

Whitehaven, March 19th 1840.

Gentlemen.—We have been informed that a meeting of the Board has been convened for this day to take into consideration the minute of the Poor Law Commissioners relative to John Brunskill, the Assistant Overseer, and we deem it no more than an act of duty to lay before you the following facts:—

The Assistant Overseer has now been collecting upon the present rate three months, and during that period, in the depth of winter, when the small rates at least are the most difficult to collect, he has succeeded in obtaining the large sum of upwards of £294). He had also, independent of the season of the year, many prejudices and difficulties to contend with. We find that on former rates, which were open for four and five months each, the collections do not exceed those of Mr. Brunskill by more than £20, though, as we have already observed, he has not been collecting more than three months; and there are many mariners belonging to this port, who have been so long detained by contrary winds on their voyages, that it is impossible to collect their rates at present.

From a consideration of this statement, we have no fear but, with his present assistant, Mr. Brunskill will be found a very good and useful officer, having already proved himself an efficient collector.—We are, gentlemen, your obedient servants,
W. K. PEARSON, JOSEPH MILLEN, } Overseers.
JOHN G. FAIKNER, JAMES KEEDE, }

The Chairman continued. He said the overseers, so far, were perfectly satisfied with Mr. Brunskill in the office of assistant overseer, and they ought to be best able to judge. They were his masters, and as they had recommended him, he thought their feelings and wishes ought to be consulted. They were answerable for his conduct, and if he had not proved satisfactory to them they would not have recommended his continuance in office. They spoke highly of his services as a collector; but as it was stated at the time of Mr. B.'s appointment that he would be wholly incapable of laying any statement of his accounts before the board if called upon to do so, he thought they might as well send for the auditor at once, and then they could learn from him if he had any objection to the accounts which were laid before him last Quarter; he would also be able to state in what condition he found them.

The Auditor having been sent for, the Chairman stated that it might be a saving of time if any gentleman, who might have a remark to make, would make it in the interim.

Mr. Spencer said he had only a few words to state. He had objected to Brunskill's appointment at first on the ground of his incapacity for keeping accounts. He had no other objection to him whatever; indeed he admitted at the time that he had no doubt of his making a good collector; but he acted consistently with his former objections to him when he stated that he considered him incapable of keeping accounts. He understood a difference had arisen between Brunskill and his assistant, in consequence of the former refusing to pay the latter what he had bargained for. This had been the cause of some delay, and he should like to be satisfied that it would not occur again, so as to cause delay in future. He certainly thought that if Brunskill was incapable of keeping accounts himself, he was also incapable of superintending them properly. If the Assistant Overseer had a collecting book he should like very much to see it.

The Chairman thought there was no necessity for producing any books. If the auditor proved to them that the accounts were properly kept, surely they ought to be satisfied. Neither did it matter if the accounts were kept by an assistant. It mattered not, in short, if they were kept by steam, provided that they were properly kept. There had been many difficulties to contend with, and a good deal of bad temper stirred up, but now that Mr. Brunskill had received the favourable testimony of the overseers in his behalf, he (the Chairman) was entirely satisfied, and he thought they ought to recommend the commissioners to confirm his appointment.

Sir John Walsham observed that Mr. Brunskill, it appeared from the overseers' letter, had proved himself a good collector, and if his accounts were proved by the auditor to be properly kept, he was satisfied—it was all that they wanted.

Mr. Thomas Jackson, the auditor, at this moment, entered the room, and was observed by the Chairman, who said he would put one question to Mr. Jackson, which was put, as were several more by Mr. Spencer, and answered as follows:—
Chairman.—In what sense did you find Mr. Brunskill's accounts at the last quarter's audit? Were they correct, and to your satisfaction?

Auditor.—Perfectly so.

Chairman.—You had no fault to find with them, then?

Auditor.—Not any.

Mr. Spencer.—Mr. Brunskill had not been long in office when the accounts were produced?

Auditor.—Only about three weeks.

Mr. Spencer.—The other part of the quarter's accounts would be kept by Mr. Mann, were they not?

Auditor.—Yes, they were.

Mr. Spencer.—Were there any errors in Mann's accounts?

Auditor.—Not any.

Mr. Spencer.—Then the whole of Brunskill's accounts were written by his assistant.

Auditor.—Yes, they were—both the writing and the figures. Mr. Spencer asked Mr. Reed, one of the overseers whom he observed in the back part of the room, if Brunskill had always attended their meetings on Friday evenings.

Mr. Reed said he had always attended the meetings himself except on two occasions, and he had never observed Mr. Brunskill absent.

Mr. Spencer was proceeding to put other questions to the overseer, when

Mr. H. Jefferson said if that line of conduct was persisted in he should move that the other three overseers be sent for. Mr. Peile said he thought that what had been stated by the auditor was quite sufficient to satisfy any one.

Mr. H. Jefferson said that after what had fallen from the auditor in the presence of all, every one ought to be satisfied. Mr. Spencer said he was satisfied that the assistant overseer had made a good collector; but he wished to satisfy himself on other points.

The Chairman interposed. He thought their present argument rather an ungracious one. The overseers had expressed their satisfaction with the conduct of the assistant overseer, and had spoken highly of his services. He thought they ought to consult the feelings of the overseers in a matter of so much interest to themselves. Besides, they had heard from the auditor that the accounts were quite satisfactory, and he must say that he was perfectly satisfied with what he had heard.

Sir John Walsham.—When is the overseers' letter dated? Chairman.—It is dated to-day.

Sir John Walsham.—Then it appears that they are satisfied with Mr. Brunskill's conduct up to this period.

Mr. Brown then moved that the commissioners be recommended to confirm Mr. Brunskill's appointment.

Mr. Henry Jefferson seconded the motion, which was carried without opposition.

Mr. Ponsoby, of Halle, enquired if he might be allowed to ask Mr. Brunskill's Assistant if he was still in his employ. The Chairman objected to any further controversy on the matter.—The subject then dropped.

The Contractors for supplying the Union with clothing, butcher meat, groceries, &c. &c., were declared, and the board again resumed its ordinary business of examining into the cases of Applicants for relief, &c.