

SESS. II.—1879.
NEW ZEALAND.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF).

Brought up 9th December, and ordered to be printed.

REPORT on proposed AMENDMENTS in the STANDING ORDERS relating to asking Questions for Returns, the Arrangement of the Order Paper, Native Petitions, Local Bills, Proposed New Standing Orders, and the Procedure of the House.

THE Standing Orders Committee have the honor, in obedience to instructions conveyed to them by the House, to report as follows:—

Questions for Returns.

In reference to the instruction of date 12th November ultimo—that “this Committee should consider and report upon the habit that has sprung up of asking for the production of returns and correspondence in the shape of asking questions”—

Your Committee are of opinion that the practice of obtaining returns and correspondence from Ministers by asking questions should be put a stop to, and that such returns and correspondence, when sought for by members, should henceforth be only furnished upon motions to that effect being carried in the House.

Arrangement of Order Paper.

In reference to the instructions of the same date—upon the question of the mode of arrangement of Notices of Motion and Orders of the Day upon the Order Paper,—

The Committee are of opinion that it would be extremely inconvenient to alter the present mode of arranging the Notices of Motion and Orders of the Day. It is contended by some that Notices of Motion and Orders of the Day undisposed of at the rising of the House, should be placed respectively at the top of the list of Notices and Orders of the ensuing day. The result of this arrangement would be that, when a member set down an important notice for a day which was at the time clear of notices, his opportunity of moving it on that day would be taken away by a crowd of notices standing over from the preceding day being placed above it, and neither the mover nor the House would know when that notice, be it ever so important, would come up for consideration.

The experiment of placing undisposed-of Notices of Motion at the top of the list on the following day was tried in the session of 1870, but proved so unsatisfactory that it was abandoned in the ensuing session. (*Vide* Report of Standing Orders Committee, Journals of the House of Representatives, 3rd October, 1871.)

Native Petitions.

In respect of the instruction of the 19th November ultimo, suggesting that it is no longer desirable to exempt petitions from Natives from the ordinary rules affecting petitions from other persons, your Committee are of opinion that it would be premature to alter the existing Standing Order No. 285 on the subject of petitions from Maoris. At the same time, members, being responsible for the petitions they present, should not offer such petitions if expressed in unbecoming language, or containing charges that, on the face of them, appear such as ought not to be entertained.

Local Bills.

On the subject of Local Bills your Committee have already reported that, after conferring with the Standing Orders Committee of the Legislative Council, they have jointly agreed to the following Standing Orders, and have submitted the same for adoption by the House:—

That the following rules be added to the Standing Orders:

1. Local Bills are those which, not being Private Bills, affect particular localities only.
2. No Local Bill shall be read a second time unless notice shall have been given of the said Bill in the locality to which the Bill refers.
3. Such notice shall state explicitly the object which such Bill is intended to effect, and shall have been published once at least in each of three successive weeks before the second reading, in a newspaper circulating in such locality.
4. The Committee on Local Bills shall have power to confer with any Committee appointed for a similar object by the other branch of the Legislature.

In order to the due examination of Local Bills and increasing the facilities for passing such Bills, your Committee submit the following proposals:—

- (1.) That at the commencement of every session a Local Bills Committee, consisting of ten members, be appointed, to whom all Local Bills shall stand referred after their first reading,—the Committee to report whether the Standing Orders have been complied with, and to suggest such amendments as they may think proper, and to report when necessary upon the merits of the Bill.
- (2.) Local Bills reported on by the Local Bills Committee shall be set down for second reading on the following Thursday, on which day Orders relating to private members' Local Bills shall have precedence of Notices of Motion.

If the House approve of allowing Orders relating to Local Bills to have precedence on Thursdays, Standing Order No. 81 will have to be altered, and a new Order framed as regards Thursdays.

Proposed New Standing Orders.

81. Notices of Motion take precedence of Orders of the Day on Wednesdays, unless the House shall have otherwise directed.

81A. Orders of the Day relating to Local Bills take precedence of Notices of Motion on Thursdays, but all other Orders of the Day shall be set down on that day after Notices of Motion.

Procedure of the House.

The Committee recommend the following alterations in the procedure of the House:—

- (a.) That, with the exception of Ministers, and the Chairman of Committees as regards sessional notices, a member on rising to give a notice shall be restricted to giving one notice until other members shall each have had an opportunity of giving one notice.
- (b.) That, with a view to limiting the continuance of Notices of Motion on the Order Paper, all notices which have not been dealt with within four weeks from their appearance on the Order Paper shall be struck off the Paper, subject always to the right of renewal.
- (c.) That in future Standing Order No. 178, which prescribes the minimum and maximum of the number of members to compose a Committee and the quorum thereof, be strictly enforced, and no deviation therefrom allowed, unless by a suspension of that Order.

9th December, 1879.

G. MAURICE O'ROBKE,
Chairman.

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