

218. *The Chairman.*] How would you recommend that the work should be tendered for?—In the four principal towns tenders should be invited, as I think the work would be done cheaper in that way than in one large contract, as the latter would greatly limit the competition.

219. Would you not, in that case, be doing some of the work four times over?—No, not exactly, because many of these forms after being once set are stereotyped, and come in for "stock" work during slack times. This is the value of them to private offices, because they fill in certain blanks, and you would get low prices in consequence.

220. But you say there must be a Government Printing Office?—Yes, clearly.

221. And skilled men?—Clearly.

222. Is there anything defective about the plant other than the machinery?—I did not examine any type, so could not express an opinion on that question.

223. And do you think in every case a first-class office would get the work if it were tendered for?—Yes, I do.

224. I suppose there is a certain amount of style required for this work?—Yes; but private offices can do that just as well as the Government.

225. Suppose a second-rate office got the contract?—You would have to accept the tender, but afterwards check the work, and, if not up to the mark, reject it.

226. Then would not that bring about an unsatisfactory state of things which does not exist at present. If Mr. Didsbury rejected it, would there not be an outcry?—There should not be.

227. *Mr. Samuel.*] Would there not probably be an outcry then if the second-rate man got it and did a quantity of the work before it was rejected. Its rejection might cause the ruin of such second-rate man. Local influence would be brought to bear, and if they failed the man would surely come before the Public Petitions Committee?—I would not anticipate anything of that sort.

228. *The Chairman.*] Then, suppose tenders were called for in the four principal towns, would you have local inspectors at each place?—Yes, just the same as they have for the railway work.

229. He would have to be a Government officer?—Yes. The Collector of Customs, I presume, could pass work for his department, and so on in other departments.

230. Would he be competent?—Yes.

231. To see that the printing was done properly?—I think so. If there was at any time any doubt application could always be made to Mr. Didsbury.

232. Would not these local inspectors be open to have pressure brought to bear upon them?—No; I think they would do their best. I should not anticipate any difficulty of that kind.

233. Now let us look at the possibilities of an irritating class of grievances which might arise. Suppose a second-rate firm obtained the contract: no question immediately arises as to the quality of the work; it passes, and the money is paid. It then turns out that the work is inferior. Then what would be said by the first-class tenderer who did not get the contract? Do you not think something would be said about the inferior character of the work? Would not the first-class unsuccessful tenderer take care to secure a means to ventilate his grievance?—I cannot anticipate anything of the sort. In England, I understand, some of the contracts are let for five or seven years, which enables tenderers to do the work better and cheaper than for a shorter period, because they can arrange for proper and regular supplies.

234. *Mr. Samuel.*] Your remarks are chiefly confined to forms?—I would have the Customs and other forms and some of the books also tendered for.

235. For publication?—No. I mean books of forms, and so on. As for other work, such as plans, &c., I may say that I do not know anything about the lithographic department, as I have not seen it for some years.

236. *The Chairman.*] Did you look at the schedule of prices submitted by Mr. Didsbury to the Committee of the Upper House?—Yes.

237. We have it in evidence that at the Government Office they printed 16,000 post octavo forms from one single form?—They should have worked four of them together, and probably did so, especially if they were stereotyped. In very long runs they would probably work eight.

238. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Have you seen the schedule of prices submitted by Mr. Didsbury?—Yes.

239. Did any of the items occur to you as being high?—I should be very glad to take the whole of the machining at their prices or something below them.

240. Could you name any particular price?—Double foolscap, 7s. 6d. a thousand for machining alone, without paper; and an extra charge of 4s. for "making ready" a stereotype form.

241. In that one matter a considerable saving would be made?—Yes.

242. Could you give us an estimate of the general percentage that might be saved as compared with Mr. Didsbury's prices?—I could not say: it would take some time to work it out.

243. Approximately, then?—I cannot pledge myself to an estimate, but there would be a considerable saving. We have a contract now for printing and supplying paper as well, at less prices than those in the schedule for machining alone.

244. *Mr. Samuel.*] You say a certain portion of the work might be done outside, and under the present system the Government establishment is not managed as it ought to be?—I would not say that; for I think Mr. Didsbury manages as well as he can with the appliances he has and the room at his command.

245. Supposing he had a new building and new appliances, would not the colony then have the profit if it did all the work?—I do not think the colony should compete for private work or do it at all.

246. Does the colony do so?—It does a certain class of work which it should not do, in my opinion.

247. *The Chairman.*] If you take interest upon expenditure by the Government, and cost of the work, you come on a par with private offices, and save profit?—Scarcely, I think, as private offices can generally work cheaper and closer than Government establishments.

248. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Then this must be your position: that private people look better