

MR. A. BROGDEN to the CHAIRMAN, PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE.

SIR,—

Wellington, 8th August, 1881.

I beg to make the following observations on the return handed in by the Hon. Mr. Richardson at the conclusion of the last sitting of the Committee.

The first seven tenders on the list are on Mr. Smyth's own account. We never had any connection with or interest in them; and, as he carried out some contracts with the Government, I am unable to see why these are included in the list of tenders by us.

Tenders by Gwynneth have also to be taken out.

Of the remaining eighteen, at least nine were let to parties who failed, and the works had to be completed at the cost of the guarantors or the Government.

The Deborah Bay contract was the subject of public notoriety, and a large sum had to be added to the accepted tender.

The Purakanui contract was carried out at a heavy loss to the contractor; and in some of the other cases, if the contracts had turned out disadvantageously, the parties had not the means to bear the loss.

But Mr. Richardson, the then Minister for Public Works, must know, although he did not so inform the Committee, that the failure of contractors for railway works was of constant occurrence: no wonder that we declined to tender on terms and at prices involving such consequences.

Mr. Richardson's statement with regard to added percentages is not sustained by the list produced by him, as in one case there was only a difference of £110 in a contract of £31,500, and in two cases the odd money, even to pounds and shillings, appears to have been taken off, and the contract given to another contractor.

But Mr. Richardson, while including all the contracts in question in his statement, was in a position to speak only of those given to us after he became Minister for Public Works, which amounted only to £192,000. Mr. Carruthers is more competent to speak of those prior to Mr. Richardson's time, and his evidence is before the Committee.

I respectfully submit that Mr. Richardson's evidence is disingenuous, and calculated to mislead, and that the Committee should give no weight to it.

I shall be obliged if you will consider this as part of my evidence.

J Kelly, Esq., Chairman, Public Petitions Committee,
Parliamentary Buildings.

I have, &c.,
ALEX. BROGDEN