

tender, if ordered direct. That opened my eyes, and I found upon inquiry that I could get supplied with quite as good an article from the firms direct, at a saving, as I have stated, of about 18 per cent. on the contract price.

420. Do you know whether you buy cheaper than private firms in the colony?—Yes; I consider that my prices are, as a rule, lower than private printers would pay for the same articles. We buy in large quantities.

421. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Have you any idea of the total value of the work done in your office per year?—About £25,000 per annum.

422. *The Chairman.*] Have you any figures upon the point?—I am having prepared a balance-sheet and profit-and-loss account for the last five years, on strictly business principles, which will give full information as to the transactions of the department.

423. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Does your estimate mean merely cost price?—No; otherwise I could not show, as I do, a profit of about 40 per cent. I take as nearly as possible the price private printers would charge; and in the case of books done by the piece-hands I take the price paid for the composition, and add 50 per cent. to cover all other charges, such as management, reading, making-up, &c.: and still a considerable profit is shown.

424. As compared with the result of the work when it is given out?—Yes.

425. *The Chairman.*] Your balance-sheet will be printed?—Yes, in my report.

426. Will you attach a copy to your evidence?—Yes.

427. *Mr. Cadman.*] You propose to give your printers a bonus. Two reliable printers told us that the average printer ought to be ashamed to ask for more than 1s. 3d.?—I consider that most of the hands I employ on piece during the session are not up to the standard. Some are elderly men, while others are young and inexperienced, and are not able to earn as much in the Government Office as on a newspaper. One of the reasons is that we are more particular with our proofs and spacing, and that of course involves more work than would be the case in a newspaper office.

428. What extra wages would they earn at the 1s. 4d.?—About 5s. per week per man. Their average earnings would then be from £2 18s. to £3 per week of forty-five hours. I have had men in the piece-room who have earned very large wages at the same rates, but those have been transferred to the time-room.

429. What rate of wages do the time-hands get?—£3 per week.

430. Then you ask that the inferior men should get as much as the first-class men?—The time-men get overtime at increased rates, which of course enables them to earn more than the average piece-hand.

431. *Mr. Dargaville.*] The time-hands are permanently engaged, and the piece-hands only casually?—They have better chances of steady employment. I might add to the remarks which I formerly made that I have received a letter from Mr. George Eyvel, the head of the Canadian *Hansard* reporting staff, in which he says: "The printing of our *Hansard*, like all our parliamentary printing, is done by contract; but the system is found to be so unsatisfactory that steps are now being taken with a view to the establishment of a Government Printing Office."

432. How does our *Hansard* compare with those of other colonies?—Very favourably.