

105. Do you remember the date when he called?—In April last. [Report of Department referred to.]

106. Did he make any statement to you in reference to the subject-matter of the contract?—He did.

107. In consequence of that did you take any action?—I did.

108. What action? Was anything communicated to the contractors in consequence of that action?—No; not to the contractors.

109. It was merely departmental action?—Yes.

110. *Mr. Montgomery.*] How many instances of incorrect charges are you aware of, we will say, besides the ones you have mentioned?—Personally, very few; I understand, from conversation with the Chief Clerk in the office, there are a good many. I cannot give evidence at first hand.

111. When you drew up the report, then, it was based a good deal on evidence that will be called?—Yes; the bulk of that is not my own evidence; but, as head of the department, I collected the evidence together for the Committee.

112. It is based partly on Jenkins's evidence and partly on evidence which will be before us?—Yes.

113. As to Jenkins's evidence, it was found it was in every instance borne out by the facts?—Jenkins said the goods were high-charged at weighing time, and that they actually weighed so much less. We had similar goods weighed, and I was informed they did weigh less at the time; but I am since informed that some of these weights are incorrect.

114. This report does not quite tally with your evidence?—Not quite.

115. This was a general report, and you have had more information since?—Yes.

116. *Mr. Tanner.*] You said in your evidence that Jenkins informed you that slips were handed to him with these weights put in, and that then another weight was inserted instead?—He first jotted them down on a slip of paper, and handed it to Bridson, who instructed him how to charge.

117. Did Jenkins show you these alterations?—No.

118. Did he produce them to you?—Not to me, but to the Chief Clerk.

119. Had you any knowledge of these slips being in existence?—No.

120. Can you tell me the proportion of error—that is, the value, as far as you have ascertained?—The proportion is simply this: The contract is of great magnitude; I think I said it was worth £6,000 a year, but that is too low an estimate.

121. But that contract had been in existence for only about three months?—It was signed on the 6th February.

122. And we are inquiring up to the end of May?—Yes. At £500 a month it would be equal to about £1,500, or £2,000, in that time.

123. You do not know the amount of overcharges?—No, but I should say about £25.

124. How much undercharges?—About £3.

125. *Mr. Lang.*] What is the difference in price between sanitary and common lead pipe; is it not one and the same thing?—No; common lead pipe is imported in coils; sanitary pipe in straight pieces, and consequently is much more expensive to land here, and a higher price is paid for it.

126. *Mr. McGowan.*] Would you please say how many contracts you have had experience with?—Many hundreds in the Public Works Department.

127. I mean contracts in this particular branch—stores?—Perhaps about a dozen.

128. I presume it has been your experience with them all that there have been discrepancies?—Yes.

129. Have the discrepancies since the time of Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co.'s contract been, in your opinion, larger than in previous ones?—I think they have, with the exception, perhaps, of Stewart and Co. I think they would take the palm.

130. *Mr. Guinness.*] I want you to look at voucher No. 7038, item sheet-lead, charged 1cwt. and 14lb. I think Mr. Jenkins gave evidence that was charged 1cwt. 1qr. ?—He said it appeared as 1cwt. 2qr. 14lb.

131. Did you notice that voucher, as making the correct charge of 1cwt. and 14lb., which you say is correct, and which Mr. Jenkins said should be the amount properly chargeable: did you notice that it is in his own handwriting?—Yes.

132. Is there any correction in that voucher?—No, the error must have been discovered before the account was sent in. I thought at first it had been seen to be incorrect, and sent back by our clerk for corrections, but on inquiry I find he has no knowledge of it.

133. Is that the only voucher sent in, as far as you know, in reference to that item?—Yes, so far as I know.

134. *Mr. Montgomery.*] It is contended in several cases that the entries and vouchers do not correspond. The vouchers were correct in several cases, you say?—I think I only said one.

135. You mentioned a man called R. G. Knight. In consequence of the complaint he made to you, did you have any communication with the firm of Briscoe, MacNeil, and Co., or their employés?—The complaint was made to me in reference to the supply of tents to another department, and I merely communicated with that department.

JOHN ALEXANDER WILSON sworn and examined.

136. *Mr. Reid.*] You are Resident Engineer for Wellington, and also Engineer in charge of this contract?—Yes.

137. Are you aware of the procedure for checking accounts of stores delivered?—Yes, I know

138. Please tell the Committee the procedure for the examination and delivery of articles.—The method adopted is that an inspector or head man or some trustworthy person receives them at the works.