

and, as only a very few copies had then been printed, I immediately rectified the mistake, so that the error should not travel further than could be avoided.

175. *The Chairman.*] You say the alteration was made the first thing the following morning :—Yes.

176. By your direction ?—Yes.

177. Was that done without communicating with the Premier ?—Yes, sir. The alteration was made by me personally on the morning of the 28th instant. I went to the printing office and saw the alteration made.

178. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] To whom did you give your orders ?—I took a copy of the Statement with the corrected figures in ink, I believe, in the margin, and gave it to the Overseer in charge. I am speaking on that matter subject to correction. I cannot say positively, but I think that was the course I adopted.

179. What was his name ?—Mr. Burns was the Overseer in charge then ; he is so still.

180. *The Chairman.*] Is there anything else you can state about the matter ?—I do not think of anything else. I shall be very happy to answer any questions that any member of the Committee may wish put to me.

181. *Dr. Newman.*] Who altered it in *Hansard*, Mr. Blow ?—The *Hansard* proofs of Statements are always read over with the copy of the Statement as it is finally issued ; by the Minister's Secretary generally. That is the usual course.

182. By whom ?—By the Minister's Private Secretary. Of course the Private Secretary would find this inaccuracy and correct it.

183. Oh, you are guessing. I do not want you to tell me if you do not know ?—I do not know of my own knowledge. I am merely telling you what is the rule.

*Hon. Mr. Seddon* : Of course it is evidence if the head of a department states that it is a rule.

*Hon. Sir J. Hall* : Oh, yes ; a note has been taken of the rule.

184. *Dr. Newman.*] In your other memorandum—that of the 26th July, 1893—you say the “conclusion” paragraph of the Statement was not written till shortly before the Statement was tabled ?—That is true. The “conclusion” paragraph would naturally be about the last paragraph that was written.

185. Are you aware that it occurs in the third paragraph of the Statement, and not solely in the “conclusion” ?—That what occurs in the third paragraph ?

186. This phrase, “that the expenditure thereon had been less during the past year than it has been for years past,” showing that this has been handed in—— ?—I do not read that paragraph in the way you do. I take it the Minister means that the expenditure for the past year was less than it had been in previous years—taking an average—not that it was less than in any one previous year.

*Hon. Sir J. Hall* : Let us get hold of the paragraph.

*Hon. Mr. Seddon* : It is in the plural, “years.”

*The Chairman* : It is a liberal interpretation of the words.

*Hon. Mr. Seddon* : It reads (*Hansard* of last year, page 433) : “Results have proved, however, that fair progress has been made with our necessary reproductive public works, and yet the expenditure thereon has been less during the past year than it has been for years past, and still the colony has advanced.” I did not say it had been less than last year.

187. *Dr. Newman.*] In your letter, D.—4, 1893, Mr. Blow, you will see you say, “A small sum of £111 was recovered during the year on account of a grant made to a local body in a previous year, and if this is deducted the expenditure of the year becomes £391,501, as shown in ‘conclusion’ paragraph on page 14 of the Public Works Statement, 1892, and in the last column but one of Table C. attached to same Statement.”

*Mr. Blow* : The only reason for mentioning that was, that I wanted to show that this figure came out several times, either in the body of the Statement or in the Appendix attached to it.

188. I want to know why you deducted the £111 and called it £391,501 instead of £391,612 ?—That was a recovery made on account of the services of a previous year.

189. But the total expenditure was £391,612, was it not ?—Yes ; but it is quite usual to deduct the recoveries.

190. Why, if you deducted the £111 in the amended Statement, did you not deduct the £95,634 receipts in aid during the year ?—Because the £111 was a recovery ; whereas the £95,634 was largely made up of ways and means brought to credit of the Public Works Fund, which were not recoveries in any sense of the word.

191. Will you tell me what the gross expenditure for the year was ?—£391,612.

192. Are you aware what it is in the Public Works Statement as amended ?—Yes ; £111 short of that.

193. *Mr. Wright.*] Who wrote the Public Works Statement, Mr. Blow ? Was it written by you or by the Minister for Public Works ?—I do not think that is quite a proper question. The whole Statement is certainly the Minister's. At his direction I may have written some of the paragraphs, but he is responsible for everything in it.

194. Was it submitted to you to correct the figures ?—As regards the figures, I supplied them in nearly every instance.

195. You are responsible ?—Yes.

196. You say you discovered this large error immediately after the Statement had been laid on the table of the House ?—I think it is a little unfair to call it an error, Sir. The figure is perfectly right, but happens to be the net expenditure, and the other the gross.

197. That is a difference of opinion. You discovered the error, and you caused that error to be corrected—you sent instructions to the foreman of the printers ?—I caused the net expenditure to be taken out and the gross to be put in.