

35. Have you ever had the same errors of overcharge, or more errors in respect to weight than you have had in this contract?—No; I have not.

36. You are only speaking from partial information when you say that the number is not greater than in Stewart's contract, because you have not gone through all the vouchers, but only through a few of them?—I have gone through the vouchers belonging to the Public Works Department.

37. *Mr. Reid.*] In going through the vouchers would you prefer to take the statements of your own officers or Mr. Menteath's figures?—I would prefer to take the statements of my own officers.

38. As to the amounts of goods relatively supplied to the Railway Department, is your statement proximate or tentative, or is it mere guess?—It is not guess; I got certain data from the storekeepers as to the proportion they receive; and, for the amount of bar and plate-iron, I got the information from Mr. Felton, the Railway Stores-manager.

39. Have you any data for your estimate of the amount supplied to the Public Works Department?—For the amount of iron-work?

39A. You have formed some notion of the proportion being so much. What I ask is, whether you have data for setting down so much to the Public Works Department, or whether it is only a guess?—Well, it is but little more, so far as the Public Works is concerned.

40. Did you not, as a matter of fact, report officially that the total amount of goods supplied to the Public Works Department during the period you mention was £800?—Yes.

41. That would show a larger proportion than you thought?—Yes.

41A. *Mr. Skerrett.*] Surely you are inaccurate in your estimate given in answer to Mr. Menteath's question. Do I understand you to say that the proportion of contract charged to Public Works would be as £4,000 is to £2,000?—I have just corrected that.

42. What should it be?—I have had the actual figures taken out, totalling in six months £5,448 4s. 2d. (see Appendix) to Public Works.

44. *Hon. Member.*] And to the Railways?—£2,013 2s. 10d.

45. *Mr. Skerrett.*] Surely there must be some mistake?—As far as outside districts are concerned, my evidence is approximate; I cannot say what goes into the outside districts.

46. Would you prefer to take it from Messrs. Briscoe and MacNeil's books?—I have very little means of saying what is used in the outside districts.

47. Would you say that your evidence on these points is not reliable, through lack of sufficient data?—I have not the data on which to form an accurate estimate.

48. Therefore your evidence on this point—the Committee could not act upon it?—I cannot say what the Committee would do in the matter.

49. Would you say it was sufficient to induce the Committee to act on it?—I do not ask the Committee to act; I merely say that I have given you the information as well as I could.

50. You must not complain if they should want better evidence?—I have told you my data is insufficient.

51. You have told us that you would not be surprised to hear that the total of deductions amounted to £52?—I have said so.

52. Could you give me the proportion of reductions which are attributable to excessive weights or excessive measurements?—I cannot; I only think it would amount to about 50 per cent.

53. *Hon. Member.*—£25.

54. *Mr. G. Hutchison.*] I wish to ask you a question as to the voucher relating to glass from Tingey's. Who discovered that error; it is in a voucher signed by you?—The department discovered the error.

55. *Mr. Menteath.*] That is Exhibit 25.

56. *Mr. G. Hutchison.*] Would you say who discovered that error?—I understand it was corrected in my office; the clerk who checked the account is here, Mr. Biddell.

57. Was it corrected before you signed it?—Yes.

58. When it was corrected you signed it?—Yes.

59. What was the date?—28th June, 1895.

60. There is a difference between £51 15s. 6d. Yours is £52?

61. *Mr. Tanner.*] I have to ask you about the proportion of the contract that went to Public Works, as against that to the Railway Department. You are a witness from the Public Works Department?—I am.

62. You say that, from the data you had before you, the figures upon which you made the statement, that the proportion which went to the Railway was one-third?—That is what I took it to be.

63. Do you adhere to that statement now, in face of the figures quoted?—I am not prepared to do so.

64. You say you would not be surprised if it did amount to £52 on £522?—I said I could not say what the vouchers would be likely to total, but I would not be surprised if the overcharges did amount to £52.

65. It has been suggested that on the accounts produced there has been an overcharge of 10 per cent. of the total?—It would be so if Jenkins's statement were correct.

66. As £500 is only the fifth of £2,500, does it not suggest itself to you that there is a couple of hundred pounds still undiscovered?—I do not think so, the accounts have been closely checked.

67. Some of them, or all?—All of them.

68. Do you mean by that that the accounts, all of them, £2,500, have been checked?—I have checked the whole in my district.

69. In your district? I find that you gentlemen who are officers of the Government, while you define your duties strictly, take responsibility for as little as possible; what do you mean by your district?—The Wellington district. Some of these goods have been sent up country.