

152. For making these alterations?—Entirely so. He has the custody of the papers. No alteration could have been made without the Government Printer's sanction or knowledge, as he had the custody of the papers.

153. Is it usual, do you know, for the Government Printer to make alterations without authority in public documents?—The Government Printer, in the matter of printed documents, is entirely under the control of the Government. In manuscript documents he would make no alteration except those authorised by the officers of the House. Of printed documents we have no knowledge whatever, except the printed copy laid on the table.

154. The responsibility for the alteration rests, then?—It rests entirely with the Printer.

155. It rests in the first place with the Government Printer, who receives his authority from Ministers?—From the Executive Government.

156. *Hon. Mr. Seddon.* How long has this system obtained, Mr. Friend—this system regarding printed documents? Has it not been in force ever since you have been in the House?—Yes, certainly, for more than a quarter of a century; for thirty years. I might say, in reference to that, that when I first joined documents used to be printed by officers of the House. The Governor's despatches and all were sent in manuscript before the session; but that was only, I think, for the first year—1863.

157. You would not be surprised to hear that many of the printed documents laid upon the table as printed differ from the copy laid upon the table?—I certainly should be very much surprised. I was not aware of the fact at all. I never had my attention called to it.

158. Have you seen alterations made in Statements—that is, alterations as from the printed copy laid upon the table—on that copy itself, have you seen manuscript notes and alterations?—No; not to my knowledge or recollection.

159. Is this the document, to the best of your belief, that was laid on the table?—That is the document. It is authenticated by the House stamp on the day it was laid upon the table, and that letter and number corresponds to the letter or number in the Journals.

160. And that document has not been tampered with in any way?—Certainly not.

161. Will you turn to the table there, and see what the amount is in Table I., second column. Under the head of "General Statement of Position of Public Works Fund on 31st March, 1892," printed on page 2, there is the statement, "£391,612, including £100,000 paid off." Do you see £491,612?—Yes.

162. Now, turn to Table I. in the Appendix. You see what it shows in the second column?—Yes; £391,612.

163. Does that agree with the amount in the Appendices of the Journals of the House?—I have never examined them.

164. Will you examine them?—Yes. [After examination.] Yes; that is the same.

165. It is the same?—Yes.

166. That which appears in Table I. of the original statement laid upon the table of the House, and that appearing in the Appendix agree?—The figures are the same.

The Committee then adjourned.

TUESDAY, 15TH AUGUST, 1893.

Mr. HORATIO JOHN HOOPER BLOW examined.

169. *The Chairman.* Mr. Blow, what position do you occupy in the public Service?—I am the Under-Secretary for Public Works.

170. Are you aware of an alteration having been made in the Public Works Statement after it was laid on the table of the House last session?—I am.

171. Could you state to the Committee what you know of that alteration—the history of it?—There is very little, I think, that I can add to the memoranda I have already written.

172. Have you that memoranda?—Yes. It has been printed, the first one as D.-4 of this session [produced], and the second (the one of 26th July) does not seem to have had any number assigned to it at present. (See Appendix A.)

*Mr. Seddon:* It would be as laid on the table of the House, 142.-D, 1893.

173. *The Chairman.* You produce that memorandum?—Yes. In it I said, "The total expenditure under the Public Works Fund for 1891-92 was £391,612, as shown in the Appendix to the Statement of 1892, and also in the general statement of the position of the Public Works Fund printed on page 2 of the Statement." I further stated that receipts in aid were received during the year to the amount of £95,634, as shown in Table I. of the Appendix to the Statement, and that if that amount is deducted from the gross total, £391,612, we get a net amount of £295,978, which is the figure originally printed in the "conclusion" paragraph of the Statement. I further stated that it was doubtless an error to print the net amount instead of the gross amount, but that, by pure mischance, the net amount had got printed instead of the gross amount. Then, in my later memorandum of the 26th July, 1893, I said that the responsibility for the error rested entirely with myself and the departmental officers, as I showed these figures to the Premier, and he wrote the paragraph, relying on the accuracy of the figures, which subsequently proved to be incorrect, by the inadvertent substitution of the net for the gross expenditure for 1891-92. I myself discovered the error on the evening the Statement was tabled, and I had it corrected the first thing the following morning.

174. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.* You mean the evening it was laid on the table?—Yes, sir. Directly the Statement was put on the table I went back to the office and read it quietly through, and saw at once that the net figures had inadvertently been printed in the paragraph instead of the gross;