

what I said, which was, I believe, that important Ministerial statements were not printed off—that is to say, the total number is not printed off—until the day following their delivery usually, with a view to giving an opportunity of their being corrected if necessary. But that does not apply to all papers laid on the table of the House, or even to papers laid on the table generally.

336. I think your answer conveyed that impression to my mind, at any rate?—If so, I should like to correct it. My recollection is not the same as yours, but if I did convey the impression that it was quite the usual thing to alter papers laid on the table, I wish to correct that impression.

337. No, I did not say as a usual thing, but that it has been done?—I do not know that it has been done except in Ministerial Statements.

338. You mean Public Works Statements or Financial Statements?—Well, Financial Statements are not laid on the table in the way that Public Works Statements are now. And Public Works Statements were not always so laid on. When they were orally delivered it was not by any means infrequent to correct them.

339. You say you are not aware of any other corrections except in Ministerial Statements. Can you name any Ministerial Statements in which corrections have been made besides this?—Speaking generally, I think I may say I scarcely ever recollect a year when the Public Works Statement has not been altered in some minor respect.

340. After being laid on the table?—Well, that course has only been followed during the last three or four years.

341. We will say in the last three or four years. Do you know of any year in which alterations have not been made after the Statement has been laid on the table? I understand you to say you scarcely recollect a year in which some alterations have not been made?—Yes; but in that I particularly referred to Statements orally delivered. I also think alterations have been made in some Statements laid on the table; but if you ask me to place my finger on an instance, after this lapse of time, I could not do so.

342. Your impression is that alterations have been made?—Oh, decidedly.

343. By whom have the alterations been made; by the Minister, or by yourself or other officer, without instruction from the Minister?—Only alterations in figures would be made, as a rule, and the Under-Secretary would make these. Of course, if the alterations were very material he would doubtless mention the matter to the Minister on making the alteration.

344. I do not ask what would be done, but what was done. Can you charge your memory as to that?—I scarcely understand.

345. I think you stated that alterations had been made in Statements delivered verbally, and Statements laid on the table?—Yes, that is my impression.

346. Then, I ask you, upon whose authority they have been made?—Upon the authority of the Under-Secretary only, I think, as a rule.

347. Without communicating with the Minister?—Yes, I think so.

348. That is important?—Unless the alteration was of some moment.

349. Then, you stated the alterations made in these figures were made to harmonize with the other figures in different parts of the Statement, to make them agree?—Yes, that is so.

350. Are you not aware that the concluding paragraph of the Statement tells the public that a diminished public expenditure has taken place, and that the letterpress, the Minister's own words, say it?—Yes. I gave my impression of that yesterday, Sir John. I think the Minister's intention was to convey this: that the expenditure of the year under review had been very much less than had been prevailing in previous years, not necessarily that the amount was less than had prevailed in any and every single previous year.

351. Do you not think that the alteration of the letterpress was just as much required as the alteration of the figures, in order to make the Statement harmonize one part with the other?—No, I do not think so; but even if I had thought so, it clearly would have been beyond my province to have altered the letterpress.

352. Certainly; but if you made that correction in the figures why did not you inform the Minister of it?—Really, I hardly know. Seeing the importance that has been attached to it since, I think now that I ought to have done so. But, honestly, at the time it did not strike me as a matter of any great consequence. With a thing four times right in the Statement, and inadvertently wrong once, I did not see any impropriety in correcting the one place where it happened to be wrong.

353. You say you informed the Minister of it when the matter was in debate in the House? Was that so?—Yes.

354. Did you inform him of it before it had been discovered by Mr. Mitchelson and Mr. Richardson or afterwards?—After they had spoken.

355. It was in consequence?—Yes. It was with the view of enabling the Minister to explain, if he thought fit so to do.

356. And if they had not spoken I suppose you would not have informed the Minister?—Probably not.

357. Will you look at that return; periodical monthly return [handed to witness]. It is a monthly return of the public works expenditure for the month of October, 1880?—Apparently.

358. It was during the time I was in office. Is a return like that still prepared in the department?—Yes, we still prepare that monthly statement.

359. Every month?—Yes.

360. Then, I suppose Mr. Seddon had this return laid before him every month?—Oh yes, I think so.

361. Stating the appropriations for the year, the expenditure to date, and the balance unspent?—Yes.