

## No. 9.

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer.

Audit Office, 12th July, 1906.

*Payment of Interest on Debentures without Receipted Vouchers; and the Colonial Treasurer's Minute of the 6th July, 1906.*

I WOULD respectfully submit that, the course having been taken by me last year of passing the payments without the vouchers pending the result of a report of the matter to Parliament, I could not well take that course again.

A draft of a form designed by the Administration to give effect to the opinion of the Public Accounts Committee was by arrangement submitted to me in March last, when I wrote on such draft the following minute: "As the law now stands, the receipted voucher prescribed by the Public Revenues Act is necessary to every payment of the interest not made by means of a coupon the delivery of which is tantamount to such voucher. The Audit Office would therefore suggest that the form of certificate should be resolved into a form of receipt to be taken from each debenture scrip or certificate holder, with provision for a witness that the payment is made to the person presenting such instrument." No intimation was conveyed to me of any decision of the Administration in the matter. My minute was not acknowledged, nor, beyond filing it, has any notice known to me been taken of it. And when, thus uninformed, I observe the form as drafted to be in use, and I ask what has been done in the matter of arranging to take the receipted vouchers which I regard as necessary to a compliance with the law, I am answered that "No arrangement has been made to take receipted vouchers, nor was it contemplated."

I would here venture to point out that the Public Accounts Committee, in reporting me to have stated that I "would accept an interest-certificate in the form submitted if the fact of the payment of interest and indorsement on the debentures were further attested by another independent officer instead of by the receipted voucher," appears to have mistaken my meaning. The answer that "there could be some responsible officer to witness the payment," was made to questions Nos. 8 and 10—how, in the case of a receipt signed by the payee, I would be satisfied that that is the person who received the money? how I would obtain ample security that *it was not a bogus receipt submitted*? The questions implied the existence of the receipted voucher. Then, the answer to question 13 was, "The mere receipt would not be satisfactory, but the witnessed receipt would be"; and to question No. 42. But the position I take up is this: that the law requires the duly receipted voucher—that the payment of the public money cannot legally take place without a voucher." Such being the view of the Audit Office, the Committee would not desire effect to be given to its opinion without the necessary amendment in the law.

J. K. WARBURTON, C. &amp; A.-General.

## No 10.

The Audit Office.

THE Treasury regrets there should apparently have been some misapprehension between yourself and the Public Accounts Committee. The Treasury was at the time of opinion that the Audit Office would be satisfied with an alteration of the form of voucher so as to provide for the signature of a witness to the payment of the interest. Under this impression the voucher was altered and submitted, and the Treasury was much disappointed to find that the Audit Office still declined to recognise any form which did not disclose the receipt of the payee. The *status quo ante* having been reached, it appeared to the Treasury useless to pursue the matter further, as they had all along contended that the form of voucher certified by the Postmaster is sufficient for the purposes of the Public Revenues Act, and the Hon. the Attorney-General upholds this view.

Referring to your minute of the 3rd May, 1905, the Treasury would be obliged by your passing the payments of interest as they are made from time to time, and no objection would be raised to your again bringing the matter before Parliament if you should so desire.

WM. HALL-JONES, Colonial Treasurer.

18th July, 1906.

## No. 11.

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer.

IT being understood that the Government takes the responsibility, pending the result of a report to Parliament of the matter, of making these payments of interest without the receipted vouchers which in the judgment of the Audit Office are necessary to all payments of public money, the Controller and Auditor-General will meantime pass the payments as the Minister desires.

J. K. WARBURTON, C. &amp; A.-General.

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