

the statement of Mr. Carson (Q. 275) that if these forms (the "stock" forms) were given out to private offices, "the cost to the colony would be double what it is now," and also to the statement of Mr. Leary (Q. 311) that he "did not wonder at any contractor naming these forms," for, as is explained, it would be picking out the eyes of the printing; and, again (Q. 327), that "he thought 'stock' work, of all other work, should not be let out to contract, because that was the work which would enable the Government Printer to keep on hands during the slack period, and thus have an efficient staff during the session." In regard to other classes of printing, the two witnesses referred to were of opinion (Qs. 185, 186, 204) that the *Gazette*, *Hansard*, estimates, tables, &c., the heaviest and least profitable classes of work, should be retained by the Government Printing Office. Upon this branch of the subject the Committee prefers to leave the evidence to speak for itself.

4. It is clear that the tender system would result in a needless multiplication of work (Qs. 179, 180), for if work were tendered for, say, in the four principal divisions of the colony, as suggested by two witnesses, it follows that four offices would at one and the same time be engaged in printing work which could without any inconvenience be turned out by one office. Necessarily the quadruple work would mean a largely-increased cost to the colony. To this it is answered (Q. 199) that "the private offices can do the work at a cheaper rate than it can be done at the Government Office." Five witnesses testified to the contrary.

5. The Committee recommends that for comparative purposes, and as a means of affording a periodic test as to the cost of printing in the Government Printing Office, some portion of the work, at the discretion of the Government Printer, should occasionally be given out to tender, as suggested by all the witnesses. There is already to be found an instructive commentary upon this point in Mr. Didsbury's answer to question No. 398.

6. Erroneously it was assumed by some of the witnesses that the Government Printing Office improperly competed with private offices in the printing of books for private persons, and that the Government Office, or the private persons, profited from the printing and sale of these books. It was elicited in evidence that the books referred to were printed for the dissemination of useful knowledge amongst the people of the colony, that unless printed by the State they would not be printed at all, and that no pecuniary profit from the printing resulted either to the Government Office or to the authors.

7. Upon the advantage or necessity of keeping a skilled staff together for the purpose of turning out the work of the office in a finished and, when necessary, in a rapid manner, there was no division of opinion amongst the witnesses; and it was gratifying to find a preponderance of testimony to the fact that the regular workmen of the establishment, technically called "the 'stab hands," were a zealous and efficient body of men, against whom no charge of idleness could justly be made. The witnesses also spoke in high terms of Mr. Didsbury and his overseers.

8. As to the building, it is condemned by all the witnesses in no measured terms. Its atmosphere is described as "foul," "pestilential," "dangerous to the health of those employed," and "it was the cause of death in some cases." (These are extracts from the evidence.) "During session time as many as four or five employes have been away ill at one time;" and "owing to the cramped position of the machinery there is constant danger to life and limb." From another point of view it is important to note that portion of the evidence which goes to show that, owing to the want of accommodation, the work of the establishment cannot be turned out so economically as would be the case were proper conveniences provided; but this subject is outside the terms of the order of reference.

9. It was put suggestively by two of the witnesses that a Commission should be appointed to go into the whole question of determining what work should be given out to tender; but this Committee is of opinion that its investigations have been sufficiently searching to render unnecessary the appointment of a Commission, either for the purpose of determining whether any of the Government printing should be given out to tender, or for inquiring generally into the working of the Government Printing Office.

GEORGE FISHER,  
Chairman.

Wellington, 18th August, 1885.

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## MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS.

FRIDAY, 17TH JULY, 1885.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

*Present*: Mr. Fisher (Chairman), Mr. Bruce, Mr. W. F. Buckland, Mr. Cadman, Mr. Samuel, Mr. J. B. Whyte.

The order of reference was read.

*Resolved*, That Mr. Fisher take the chair.

Mr. Kirkbride attended and gave evidence.

*Resolved*, That Mr. J. P. Leary, of Palmerston North; Mr. Gilbert Carson, of Wanganui; Mr. G. Fenwick, of Dunedin; and Mr. A. G. Horton, of Auckland, be summoned as witnesses.

The Committee then adjourned *sine die*.

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TUESDAY, 21ST JULY, 1885.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

*Present*: Mr. Fisher (Chairman), Mr. Bruce, Mr. W. F. Buckland, Mr. Cadman, Mr. Cowan, Mr. Dargaville, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Samuel, Mr. J. B. Whyte.