

279. I do not think you ought to limit it to "if the Premier has no objection."

*Hon. Mr. Seddon*: I agree to the production of this particular paragraph—this concluding paragraph. You are entitled to the first print of that.

280. *Mr. G. Hutchison*: No more?

*Hon. Mr. Seddon*: Certainly not, after the Chairman's ruling.

*Mr. Blow*: I produce the print of the concluding paragraph, showing the revision that it subsequently went through. [Exhibit 2 produced.]

281. *Hon. Mr. Seddon*.] What are the figures in that?—The figures are quite unaltered.

282. But what are they?—The figures for 1891-92 are £295,978. The print, of course, is an identical copy of the draft; then it underwent a subsequent revision, but the figures were not altered.

283. *Mr. G. Hutchison*.] Did you order the copies to be printed?—Yes.

284. You gave the order?—Yes.

285. How many copies did you order to be printed?—I did not name the number. I simply authorised the Statement to be printed off. The Printer prints the ordinary number for parliamentary papers, with any special number I may require for departmental use.

286. How many of these Statements as laid on the table were printed?—None at all of those as laid on the table were printed for general circulation.

287. You got none at all?—I got one myself, and one to be laid on the table of the House, and they were also distributed to members. It is usual, I may say, with important Ministerial Statements, to only print a short number on the night they are delivered, and to give an opportunity the following morning of making any corrections—immaterial corrections—that may be required.

288. *Hon. Sir J. Hall*.] What is that—just say it again?—It is usual to only print, on the night when the Ministerial Statement is delivered, a short number—that is to say, the smallest number possible that will suffice for the members of the House of Representatives and the Press.

289. What did you say about the object?—The object being to give an opportunity of making any trifling corrections that may be needed on the following morning. The total number is printed off the next day.

290. *Mr. G. Hutchison*.] Of Ministerial Statements out of your own department do you speak?—Yes, I have no doubt, the Financial Statement.

291. Do you know of your own knowledge?—If you will wait a moment I will tell you; you will not give me time to reply. I have myself seen a Colonial Treasurer read a Financial Statement that has been made up of sheets and slips, and extensively altered in red ink, the Statement being printed off in its proper form the next day.

292. When was that instance?—It has occurred more than once.

293. Give us one instance please?—When Sir Harry Atkinson introduced his Statement, and the alterations were made in the tariff.

294. That would be 1888?

*Hon. Sir R. Stout*: 1888 was the time.

295. *Mr. G. Hutchison*.] You say Sir Harry Atkinson's Statement, which introduced alterations in the tariff?—Yes.

296. That would be in 1888, I suggest?—I do not speak positively of the year.

297. I suggest it. We will take another instance if you can give it?—I cannot name another instance, but there have been others.

298. As to this one instance. Do you suggest there was any alterations made in the figures of the Statement after it had been delivered in the House?—Oh, I am not able to suggest what the alterations were; but the Statement, as read, was not in its final shape. It was made up of sheets of very unequal size, as anyone in the gallery could perceive.

299. But you do not suggest there was any alteration made in that Statement as bound in the Appendix and that delivered in the House, do you?—I am not in a position to do so, for this reason: unless one took a shorthand note of what was read in the House and compared it with the copy appearing in *Hansard*, you could not tell.

300. Then you do not know what there was?—I told you all I know. I cannot tell you anything more than that.

301. But this moment you indicated there were instances out of your own department.

*Hon. Mr. Seddon*: I think we may hear what the witness does know without being interrupted.

*The Chairman*: I think it would be better if questions were asked without comment.

302. *Mr. G. Hutchison*.] That is what I am doing. Can you, Mr. Blow, refer the Committee to any other instance in which the Public Works Statement has been altered after it has been delivered in the House, or laid on the table of the House?—I do not know that I can specifically, but I am aware, speaking generally, that alterations have been made. Of course, the practice of laying on the table has not prevailed very long, and I was going to remark just now, in answer to your former question, that a statement orally delivered in the House, and a statement laid on the table of the House, do not offer like facilities for correction. Any alteration made in a statement laid on the table of the House is abundantly apparent, but a statement orally delivered may be altered from beginning to end, and no one could say that it had been altered at all. As a Government officer, I know that statements are not always in their complete form when brought down to the House, being put into complete form the next morning. Of course, no Minister would make an important alteration, or any other than a quite immaterial one.

303. Then I understand you can refer to no other instance of a Public Works Statement being altered after it has been laid on the table?—No; I cannot call to mind at the moment any other instance.

304. Can you refer to any other document laid on the table of the House by a Minister of your department being altered?—No; I cannot say that I can.