

746. Perhaps you would be good enough to say, whether the cases you have in your mind are similar to that—namely, documents laid on the table being afterwards altered without attention being called to the fact of the alteration by the Minister who laid them on the table?—Well, you have not had, except this last year or two, this system of taking the Statement as being delivered. If I had spoken this, or read it, whichever you like, then what has been done is in keeping with what has been done before.

747. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] Put it in this way: The system has obtained of laying Public Works Statements on the table. Has any instance occurred of an alteration being made in the Statement after it has been laid on the table?—As regards the Public Works Statement?

748. Yes?—No; not to my knowledge.

749. *Mr. G. Hutchison.*] Do you know, Mr. Seddon, if it has been the practice for Ministers to put their names on the document when that is laid on the table?—Oh, all documents laid on the table of the House must have the name of the Minister who lays them on the table.

750. Has that been the practice in reference to Public Works Statements?—I do not know.

751. That is a paper laid by a Minister on the table?—Well, it ought to bear the Minister's signature, according to the Standing Orders. That is a question for the Clerk of Parliament.

752. That is, according to the Standing Orders?—Yes.

753. Are you aware this document has not your signature?—I should not be at all surprised.

754. You do not remember whether you put your signature on it or not? You do not remember signing it?—No. Of course there is only the one Statement I laid on the table.

755. This was the second laid on the table without being read.

*Mr. Hutchison*: No, I think Mr. Mitchelson began the practice.

*Mr. Seddon*: No, I do not think it. I think it was Mr. Fergus who commenced the practice. I do not think it was Mr. Mitchelson.

756. *Mr. Hutchison.*] You have always done it?—I have laid two Public Works Statements on the table, and I may say my present intention is not to continue the practice. I think I shall reserve to myself the same privilege as has been given to my predecessors. It was considered a saving of time; but if there is to be this sort of thing—Committees sitting days to inquire into it—it would be better to conform to the rules and adhere to the old system. Had that been done, as I have told you, you would have known nothing about it. That is about the English of it. I would not raise the technical point, that it has not been laid on the table in the ordinary way, now.

757. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] I think you stated, Mr. Seddon, that you recognise no difference between a document laid on the table and what I may call the reporters' version of a speech. When alterations have been made on previous occasions they have been alterations in spoken Statements, and, of course, that is supposed to be a reporter's version?—Scarcely so. I think if you look up *Hansard*, you will find the form adopted in this and in previous cases has been that the Statement has been taken as delivered, and for the purposes of reporting and publication, though laid formally on the table. That, I think, is the position.

758. You stated, I think, of your own knowledge, Public Works Statements had often been corrected, and that Mr. Blow had followed the usual custom in altering the Statements?—Well, you have Mr. Blow's evidence. It is to the same effect as mine.

759. No, pardon me. However, did the alterations you speak of refer to alterations of the tables attached to the Statement or to the text of the Statement itself?—Well, the text. What I referred to was in the amount given as available for expenditure. Oftentimes—it is not at all unreasonable to expect it—in printing you will find a wrong figure, and that in the text. I should myself not consider it at all going beyond what was reasonable, or what could be expected, if when that was found to be the case it was corrected.

760. That is not my question. It is not what you consider reasonable. You say, Mr. Blow followed the usual custom in altering the Statement. I ask whether that refers to alterations in the tables or text?—The custom followed has been this: the department has and keeps control of the Statement until it leaves the Printing Department, and would correct it until the final print is given. In the past the final print has not been held to have closed immediately it has been delivered by the Minister.

761. I must press for an answer to my question?—That is my answer.

762. Pardon me, but it does not answer it. Will you kindly say whether your statement yesterday referred to alterations in the text or simply in the tables attached to the Statement?—I say it would apply to both, until the final pass of the department; up to then the department has had control.

763. Does the statement amount to this, that Mr. Blow has followed the usual custom in altering Statements in the text?—It applies to both; as I say, simply to correcting errors.

764. It does not matter?—I put it that way—correcting errors.

765. Any alteration? Can you cite a single case in which alterations have been made in the text after the Statement has been laid on the table?—Well, of course, you have had the case cited by Mr. Costall, and I have no doubt if you took the whole of the Statements delivered you would find corrections. I do not think you would find any difficulty in that whatever.

766. Are you aware Mr. Costall stated in evidence there is no other case; he has been for twenty years in the printing-office, and there is no other case in which an alteration has been made in the text?—No other case after the Minister has read it?

767. After the paper has been printed off for circulation amongst members. After that he knows no other case except one of Sir Julius Vogel's. In that case the copies originally issued were called in, and members were made aware that an important alteration had been made to it?—Is he confining himself purely to Statements, or all documents?

768. No; he is speaking of Statements like this one?—He confines himself to Statements. He does not say as to all reports and other papers.

769. No; nothing to do with them. Are you aware Mr. Costall said that?—Yes.