

ally when I tell you that it was that very reason that caused me to bring this matter forward. If I answered your question in that way I should be committing my predecessors in office, which I have no right whatever to do. They may have taken an entirely different view of it, and I am not prepared to answer a question in that form.

45. *Mr. Reed.*] Were you following the system that was in existence in the Department when you took charge?—Yes.

46. *The Chairman.*] I think you have made it quite clear that your predecessors used to pay on a certain basis; that after you became Valuer-General you had your doubts about that; that you paid out for the first year or two, but still had doubts; and when you investigated the matter your own opinion was that the law did not allow that to be done which had been done by your predecessors?—Yes.

47. And in making the alteration in the Appropriation Act of last year you brought the matter under the notice of the Law Officers with the view not of altering the law, but of making its meaning clearer than it was before?—Yes. I should like to make it clear that that was done when I was asked to make a suggestion with regard to simplification.

48. *Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] You were of opinion that the alteration made by the Law Draftsman which appeared in the Appropriation Act of 1908 was an inconsequential alteration?—I was.

49. *Mr. Massey.*] An alteration affecting the subsidies of local bodies to the extent of some hundreds of pounds in each case?—I am still of opinion that it was an inconsequential alteration.

*Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward:* I should like to put this on record—it is what I stated in the House early in the session:—

“Regarding the other question raised by the honourable gentleman in connection with ‘The Local Bodies’ Finance and Powers Act, 1885,’ the information I gave to the House was the information as I received it exactly. There was no intention on my part to do anything in the shape of conveying a wrong impression to the House. I have looked into it since, and I find that part is affected in a way I did not know at the time. I have no objection to having this part of the Bill referred to the Public Accounts Committee, or some Committee of this House, so that it may be reported upon to the House itself. I want to say at once that the intention was to remove a wrong position, and when the matter is gone into it will require to be carefully reviewed by every member of the House, because it may place a particular class of local bodies at an advantage—

“*Mr. MASSEY.*—A disadvantage.

“*The Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*—No; at an advantage as compared with other public bodies throughout the country. It was to remove an anomaly that the suggestion was made to have this amended. I did not know the details of it at the time.

“*Mr. MASSEY.*—Mine is not the only district affected.

“*The Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*—But it affects your district more than any other in the Dominion.

“*Mr. MASSEY.*—Except the Electorate of Manukau.

“*The Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*—I have had the matter looked into since, and, now that I know what the position is, I think it only right that that portion of the Bill should be referred to the Public Accounts Committee, so that it may be examined into and a report made to the House. If, then, it is found right to alter the legislation, I am quite prepared to do it. On the whole, I think the House will be careful before restoring it to the position it was in before. If it does apply in these cases, it should apply to all local bodies throughout the country. It was never intended that any particular class of local bodies should be given an advantage as against others.

“Bill read a third time.”

*Mr. Massey:* Following up that, I want to put this on record. I am quoting now from Sir Joseph Ward’s speech in moving the second reading of the Appropriation Bill, on the 10th October, 1908, on the night when the session came to an end, and probably half an hour before midnight:—

“In moving the second reading of this Bill I desire to say, for the information of the House, that the clauses down to clause 22 contain practically no alteration excepting in clause 9, and that is merely an inconsequential alteration rendered necessary by the repeal of ‘The Local Bodies’ Finance and Powers Act, 1885.’ The schedule in the previous Act has now been made a schedule of the Bill. In this respect the clause calls for no comment.”

*Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward:* That is a statement that I made upon the information given to me at the time by the Law Draftsman.

TUESDAY, 14TH DECEMBER, 1909.

WILLIAM JOLIFFE, Law Draftsman, examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.*] I do not know whether you are aware of the subject on which you have been called here this morning?—I have a general idea.

2. It is in connection with the subsidies to local bodies. You are aware of the Local Bodies’ Finance and Powers Act of 1885, of course?—Yes.

3. That has been repealed by the consolidated statutes?—It has been dropped.

4. There is a schedule to that Act, and that schedule has been re-enacted in a somewhat different form?—A slightly different form.

5. But it is a different form, and the object of the investigation of this Committee is to ascertain whether the law has been in any way altered; and you have been asked to attend so that you may inform the Committee how this was led up to. Will you make a statement, showing exactly how it came about, and whether this was done of your own volition or whether it was at any one’s instigation?—As Secretary to the Consolidation Commissioners I was aware that the Local Bodies’ Finance and Powers Act of 1885 was no longer on the statute-book, and, knowing what was wanted,