

*By the Hon. Mr. Macpherson :—*

Q. I think the Committee understood you yesterday to say that there had been no dry fills where trestle-work had been originally specified? Do you adhere to that, or is that your meaning?—No; it is what I said and it is what I mean in my view of the case, which I will explain to the Committee. It conveys an idea that I did not wish to convey and I will repeat it in a different form. There are banks made where trestle-work would have gone, and if those are the banks to which Mr. Smith refers, then his statement may be accounted for in that way, for this reason: I thought when I was giving my answer to the question, the Committee understood when I said there was nothing done, but what I had been authorized to do by Mr. Smith, with reference to the water-stretches, that we had put rock sides instead of solid rock base in the water-stretches, and that it took less rock to cross the water stretches in that way. Consequently as there was rock enough in the cutting on the whole section to make up the water-stretches—only it would have to be carried a long distance—when you put it into the water-stretches only for side walls, it left a mass of rock on our hands from the cuttings which was available to make up the land voids. Therefore, when I was giving evidence, I said we had not done anything beyond what was authorized, because the rock that was saved out of the cuttings was in my view a part of the other. Therefore, I may have conveyed to the Committee, the impression that there was really no place on the land-stretches where embankments are now, that would not have been made if the work had been done under the original contract. The Committee will now see there must be bank where it was originally intended to be trestle-work as we did not waste the stuff taken out of the cuttings. When Mr. Smith came along he made certain suggestions and changes that I did not feel warranted in making, without the approval of my superior officer, and they have very materially improved the work as well as reducing the cost very decidedly. Whether the present cost is reduced there is no doubt that the improvements Mr. Smith has ordered on his own views, and on my suggestions, will have the effect of materially reducing the ultimate cost of the work.

Q. Can you give us an approximate idea of the proportion of trestle-work that was specified for the land voids which has been dispensed with, by making solid embankments of earth and rock?—I cannot tell you right off; but the statement I am bringing down will give you the money difference.

Q. The Committee understood you to say yesterday that more than half the trestle-work had been dispensed with, by adopting the solid embankments across the water-stretches?—Yes, more than half.

Q. What further proportion of the other half has been rendered unnecessary by filling of those land voids with solid embankments?—I really cannot say, but probably it is one-fourth or one-third, because it is the low-priced trestle-work that is thrown out by our filling up. Earth filling up to 18 feet is cheaper than trestle-work at Mr. Whitehead's price.

Q. What I would like to get approximately is this: Suppose the Government determined to finish the section by using trestle-work, what proportion of the original trestle-work would be required?—That is, what the statement I am now preparing will show you.

Q. More than one-half has been dispensed with on the water-stretches?—Considerably more than one-half.

Q. Do you consider altogether if that order were given now that more than one-half of the original trestle-work would be constructed?—I think I could put it in this way if it would satisfy the Committee, although it is merely guess work. I do not think if we were to order the trestle to go on now, that there would be much more than one-fourth or one-third of the original trestle-work to be done. It is a haphazard guess however.

*By the Honorable Mr. Penny :—*

Q. But the abolition of the trestle-work in favor of the bank in the water-stretches has been economy?—Yes.