
REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE.

DISMISSAL OF PHILIP WOOLLACOTT.

MR. SPEAKER :—

Your Committee appointed to enquire and report to the House what reasons existed for the dismissal of Philip Woollacott from the public service in or about the year 1878, beg to report as follows :—

That the following gentlemen came before them and gave evidence, viz., Messrs. David Green, W. Wilson, and Honourable T. B. Humphreys, and that Mr. A. McLean being too ill to attend the Committee waited upon him at his residence and took his evidence there.

The Committee had also before them the printed Return to the Order of the House for copies of correspondence.

The entire evidence taken, together with Mr. Woollacott's statement of the case, is hereunto annexed.

Your Committee found great difficulty in getting at all the particulars, as ten (10) years have elapsed since the transaction took place, and Mr. Woollacott's superior officer in the gaol is now dead.

From all the evidence that can be obtained, your Committee are of opinion that some carelessness and irregularity existed in the management of the Gaol in the year 1878, but do not find that Mr. Woollacott was solely responsible therefor.

HENRY FRY,

Chairman.

23rd April, 1888.

EVIDENCE.

COMMITTEE ROOM, FRIDAY, 6TH APRIL, 1888.

A Select Committee appointed to enquire and report to the House what reasons existed for the dismissal of Philip Woollacott from the Public Service, in or about the year 1878.

Present—Messrs. Fry, Duck, Ladner, and Anderson.

H. Fry, Chairman.

DAVID GREEN, examined—I remember Mr. Woollacott speaking to me about some supplies (clothing) wanted in the gaol sometime in 1878. He told me Mr. Bowden was away, and he waited some 10 or 12 days for Bowden's return, when he came again and said he must have them, as he could wait no longer. The goods were delivered by me, and were all according to samples which had previously been sent in to the gaol, and for which I had the contract. None of these goods were returned to me as being inferior, but my contract was cancelled about this time. I was paid the sum of \$80 (eighty dollars) for the goods supplied on Woollacott's order by Mr. Bowden before the usual pay day, and I signed the usual printed voucher. All orders that came to me were on a printed form. It would have been impossible for me, or anyone else, to substitute the serge shirts by an inferior grade, as there was none in the market at that time. There never was anything irregular in my transactions with the Government. I have more than once delivered goods to the gaol when Mr. Woollacott declined to pass them if Mr. Bowden was in the city, or until he had seen them; that is, Woollacott said it was not his duty, but Bowden's, to pass all supplies. My contract was for (12) twelve months, but the Government only took about (3) months' supplies, and did not notify me that it was cancelled; but no more goods were ordered after about this time, nor could I get any reasons given why. I frequently applied for an enquiry, but none was ever made that I know of. I positively assert that no goods were ever sent to the gaol by me that were inferior to or of less value than the samples submitted by me.

D. GREEN.

PHILIP WOOLLACOTT, examined—Sometime in the summer of 1878 I sent in a requisition to Mr. D. Green, the clothier, for certain goods wanted in the gaol. Mr. Bowden, the Superintendent of Police, usually signed these requisitions, but he was away from Victoria (at Barclay Sound), and the goods ordered by me were urgently needed, and as I did not know when Bowden would be back, I took upon myself the responsibility of ordering these things. When Bowden returned (he was away about two weeks), he said I might have waited until he came, but did not then say he should report the matter; but after this I have good reasons for saying that he was advised by other employés in the gaol that I was trying to undermine his authority, and, as they said, run the gaol myself. He then wrote the letter of 17th July, 1878, to which I replied on the 18th of same month, and would refer the Committee to that, as being a fair answer to and a statement of the case. With regard to the charge made by Mr. McLean, in his letter of 17th July, 1878, that certain blue serge shirts had been removed and replaced with a better class of goods, I can only say that no such change was made, as it would have been impossible to have done so without others in the gaol knowing it, for the reason that all such shirts are immediately on their reception stamped in thick paint with the prison stamp "V. P." in letters about six inches long, and painted, as they were, in thick white paint and oil no one could have prepared a fresh lot in the time between the two visits made by McLean, namely only one day. As to other charges made or implied in the letter of the Honourable the Attorney-General, of the 5th November, 1878, I would also refer the Committee to my reply made on the day following. Beyond this no further investigation was ever made, although promised in the Hon. Attorney-General's letter of 26th September, 1878. I have always courted an enquiry, and have done all I could to bring it about, but it has never been granted. I would also call the Committee's attention to my reply to the Honourable the Attorney-General's letter of the 22nd August, 1879, in which I most emphatically deny that there was any shortness of stock, &c. During the time of my service as gaoler or assistant gaoler, a period of nearly fourteen years, no prisoner ever escaped from my custody, but within forty-eight (48) hours after I left two prisoners escaped from the gaol by cutting their way through the roof, and have never been re-captured; this, too, was after the long-term prisoners had been removed to the penitentiary at New Westminster. I am now very glad to have this opportunity of replying to the various charges and allegations made at sundry times, and can and do deny that there is or ever was any foundation in fact for shortness of stores or any misconduct on my part during my services in the gaol.

P. WOOLLACOTT

Committee adjourned till Wednesday, the 11th April.

H. FRY, *Chairman.*

WEDNESDAY, 11TH APRIL, 1888.

Present—Messrs. H. Fry (Chairman), S. Duck, W. H. Ladner, G. W. Anderson.

WILLIAM WILSON, examined—I live in the City Victoria, and am a clothier of the firm of W. & J. Wilson. I know Mr. Woollacott. I remember going to the gaol with Humphreys and McLean. I do not remember all the details, as it is so long ago, but the goods struck me as being a fair average in value as to sample. I think the socks were different from sample, but those substituted were about of equal value. I attached no importance to that, as, in a market like this, it is not always possible to get a certain class of goods exactly when you want them. As far as my memory serves me, there was nothing out of the way in the clothing. I saw some blue serge shirts there which were stamped or marked with the Government brand, V.P. I detected no inferiority in value.

W. WILSON.

Adjourned till 10:30 A.M., on Thursday, 12th April.

H. FRY.

MEETING ON 12TH APRIL, 1888.

Present—Messrs. H. Fry (Chairman), W. H. Ladner, S. Duck, G. W. Anderson.

HON. T. B. HUMPHREYS, examined—Mr. Woollacott asking for explanation as to the phrase that “he threw obstacles in the way of our inspection.” Mr. Humphreys replied that the obstacles or obstruction to the enquiry took a passive rather than an active form—in plain English, Mr. Woollacott seemed disinclined to give any information at all.

Mr. Woollacott complained that the statement in Mr. Humphreys’ letter of 12th September, 1878, that “Hart” had control and distributed the supplies was a mistake—a misconception—for that Hart only distributed the clothing, etc., to the various prisoners, after having received the same from himself (Woollacott), who never relinquished the sole charge of all supplies.

Mr. Humphreys replied that Hart told him that he had control of the goods, and got them when he wanted them out of the store-room.

To whom it may concern:

I do hereby certify that Alexr. McLean, Esq., is confined to his house by illness, and that he is not able to leave his room. He is, however, in a condition to give evidence to a Committee, provided the sitting is not too prolonged.

ERNEST B. C. HANINGTON, M.D.C.M.

Fort Street, 6th April, 1888.

ALEXANDER McLEAN, examined (at his own residence)—I remember Mr. Walkem coming to me in the store and telling me that he suspected something was going wrong at the gaol. He asked me to go down and make an examination of the clothing supplied. I went down alone. I examined and reported in a letter not now submitted to me. I believe it is not printed. Mr. Walkem told me that matters in the gaol, as far as he had seen, did not correspond with my report. I then went again on my own account to verify my first impressions, and I found the shirts that I had condemned previously had been exchanged for a better quality, as explained in my letter of 17th July, 1878. I am positive about this. I did not notice whether the shirts were branded or marked with the prison mark V P. Those that I saw on the first day were some in the store and some on the line outside, and were of an inferior quality. The next day when I went the shirts were in the store-house, and were of a much better quality. I did not notice any other change in the goods, but only in the blue serge shirts. I have tendered for the supply of clothing to the gaol myself, but do not think I had done so at that time.

A. McLEAN.