

SESS. II.—1884.
NEW ZEALAND.

WESTLAND EDUCATION BOARD ACCOUNTS

(AUDITOR'S REPORT ON) FOR YEAR 1883.*

Return to an Order of the House of Representatives, dated 10th September, 1884.

Ordered, "That there be laid before this House all papers connected with the financial position of the late Education Board of Westland."—(Mr. Seddon.)

Mr. W. A. SPENCE to the UNDER-SECRETARY for EDUCATION.

SIR,—

Hokitika, 28th March, 1884.

In accordance with regulations of His Excellency the Governor in Council, No. 2 of "The Education Act, 1877," paragraph 2, I have the honour to report, for the information of the Hon. the Minister of Education, that I have examined the accounts of the Education Board for the District of Westland for the year ended the 31st December, 1883, and find the following amounts to have been passed for payment by the Board which in my opinion do not come under any heading with regard to the disposal of funds as enumerated in section 43 of the said Act, viz. :—

Voucher 6062, for the sum of £57 7s. 4d., which amount was paid to Mr. A. R. Guinness, Solicitor to the Board, for attending the sittings of the Supreme Court in Christchurch in April and May, 1883, for the purpose of defending an action brought by "Seddon and others" *versus* "Nancarrow and others." From inquiries I have made I find that this was an action brought by Messrs. Seddon, Rae, and Jack *versus* Messrs. Nancarrow, Warner, and Taylor, to show cause why they should not vacate their seats as members of the Board in consequence of some irregularities having taken place at the election. These irregularities were caused, I believe, by some of the Committees, in voting for members of the Board, having sent in a second list of persons for whom they voted, the first lists having already been sent in to the Secretary (according to paragraph 2, section 13 of the Act), which lists were returned to the Committees, and were substituted by the second lists. There is also another amount of £87 10s. 6d. which has been paid to Mr. Guinness for services rendered as solicitor in the same case in the months of May and June, 1883. A cheque for this amount has been drawn and given to Mr. Guinness; but, as it has not been cashed, the amount is included amongst the liabilities. Copies of vouchers for the above payments are forwarded herewith, and marked A and B respectively.

There is also an amount of £10 passed for payment to Mr. George McBeath for services rendered in obtaining signatures to a petition for amalgamation of West Coast Education Districts, copy of voucher for which is enclosed, and marked C. This petition was got up outside the Board altogether, and, in fact, I am given to understand that there was a private subscription-list started for the purpose of defraying the expenses in connection therewith. The Board, however, finally passed the amount for payment, and a cheque has been drawn for the amount. I do not consider it a fair charge against the funds of the Board.

I also object to an amount of £4 paid to Mr. J. Petrie, Chairman of the Board, for payment of travelling expenses to Hokitika on the occasion of a public meeting having been called by the Mayor of that town for the purpose of discussing education matters. Mr. Petrie was not invited to be present, nor was he authorized by the Board to incur the expenditure. This amount has been paid out of petty cash account, and has not been passed for payment by the Board, although on the face of the voucher it appears to have been passed on the 12th June, 1883. Copy of voucher for this amount enclosed, and marked D. This might be considered a fair charge against the funds of the Board; but, as the amount has not been properly passed for payment, I consider it my duty to draw your attention to the matter.

I beg to enclose lists of the liabilities of the Board on the 31st December, 1883, for which amounts cheques have been drawn, and so the amounts have been shown as expended, and are included in the expenditure column in the "General Statement of Receipts and Expenditure."

Some of the cheques drawn are on account of contracts that have been let; but the work has not yet been commenced. I have noted accordingly opposite these amounts to this effect in red ink, so that really these amounts are not due or payable until work has been done in accordance with specifications of contracts.

I have not been able to check the assets of the Board, as the Secretary had not taken stock of books and school requisites on hand; but I shall be in Greymouth shortly, when I will examine and check the stock, and report accordingly.

I have, &c.,

W. A. SPENCE,
Auditor.

The Under-Secretary for Education, Wellington.

* Enclosures, &c., connected with this paper were not ordered to be printed.