

1895.  
NEW ZEALAND.

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## PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF THE, ON THE INQUIRY INTO THE MANNER IN WHICH THE CONTRACT OF MESSRS. BRISCOE, MACNEIL, AND CO., FOR IRONMONGERY, ETC., HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AND EVIDENCE, AND APPENDIX).

*Report brought up on 22nd October, 1895, and ordered to be printed.*

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### ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

*Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.*

FRIDAY, THE 21ST DAY OF JUNE, 1895.

*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, Mr. G. Hutchison, Mr. Lang, Mr. Montgomery, Dr. Newman, Mr. Saunders, Hon. Mr. Seddon, Hon. Sir R. Stout, Mr. Tanner, and the mover."—(Hon. Mr. SEDDON, for Hon. Mr. WARD.)

WEDNESDAY, THE 24TH DAY OF JULY, 1895.

*Ordered*, "That the names of Mr. T. Mackenzie and Mr. J. McGowan be added to the Public Accounts Committee."—(Hon. Mr. WARD.)

TUESDAY, THE 24TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1895.

*Ordered*, "That the names of the Hon. Mr. Larnach, Mr. Hogg, and Mr. Button be added to the Public Accounts Committee."—(Hon. Mr. WARD.)

WEDNESDAY, THE 25TH DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 1895.

*Ordered*, That the name of Mr. Hogg be discharged from the Public Accounts Committee, and the name of Mr. T. Thompson substituted in lieu thereof."—(Hon. Mr. SEDDON.)

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### REPORT.

1. THE Committee find that on the 31st day of January, 1895, the Government, through the Public Works Department, entered into a contract with Messrs. Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co. for the supply of general ironmongery, iron, steel, ship-chandlery, cement, lime, drain-pipes, and tents for the current year ending 31st December, 1895.

2. That it had been alleged by one James Hendry Jenkins, a former employé of the contractors, that in carrying out the said contract they wilfully made certain overcharges and mistakes of weights and measures in respect of goods supplied.

3. The Committee have sat for twenty-two days hearing evidence, and have examined twenty witnesses for and against the allegations made.

4. From the evidence given by the said J. H. Jenkins, and Messrs. Gellatly (manager) and Bridson (ironmonger), for the contractors, and Messrs. Blow, Wilson, Ibbetson, Turner, and Biddell, officers in the service of the Government, the Committee find that there has been carelessness and looseness on the part of the contractors in connection with the delivery of goods under the said contract, and for these irregularities the Committee consider the manager and servants of the contractors responsible; but there is no evidence of fraud on the part of the contractors.

5. The Committee find that there was a number of errors in the vouchers sent by the contractors to the Government. These errors consisted for the most part of errors in weight and price, or were owing to wrong or inferior goods being supplied. They were, however, in many instances satisfactorily explained; but in connection with the supply of tents an instance was brought before the Committee in which very inferior tents were supplied in lieu of tents according to sample ordered by the Government.