

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 23RD AUGUST, 1912.

AUGUSTUS HAMILTON, Director of the Dominion Museum, examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Do you consider there is any necessity for any arrangement of the scientific work in the publications of the Government throughout the Dominion?—Yes. I think it would be more convenient to the people of this Dominion if they could obtain scientific reports on various matters, such as the Sandhills Report, or the Forestry Report, in book form instead of having to look for them in the Appendices to the Journals of the House. I think the Appendices to the Journals might contain a summary of scientific reports, and state where the full reports could be obtained. It would lessen the cost of the Journals, and revenue could be derived from the sale of the book containing the reports, which would not be the case if the reports were merely printed in the Appendices to the Journals of the House.

2. Are you satisfied with the present government of the Dominion Museum?—I am satisfied with the way Ministers have treated the Museum so far as they have been able to do it; but I consider that a Board would be in a better position to look after the interests of the Museum than the Minister, as at present, with no Board. I may instance the Board of Trustees such as they have in Sydney, Melbourne, the British Museum, the Field Museum in America, and other museums, who are in a position to go to the public direct if they desire to raise funds outside. These Boards can ask for help for their museums, while the Minister cannot do that, nor can the Director, and consequently no one is interested in the Museum here. I think it would be an aid to the Minister, who may not have any scientific attainments, if he could obtain advice from time to time. A Board of Trustees would give greater force to the Minister, and I think persons who intend giving presentations to the Museum, or helping it in any way, would sooner give a donation to a permanent Board than to the Government, which is changed from time to time, with the Ministers. Again, I think in the matter of rules and regulations and general administration it would be better to adopt some more severe system than is in force at the present time. The rules and regulations of the different museums, including the old regulations, are much more severe than any we have at the present time, and I think it would be an advantage to the Museum to bring such regulations and by-laws into force.

3. Would you give this Board power to employ the officials, and so on?—That, of course, would be subject to the approval of the Minister. The Board would simply recommend to the Minister, and the appointments would still be Ministerial appointments. The Government would have a preponderating representation on the Board. I would recommend a certain number of members of the House of Representatives, and some outside persons from scientific bodies and from bodies which are known to take an interest in science should compose the Board.

4. *Mr. Anderson.*] It would be a very large Board?—I think that is necessary. You will see what is done in the case of the Australian Museum.

5. *Hon. Mr. Herdman.*] How is that constituted?—It is constituted by Act of Parliament.

6. What is the personnel of the Board?—The personnel of the Board includes high officials such as the Chief Justice, the Colonial Secretary, the Attorney-General, the Colonial Treasurer, the Auditor-General, and the President of the Medical Board. But the only officers who attend and who are really considered important members of the Board are the Auditor-General and Government Architect.

7. There are some prominent citizens and scientists on the Board?—Yes.

8. Do they attend?—Yes, they attend largely.

9. Is it found that their advice is of very great service?—Yes, very great service. The report of the Trustees of the Australian Museum shows the attendance during 1909 as follows: Crown Trustee, J. C. Cox, Esq., M.D., F.L.S., C.M.Z.S., 19; Official Trustees—His Honour the Chief Justice, 0; Hon. the Colonial Secretary, 0; Hon. the Attorney-General, 0; Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, 0; the Auditor-General (Mr. J. Vernon), 12; the President of the Medical Board (Sir P. S. Jones), 6; Executive Trustees—H. H. B. Bradley, Esq., 16; Surgeon-General W. D. Campbell Williams, 2; Professor W. A. Haswell, 6; Professor T. W. Edgeworth David, 4; Professor T. J. Wilson, 5; T. Storie Dixon, 17; W. H. Hargraves, 19; E. A. Rennie, 7; Hugh Pollock, 13; Reuter E. Roth, 14; Eric Sinclair, M.D., 15; W. L. Vernon, 11. The number of meetings during the year was eleven ordinary, one special, and seventeen committee.

10. *Mr. Anderson.*] Are those gentlemen who attended so regularly scientific men?—Yes, all scientific men interested in the Museum.

11. Does that not go to show that instead of appointing ordinary officials it would be better to appoint purely scientific men as members of the Board?—I think it would be better from a Government point of view to have representation on the Board. I might mention that at the present time no annual report is required for the Museum, and the Museum has no opportunity of being represented in Parliament by an annual report.

12. *The Chairman.*] Do you not report at all to your official head?—No, there has been no report since I came here, some nine years ago.

13. *Mr. Sidey.*] I want to know whether you are dissatisfied with your present condition under Government control?—Not so far as the conditions will allow. I think they could be made far better under the proposal now before the Committee.