

1893.
NEW ZEALAND.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE.

(REPORT ON ALTERATION IN PUBLIC WORKS STATEMENT, 1892, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AND EVIDENCE, AND APPENDIX.)

Report brought up 6th September, 1893, and ordered to be printed.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

WEDNESDAY, THE 28TH DAY OF JUNE, 1893.

Ordered, "That a Committee be appointed to examine into and report upon such questions relating to the Public Accounts as they may think desirable, or that may be referred to them by the House or by the Government, and also into all matters relating to the finances of the colony which the Government may refer to them; five to be a quorum. The Committee to consist of Mr. Guinness, Hon. Sir J. Hall, Mr. G. Hutchison, Mr. J. Mills, Dr. Newman, Mr. Saunders, Hon. Mr. Seddon, Mr. Shera, Mr. Tanner, and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. WARD.)

WEDNESDAY, THE 5TH DAY OF JULY, 1893.

Ordered, "That the names of Hon. Sir R. Stout and Mr. Wright may be added to the Public Accounts Committee."—(Hon. Mr. WARD.)

WEDNESDAY, THE 26TH DAY OF JULY, 1893.

Ordered, "That Paper No. 142, Public Works Statement, 1892: Explanation by the Under-Secretary for Public Works as to error in, with a letter from Mr. Speaker to the Hon. the Premier, be referred to the Public Accounts Committee."—(Hon. Mr. SEDDON.) (*Note*.—The enclosure referred to is printed in Appendix p. 41.)

THURSDAY, THE 10TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1893.

Ordered, "That the Public Accounts Committee have power to call for persons, papers, and records, in relation to all matters referred to them."—(Hon. Mr. SEDDON.)

REPORT.

THE Committee have the honour to report that they have considered the papers referred to them regarding the error made in the Public Works Statement of 1892, and the charge founded thereon, and have also examined persons and papers. They find the facts to be as follows:—

1. The Public Works Statement was laid on the table of the House of Representatives on the 27th September, 1892, by leave of the House, and the following copies were circulated—namely: 180 to the House of Representatives, 69 to the Legislative Council, and 46 to departments; making a total of 295. After the Statement had been laid on the table it was discovered by Mr. Blow, the Under-Secretary for Public Works, that it contained an error in the text at page 14. This error was in the figures of expenditure for the year 1891–92. It was given in the Statement as £295,978, instead of £391,501. Mr. Blow discovered this error soon after the Statement was laid on the table, and he had it altered in the printing office the next day or the day afterwards, making the amount correct—namely, £391,501. There was also a slight error in the table called D, annexed to the Statement, through an omission of a credit of £111. This table was altered to Table C, and the figures "£111" were inserted in the last column under the heading of "Expenditure of 1891–92." The insertion of these figures necessitated the alteration of the addition of that column in three particulars—namely, from £70,957 to £70,846, from £312,482 to £312,371, and in the total from £391,612 to £391,501. These alterations in Table D were made by Mr. Clapham, Accountant to the Public Works Department. All these alterations were made without Mr. Seddon's knowledge.

2. The error in the text occurred through Mr. Seddon having used the figures given on a slip of paper handed to him by Mr. Blow, and which contained the expenditure in the seven financial years, 1885–86 down to 1891–92. This was in the handwriting of a cadet in the office to whom it was dictated. It gave the expenditure for 1891–92 as £295,978.