

NATHAN SEDDON SWORN and examined. (No. 3.)

1. *Mr. Salmond.*] You are an officer of the Public Works Department?—An overseer.
2. And have been engaged at Trentham?—Yes.
3. How long were you there?—I have been there since the 19th April.
4. Were you in charge of the erection of these huts from the commencement?—Yes, sir.
5. You put up the sample hut?—Yes.
6. How many men did you have under your charge there?—During June and July we had 131 all told—somewhere about ninety carpenters, and the rest labourers, and plumbers, and electricians.
7. And during May how many men approximately would you have working for you at the same time?—I should say a hundred all told.
8. Was there any complaint in May that they were not getting on fast enough?—Not that I know of.
9. No complaint was made to you?—No.
10. *The Chairman.*] Did you ever receive any letter asking you to get on with more urgency?—No, sir.
11. Getting on with more urgency would have meant either overtime or more men, I suppose?—It was impossible to work overtime: it was too dark. We worked all the time we possibly could. During the earlier stages of the job we started at 6 in the morning and worked till 7, and then from 8 till half past 5. As winter came on we had to reduce the time.
12. You took advantage of all daylight?—Yes.
13. And Saturday afternoons?—Yes, working till 4 o'clock.
14. *Mr. Salmond.*] In your opinion has the work proceeded as rapidly as it could have done?—Yes, sir. It could not have proceeded faster.
15. *The Chairman.*] Were you delayed at times through material not being present?—No. The first week was awkward, because we had such short notice to start. We received notice on the Thursday, and were on the job on the Saturday. We started on the Monday. Afterwards we had no difficulty.
16. Had you any difficulty with regard to the men?—No, we seemed to get plenty of men. Of course, they were coming and going. There seemed to be a good supply of men.
17. They began to leave, without the gaps being filled up, some time in June, did they not?—No; we took on men as they came.
18. When the epidemic was pronounced at the end of June, did men go then?—I believe so. The numbers began to grow smaller towards the end. It may have been because the job was coming to a close.
19. Was there a demand for extra wages?—Not that I know of. We were paying a fair wage.
20. Was there some question about being paid if they took ill, or something of that sort?—Yes, a question arose during the last week of the work.
21. That was at the end of June?—Yes.
22. What was that?—We considered the work would be finished in a fortnight from the 8th July, and a lot of the men began to think it would not pay them to stop there if they were going to catch measles and take it home at the end of the job, unless we were prepared to pay them for lost time while they were sick.
23. It arose out of the very short time they would have had to work: to be laid up for such a very short time would not pay?—I suppose they consider it better to knock off and lose a week than have to lay up and incur the doctor's expenses.
24. *Mr. Salmond.*] Are you quite satisfied with the design of the huts?—No, sir.
25. What is wrong with them?—I consider they want ridge ventilation.
26. *The Chairman.*] To get rid of the bad air above the level of the air-spaces?—To cause the air to draw up instead of coming down.
27. *Mr. Salmond.*] Do you mean instead of the ventilation under the eaves, or in addition to it?—In addition to it.
28. Your idea is that the hutments are not sufficiently ventilated?—My idea is that the ventilation is coming down instead of going up. That is where the draught is coming from.
29. Have you been in one of these huts a night or on a morning after its occupation?—Yes, both morning and night.
30. What is it like?—I consider it is very stuffy in the morning, and there is not sufficient ventilation on a calm day. It was during the very calm period that I was in recently.
31. *The Chairman.*] That was in the morning after the hut had been occupied overnight?—Yes.
32. *Mr. Ferguson.*] Was there any trouble from condensation on the roof? Is the roof lined with malthoid or anything of that kind?—We have saturated felt in the roof.
33. Any trouble from condensation?—No.
34. *Mr. Salmond.*] Have you slept in these huts at night?—No; but I have slept in a small galvanized-iron place—not one of the large huts.
35. Do you think it is objectionable for the men to sleep on the floor?—From my own experience I think it is.
36. *The Chairman.*] From your experience in the small hut?—Yes.
37. *Mr. Salmond.*] What is the objection?—I could not keep warm. First one side would get cold and then the other. I got up on a bunk, and then I was all right.
38. *The Chairman.*] Was there a bunk in the place?—I put one in.
39. And then you found you could keep warm?—Yes. It was very frosty there at first.