

SESS. II.—1891.
NEW ZEALAND.

PROPOSED INCREASE OF AUDIT OFFICE STAFF

(CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE CONTROLLER AND AUDITOR-GENERAL RESPECTING).

Laid on the Table by the Hon. J. Ballance, with the Leave of the House.

No. 1.

The CONTROLLER and AUDITOR-GENERAL to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

I HAVE the honour to report that it is quite impossible any longer to carry on the work which is imposed on the Audit without an increase of the staff.

Mr. Webb, who is intrusted with the examination of the accounts of the Insurance and Trust Offices, reported to me some time ago that the business of those officers have increased to such an extent that it was impossible for one Inspector to give sufficient time to each office, and has now again made a similar report.

2. I find it impossible to inspect the whole of the Government offices throughout the colony once a year, those of the Boroughs and Counties twice a year, the Road Boards, Town Boards, River Boards, Domain Boards, Charitable, Hospital, and Education and School Boards once a year, and bankruptcy accounts four times a year, as the law requires, with only eight Inspectors. When asked by Sir Harry Atkinson to undertake the work, I estimated it at nine Inspectors. But I have hitherto managed with much delay to get on with eight; and if no interruption occurred in their ordinary work eight might be sufficient. But delays are constantly occurring from prosecutions, special audits, and sickness—one cause or another, Inspectors are called off from their ordinary work, and delay and dissatisfaction arises. Hence it is necessary to have an extra or travelling Inspector who can be dispatched to any district to take up the work of an Inspector who is called off.

In the current work of the office I find that the audit of the land revenue has fallen at least fourteen months into arrear, and there is no prospect whatever of overtaking the work with the present staff, as it occupies the whole time of one man to keep the current work up. The introduction of deferred-payments and perpetual-lease sections having largely added to the labour of the Audit.

I must therefore respectfully request the appointment of two additional clerks, or that the Government will be pleased to indicate to me which branch of the Audit is to be abandoned.

In the endeavour to meet the views of Parliament and the Government I reduced the staff by one last year. The result has simply been that work has gone into arrear and cannot be overtaken; and I now only regret that the staff should not have been increased instead of being diminished on that occasion.

JAMES EDWARD FITZGERALD.

P.S.—I should add that if an Inspector is required for the Trust Office and Insurance Office separately the required increase will be three clerks.

No. 2.

Mr. G. S. COOPER to the CONTROLLER and AUDITOR-GENERAL.

SIR,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Wellington, 30th May, 1891.

In reference to your memorandum, undated, but received in this office on the 19th instant, in which you recommend the appointment of one Inspector and two or three clerks in addition to the existing staff, I have the honour, by direction of the Colonial Secretary, to inform you that the question having been carefully considered by the Government, Ministers regret that they cannot see their way to increase the staff of the Audit Department, pending any inquiry which Parliament may direct to be made into the question of audit generally in the colony.

The Controller and Auditor-General, Wellington.

I have, &c.,
G. S. COOPER.

No. 3.

The CONTROLLER and AUDITOR-GENERAL to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,—

Audit Office, 3rd June, 1891.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Cooper's letter of the 30th May informing me that the Government does not see its way to increase the staff of the Audit Department pending any inquiry which Parliament may direct to be made into the question of audit generally in the colony.

As I am held responsible for the audit of the public accounts, and as it is clear to me that that audit cannot be carried on with the present staff, I respectfully request that Ministers will be pleased to move Parliament to direct such an inquiry to be made at its early convenience, as may determine what work the Audit Office shall be required to do, and what staff is necessary for the purpose.

I have, &c.,

JAMES EDWARD FITZGERALD,

Controller and Auditor-General.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

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