

702. Do you approve of the fact that the expenditure is stated to be £391,612, in two places, and differently in two other places, as now bound up in the Appendix? Look in Table C., where you find a credit of £111?—I look upon that as a small matter.

703. You do not dispute the fact, then?—No, certainly not.

704. *Mr. J. Mills.*] Mr. Seddon says, after he had laid the Statement before the House, in which these incorrect figures were given, the mistake was pointed out by two members of the Opposition, Mr. Mitchelson and Mr. Richardson. The mistake having been pointed out, he did not think it necessary to admit or deny it. Do we understand from that he considers they are the proper people to place the proper figures before the country, and that the colony could rely upon their statements and not upon his?—I should say at once, if any member holding the position of these gentlemen made an incorrect statement, or specific allusion to something in the Financial Statement, not being borne out by the Public Works Statement, and I was in the House, I should immediately have said they were wrong.

705. The fact is this: You stated the public works expenditure was £295,000; immediately afterwards these two gentlemen say it is £391,000. You admit they were the gentlemen whose statements could be relied on by the country?—In the first place, you are wrong in the way you have put that. You are evidently speaking from memory of the Public Works Statement. If you turn to it, page 14, you will see I say: "For the purpose of showing how the tapering-off policy, succeeded by the self-reliant non-borrowing policy, has affected our public works expenditure during the last few years." It was not the last year.

706. But you give the figures for last year as £295,000?—That is not the question. In putting it to me you said—"as compared with last year." I replied you were evidently going from memory, for what I had said was this: "to show the effect of public works expenditure during the last few years. . . . I give the following figures during each of the years mentioned." You cannot apply it to any single period. If you turn to the first part of the Public Works Statement you will find the same thing occurs, "for the last few years." If I had wished to make the point in the way you put it I should have said so definitely and distinctly.

707. The point I wish to bring out is, you stated the expenditure was £295,978. Messrs. Mitchelson and Richardson pointed out that was a mistake. You are content that the country should rely upon their statement?—Certainly not, because the country got the very next day the correct amount. Only a very few of the first copies were printed.

708. But, presuming these statements were published broadcast by the newspapers, you are content the country should accept the statements in opposition. The Appendices, you know, are buried, and they are not referred to, except by a few, days afterwards?—It is not that I am content with the contradiction. But there is *Hansard*, which has a larger circulation than any paper in the colony, and which is looked upon by the public as reliable. Both in *Hansard* and the Appendix they had the correct figures.

709. But *Hansard* is published weeks probably afterwards. I am alluding to the original Statement published in the newspapers. You state these gentleman having pointed out the mistake, you did not consider it necessary to offer any explanation by way of admitting or disputing it?—I did not say that. It was my intention to reply and make a statement. But when I got up the Speaker had left the chair.

710. I am inclined to think more than once, in so many words, you gave, as your reason for not getting up and explaining the mistake, was that these two members of the Opposition had done it, and you practically considered that sufficient?—What I did say was, I did not contradict them at the time. Had they been incorrect, I should have contradicted them at the time. That is what I said and say now.

711. *Mr. Wright.*] Could you tell the Committee about the date when you obtained the figures given in "Exhibit 3"?—No, I could not.

712. Would it be somewhere during the month of September in which the Public Works Statement appeared. The Public Works Statement was presented on the 27th September?—I know that. I did not take very long to compile it. Of course I could not give you the dates.

713. You had these figures delivered to you during the month of September?—That I could not tell you.

714. Would it have been the month previous, August?—I could not tell you that. I could not give you the date when Mr. Blow told me what the figures were.

715. You say you were a very short time preparing the Statement?—I was a very short time preparing it.

716. And it was based on these figures?—Whatever Mr. Blow told me as regards figures, of course, that would be the basis.

717. At the time you prepared that Statement had you not seen the statement prepared by the Treasurer, headed "Statement showing the net Issues from the Public Works Fund for the year ending the 31st March, 1892," and audited by Mr. FitzGerald on the 29th April, 1892?—No, certainly not; I never saw that.

718. You had not seen that statement?—No, certainly not. If you ask me whether I had seen the Financial Statement, and knew about the Financial Statement, I should say "Yes." But, as regards the tables of the Financial Statement, I should say "Certainly not."

719. In seeking to ascertain the public works expenditure under your control, you ignored altogether the figures of the Treasurer in reference thereto?—Well, I should take them from my own officers. I should not go to the Treasurer. Probably, had it not been the bustle of the end of the session, I might have to open the Statement I keep by me, and have gone to them instead of asking the Under-Secretary, and the thing would never have occurred. Or I should have asked to be shown why it was there was a discrepancy between the gross amount and the figures supplied.

720. Did you obtain the figures on Exhibit 3 from Mr. Blow?—Yes; there is no doubt about it. I never saw any one else. The figures there were obtained from Mr. Blow; I saw no one else in reference to it.