

6. The Committee also find that under the terms of the contract the several Government departments have the right to order and take separate delivery of goods. The Committee also find that the Railway and Marine Departments maintain efficient checks upon goods received from contractors. The Public Works and Lands and Survey Departments each exercise a fair check on goods supplied where delivery is taken at Wellington. When, however, goods are sent by the contractors to the order of the several departments outside of Wellington the Committee are of opinion that the present system of check is defective.

7. The Committee therefore recommend that a more efficient system of check should be established by the Government, whereby all goods purchased should be, in the first place, taken delivery of at central stores in the several chief cities, and afterwards distributed to the different departments for the works as required. While such a system might entail some extra expense in handling goods, yet the Committee consider a greater compensating benefit would accrue to the colony by the safer and more satisfactory management of such important and necessary annual business.

8. During the course of the investigation it came to the knowledge of the Committee that the managing partner at Wellington of Messrs. Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co. had been accepted by the Government as bondsman for the proper carrying-out of their contract. The Committee think that this is objectionable, and that a bondsman should have no interest as a partner in any contract with the Government.

22nd October, 1895.

W. J. M. LARNACH,
Chairman.

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS.

WEDNESDAY, 25TH JULY, 1895.

Present: Mr. Guinness, Mr. G. Hutchison, Mr. Lang, Mr. T. Mackenzie, Mr. McGowan, Mr. Montgomery, Dr. Newman, Mr. Saunders (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Seddon, Hon. Sir R. Stout, Mr. Tanner, Hon. Mr. Ward.

The Orders of Reference of the 21st and 24th June, 1895, read by the Clerk.

Election of Chairman.

On the motion of the Hon. Mr. Ward, *Resolved*, That Mr. Saunders be appointed Chairman.

Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co.'s Contract—

Mr. G. Hutchison gave notice to move, That this Committee investigate the manner in which the contract of Messrs. Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co. with the Government has been performed, and that the Minister for Public Works be requested to arrange for the attendance of the Crown Solicitor to conduct the proceedings before the Committee.

FRIDAY, 2ND AUGUST, 1895.

Present: Mr. Guinness, Mr. G. Hutchison, Mr. Lang, Mr. T. Mackenzie, Mr. McGowan, Mr. Montgomery, Dr. Newman, Mr. Saunders (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Seddon, Hon. Sir R. Stout, Mr. Tanner, Hon. Mr. Ward.

The minutes of the previous meeting read and confirmed.

Mr. G. Hutchison moved, That this Committee investigate the manner in which the contract of Messrs. Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co. with the Government has been performed, and that the Minister for Public Works be requested to arrange for the attendance of the Crown Solicitor to conduct the proceedings before the Committee.

After discussion it was resolved, on the motion of the Hon. the Premier, to adjourn the further consideration of the motion till Friday next.

The Committee then adjourned until Friday next, at 11 o'clock a.m.

FRIDAY, 9TH AUGUST, 1895.

Present: Mr. Guinness, Mr. G. Hutchison, Mr. Lang, Mr. T. Mackenzie, Mr. McGowan, Mr. Montgomery, Mr. Saunders (Chairman), Hon. Mr. Seddon, Hon. Sir R. Stout, Mr. Tanner, Hon. Mr. Ward.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and confirmed.

Mr. Alexander MacNeil, of Melbourne, a member of the firm of Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co., attended the Committee, and stated he was passing through Wellington on his way back to Australia, and said that whilst in Dunedin he had seen a telegram in the *Dunedin Star* that the Committee was to inquire into the manner their contract had been carried out; and he asked that at any such inquiry his brother, Mr. Hugh MacNeil, of Dunedin, should be allowed to be present.

After discussion it was resolved, on the motion of the Hon. Mr. Seddon, To strike out from Mr. G. Hutchison's notice of motion the following words: "the Minister for Public Works be requested to arrange for the attendance of the Crown Solicitor to conduct the proceedings before the Committee," and to insert in lieu thereof the following: "Messrs. Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co. may be represented before this Committee, and that the Crown be represented by counsel; and also that a copy of the charges be supplied to Messrs. Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co.; and that the Public Works Department be asked to furnish to the Committee a statement in connection with the matter."