

248. The following year there is a credit of £153?—Yes.

249. And the following year a credit of £395?—Yes.

250. Are these sums deducted in the same way?—Yes, they are deducted from the gross total, so that the amount appearing at the foot of the table is the net amount. [Record copy of Public Works Statement, 1892, as laid on the table of the House, produced.]

251. *Mr. G. Hutchison.*] You say the third time the figure is correctly stated is to be found in Table D.: I am taking my stand on the record of the House. Now, where is the fourth time?—Now that the record copy of the Statement as laid on the table of the House has been placed in my hands, I have to say that the table printed as C. in this Statement, as printed in the Appendices appears as Table D. in the record copy. This table shows the expenditure from 1880–81 to 1891–92, the total of the 1891–92 column being £391,612.

252. Where is the fourth time it is correctly stated?—The fourth time is in Table I. of the Appendices to the Statement—page 2 of the Appendices.

253. *Mr. Guinness.*] To the Statement laid on the table?—Yes, this table was never altered. The second column of this table shows the expenditure for the year as £391,612 5s. 7d. That is the fourth time.

255. Where is it not correctly stated?—The one place where the figure was not correctly stated, and needed to be rectified, is in the concluding paragraph of the Ministerial Statement. It appears on page 14.

256. Now, Mr. Blow, you have referred to four times correctly stated, and indicated the amount to be £391,612. Yet that is not the amount inserted at page 14. You explain that by saying there was a credit in the year of £111?—I had no idea that the Committee was going to attach so much weight to this question of the £111. I rather thought the question of the £95,000 was to have been gone into, but I have already said that the credit of £111 is correctly deducted from the total expenditure. The table printed as Table C. in the copy of the Statement appearing in the Appendices, and which appears as Table D. in the record copy, shows that in each of the years from 1888–89 to 1891–92 there is a credit, and in some cases more than one credit. Each of these credits is deducted from the total expenditure.

257. I will put it in this way: Can you point to any place in this Statement except where you have corrected the figures to £391,501 where these figures can be found?—Not in the record copy, but in the copy printed in the Appendices these figures appear as the total expenditure for the year 1891–92, in Table C.

258. I will take it, in the record copy they do not appear, but in the corrected copy they appear in Table C.?—Yes.

259. Who made the corrections in this table?—The Accountant.

260. What is his name?—Mr. Clapham.

261. By whose direction, do you know?—If he consulted me in the matter, I, doubtless, should have directed him; but I am not aware at the moment whether he did or not.

262. You cannot say, then, how these alterations came to be made in the table?—Oh, I think I can.

263. How were they made?—By reason of the credit of £111 not having been printed in the copy that was laid on the table of the House, and the omission being noticed.

264. But you have not answered, as a matter of fact. Here is a document laid on the table of the House at 4 o'clock one afternoon. In the evening you discover an error in one part of it, and you go down to the Printing Office and authorise a correction or alteration. We find now that an alteration has been made in another part of the same document. Was that other alteration made by your authority, or not?—I hardly know how to answer the question. It certainly was not made by Ministerial direction. I am not even aware that it came as far as myself. I rather think the Accountant made it on his own responsibility.

265. *Hon. Sir J. Hall.*] Where? At the Printing Office?—Possibly. He revises all these tables.

266. *Mr. G. Hutchison.*] You cannot explain that alteration, can you, except by —?—In no other way than I have done already.

267. If you do not know how it was done, how can you say that it was done without Ministerial responsibility?—Because the Ministerial directions are always conveyed through myself.

268. Where is the manuscript of the Public Works Statement of last year?—It is filed in the Public Works Department.

269. Do you have the custody of it?—Yes.

270. Have you brought it?—Yes.

271. I ask you to produce it?—I do not think I can agree to produce it. I should very much like to do so, because it entirely upholds what I have said. But if Under-Secretaries can be called upon to produce drafts of Ministerial Statements, I hardly know where that would end.

*Mr. G. Hutchison:* It is not a question for you, but for the Chairman.

*Mr. Guinness:* I submit it is not a question that should be asked.

*Mr. G. Hutchison:* He may say, "I decline to produce it."

*Hon. Sir R. Stout:* It seems to me to be a privileged document which this Committee has no right to call for unless the Minister is willing.

*Mr. G. Hutchison:* I ask for a particular document, the manuscript of the Public Works Statement. On this being called for, Mr. Blow objects unless the consent of the Minister is given, and the Minister, being asked, declines.

*Hon. Mr. Seddon:* I must refer you, Mr. Chairman, to the order of reference which refers to the alterations made in the Public Works Statement as laid upon the table. That particular slip, where that alteration is made, of the original draft I approve of being put before the Committee. The other portions of the Statement are not questioned, Hence I refuse to give the original draft.