

William Jenkins writes to the Editor of the Nelson Examiner 3 Oct 1850

Nelson Examiner 12 Oct 1850

To the Editor of the Nelson Examiner. Sir, You will oblige me by inserting, in your paper of Saturday next, the following statement, which is loudly called for by the injurious reports that have been for some months past in circulation respecting the appropriation of the moneys subscribed towards the erection of the Wesleyan Chapel, at Motueka:-

Some twelve months ago, subscriptions were solicited and received from the inhabitants of Nelson and its neighbourhood, towards the erection of a Wesleyan chapel at Motueka, which chapel was finished and opened for Divine service, and for school purposes, in November last. Peculiar circumstances rendered it impossible, at that meeting, to give a definite and correct financial statement; but, at the request of the Chairman, I stated that, as far as I could ascertain at that moment, some £7 or £8 were still required, in addition to what had been received from Nelson, and the unfulfilled promises elsewhere; upon which, additional subscriptions were promised by parties then present, making up that amount; and the impression there received by the public was, that the chapel would be out of debt.

It is necessary to state here, that a public tea meeting was convened at the opening of the chapel, the profits of which were to go to the Chapel Fund. The Natives who attended the tea meeting paid for their tickets in *potatoes*, instead of cash. The donations, also, given by them, were *potatoes*, *wheat*, and *pigs*, the supposed value of which was taken into account. As soon as possible after the meeting, the potatoes and wheat were disposed of, the former realizing *considerably less* than the sum taken into account at the meeting. The pigs were so poor as to be unsaleable (excepting one, which sold for 5s.), and were accordingly turned out to improve their condition. The surplus provisions sent to Nelson for sale *realised nothing*, having been consumed on the passage or elsewhere. The expenses attending the getting up of the tea meeting were greater than anticipated; all tending to make the deficiency greater than was supposed it would be at the opening services. A minute statement of accounts was laid before the parties concerned, at Motueka. The items were examined, one by one; and the profits of the tea meeting were found to be *one pound ten shillings*, instead of *six or eight pounds*, as *anticipated*. The accounts were paid as far as the funds would allow, a considerable sum remaining in *unfulfilled promises &c.*

Some dissatisfaction having arisen in the minds of parties in Nelson and neighbourhood, who were unacquainted with the above facts, Mr Ironside wrote to me for information on the subject, requesting that I would deliver a statement of accounts as soon as possible. I complied with his request; and at the December quarterly meeting of the officers of the Society, held at Richmond, delivered into his hands a detailed account of the affairs of the Motueka chapel. Mr Ironside then delivered it to Mr B. Jackson, of Richmond, requesting him and Mr Lightband, of Nelson, to audit the same. This was done; the auditors expressing their satisfaction as to the correctness, &c., of the accounts.

In faith of this statement, several parties, who had previously been dissatisfied, paid the additional subscriptions promised by them at the opening services. So far, things were settled. There still remained, however, a considerable sum in unfulfilled promises, &c., chiefly among the Motueka people, consequently, the builder was unpaid; and he, hearing that I was about to leave Motueka, summoned me before Mr Greenwood, the magistrate, to make some satisfactory arrangement for the payment of his bill. I then, to prevent my being distressed, agreed to place the key of the chapel in his hands as security for two months, hoping, within that time, to collect the subscriptions already promised, and to devise means for raising the deficiency.

Having occasion to visit Nelson some time afterwards, on my way, I heard, to my surprise, that there was still an impression on the mind of the public, that the moneys collected by for the chapel were misappropriated, and that reports injurious to my character were in circulation; also, that Mr Ironside himself, being still dissatisfied, was about to proceed to Wellington, to lay the case before the chairman of the district. Hastening from Richmond, where I received this information, I proceeded at once to Mr Ironside; and having at that time in my pocket a copy of the said accounts, I presented it, and insisted on his examining the same, stating, also, that I was ready to explain any matter that he could not understand. After hastily glancing over the paper, he said that he was not quite satisfied with the matter – he could not understand it.

Mr Ironside went to Wellington, and on his return he said he was authorized to pay the debt still remaining on the chapel, and that I was to be prepared with a full statement of the accounts &c. On Mr Ironside's visiting Motueka, a full and minute statement, such as he requested, was laid before him; and it was then shown that, instead of my having 'misappropriated' the moneys collected, there was actually a balance in my favour, and that balance was paid to me by him in the presence of Mr Greenwood and others. The affair was then settled to Mr Ironside's satisfaction, he having received from me the whole of the accounts made out by the several parties concerned, which accounts he separately examined; also, receipts to those bills that were settled. And here, of course, I concluded the affair would end, and that any wrong impression received by any party would of course be removed by Mr Ironside's giving a correct statement of the affair on his return to Nelson.

I find, however, to my surprise and grief, that no such course has been adopted, but that those impressions still remain, and that it is generally believed that I have appropriated the said moneys, or some part thereof, to my own personal uses, and thereby my conduct is suspected, and my character injured. Now, after several unsuccessful attempts to get the thing set right by those who can do it, I am compelled, for the sake of my own credit, to make these facts public through the medium of the press, and leave the public to judge whether or not I have done all I could to satisfy the parties concerned. I am, sir, yours respectfully, W. Jenkins, Nelson, October 3, 1850.