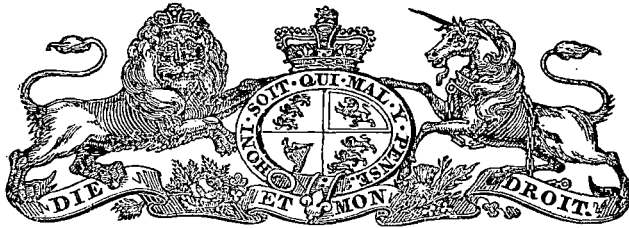


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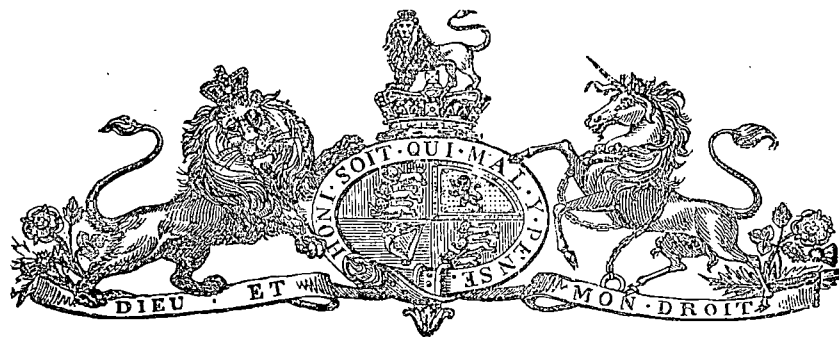
1888.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

PUBLIC WORKS EXPENDITURE:

REPORT FROM THE SELECT COMMITTEE, WITH MINUTES
OF PROCEEDINGS AND EVIDENCE.

Brought up by the Honorable Nicholas Brown, and ordered by the House of
Assembly to be printed, September 27, 1888.



SELECT COMMITTEE appointed, on the 12th July, 1888, to consider and report upon the practicability of reforming the system whereby proposals for Expenditure of Public Money on Public Works other than Railways shall be determined upon for submission to Parliament, with power to send for Persons and Papers.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

MR. NICHOLAS BROWN.
MR. PILLINGER.
MR. DOOLEY.
MR. DUMARESQ.

MR. FENTON.
MR. LYNE.
MR. GRAY (*Mover.*)

DAYS OF MEETING.

Friday, 12th July; Tuesday, 17th July; Wednesday, 18th July; Thursday, 19th July; Thursday, 23rd August;
Friday, 7th September; Friday, 21st September; Wednesday, 26th September.

WITNESSES EXAMINED.

Mr. W. Smith, Chief Clerk, Works Department; Mr. W. Duffy, Engineer of Roads; Mr. J. Fincham, Engineer-in-Chief; Mr. J. Helmer, Inspector of Roads.

REPORT.

Your Committee have the honor to report that they have given their most earnest consideration to the question of the practicability of reforming the system under which proposals for expenditure of public money on Public Works, other than Railways, are submitted for the consideration of Parliament.

Your Committee have held 8 meetings, and have been aided in their inquiry by the evidence of many of the professional officers of the Government competent to give an opinion on the question under consideration; and, after due deliberation, beg now to submit the following suggestions for the favourable consideration of your Honourable House:—

It appears to your Committee that the present mode of seeking information from Members of Parliament as to the requirements of Districts is one that should not be continued; and they are unanimously of opinion that such information, when required, should be obtained from the Road Trusts of the various Districts.

In order to give time for the examination of, and report upon, such works as may be asked for, it is the opinion of your Committee that the applications for information as to works deemed necessary should be forwarded to the Road Trusts not later than December in the year preceding the Session in which it is intended to submit to Parliament the proposals for works which may have received the approval of the Ministry.

Your Committee recommend that all proposals for Public Works submitted to Parliament, in future, be accompanied by a printed Report from the Engineer-in-Chief or Engineer of Roads as to each particular work, such Report to give information as to the amount or amounts previously voted for such work; the amount estimated to be necessary to complete the work; the urgency or otherwise of the work; and, generally, such information as may be necessary to enable Members of the House to arrive at an intelligent decision upon the proposed vote; and, further, that no vote for a Public Work should be submitted for the consideration of the House, in Committee of Supply, until the Report above recommended upon such vote has been in the hands of Members at least fourteen days.

*Committee Room, House of Assembly,
26th September, 1888.*

NICHOLAS J. BROWN, *Chairman.*

MINUTES.

FRIDAY, JULY 12, 1888.

The Committee met at 12 o'clock.

Present.—Mr. Pillinger, Mr. Lyne, Mr. Dumaresq, Mr. Gray, and the Hon. Nicholas Brown.

Mr. Gray having informed the Committee that he would be unable to give the time to the business of the Committee which the position of Chairman would involve, the Hon. Nicholas Brown was voted to the Chair.

Ordered, That the following witnesses be summoned to attend and give evidence before the Committee:—

Mr. W. Smith, Chief Clerk Public Works Department, on Tuesday, the 17th inst., at 11 A.M.

Mr. W. Duffy, Engineer of Roads, on Tuesday, the 17th inst., at 11:30 A.M.

Mr. J. Fincham, Engineer-in-Chief, on Tuesday, the 17th inst., at 12 noon.

The Committee adjourned at 12:45 P.M. until Tuesday, the 17th inst., at 11 A.M.

TUESDAY, JULY 17, 1888.

Present.—Mr. Gray, Mr. Dumaresq, Mr. Dooley, and the Hon. Nicholas Brown (Chairman.)

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Mr. Wm. Smith was called and examined. Mr. Smith withdrew.

Mr. Wm. Duffy was called and examined. Mr. Duffy withdrew.

It was resolved that the Scheme prepared by Mr. Duffy for the completion of existing Roads be produced.

The Committee adjourned at 12:45 till 12 noon on Wednesday, the 18th inst.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 18, 1888.

The Committee met at 12 noon.

Present.—Mr. Gray, Mr. Dumaresq, Mr. Lyne, Mr. Dooley, Mr. Pillinger, and Hon. Nicholas Brown (Chairman.)

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Mr. Wm. Duffy was re-called and examined.

The Committee adjourned at 1 P.M. till 11 A.M. on Thursday, July 19.

THURSDAY, JULY 19, 1888.

The Committee met at 11 A.M.

Present.—Mr. Dooley, Mr. Pillinger, Mr. Gray, Mr. Dumaresq, Mr. Lyne, and Hon. Nicholas Brown (Chairman.)

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed.

Mr. Wm. Duffy was re-called and examined.

The Chairman called the attention of the Committee to the Return laid on the Table of the House of Assembly showing the amount of money available under the Waste Lands Act, the total amounting to over £100,000.

At 1 P.M. the Committee adjourned till 2:30 P.M.

The Committee resumed at 2:30 P.M.

Present.—Mr. Dooley, Mr. Dumaresq, Mr. Pillinger, and Mr. Lyne.

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Lyne was voted to the Chair.

Mr. James Fincham was called and examined. Mr. Fincham withdrew.

At 3:40 P.M. the Committee adjourned till 12 noon on Thursday, the 23rd instant.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 1888.

The Committee met at 12 o'clock.

Present.—Mr. Dumaresq, Mr. Pillinger, Mr. Lyne, Mr. Dooley, and the Hon. Nicholas Brown (Chairman.)

The Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, That in the opinion of this Committee it is desirable that proposals for public works submitted to Parliament should be accompanied by a printed report from the Engineer-in-Chief or the Engineer of Roads as to each particular work, and that such report should be fourteen days in the hands of Members before any vote is considered in Committee.

The Committee adjourned *sine die*.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1888.

The Committee met at 11:30 A.M.

Present.—Mr. Pillinger, Mr. Dumaresq, Mr. Fenton, Mr. Lyne, and the Hon. Nicholas Brown (Chairman.)

The Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

Mr. John Helmer, Inspector of Roads, was called in and examined. Mr. Helmer withdrew.

Resolved, That in the opinion of this Committee it is desirable that instead of information as to the requirements of districts being sought for from Members of Parliament, it should be obtained from the Road Trusts of the various districts, and application for information relating to works which it is proposed to submit for consideration in the ensuing Session of Parliament should be forwarded not later than December in the year preceding such Session.

The Committee considered the possibility of forming a Board to prepare a Report upon Public Works, in addition to the Report forwarded by the Engineer of Roads.

The Committee adjourned at 1 P.M. till 12 noon on Friday, the 21st instant.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1888.

The Committee met at 12 noon.

The Minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

The Committee deliberated.

At 12:30 P.M. the Committee adjourned until 3:30 P.M. on Wednesday, the 26th instant.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1888.

The Committee met at 3:30 P.M.

Present.—Mr. Pillinger, Mr. Dumaresq, and the Hon. Nicholas Brown (Chairman.)

Report brought up and agreed to.

The Committee adjourned *sine die*.

EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, JULY 17, 1888.

MR. WILLIAM SMITH *called and examined.*

1. *By the Chairman.*—What position do you occupy? Chief Clerk in the Public Works Office.

2. Will you inform the Committee, as far as possible, of the practice with regard to proposals for public works to be submitted to Parliament, how they first come into the notice of the Public Works Department, giving the past and present modes? In the past the mode of procedure has been—the Minister has had a list submitted to him by the professional heads of the department, that is the Engineer-in-Chief and the Engineer of Roads; he went through the list with those professional officers, and arranged the list of works for submission to the Cabinet prior to submission to the House. After the list had been decided in Cabinet the Minister of Lands gave instructions for its preparation for printing and submission to Parliament.

3. In the preparation of the list was any further reference made to the officers of the Department for particulars as to the necessity for the works, or what had been done previously? During the preparation of the list enquiries were often made in respect to any items about which information might be desired, and it often happened that corrections and additions were made to the list; the representations of Members of Parliament were duly considered, and if any omission was made it was rectified by the Minister's orders. Certain Members of Parliament adopted the rule of submitting to the Minister a list of works for their respective districts prior to the meeting of Parliament, but that was not the rule of all Members. Representations thus made received careful consideration.

4. In what respect does the present system differ? The present Minister issued circulars to every Member of the Assembly requesting to be furnished with a list of the works for which they desired provision to be made by Parliament. In the list to be furnished this Session it was requested that only works of undeniable urgency should be sent in. These lists when received were considered by the Minister, in conjunction with the departmental lists—being lists sent in by the District Inspectors and revised by the Engineer of Roads. The Minister of Lands goes through these lists, comparing one with the other, and finally deciding upon the list to be submitted to Parliament.

5. Then the list as submitted to Parliament during this Session was made up partly from information received from the District Inspectors and partly from the lists furnished by the various Members of Parliament? Yes; the present Minister has in both cases considered the departmental recommendations side by side with the lists supplied by Members.

6. *By Mr. Gray.*—When giving his information of votes to the House, had the Minister the lists of the Departmental Officers before him? Yes.

7. With marginal notes? Yes, and full information from the District Inspectors and Engineer of Roads as well.

8. Do you think it a desirable plan to consult Members of Parliament, and obtain a thorough knowledge of the wants of the districts before preparing the annual list of works? I do; I cannot see any better mode at present.

9. Has the Minister felt bound to go upon the list of works submitted by Members? Certainly not, and does not. I omitted to mention that both now and formerly the list is submitted to the Cabinet before being submitted to Parliament.

10. Do you think it would be desirable to have a Board of Construction outside of and independent of the Government or Administration for the purpose of preparing an impartial scheme of public works in accordance with the wants of the several districts? I do not think it would be a better arrangement than the present.

11. Would it not be a relief and benefit to the Minister to have a properly constituted independent Board to report on the necessary works throughout the Colony to be submitted by the Minister to Parliament? I have no doubt it would relieve the Minister of a considerable amount of duty, and what perhaps is not a pleasant duty; but it is a question whether it would be an improvement on the existing system.

12. *By the Chairman.*—Would it not result in Parliament having a better guarantee that the works are necessary in the district if submitted first by an independent non-political Board? I do not think it would. Parliament ought to have full and complete information of the necessary and desirable works, and the officers who supply that information are thoroughly independent in the matter.

13. Then the Committee are to understand that you are of opinion that no unnecessary work has ever been submitted to Parliament? I do not say that. I would consider as an unnecessary work a vote that was pressed by a Member of Parliament but was recommended by departmental officers as not necessary.

14. Do you know any work that has ever been submitted to Parliament under such circumstances? I do not feel at liberty to answer that question.

15. *By Mr. Dooley.*—You referred to two systems for the initiation of works; one that obtained during the last twelve months, and one prior to that period? Yes.

16. Am I right in saying that under the last system the District Inspectors and Engineer of Roads initiated the list? Yes.

17. And some Members of Parliament sent in lists of works for their districts? Yes.

18. Prior to the last two Sessions were any circulars issued to Members of Parliament? Not to my knowledge.

19. Then, in initiating his scheme the Minister took the lists of the District Inspectors, Engineer of Roads, and Engineer-in-Chief all together? The Minister instructed lists to be supplied him of works for which provision was recommended to be made. The Minister gives instructions to the professional head of the Works Department that he requires a list of works for his consideration, and the other information follows as a matter of course.

20. Under the former system, Members were not invited to send in a list of works? No; but some of them did, and their lists were considered, and if the works mentioned were considered necessary they were proposed as necessary works, but if any work was considered unnecessary by the Minister he did not propose it.

21. Then the forwarding of these lists depended on the vigilance of the Member? Yes.

22. *By Mr. Gray.*—Would the Minister act on the recommendation of a Member of Parliament without consulting his professional officers? Certainly not.

23. *By Mr. Dooley.*—Are you in a position to say that a Minister of Lands never acted on the recommendations of Members of Parliament without consulting the professional heads of the Department? I am not in a position to say that.

24. *By Mr. Gray.*—Would the appointment of an independent Board of Works relieve the Minister of the importunities of Members? I cannot answer that; I do not know what course Members would follow then.

25. *By Mr. Dumaesq.*—Would not the proposals of the proposed Board still have to be recommended to the Minister by the heads of the department? Yes.

26. *By Mr. Gray.*—Do not Members, by proposing addresses to His Excellency, seek to have large additional sums for works placed on the schedule during the Session? Such action does take place, but I do not know that they often succeed.

27. Do you consider that a desirable course? I cannot express an opinion on that point.

28. Does it not augment the original estimates considerably? It depends on circumstances. A very necessary work may be omitted, and it would be a pity to say such work must be left out.

29. Do you consider the organisation of the Department at present, in reference to public works, in a good condition or position? I do,—very good.

30. Can you advise any improvement that would lead to more certain results as to the absolute requirements of proposed works, or necessity for them? I am not prepared to make any suggestion in that respect just now.

31. Do you think the manner of initiating works—the first step being to obtain necessary information through the district inspectors—the best mode available? I am not aware of any better system at present.

32. Is the information obtained from the District Inspectors handed over to the Engineer of Roads for his remarks and recommendations? Yes.

33. Is the list then given to the Engineer-in-Chief? No; it passes from the Engineer of Roads to the Minister of Lands. The late Minister left a memorandum clearly defining what works would appertain to the Engineer-in-Chief when the Engineer of Roads was appointed, namely, that Mr. Fincham would only be called in to give information on matters appertaining to roads when specially required.

34. Have you any fault to find with that system? I have not.

35. Do the recommendations of the respective Members of Parliament come separately to the Minister direct? Yes, independent of the departmental information.

36. Does this enable the Minister and his professional officers to investigate these claims? Yes, and to make comparisons with the lists furnished by the inspectors.

37. And therefore determine the merits or otherwise of any omissions made in the lists? Yes.

38. If we were to abolish that system, and appoint some professional man or men in conjunction with the Engineer of Roads, and have two or more lists to be checked by the Road Trusts, do you think that the lists and information obtainable from that method would be more reliable or accurate than the lists and information now obtained? I do not.

39. If a Board were constituted, as suggested, what powers would they have to adopt to obtain the required information? They would have to go through the same process as that now adopted by the Department, or make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the special wants of the different localities by such means as they chose to adopt.

40. *By the Chairman.*—Do you think it would be an improvement to have an independent Board or some other means of thorough investigation into the state or requirements of every district in the Colony for roads, bridges, &c. other than railways, for some five years in advance, and what would be required for their completion and for keeping them in order? I do not think it would be an improvement.

41. Do you think it better to go on, as at present, doling out small amounts as required, no provision being made for completion of works or keeping them in order beyond the sum voted for the particular year? I think the system you suggest would be surrounded with great difficulty. It would be very difficult in a colony like Tasmania, a new country, to map out for five years in advance the works that

would be required for roads and other wants. New roads, especially in mining districts, are constantly cropping up, and to say they should not be carried out because prior provision had not been made would be great injustice.

42. I am referring to ordinary public works throughout Tasmania, exclusive of railways? You could not operate on more than the yearly provision made, and I do not see what advantage would be gained by the system you suggest.

43. Can you inform the Committee what amount, approximately, remains unexpended of former votes? About £70,000 for roads, bridges, and jetties. (This is exclusive of amounts available under Waste Lands Act).

44. How long would it take to expend that amount at the ordinary rate of expenditure—that is, when the votes now in hand will be exhausted, without touching any new votes? At present rate of expenditure the £70,000 will be expended by 31st December next.

45. From your experience do you believe that the present staff as now organised are quite adequate to supervise the construction of the proposed works within reasonable time? I think so. When necessity arises the assistance of sub-inspectors is obtained. These officers are appointed only as occasion requires. When a rush of work occurs the Minister always sanctions the appointment of assistants, whose services are dispensed with when the rush ceases.

46. Then the present staff is fairly sufficient for the work? Yes, it is.

47. *By Mr. Gray.*—Is the staff efficiently equipped? Yes, so far as I know.

48. When the services of any officer are not required from want of work, is he dispensed with? He is.

49. *By Mr. Dooley.*—Do you believe that all the outside staff are efficient and competent? So far as I am able to judge, they are.

MR. WILLIAM DUFFY *called and examined.*

50. *By the Chairman.*—What position do you occupy? Engineer of Roads.

51. Will you inform the Committee what you know as to the system on which the proposals for Public Works are first brought under the notice of the Minister of Lands, both in the past and present time? In the past I took notes in travelling through the country and localised any particular works during the year; and I also instructed all the Inspectors to give me details of the different particulars of the works, and to call my attention to them. From that information I prepared a small history of each road and submitted it to the Minister, and went over the list with him, explaining *viva voce* the different requirements of each road.

52. What is the present system? Last year, following the same mode, I prepared a list for the use of the Minister; it was handed to him, and also copies for the other Cabinet Ministers; and that is all I know of it.

53. Were you subsequently consulted as to the various items? Never a word. Afterwards when the votes were going through the House, the Chief Clerk brought me a list, and asked me to go over it. I went through the list and showed two items which were duplicates, being two votes for the same road under different names.

54. Were the District Inspectors consulted? Not to my knowledge. This year I have made out a list of the road votes, having obtained the information from the District Inspectors' notes to me, and those I did not consider necessary I left out of the list I supplied to the Minister for submission to Parliament. In making out the list I consulted both my own notes and the reports of the District Inspectors.

55. How did the lists of works submitted to Parliament last Session and this compare with your lists? Several votes were put in of which I knew nothing, and on which I was not consulted.

56. Were any works submitted by you omitted? Yes, some were.

57. *By Mr. Gray.*—Would your list and those supplied by the District Inspectors be before the Minister when preparing his list of works? Yes.

58. *By the Chairman.*—Do you know of any modes adopted to obtain information from officers of the Department? Only from hearsay; from actual knowledge I do not.

59. *By Mr. Gray.*—What were the modes to which you refer? Some Members of Parliament have come to me and said the Minister of Lands had written to them about the requirements of their Districts; they spoke to me about some of the roads, and to the best of my knowledge I told them what votes I would recommend if asked by the Minister.

60. Are you aware that a circular was sent by the Minister to Members? I am.

61. To whom would the information obtained in reply to such circulars be referred? I do not know.

62. *By the Chairman.*—Were the answers to those circulars as supplied by Members submitted to you? No.

63. Do you think it would be an improvement on the present system to have an independent Board who would receive applications for works from different parts of the country, and who would give their opinions and recommendations thereon before they were dealt with by the Minister? I do.

64. Do you think it would be well if such Board were to make a thorough investigation into the requirements of the various districts, looking some few years ahead, and to make an estimate of the total amount required for the various roads, bridges, &c., other than railways, and make provision for expenditure in each particular year, so as to have some definite plan to go on? I do.

65. Do you think such a proposal a feasible one that could be carried out? Yes; I prepared such an one whilst you were Minister of Lands, and it is now in the office.

66. What are the details of that scheme? I took a record of every known road on which public money had been expended by Road Trusts, Municipalities, or the Government, and gave a history of each, with the probable requirements in future. The aggregate cost was so enormous, however, that the scheme was not brought forward.

67. *By Mr. Gray.*—Do you not think that the course pursued during the last two years by the Minister of Lands in collecting all available information, was one calculated to enable him to judge of the necessity and requirement of works to be submitted to Parliament? I consider that the roads submitted during the last two years have not, as a rule, been the roads best calculated to facilitate settlement and afford the best means of communication to the public generally. There have been private roads, if I may use the term, supplied with funds, whilst the important, or trunk roads, have been sacrificed.

68. *By Mr. Dumaesq.*—What do you mean by private roads? Unimportant roads leading to a few places, and which the road trusts themselves would have left to the very last to be made or repaired in the District.

69. *By Mr. Dooley.*—Do you mean that money was expended on those so-called private roads to the detriment of the leading roads? The leading roads have been sacrificed.

70. You are acquainted with the system that has obtained during the last two years, and the system prior to that period—which do you think the better? The old system.

71. Can you point out the difference in the two systems? Under the old system adopted by the Department, the principal, or main and trunk roads, were recommended by the Officers of the Department, who had no personal or private interests to serve. They selected the most required roads in the district, and submitted them to the Minister. Under the present system many roads are forced through just to suit private interests or to benefit certain property. It is important that Members should know what will be the results of the roads they are advocating. I mean, when roads are brought under the attention of Members that those gentlemen are not posted up with right information by the parties giving the information. The information is supplied from interested sources, and it is impossible, in many instances, for Members to get personal information or knowledge.

72. *By the Chairman.*—Then do you mean that mischief has been done by many of the votes submitted having been for roads that you would not, and did not recommend? Yes.

73. *By Mr. Gray.*—Could you point out such votes if the schedule were before you? Yes.

74. Have you a thorough knowledge of the works which you say were forced on without proper information being supplied? I know most of them from personal knowledge or by reports of the district inspectors.

75. Do you say that the most important or trunk roads were sacrificed for unimportant roads—or what you call private roads? Yes, on what I have defined as private roads.

76. Were not tenders publicly invited for all of those which you define as private roads? In all cases as we could get out. We only got the money at the beginning of January this year.

77. Before the expenditure of any money on those roads, are not tenders therefor publicly invited? Undoubtedly.

78. Did you take any exception to those roads, or make any representation to the Minister that more important roads were being sacrificed? I have in some instances, by putting them off, and in writing. I have put them off until ordered to get them out.

79. Can you point out those works in the schedule? Yes.

80. Do you think your staff is sufficient to carry out the work? No; it has been reduced until I have only two competent draftsmen in the office; the others are volunteers, or are in their first year after being volunteers.

81. *By the Chairman.*—With your present staff what amount of expenditure can you carry out in the year? I could get out from £80,000 to £100,000 per year giving me the whole year, but not if we are required to get out the work during the three months preceding the winter.

82. Is your supervising staff sufficient to enable you to expend from £80,000 to £100,000 per year? The present staff is sufficient and fairly efficient, considering their status. They are not paid engineers' salaries, and only two of them are engineers.

83. *By Mr. Dooley.*—Were you furnished with the lists of works submitted by Members of Parliament in response to the circular issued? I was not. I have a copy of the schedule, and have also a copy of my own list which I could compare.

84. You say many items were included in the schedule which were not recommended by you? Yes.

85. Were those items which came in on the representations of Members of Parliament? I cannot say how they came in.

86. Were they there when you first saw the list? I never saw the list until a fortnight before it was out. Then I asked for a copy, and it was supplied me.

87. Had you prepared a manuscript list of your own? Yes. I handed it to the Minister.

88. When you first saw the printed list did it contain works not recommended by you? I saw some which I did not recommend, but I have not gone through the list carefully.

89. *By Mr. Gray.*—Are you aware if the information given by the District Inspectors was before the Minister when he was preparing the list of Public Works? I supplied the Minister with a list, dictated from the Inspectors' reports and personal knowledge, something like three weeks or a month before any information was furnished him by Members of Parliament for preparing his list.

90. Did the Minister prepare his list of works from your list? Yes, from that and other sources of information of which I know nothing. My list was prepared and submitted to the Minister before Parliament was called together.

91. *By Mr. Dooley.*—Was your knowledge of the items in the list furnished by your personal knowledge, or from reports supplied by the inspectors? I travel through the districts and go through the list with the inspectors on the ground, and when they furnish me with the information I recognise the works, and if I require more information I send to the inspectors for it.

92. Then, the information is really supplied by your subordinates? Yes; but they are revised by me, and I can, in most cases, speak from personal knowledge, having visited the locality.

93. Will you go through the schedule of works for this year, and when again before the Committee point out the works you alluded to as not having been recommended by you? I will.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 18, 1888.

MR. WILLIAM DUFFY *recalled and examined.*

94. *By the Chairman.*—Yesterday you told the Committee you would indicate on the list of works of last year and the previous Sessions the works of which you had any knowledge: do you produce the list giving that information? I produce lists of works submitted in 1887 and 1888. I have marked those items which were submitted to the Minister on my recommendation; those which are not marked I have no knowledge of.

95. *By Mr. Dooley.*—Do the items you have marked include those recommended by the Inspectors and yourself? Yes, the items I have marked are those recommended by the Inspectors and submitted by me; the remainder are those of which I have no knowledge at all.

96. Was it the practice to obtain from the Chairman of the respective Road Trusts other lists of the requirements of their districts? I do not know; I only know that I prepared a list of works and handed it in.

97. After the lists supplied by the Chairman of the Road Trusts had been shown to you? I am not able to answer that question, for I know nothing about such lists; I have never seen them.

98. *By the Chairman.*—Have you had any direct communication with the Chairman of the Road Trusts on such subject? No.

99. What is the order in which information is supplied by the Road Trusts of the requirements of their districts? I have to obtain the requirements of the districts from those men whose educational status warrant me in accepting their recommendations. Members of Road Trusts might be gentlemen well qualified for the position, and they might be men of very limited knowledge.

100. Would it be wise for them to initiate a scheme of Public Works? In many instances, no.

101. Do you think it advisable that the Road Trusts, or through the Chairman of the respective Trusts with the assistance of yourself, should assist in the initiation of an annual Public Works scheme? As a matter of fact we generally consult the road trustees on the subject, for it is our duty to get all information of the requirements of the district wherever we can, and then place on such information whatever we think desirable. It depends on the educational abilities of the parties nominated as trustees whether you can accept the information or not. In many instances Road Trustees are not very well educated men, and in other places they are well educated and qualified men.

102. *By Mr. Dooley.*—Do you attach any more importance to the information supplied by the Road Trustees than to any other individual residing in the district? No; as a matter of fact both the Inspectors and myself wherever we can obtain information we do so, whether from local bodies or respectable gentlemen in the neighbourhood; we are only too glad to get all possible local information. In my opinion there are many good men in the district who are not Road Trustees, and whose information is often valuable.

103. In reference to the scheme proposed by you three years ago, in the time of the late Minister of Lands, does it contain any new principles other than that now being carried on? I do not think so. My instructions were to give the list of the existing works and the cost of equipping them properly. I have given my remarks on each road, and what money has been expended on each, either by Road Trusts, Municipalities, or by the Department, with the probable cost of completing same.

104. Then you do not think the Road Trustees should be asked to furnish particulars for each vote in their district? I do not object to asking them for the information, but I do not think it should be imperative that they should be asked, or that their advice should be acted upon. It is absolutely necessary that local information should be asked for, but it is not always wise to get this from persons in the position of Road Trustees.

105. *By the Chairman.*—What is new in the scheme laid down in the books you have produced? It shows the requirements of roads for a series of years in advance so far as the information at my command enables me to indicate.

106. What would be the estimate of the total cost of getting all these roads in order? I cannot remember; I believe the estimate was given to the Minister, but I do not know where it is now.

107. *By Mr. Dooley.*—In the preparation of the usual list of public works for the Minister of Lands to present to Parliament for its acceptance, do you deem it wise to consult, as he has done, first the Road

Trustees, secondly the District Inspectors, and thirdly the Members Parliament, each to furnish a separate list? The Road Inspectors should certainly be asked to furnish a list—that is absolutely necessary; but I certainly do not think the Road Trusts or Members of Parliament should be asked to furnish lists.

108. Then you are of opinion that the recommendation of yourself and the Inspectors are ample? Yes, supplemented with the fact that we make it an invariable rule to get the best local knowledge available, and we always get our information from what we consider the best sources.

109. Do you think the local Trusts should be called upon to furnish particulars of any road, whether old or new, for which they approach Parliament for funds, giving engineering data? I think it a moral impossibility for most of them to give it.

110. Why? Simply because there is not the engineering skill at the command of the local bodies.

111. Could not they employ engineering skill? That would require more means than they have at their disposal. There are no professional men for such information being obtained, and under the existing state of the law they would not be justified in spending the ratepayers' money in employing such engineering skill as would be necessary to obtain these particulars; special provision would have to be made if such information is deemed necessary.

112. Was the circular which was sent to Members of Parliament submitted to you before being issued? No; I never saw the circular, and only know from hearsay that it was issued.

113. You stated that your Department was insufficiently manned? I did yesterday. I stated that the staff could get out works amounting from £80,000 to £100,000 per annum. I would like to supplement that by stating that we have to expend the votes under "The Waste Lands Act," and supervision of all public buildings in the country districts.

114. What do your field duties consist of, and are they contained in regulations or instructions issued immediately from the Minister? I have only the general instructions under which I was engaged. I have the supervision of the different contracts that come in; I have to examine them and be responsible for them all, and whenever I am out in the field I examine the works to see that they are being carried out according to contract. When I am going through the districts on every occasion I take notes and make the Inspectors also take them passing through, and then we compare our notes as to the most economical way of overcoming any difficulty.

115. Do the Inspectors' lists of works come directly to you? Yes.

116. When you recommend a certain amount for a specified work, and the Minister reduces that amount, do you deem it your duty to hand in any objection, or that you have any reason for enquiring into his motives? If it is a progressive work I accept the reduction as the will of Parliament. If it is a permanent work, such as a bridge, the Minister either increases the vote or says that he will get another vote for its completion next year.

117. *By Mr. Lyne.*—Do you think it would be advisable to increase the main road system at present in existence, and in fact make it become a general system, rather than giving votes to road trusts for cross roads? I think it would be a wise thing if a main road vote were brought in, and some defined amount laid down for a certain number of years for the principal roads, and let the subject be thoroughly thrashed out on the information supplied by the Department, and let the roads then set down as main roads remain so for some time. At present main roads can be taken off the list from time to time, and the system is unsatisfactory.

118. You mean roads leading from township to township? Yes.

119. Are you acquainted with the road system in England? They have County Road Boards. Very little work is done by contract, workmen under inspectors being put on on certain lengths. The parish roads are kept up on a system something similar to our road trusts; they are kept up by road rates levied on property-holders.

120. Do you think it would be well to have a non-political commissioner passing through the Colony previous to the meeting of Parliament in every year, taking a competent officer connected with the Department with him, examining and reporting upon the works he may think possible to include in the Public Works Scheme? I do not think one commissioner could do the work of the whole Colony. The work would be so voluminous that he could hardly make remarks on it.

121. If he could, would such a system be advisable? No; a Board would be preferable.

122. *By Mr. Dooley.*—How would you suggest that such Board should be constructed? They have such Boards in Victoria and South Australia, and all the public works in those Colonies are initiated and carried out by the Boards. The Commissioners are nominated or chosen in the first instance by the Government, I believe.

123. *By the Chairman.*—Does the Board system work well in South Australia? They are extending the system of non-political Boards there by appointing railway commissioners and public service boards. In Victoria there is no such thing at present as public works; all the works are carried out by local boards, shire councils, &c.

124. *By Mr. Lyne.*—If the Board you suggest were appointed, would it not be advisable, before they passed through the Colony, to get a return from the various Road Trusts of the work required? As prudent business men, the Commissioners would avail themselves of every possible way of getting information, and the Road Trusts would be one of the best possible means of getting local knowledge. It would, however, be better to leave it to their judgment. The information would be only for their guidance.

125. *By Mr. Dooley.*—In the event of the Commissioners being appointed, the system to be adopted, you think, would be that now followed by you to get information from the District Inspectors? Circumstances alter cases; but I should think so.

126. *By the Chairman.*—Would not the difference be that your recommendations may or may not be accepted by the Minister, whilst the recommendations of Commissioners appointed independently would probably be accepted by Parliament? The recommendations of the Commissioners would be absolute; our recommendations are merely optional.

127. *By Mr. Dumaresq.*—Under the system you advocate, Members of Parliament would have no voice in the public works scheme? No, not in their individual capacity, not more than any ordinary gentleman who has information that is considered valuable; but in their collective capacity, when voting for or against the votes, they would have power to decide in Parliament as they do now.

128. *By Mr. Pillinger.*—Would you take away from Members the power of initiating votes? No; but I would take away all the power they have outside the House. I would treat them outside the House just as I would any other gentleman whose opinion was valuable.

129. On what basis do you introduce your scheme of public works? The population of the district, the subsequent traffic, and the possibility of increasing settlement in the district.

130. Without regard to engineering? I consider the engineering after we have determined on the line of road to be made, and then make the road to the best of our engineering ability.

131. Do you think that either yourself or staff would be better judges of the traffic to be carried over a road, or the Crown land that would be opened, than the Road Trustees? No; it is desirable to get local information if you possibly can.

132. When you speak with reference to traffic or to roads through Crown land, do you simply refer to the information supplied by Road Trustees or Members of Parliament? Yes, with this difference: Members of Parliament do not make it their business to go into these matters, and very often the information is thrust on them, and they are not able to master it of their own knowledge.

133. How many of those roads that you have ticked on the schedules for 1887 and 1888 are you personally acquainted with? I know the whole, or most of them.

134. Have you any knowledge of the roads you have not ticked? Some of them I know. I have given no opinion at all about the roads I have not ticked. Those not ticked were either overlooked by me or were roads that I would not recommend.

THURSDAY, JULY 19, 1888.

MR. WM. DUFFY *re-called and examined.*

135. *By Mr. Pillinger.*—Had you offered to the Minister any opinion on the roads which are not ticked on the schedule produced? So far as I remember, no.

136. I would like to call your attention to the road from Jerusalem to Tunnack, £500. In the scheme for 1887 you have ticked it as a road recommended by you, but this year a vote for the same road is not ticked. Have you a knowledge of that road? Yes, I have a knowledge of it. I did not recommend it this year because the money voted for it in 1887 had not been expended, and I received instructions not to submit as extensive a scheme as hitherto.

137. Am I to understand that all the roads ticked have had the amounts previously voted for them expended? It is not so.

138. What did you mean by alluding to the old system as distinguished from the present system? Since the last change of Government a new system has been introduced.

139. You say that under the present system many roads are forced through to serve private property—can you show on the produced schedules for 1887–8 any road on which money was voted to serve private or individual interests? I object to answer that question.

140. Why do you object to answer that question? There would be comments and interpretations put on my answer which I do not at all mean to convey.

141. Can you point out where money was expended on what you call private roads to the detriment of leading or more important roads? For many of the important roads now on the schedule I recommended larger sums, and some of the main roads I recommended were struck out. Otherwise, with the sums voted for these so-called private roads, the total amount would have been much too large. Consequently, the amounts for important roads were reduced to meet the votes for less important roads. Some of the roads now in the schedule have previously received large sums, and now appear on the list under different names.

142. What is your system of placing main roads on the schedule? I have stated to the Minister that I do not consider any road should be put on the schedule that did not appear originally in the Bill. All main roads should be designated in the Bill, and not altered yearly on the Public Works schedule. That has not been done correctly heretofore.

143. *By the Chairman.*—Is not that done really under the provisions of the Main Roads Bill that is submitted every year, and in accordance with provisions of which certain roads are determined to be maintained as main roads? I do not consider that the right way. I think the Act should exist in its entirety until a new Bill is brought in. There should be no addition to the main roads on the schedule unless brought individually and pointedly before the attention of the House. Within the last two years, owing to the development of the railway system, main roads running parallel to railways have been struck off the list, and other roads put in lieu of them. I consider that whenever a new road is to be included in the list of main roads it should be brought formally before Parliament in an individual Bill. To my mind it is optional for an officer preparing a schedule whether he put down a road or not.

144. Are you aware that, as a matter of fact, discussion has arisen in Parliament on the omissions and additions in the main road schedule you have mentioned? Yes, in some instances, but in other cases they have passed on the voices. I have spoken to Members afterwards, and they have been very much surprised that certain roads have been included in the list of main roads.

145. *By Mr. Dooley.*—When a new road or deviation of an old road is advised, how do you proceed to give effect thereto? Whenever the necessity for a new road arises I bring it officially before the Minister, and give the reasons for the alterations required; I then ask for a survey of it, and deal with the owners of the adjacent land with regard to position, and when the position is satisfactorily settled, or arranged by arbitration, and the road surveyed, we commence work.

146. To whom would you apply for the survey? To the chief clerk generally, and it is done either by the Lands Branch or an officer in our Department who is now told off to make surveys.

147. Do you get the district inspector to mark out the ground? That is the preliminary work to show the extent of the work.

148. Does the district inspector mark out the road or deviation? Yes, he goes over the line of road, it may be before or after the money is voted by Parliament; it is simply carrying out the details of the work. If he thinks it necessary to avoid heavy cutting or gullies he then suggests such work, and it is put before the Minister for approval. The Engineer of Roads then goes over the road to see whether he approves of it, and on his report the owners are dealt with with the view of settling the position of the road, and the survey is then arranged.

149. Does not the Engineer of Roads go over the road unless some objection or question is raised? Not in most cases, but if it is an important work he goes over it.

150. After the inspector has marked out a road do you apply to the Department for instruction? In many cases, where the work would otherwise be delayed, a district surveyor is ordered to do the work. Either a district surveyor or a departmental surveyor surveys the work in every case.

151. Do you know what scale is laid down for such surveys? I do not know what is the scale of payment to the district surveyors, but I believe a scale has been adopted. When the work is done by an officer of the Department who is in receipt of a salary I do not think any payment is made.

152. *By Mr. Dumaresq.*—You say you can expend from £80,000 to £100,000 per year: do you take that as the basis for your proposed works? Not necessarily. It has hitherto been the exception for the whole of the money voted to be expended during the year. Some of it might not be spent for two or three years afterwards.

153. *By Mr. Gray.*—You informed the Committee that you had a thorough knowledge of the roads of the Colony—is that so? Yes.

154. Have you visited the roads under your inspectors as occasion required? Yes.

155. What district has Mr. Helmer charge of? He takes from Leslie, up the valley of the Derwent to Bothwell, back towards Tunnack, and round towards Richmond and the Kangaroo Point district.

156. How often have you visited his district? I only go through his district in different parts. Sometimes I visit the New Norfolk portion and sometimes other parts, as I am sent for on special occasions. I have not been through the entire district for 18 months or two years.

157. Has the Minister of Lands often questioned you as to the roads which you inspect, and as to those which you have failed to inspect? Yes, always. At the end of last year the Minister asked me for a copy of my diary showing the districts I had been in, and asked me what particular roads I had visited. My answer was I had kept no diary of the works I had been over, but that I had reported on several roads, and those roads were in his office.

158. You say you took exception to votes for certain roads—did you take exception to them in writing to the Minister? I find I was perhaps rash in answering that question. I am not able from memory to ask for the papers required. I wish that question not to be pressed, for I am unable to lay my hands on the papers, or give such instructions as would find them.

159. *By the Chairman.*—Have you clear recollection of making such recommendations to the Minister in writing? Yes, to both the present and late Ministers of Works.

160. *By Mr. Gray.*—Have you gone through the list of works proposed by the district inspectors for 1887-8, and inspected those works personally? I can hardly answer that question in a positive manner. Perhaps I had not been on the ground when the vote was asked for, but I have a personal knowledge of most of the votes through having gone over the ground, either with the inspectors or by myself. If you mean have I gone over these special votes on the ground, I answer no.

161. Did you not agree with all the road proposals for 1887-8 before they were submitted to Parliament? Yes; I went over the lists for 1887 with Mr. Smith about six months before they were submitted to Parliament. I have not yet gone over the list for 1888.

162. The proposals for 1888 were not gone over by you as were those for 1887? All that I know up to the present time of the works for 1888 is that I made out a list for the Minister from the notes of the district inspectors, but I had not been consulted with regard to any alterations made in my list except in one instance. Two or three votes were put on a supplementary list, and then I spoke to Mr. Smith, giving my opinion on them. I have not gone over the list with any officer of the Department. There are many votes which I have not ticked—showing they were not recommended by me—of which I would certainly have approved if I had gone over the list with an officer of the Department.

163. *By Mr. Dooley.*—Do you agree with them because they tallied with your recommendations? In many instances they are not deviations from my recommendations, but are roads which I would have certainly recommended had I known there were sufficient funds.

164. *By Mr. Gray.*—Do you think it necessary that a Minister should be obliged to have your recommendation for every vote proposed? Undoubtedly no.

165. *By Mr. Dooley.*—Do you keep any office records of the various roads operated upon in your Department? Certainly, yes.

166. Do you file them, and keep up a road plan? I am making such a plan, and have kept it up ever since I have been in the office.

167. *By Mr. Lyne.*—What is your opinion of the desirableness of extending the main road system instead of granting so much money to Road Trusts, as guaranteed, for cross-roads? I think it would be wise to introduce a general system; many roads are now developing into trunk roads.

168. What is your opinion of the expenditure of money on roads under the Waste Lands Act? Such money is expended in opening up roads to farms, which by purchasing the land have really contributed to the fund.

169. Do you think the system a good one? Generally speaking the money is expended by the Department, and under the control of the Department. In most instances that I know such is the case.

170. Is not the money often laid out on roads on which there is little or no traffic? It is very often laid out on roads that are not directly the roads demanded by the Act; but it is invariably at the request of the parties to whom the money is due, and to provide them with a road which they otherwise ought not to get.

171. Do you think an improvement could be made in that system? I have not given the subject much thought.

172. *By the Chairman.*—In regard to the road between Jerusalem and Tunnack, and for which you told the Committee that the £500 voted last year was not expended, and for which you did not recommend any further vote this year, do you know how much of that £500 has been expended? Speaking from memory, I do not think any contract for it is out yet. There has been an enormous amount of votes, and the District Inspector could not do all the work. He called attention to the fact, and has been given two assistants, who will enable him to get the work out now. The district is very large and scattered, and there has been a great expenditure under the Waste Lands Act. It was impossible for one man to do it all, but I hope, with the assistance given, that we will be able to get the work more expeditiously.

173. Do you know that the money voted in 1887 for the various works will be expended before you touch the votes passed this year? The votes passed last year, or the great bulk of it, will be expended by December this year.

174. When you speak of your ability to properly expend from £80,000 to £100,000 per year on works, do you mean exclusive of works under the Waste Lands Fund? Yes, additional to the expenditure under the Waste Lands Act; but difficulties crop up which very often occasion delay in carrying out work for which money has been voted. Very often we are able to do pioneer work with the Waste Lands Fund which we could not do if we expended the parliamentary vote first. We work the two together where possible.

175. What amount per annum do you generally expend under the Waste Lands Act? It is impossible to say. During the last 15 or 18 months we expended nearly three times as much as we did in previous years. It depends entirely on the amounts received from the various districts and the works asked for. Until I hear there is a certain amount available, I know nothing about the matter. The only way we hear is by the residents calling attention to it.

176. What explanation do you desire to give in respect to questions 29 and 32? I think the word "several" would convey more than I intended and than I really meant to convey. In regard to answer 29, I may say I have expended time during six months trying to get the papers. In some instances the people of the district have petitioned against the work; but there are generally in a district two parties and two sides to the question, each side taking different views. A petition sometimes comes in from a district representing the views of one particular party, and when the matter has been enquired into I have been ordered to get the work in accordance with their desires. In regard to answer 32, complaints have been made, but we simply have not had time. We have got out a very great deal of work. We have been accused of delay, but it is simply a physical impossibility to get the works if we do not get the money until three months of the year have passed.

JAMES FINCHAM, called in and examined.

177. *By Mr. Pillinger.*—What position do you occupy? Engineer-in-Chief.

178. Have you any control over the roads? Very little now, if any.

179. Are you consulted in the preparation of the Schedule of Public Works for presentation to Parliament? No, not now, except as regards railways.

180. Is it long since the Minister ceased to consult you? About three years, I think.

181. When you had control of the roads, what principle was adopted in preparing a Schedule of Public Works? The usual practice was, that as soon as we got any intimation that a Public Works Schedule was required to be prepared for the coming Session, I partially from my own knowledge of the requirements of the different districts, and with the assistance of information obtained from the various local Inspectors, roughed out a list of proposals. These lists were approximate so far as cost was concerned, because there was no time to make detailed and close estimates out. Upon the list being prepared it was submitted to the

Minister, who would go through it several times with me before submitting it to the Cabinet. It was then pretty well thrashed out, and I would be called in to answer questions or give further information on different points as required by one or other of the Members of Cabinet. So far as the limited time would allow, professional officers of the Department were consulted by the Minister as to the amount required and the direction of the various items of expenditure.

182. Did members at that time suggest works to the Minister? No, or if so, only to a very small extent.

183. What was the result when passing such a Schedule through the House?—were many items added to the List? The items added in the earlier days of the Public Works Schemes were very few compared with later years.

184. During the last few years were many items added to the list during the passing of the Scheme through the House? Yes. So far as my knowledge goes it has occurred chiefly during the last three or four years.

185. Can you suggest any system which you think would be preferable to that in operation when you were consulted in reference to these works? I have thought a great deal of the matter at different times as to the difficulties (which were not inconsiderable, in connection with an equitable adjustment of the public moneys) brought from time to time under my notice. My recommendation would be that the Scheme should be prepared with more deliberation than is practised now,—say some twelve months in advance. I would then recommend that instead of, as now, allowing the amounts which have to be proposed to grow from one vote to another, that the same should be definitely fixed some twelve months in advance. Then that the expenditure be divided under two heads,—one expenditure to be controlled entirely by the Minister of the Department, and the other, the larger expenditure, should be under the control of the local authorities. In regard to the first and smaller expenditure, I would strongly recommend that liberal allowance be made for constructing roads in advance into Crown Lands; thus letting selection follow the road, instead of the road following selection, as now. I feel sure very great benefit would accrue from this course. In the first proposal for the expenditure under the estimates I would suggest that out of the yearly Public Works Scheme the Waste Lands Fund should be supplemented to a liberal extent, as chiefly where this Waste Lands fund expenditure is laid out the district is beyond the immediate notice or care of the local authorities, and I think this suggestion would have a very beneficial effect in many ways. To come to the larger and more difficult proposal, I think it is worth serious consideration as to whether the sums to be allowed to the various districts should not be allowed in a lump for each district, in the same way as is done, I believe, in connection with the main roads in some other colonies. In order to carry out this proposal I would suggest that for the present the various road districts should form a district to be dealt with; that they should submit to the Minister of Works a scheme of their proposals for works which were considered urgently necessary; that these works should be distinguished or divided into two or three classes, and in order of their importance. I am speaking only of roads exclusive of main roads approved specially by Parliament: I am speaking of local roads dealt with under the schemes as branch roads. I would also suggest that on the list being furnished that the district inspectors be instructed to make approximate estimates for the cost of these works. With this information, and the knowledge beforehand of the total amount decided to be expended on these branch roads, I think it is possible that some common basis might be arrived at by which the funds should be equitably divided. I admit there is very considerable difficulty in adjusting the system just at first, and in seeing my way to what the basis should be; but as I imagine the object of the expenditure year after year is more to benefit agricultural settlement than mere pastoral land, I would suggest that the division should be made on the basis of population, and area of cultivated land. When the money has been passed in a lump sum I would suggest that subject to the Minister's veto where he considered it necessary to use it, that the disposal of the vote locally should be in the hands of the local authority, they presumably knowing best where the money is required, the expenditure then, as now, being carried out under Government supervision. I only pretend to give that as a rough sketch of the ideas I have thought for some time would be the best to carry out in the interests of all.

186. *By Mr. Pillinger.*—How would you classify these roads? The main roads are already classified. My only object in suggesting the classification is to enable the Minister to distribute the funds. The classification I would leave to the local body, who would recommend so many roads in the first division, so many in the second, and so on, but really leaving the division to be regulated by the traffic and importance of the road.

187. *By Mr. Lyne.*—Do you think it would be well to have some non-political commission, either individual or board, to overlook the works proposed by road trusts, with the assistance of officers of the Department, previous to the list of works being sent in to the Minister of Works? I think that the district inspectors, from their intimate knowledge of the wants of every district, should be sufficiently competent and able, with the help of the Engineer of Roads, to advise the Minister whether items proposed are good or bad. As to the suggestion for the appointment of a commissioner or commissioners, I do not believe it would be of much real use; and I say so from personal experience. No one man, or set of men, could be supposed to be competent to deal with all those questions relating to roads all over the colony until he or they had made themselves thoroughly acquainted with all the roads of the colony, and that would take from two to three years. When I was first appointed, and had only roads to deal with, I was warned that it would take fully two years to make myself acquainted with the roads of the colony, and I found that prediction fully verified. My proposal to have the details of the proposals for the scheme originate with the road trusts might be presumed to do away with any suggestions of political influence. If there were any, the independent reports of the district inspectors would be sufficient check.

188. You are aware that Members of Parliament have been invited to give their opinions of such works as might be required in their districts, prior to the meeting of Parliament? I only know it from what I have seen in the public press.

189. If that is the case, do you think it advisable? No, I do not. I think it would be far better to address the authorities in charge of the roads. I might add that perhaps one advantage of the suggestion I have thrown out would be to increase the interest of the people of the district in road matters—an interest which I have observed to be wanting in some districts.

190. Do you see any objection to the list of public works for each district being submitted to the member of the district for his remarks prior to the list of works being laid before Parliament? Yes, I think if there is any objection to inviting the opinion of members beforehand, there is just as much objection to inviting their opinions afterwards.

191. Then you think members should know nothing of the Public Works scheme, except what they find out from the Road Trusts, prior to the scheme being laid before them in Parliament? I think the plan I have suggested would be preferable—that the proposals should emanate from the local authorities. I see no objection at all to the opinions of members being asked, but I do not say they should be acted upon.

192. Could not the list furnished by the Road Trusts, and corrected by the officers of the Department be submitted to the member for the district prior to its final presentation to Parliament? I think it should not be submitted to the members if the object is to do away with all political influence.

193. *By the Chairman.*—From your previous knowledge of the Department, especially regarding roads and works other than railways, what is the amount you think could be ordinarily expended annually with the ordinary office and outdoor staff? The amount would not so much depend on the staff as on the available labour market.

194. Taking the state of the labour market, and all other things that you know affect this matter, into consideration, what would be the approximate amount that you could expend annually? That information would be best given you by the Public Works report for the half-year, showing what amount has actually been expended.

195. *By Mr. Dooley.*—When your connection with Roads Department ceased, were you duly notified to that effect, and how? In response to some requests of mine for relief, as soon as the Engineer of Roads had become sufficiently acquainted with the various districts of the colony, the late Minister of Lands informed me that I would be relieved of all duties in connection with roads and buildings, but that I was still to be considered the head of the department, and to give the Minister advice or assistance in connection with either roads, bridges, or buildings, whenever called on to do so.

196. In reference to amounts for items that might be submitted by Road Trusts, would you ask them to furnish an account of the whole cost of the road, and what would be required for its completion? I think it would be advisable to get that, but I would keep it entirely apart from the information required for the portion of the work to be immediately undertaken. I think the full information would be valuable, but it would have to be kept separate from the immediate work for which Parliament was being asked to vote money. All the details of the cost of ultimate completion might be posted in a separate column, and would be very valuable. I think something in that direction has been prepared by the Engineer of Roads.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1888.

JOHN HELMER *called and examined.*

197. *By the Chairman.*—What position do you occupy? Inspector of Roads, and have been so for eleven years.

198. Can you inform the Committee in what way votes for roads to be proposed to Parliament are initiated as a rule? In the beginning of the year I get instructions from the office to prepare a list of works which I think necessary in my district to be performed, and to give estimates and particulars of the same, I then prepare the necessary particulars and forward them to the office.

199. Is that list prepared from your personal knowledge of the locality, or do you depend on others? I prepare my list from personal experience. I go through the district every month and take notes of what I think is required.

200. Do you consult with the Road Trustees as to the requirements of the district? Yes, occasionally.

201. Have you found any difficulty in carrying out your duties in that respect? There is no difficulty at all in that respect; knowing the country so well, I know what is required on the different roads.

202. *By Mr. Dooley.*—In reference to your method of ascertaining the requirements for the year, if you start from, say, Bellerive and go on to Carnarvon, do you take the whole requirements of that road into consideration? No, I would only take the worst parts, and describe the wants of those portions.

203. Do you give an estimate of what would be required to complete the whole work? Two years ago a plan was prepared showing the whole length of the different roads of the Colony and what would be required up to 1890 to complete those works.

204. In estimating the requirements for the coming year, are you guided by the total amount of work? I would take, say two miles of very bad road, and recommend its being done at a certain cost. I make my estimate and furnish it without any regard to what would complete the whole line of road.

205. Then, your only aim and object is to keep the roads in passable repair? We complete a certain portion every year. If a road would cost a £10,000 to complete, and I asked for that sum in one year there would be very little probability of my getting it; I therefore ask for what I think would be a fair sum for the district. We have to be guided by circumstances.

206. The circumstances, I suppose, are the money available and the works that require immediate attention? Yes. I consult the road trusts as to what their opinion is on the matter, and where they wish the money to be expended.

207. *By the Chairman.*—Would there be any difficulty in getting your schedule of works prepared in time to have it examined and reported on by a Board before Parliament met in June or July? There would be no difficulty.

208. What notice would you require to get such report prepared? I could get it in a month. Knowing the country so well, there is no difficulty in getting a report made out.

209. *By Mr. Dooley.*—When you and the road trusts disagree, how do you settle it? I take my own view of the case when we differ.

210. Having prepared your list, do you furnish it to the Minister of Lands? Yes. I furnish my report to the office, and that is the last I hear of it.

211. Have you observed the result of your recommendations—how many were accepted and how many rejected? Sometimes the amounts are curtailed, sometimes they are struck out altogether, and sometimes they are slightly increased.

212. Are those alterations effected without reference to you? Yes, as a rule.

213. Can you say whether the public interests have ever suffered materially from such alterations? I suppose the Minister had grounds for making the alterations. I cannot say that the public have ever suffered severely on that account. When the whole of the inspectors send in their reports and recommendations they may amount to double the total Ministers are able to propose, and the amounts have to be cut down. The votes cut out are generally those for which no petition from ratepayers or representations by the Member for the district have been made.

214. Can you instance any particular case in which the district has sustained serious loss by your recommendation not being carried out? No. If the people can make out a good case, the petition for the work required and their wants are generally attended to. The wants of a district are generally made known by the Member.

215. Then you think that the amount of work obtained by a district depends on the exertions of the people in making their wants known. To a certain extent. If a good case is made out, either by petition or by the Member in Parliament, the money is generally voted.

216. *By Mr. Fenton.*—Have you known money to be expended in your district without due regard to population and production; or has money been expended on some roads of little importance, while others, for the accommodation of larger population and production, have not been constructed? I do not know of any particular waste of money. There might be some instances, perhaps, where some roads get more than they should have in proportion to what is voted for other roads, but that is owing to the people interested in the latter not making known their wants. People who petition, and whose members make their wants known, perhaps get a little more than those who do not.

217. Then your report to the Department is not considered reliable unless backed up by petition from the people? I do not mean that; but if it is backed up by petition or deputation perhaps it may be more successful. Sometimes the recommendations of the inspectors are double what the Government can propose, and some must be cut out.

218. Then some votes may be struck out after being recommended by you, and others that have been recommended by the people may be inserted? Yes.

219. Have you known any votes that have been recommended by you to be struck out, and other votes substituted in the same districts, and which you have not recommended? I have known of a few instances.

220. Have you any knowledge why such votes have been inserted? They have been inserted owing to the recommendations of the Member for the district and representations of the ratepayers.

221. Can you give any particular instance of a road having found its way on the schedule of works without your recommendation? On looking through the schedule for 1888 I only see four items for works in my district which were not recommended by me. They are all for small amounts, and are as follow:—From Ti-tree Road to selections of Grice and others, £100; from Richmond Main Road through Dulcot, £100, both in Mr. Lewis' district; Ouse to Marlborough, £500, in the Hon. Nicholas Brown's district; and approach to Elphinstone and Mount Stewart road, £150, in Mr. Hamilton's district.

222. *By Mr. Pillinger.*—Were these roads inserted instead of others which the Minister left out? No, they were additional.

223. Were any of the roads recommended by you in your district left out? Yes, in some instances, but very few. On looking through the list I see there were more additions than items struck out. Two works which I recommended were left out—a jetty at Sheepwash, Bruni Island, and a jetty at Adventure Bay. The latter, however, has been inserted in the supplementary schedule conditionally on a similar sum to that voted being subscribed locally. Some of the amounts recommended by me were slightly reduced, but on the whole the alterations have been few and only in small items.

224. *By Mr. Dooley.*—If in the first instance the Minister of Lands applied to the road trustees to furnish a list of urgent requirements, and these lists were then submitted to the inspectors of the various districts, would not the fullest information be obtained? Yes; but it would amount to the same thing as the principle now adopted, although, perhaps, it would be an improvement.

225. If you differ from the road trustees, would you assign a reason for so doing? Yes, certainly.

226. Do you think if the road trustees were first applied to that the ultimate result would be the same as now adopted? Yes, practically. I have known road trusts to refuse to take charge of a road, although it was very much required. They would not undertake it because it was at the extreme end of their district.

227. *By Mr. Fenton.*—Do the road trusts in the Huon maintain their roads when constructed? Some do, but some are neglectful.

228. Have you ever had to construct the same road twice? No.

229. In what condition do you hand over the roads to the trusts? Sometimes they are only formed. If the amount voted is expended the road is handed over to the trust, they having previous to the work being commenced consented to take charge of it. In opening a line of road it has to be cleared and formed first. We cannot get sufficient money to metal and complete it immediately.

230. Have you ever found trusts to neglect roads if they have been properly made? Occasionally, but not often.

231. *By Mr. Fenton.*—Have you ever known Government votes to be expended more than once on the same portion of a road? No, not for the same class of work. I have never had to form a road twice.

232. *By Mr. Pillinger.*—How long would it take you to travel over the roads in your district and report on them? It would take about eight weeks. I have 120 separate roads in my district, stretching from Marlborough to Bruni, over 120 miles distance.

233. *By Mr. Dumaresq.*—If you went into a new district, would it not take you much longer to report on the roads? Yes, very much longer. Knowing the whole of the roads personally, of course I do not need to inspect all closely on every visit, except where works are carried on.

234. How many road inspectors are there? Ten or eleven altogether.

235. Have they all the same extent of duty as you have? I do not think so. I have charge of about one-third of the whole of the Colony. There are 82 road trusts in the Colony, and I have 30 of them in my district; and out of the 36 electoral districts I have 10.

236. Have you any assistance in superintending the works? During the last few months I have had assistance. I represented to the Minister that I could not faithfully carry out the works, and he gave me two assistants.

237. What class of men are they? One is a surveyor and had been in the office for some years, and the other has been on the main roads for some time in charge of the stone-crushers.

238. Being allowed assistance, does not your work come easy, you having only to see that the contracts are properly completed? I visit the works during their construction. Very often I see how they are laid out before construction is commenced. No matter what number of assistants I had, I would still have to look after the roads to see that they are properly laid out and during construction.