

want to know did I question the statement, or do you question the statement of Mr. Richardson, when he said the expenditure in the Financial Statement is given as £391,000?—No, the Financial Statement, I believe, is correct; but that makes it all the worse.

83. I do not want an expression of opinion?—That is the gravamen of my charge.

84. Mr. Richardson, if you read on, goes on to show the discrepancy. He says, "The expenditure is shown in the copy of the Public Works Statement which was circulated first to be £38,000 less than last year; whereas the expenditure last year was really £57,000 in excess, or a difference in position between under-expenditure and over-expenditure of not less than £96,000"?—Yes.

85. The first Statement laid on the table of the House shows £296,978, does it not?—Yes, I think so.

86. As shown in the Financial Statement it is £391,000?—Yes, I presume that is so.

87. As shown in the table of the Public Works Statement it is £391,000?—Is it so? the figures are not given together.

88. I am speaking about the tables?—You can deduce it from the tables, but it is not in the tables as it stands.

89. At all events, you would not say it was not in the tables, and that it was not in the Financial Statement?—I will not say it is not in.

90. Do you not think before you made such a grave charge it was your duty to have ascertained these facts?—Not at all. I think my charge is that the public have been grossly misled by the first and last paragraphs of the Public Works Statement.

91. You think the public would not believe Mr. G. F. Richardson and the Hon. Mr. Mitchelson—that the public would not believe the Financial Statement or the tables of the Public Works Statement?—Would you mind asking that again?

92. You do not deny it is in the Financial Statement?—That, of course, is capable of verification.

93. You do not say that Mr. Richardson does not say so?—Yes; and he follows it up with the same charge I am now making, in the strongest terms.

94. Does he not say, "I see in the Financial Statement the expenditure of the Loan Fund is given as £391,000"?—I have not looked up that particular matter. I believe it is deducible from the figures.

95. I ask you to look at what he said. Does he not say—Mr. Richardson, page 682: "In the Financial Statement the expenditure of Loan Fund is £391,000"?—Yes.

96. That is public information, is it not?—That is public information.

97. That is the Financial Statement, supplemented by Mr. Richardson?—Yes, I presume so.

98. Then, the Hon. Mr. Mitchelson, page 665, says: "The same table shows," that is, Table I. attached to the Public Works Statement, "the correct figures, showing the expenditure that has taken place from 1881 down to 1891–92, and it will be found there, in D.–1., Table D, that the expenditure on public works throughout the colony for the year 1890–91 amounted to only £334,000. I will give the round figures, and not trouble about the odd amounts. The same table shows that the expenditure during the last financial year amounted to the sum of £391,000, showing that the honourable gentleman in his Statement was only out to the extent of £56,000. If honourable members will also turn up the Financial Statement they will see that the Colonial Treasurer shows in the tables attached to it that the expenditure on public works for the past financial year amounted to £391,000."

99. Now, I ask you, seeing it is in the Financial Statement, and in the tables of the Public Works Statement also, does it not show that being in this particular paragraph was an error, which both the Financial Statement and the table proves?—That does not alter my view of the case at all.

100. I do not ask you to alter your views, but I ask you a plain question Yes or no, does it not show palpably it is an error?—No doubt it was an error, and upon that error was founded a claim to credit which does not belong to the Government.

101. How could there be anything "secret" or "silent," or "surreptitious" when by these other statements the correct amount is shown?—The figures were altered without any indication on the part of the Minister to the public of the alteration. That is the first charge, and that, I think, is absolutely shown. They were secretly and silently altered, in a manner which, no doubt, the Committee will find out.

102. That is the point I want to get you to. When you made that statement in the House, did you not by it charge me with having altered the figures at that particular place for the purpose of leaving out what was in the Statement as regards the reduction of expenditure, and that I had done it "secretly, silently, and surreptitiously"?—Clearly, the alteration did not bear out the Statement; it falsified it.

*Mr. G. Hutchison:* The charge is not that you altered it from the correct to the incorrect figures.

*Hon. Mr. Seddon:* You must take the second part of Mr. Rolleston's charge with this—that it was done for the purpose of altering.

*Hon. Mr. Rolleston:* I must ask that my statement be taken as it is. My statement is in *Hansard*.

*The Chairman:* The impression upon my mind was that the charge was that a smaller amount had been put into the Public Works Statement to lead to the impression that there had been less expenditure, and that afterwards the correct amount was put in.

*Hon. Mr. Rolleston:* I never made that charge; but it was made in the House.

103. *Hon. Mr. Seddon:* It was made in the House by Mr. Richardson, and supplemented by Mr. Rolleston?—No.

*Hon. Mr. Seddon:* That was the accusation; and then Mr. Rolleston followed by making this accusation.