anything of this sort," and I burned practically everything that I came across. I was not going to carry them up into the King-country. Therefore I have no letters from these people, or next to nothing, except two or three unimportant letters that escaped burning, but how I do not know, because I intended to burn everything. The result was that I sent to them showing them how to make out their claims, and in many instances I actually wrote them out, and they copied them. I found out where they had paid. I knew the amounts they had paid because all that had been done when I had my case before the Supreme Court. I told them what evidence was necessary to establish their claims.

48. That is, after the amount had been placed on the estimates?—Oh, yes! a long time after I told them that it was necessary to get their banker either to give them a letter to accompany their claim or to get the cheque if possible, showing what it was for and when it was paid. The result, at any rate, was that they all got paid, and every one that I had done this work for outside of my constituents, with the exception of the Lysaght Estate, paid me their commission.

49. At what rate?—Five per cent.

50. The ordinary collecting commission?—No; 10 per cent. is the ordinary collecting commission.

51. Half the ordinary commission charged by commission agents for collecting money?—Yes.

52. Did you confine this charge to lessees who were not constituents of yours?—Actually so.

53. One name has been mentioned as a constituent of yours—Mr Wilson's partner?—No, that was Wilson and Frere. Neither of them were constituents of mine—they were both living beyond New Zealand. Mr Wilson was living in Australia and Mr Frere in England.

54. There was a subsequent petition presented later to the House?—Yes.

55. Tell the Committee the circumstances of that?—I simply got a copy made of the original petition, and presented that.

56. Was any arrangement, express or implied, made by you with the petitioners that you were to charge them for presenting the second petition?—No.

57. Would you mind looking at the names on the petition? What are the names?—I think there were only a very few petitioners.

58. Would you mind reading them out?—F V Lysaght, George Gower, Alfred Hobbs, and Frederick Turner.

59. Well, we know that a further sum was placed on the estimates representing the reimbursement of the arbitration fees paid by the subsequent petitioners?—Yes.

60. Did you collect the money on behalf of them?—Some of them.

61. At their request?—Yes; in fact, some of them sent me their vouchers authorizing me to sign for them for the cheques.

62. Some of them gave you the ordinary Treasury authority to receive the cheques and sign for them?—Yes, on their behalf.

63. Mr Hobbs, of the Hobbs Estate, was one of them?—Yes.

64. You rendered an account to the executors of J R. Lysaght's estate?—Yes, that was on the first petition.

65. Are these the only letters you have been able to find dealing with the matter? I will put them in in a bundle, and my learned friend will be at liberty to inspect them. [Bundle produced, and marked Exhibit HH]?—Yes, those are all the letters I can find.

66. Now, did you receive this letter [produced] from Mr Moore, one of the executors in Lysaght's estate, sent to you by Mr. George Johnston, Waverley?—Yes. [Put in—GG.]

67. The covering letter is from Mr George Johnston to Mr Symes, dated 5th February, 1906, as follows: "Enclosed you will find a letter and three vouchers that I received from Mr F. E. Moore (ex'ors J R. Lysaght), who obtained them from the Under-Secretary for Lands. Would you please let me know if it is necessary for us to fill in forms like the enclosed, and if it is would you please procure them for me, and I will get them signed.—I am, &c., GEORGE JOHNSTON.—P S.: I received a letter from F V Lysaght in Canterbury saying that he had a claim. Could you give me the particulars of his claim, so that I could forward them to him, as he may put in a claim at some future date.—G.J." The letter from Mr Moore is as follows: "Albury, Hawera, Feb. 6th, 1906.—Mr George Johnston, Waverley.—DEAR SIR,—Before we knew that you were collecting and sending in claims in connection with confirmed leases, we had instructed Mr Coplin to inquire into our claims, but afterwards stopped him on hearing from you. But in the meantime he had written to the Lands and Survey Department, and after some time received a letter from the Under-Secretary for Lands with three forms to fill in and sign. We now send you the Secretary's letter and the forms under separate cover, and would be glad to know if you think it necessary that we should sign these, seeing that you have already sent in our claims.—Yours truly, EX'ORS J R. LYSAGHT, per F E MOORE." Now, will you be good enough to look at the account rendered to J R. Lysaght's estate?—Yes.

68. Now, what was that account rendered for?—For the collection of £347 5s. 4d.

69. Would you please refer to the subsequent paragraph of that account?—Yes. This paragraph was put there to show them that on this occasion the lessees had not to employ a solicitor to prepare the petition for them, as they had to do on a former occasion. They employed a solicitor, Mr Bell, and afterwards Mr Levi, to appear before the Committee for them. They paid the lessees to come to Wellington to give evidence, and they paid all their expenses to and fro and while they were in Wellington. I wished to impress upon Mr. Lysaght that on this occasion they were saved all those expenses, and that all I was asking was the ordinary commission for collection, and that I should not have done had not Mr Johnston forwarded all their papers on to me for collection.