

that he should have been asleep at the beginning of the debate, when Mr. Mitchelson spoke—at the very first of the debate on the Public Works Statement. It will be found in pages 674, 676, and also 686, of *Hansard*, the last volume of last year, that he made interjections during the debate. These, presumably, were made when he was awake. My charge then, Sir, is that he traded on false figures, and that he never altered the body of the statement in a manner called for by the alteration of the figures. I think, Sir, the Committee will see it was not only in the concluding paragraph, which Mr. Blow, I think, rather implies was hastily written, and when the Statement was mainly prepared, but it was in one of the first and opening paragraphs. Here these words occur: "That the expenditure had been less during the past year than it has been for years past." I think Mr. Seddon knew of the mistake, and had opportunities in the House of publicly making explanations which would have put the public right in a matter of very large importance. He neglected to do so. It seems to me, so far as I have read the papers, that he misled the House and allowed the figures to be altered without altering the deductions made from those figures. He had them altered, as I have shown, in the *Hansard* proof, and, as I have said, knowingly allowed them to be altered in the Public Works Statement and in the Appendix, silently and secretly, as well as in *Hansard*, silently and secretly, as far as the public were concerned. It appears to me whether he himself knew—whether the alteration was made by an under-secretary or by himself is much the same thing, because he adopted the alteration and knew it had been made; and it seems to me the appropriation to himself of credit which did not belong to him, by circulating statements the veracity of which depended on figures which were silently and secretly altered, was a surreptitious obtaining of credit. I do not know, Sir, there is anything more I need say, but, of course, I am open to answer any inquiries.

8. Do you remember the conclusion of the debate on the Public Works Statement? Were you present?—I imagine so, Sir. I am very seldom out of the House.

9. Do you remember the Minister for Public Works did not reply?—I know that from having seen the records recently.

10. You do not recollect the circumstances?—Oh, I have no doubt he did not reply, because it does not appear in *Hansard*.

11. On the 5th October, just after the question was put, do you remember the Minister standing up to reply?—No, I cannot say I do.

12. And stating to the House that he had been asleep when the question had been put. You do not remember that?—No, I do not remember that. But that was not the only date on which the statement was made, and on which he had the opportunity of publicly correcting the error. My contention is that it ought to have been most formally corrected, and a printed alteration circulated with the documents that went to the public.

13. I was merely asking you as to a matter of fact, as to whether you remembered?—No, I do not.

14. *Dr. Newman.*] Do you know this was a short debate begun by Mr Richardson?—Yes.

15. Do you know how often Mr. Seddon spoke in the course of the debate?—There are three or four interjections, I think. I do not recollect exactly, but there are certainly three.

16. Were there eight?—I do not know. No, not eight, as far as I know.

17. Have you counted?—No, I have not, but I know there are interjections by Mr. Seddon on pages 674, 676, and 686 which show that at the time he was presumably awake.

18. *Mr. Guinness.*] Is it anything unusual, Mr. Rolleston, for a printed statement submitted to the House and afterwards found to be in error, before it is printed for circulation, to be corrected; supposing it was a typographical error?—You ask me whether my experience has led me to think there have been alterations made?

19. Yes?—I could not say. But I can only say, also, that this is not a clerical error. When considerable arguments are founded upon it it is entirely apart from any question of clerical error; but, of course, that would be a matter of evidence. The answer to your question the Committee would get from officers who are better acquainted with the state of things. I could not say, of my own knowledge. I do not know of any case, and I think it would be an extremely dangerous precedent to admit, if it had been done, that any record for transmission to the public had been altered after it was put on the table of the House.

20. *Mr. G. Hutchison.*] Can you give us the reference to the statement you made as to the correction of the figures in *Hansard* proof?—September 27th was the date on which the Public Works Statement was delivered, and presumably it would appear within the ordinary period.

21. *Hon. Mr. Seddon.*] The Public Works Statement is in *Hansard*?—Yes; I say it is in *Hansard*, and it must have appeared in *Hansard* within a few days, with the corrections in it.

22. *Mr. G. Hutchison.*] Comparing the Public Works Statement in *Hansard* with the copy laid on the table, you say the figures have been altered?—Yes.

23. That is what you mean by *Hansard* proof?—Yes.

24. In *Hansard*, you mean, the figures are different to the figures laid on the table?—Yes.

25. There is no speech of Mr. Seddon's?—No.

26. *Hon. Mr. Seddon.*] The Public Works Statement is on page 448.

27. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] It is stated Mr. Seddon knew of the mistake, and had an opportunity of correcting the false impression the Statement conveyed?—Yes.

28. Could you state what opportunities?—Yes. On October 11th, *Hansard*, page 885.

29. What was the occasion?—In the debate upon the Appropriation Bill, that was the very last day, Mr. Richardson spoke as follows: "There can be no doubt whatever that the Government gained credit throughout the colony upon the assumption that during the past year they had reduced the amount of the public debt by £117,000. It has been shown that was a fallacious statement, and that instead of a reduction there has been an increase of over £330,000; but the Government got credit for this reduction, which never took place. Then, again, the Public Works