

1876.

NEW ZEALAND.

MODE OF CONDUCTING PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS IN VICTORIA,

(REPORT BY THE CLERK, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ON THE).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

The Hon. W. FITZHERBERT, Speaker, to the Hon. the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

SIR,— House of Representatives, Wellington, 11th July, 1876.

I have the honor to transmit to you copy of a report which the Clerk of the House of Representatives has forwarded to me on certain matters connected with the business of the House.

I understand that he was commissioned by my predecessor in office, Sir F. D. Bell, to proceed to Victoria and make inquiries and report.

There are many subjects referred to of considerable interest, and I suggest to you that it would be desirable that this report should be laid upon the table of the House.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM FITZHERBERT,
Speaker.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, &c., &c., &c.

The CLERK of the HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES to the Hon. the SPEAKER of the HOUSE
of REPRESENTATIVES.

SIR,— Wellington, 30th June, 1876.

In conformity with the instructions conveyed to me by Sir F. Dillon Bell, at the close of last Session, namely,—

“That with a view to the organization of the service of the House on a better footing, to meet the rapidly increasing amount of work in each Session, I have now to instruct you to proceed to Melbourne and make yourself thoroughly acquainted with the course of proceeding adopted in the offices of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, especially with reference to the division of the work between the Chief Clerk and the Clerk’s Assistant, and the way in which the ordinary sessional extra clerks’ work is regulated, and the proceedings of Select Committees dealt with in that colony.

“So soon as you have completed your inquiry into these matters, you will be good enough to report to me, in order that a plan may be devised, in time for the meeting of the next Parliament, to remedy the various inconveniences to which the great increase of duties in the offices of this House has subjected the servants of the House for the last two or three years.”

I have now the honor to report that I accordingly proceeded to Melbourne and waited upon the Hon. the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, who most kindly afforded me every facility for observing the mode of procedure of that House, as also the manner of conducting the business in the various departments connected with it.

Before proceeding further, I would desire to call attention to the different circumstances in which the two Legislatures are placed as regards the duration of the Session in Victoria. It extends over a great part of the year; in New Zealand the Legislature meets in the middle of winter, and it has generally been found difficult to keep a quorum together after the end of October, the consequence being a very great pressure of work. There they usually sit only three days in the week; here we sit four, and towards the end of the Session five days a week.

I also subjoin a comparative statement of the amount of business that is transacted by the Lower House in each colony, in certain particulars. I have taken an average of the four years 1871 to 1874, and during that time the Victorian Session extended over a period of about seven months, and the New Zealand Session was rather under three months.

—		Bills Introduced.	Passed and Assented to.	Petitions Received.	Select Committees other than ordinary Sessional Committees.
Victoria	48	29	103	7
New Zealand	160	83	200	19

With regard to the way in which the proceedings of Select Committees are managed, I was informed by the Clerk of the House that he has seldom more than two or, at the outside, three Committees meeting on the same day, so that his permanent assistants are able to attend as Clerks of Committees; the whole of the clerical business of Select Committees being under the supervision of the First Clerk-Assistant.

As is shown in the above statement, the amount of work devolving on Select Committees is very much greater in this colony than in Victoria; and unless some of the means which are there taken, of saving the time and labour of the permanent officers, should be adopted here, I do not think it will be possible to make their services available as Clerks of Committees.

In Victoria, the First Clerk-Assistant, in addition to the duties already stated, sits at the table of the House and generally assists the Clerk. He also takes notes of the proceedings when in Committee of the whole, as with us, but that is the only record of those proceedings: they do not appear in the printed Journals, nor is there any manuscript Journal of the proceedings in Committee.

So also with regard to the proceedings in the House, no manuscript Journal is kept. The Clerk's notes, taken at the table, are sent to the Government Printing Office, where men accustomed to the work print the Journals from the Clerk's abbreviations. This is revised in the morning and printed with the Notices of Motion and Orders for the next day, and issued to members. A copy of the printed Journals is signed by the Speaker, and at the end of the Session bound together, and that is the official record.

This plan is, no doubt, a great saving of labour. It would relieve the First Clerk-Assistant of a considerable part of his work, and the Second Clerk-Assistant of the most laborious part of his duties—viz., the elaboration of the Journals from the Clerk's notes taken at the table, and both these officers would be enabled to undertake other duties. It would of course involve some additional expense, as the Journals would have to be printed from day to day, necessitating the employment of two or three additional compositors; but it might, on the other hand, be found possible to dispense with some of the extra clerks at present employed.

I imagine, however, the question of discontinuing the manuscript Journals would be referred to the House, probably to a Joint Committee of both Houses, as it would be desirable the practice of both Houses should be similar in that respect.

With regard to the employment of clerks for Select Committees, if the plan above indicated were adopted, it would give the permanent officers more time to look after the business of Select Committees. As matters at present stand, the Clerk of the House has occasionally great difficulty in getting suitable clerks; and when new to the work they are wholly unacquainted with the duties required of them, to the great inconvenience of the Committees. I believe it would be practicable to secure the services of a sufficient number of efficient clerks by a rather more liberal scale of payment and a permanency of employment, as in the case of the Committee Reporters.

Through the courtesy of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria, I was enabled, in observing the way in which the business of his office was conducted, to gather some useful hints on matters not named in my instructions, and which need not, perhaps, be more particularly referred to here, but which will be of use to me in the business of my office.

I append to this report a statement furnished me by the Clerks of the Houses in Victoria, of the duties devolving on the officers of their respective departments.

I have, &c.,
F. E. CAMPBELL,
Clerk of House of Representatives.

VICTORIA.

OFFICERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

1. *Clerk of Assembly.*—Conducts all business of the House, and is the working head of the department; signs all abstracts and documents for Assembly and refreshment rooms; attends Select Committees on Standing Orders, Privilege, or searching for precedents.

2. *Clerk-Assistant.*—Assists the Clerk in the conduct of the business of the House, takes charge of all Bills passing through Committee, and acts generally in the absence of the Clerk; attends Select Committees.

3. *Accountant and Clerk of Private Bills.*—Has charge of the accounts of the department; attends Committees on Private Bills, and other Select Committees.

4. *Clerk of the Papers.*—Has charge of all the original documents and of all printed papers, seeing that the Orders of the House with respect to the production of papers, returns, &c., are carried out, and that no delay takes place at the Printing Office; writes the messages, &c., from the Assembly to the Council; takes charge of all the correspondence, ballot papers, &c., and keeps a general registry of the same, and has to remain in attendance until the rising of House each night when the House is sitting; attends Select Committees.

5. *Assistant-Clerk of the Papers.*—Copies all papers and returns intended to be printed, and sends same to Printer; forwards Parliamentary papers weekly, and at the end of each Session to the

different colonies, England, and America ; sees to the binding of the volumes ; places on the Assembly table daily all papers and Bills required for each sitting ; and acts generally in the absence of the Clerk of the Papers, and has to take turn with the Clerk of the Papers in remaining in attendance until the House rises ; attends Select Committees.

6. *Reader*.—Examines all proofs of the Votes, Notice Paper, returns, &c., from the Printer ; corrects same, &c. ; and has charge of the telegraph for the use of honorable members.

7. *Reader's Assistant*.—Assists in all the above duties.

Legislative Assembly Chambers, Melbourne,
20th November, 1875.

OFFICERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

1. *Clerk of Parliaments, who is also Clerk of the Council*.—Attends Select Committees.
2. *Clerk-Assistant*.—Attends Committees of the whole House and other Select Committees.
3. *Clerk of the Papers*.—Attends Select Committees, and is accountant.
4. *Reader*.
5. *Reader's Boy*.—During Session only.

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