

1885.
NEW ZEALAND.

GOVERNMENT PRINTING COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF), TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AND EVIDENCE.

Brought up 18th August, 1885, and ordered to be printed.

ORDERS OF REFERENCE.

Extracts from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

WEDNESDAY, THE 15TH DAY OF JULY, 1885.

Ordered, "That a Select Committee, consisting of nine members, be appointed to inquire into the advisableness or otherwise of printing, under contract with private offices, any part of the printing required by the Government of the colony. The Committee to have power to call for persons and papers, and to consist of Mr. Dargaville, Mr. Joyce, Mr. J. B. Whyte, Mr. Cowan, Mr. W. F. Buckland, Mr. Samuel, Mr. Bruce, Mr. Cadman, and the mover; three to be a quorum; to report in a fortnight."—(*Mr. Fisher.*)

WEDNESDAY, THE 29TH DAY OF JULY, 1885.

Ordered, "That the Government Printing Committee have leave to postpone the bringing up of their report for one week."—(*Mr. Fisher.*)

WEDNESDAY, THE 5TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1885.

Ordered, "That the Government Printing Committee have leave to further postpone the bringing up of their report for one week."—(*Mr. Fisher.*)

WEDNESDAY, THE 12TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1885.

Ordered, "That the Government Printing Committee have leave to further postpone the bringing up of their report for one week."—(*Mr. Fisher.*)

REPORT.

THE Committee to whom was referred the question as to the advisableness or otherwise of printing under contract with private offices any part of the printing required by the Government of the colony, have the honour to report,—

1. That they have examined seven witnesses, all of whom, by reason of their experience and standing in the trade, are entitled to speak with authority upon the point submitted to the Committee for investigation.

2. All agree that for the purpose of executing the printing required by the Government there must be a Government Printing Office.

3. To the question whether any part of the Government printing could be done cheaper by private contract than at the Government Printing Office, five witnesses answered decisively "No." Two were of opinion that "some of it might" (Qs. 157, 203). Questioned further as to the particular class of work which, in their opinion, might with advantage to the colony be submitted to tender, these two witnesses, both newspaper proprietors, selected certain "stock" work (Qs. 180, 205) "which it would pay them to take at low prices in slack times when their machines were idle." To this position there appeared to the Committee to be the irrefutable answer that, if it be advantageous to private offices to be provided with "stock" work in slack times, which, in the case of the private offices, come at more or less uncertain periods, it must be of considerably more importance to provide "stock" work for the Government Printing Office, which has a definite and annually-recurring slack time, during which the large and expensive plant of the office would lie idle and unproductive if its "stock" work were taken from it to be given to private offices. From that point of view alone the annual loss to the country would be great; but, further, the Committee desire to call attention to

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,

Wellington, 18th August, 1885.

Chairman.

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*.

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.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.
 Mr. Gilbert Carson and Mr. J. P. Leary attended and gave evidence.
 The Committee then adjourned till Thursday, the 23rd, at 11 a.m.

THURSDAY, 23RD JULY, 1885.

Present : Mr. Fisher (Chairman), Mr. Dargaville, Mr. Joyce, Mr. J. B. Whyte.
 The Committee adjourned till to-morrow at 11 a.m.

FRIDAY, 24TH JULY, 1885.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.
Present : Mr. Fisher (Chairman), Mr. Bruce, Mr. Dargaville, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Samuel, Mr. J. B. Whyte.
 The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.
 Mr. Patrick Galvin attended and gave evidence.
 Mr. George Fenwick, Managing Director of the *Otago Daily Times*, attended and gave evidence.
 Mr. A. T. Horton, one of the proprietors of the *New Zealand Herald*, attended and gave evidence.
 The Committee then adjourned till to-morrow at 10 a.m.

SATURDAY, 25TH JULY, 1885.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.
Present : Mr. Fisher (Chairman), Mr. Bruce, Mr. Cadman, Mr. Cowan, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Samuel.
 The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.
 The Committee examined Mr. Gilbert Carson, who had previously been over the Government Printing Office, as to his opinion upon the working, accommodation, &c., of the same.
 Mr. J. P. Leary was also examined to the same effect.
 The Committee then adjourned till Tuesday, the 28th, at 11 a.m.

TUESDAY, 28TH JULY, 1885.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.
Present : Mr. Fisher (Chairman), Mr. Bruce, Mr. Cadman, Mr. Dargaville, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Samuel, Mr. J. B. Whyte.
 Mr. George Didsbury, the Government Printer, attended and gave evidence.
Resolved, That one week's extension of time be asked from the House for bringing up the report of the Committee.
 The Committee then adjourned *sine die*.

TUESDAY, 18TH AUGUST, 1885.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.
Present : Mr. Fisher (Chairman), Mr. Bruce, Mr. Cadman, Mr. Cowan, Mr. Dargaville, Mr. Joyce, Mr. Samuel, Mr. J. B. Whyte.
 The minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed.
 The Chairman having read the draft report, *Resolved*, That the same be adopted and presented to the House.
 The Committee then adjourned.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

TUESDAY, 21st July, 1885. (Mr. GEORGE FISHER, Chairman.)

Mr. J. L. KIRKBRIDE examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] I may explain to you, Mr. Kirkbride, that this is a Committee appointed by the House to inquire into the one definite question as to the advisableness or otherwise of printing under private contract any part of the printing required by the Government of the colony. You are a practical printer of some considerable experience?—Yes.

2. How many years have you been connected with the trade?—About twenty-six.

3. Are you in business for yourself?—Yes, and have been for ten years.

4. What business?—Newspaper and general printing.

5. You are the proprietor of a newspaper yourself?—Yes, and of a general printing office.

6. Do you think any of the Government printing can be done cheaper by contract than at the Government Printing Office?—No.

7. Will you give your reasons for that opinion?—Well, in the first place I think the permanent staff of compositors in the Government Printing Office equal to anything you could get together in the colony. Many of them have had years of special training; so of course they do better work and more profitable work than could be done in any private establishment.

8. Is the work of the Government Printing Office peculiar in its character?—Yes, a good deal of it. There is a very large amount of tabular work, and very few compositors have a chance to qualify themselves in that class of work to anything like the extent they have in the Government Printing Office. It is a special kind of work, and is seldom met with to any extent in private offices.

9. And is the Government Printing Office, generally speaking, better equipped as to plant?—Yes, it must necessarily be so. For tabular work, for instance, they have to provide very much larger founts than are to be found in any one, or, in fact, any three private establishments put together in the colony.

10. Then it has, I believe, stereotype and electrotype plants?—Yes; but several of the private establishments could compete with it in that respect.

11. What is the custom in the Australian Colonies? Are there Government printing offices there?—Yes; very much larger establishments than the Wellington office.

12. Then the natural deduction is that they find it more advantageous to do the work in Government printing offices?—Yes. The work cannot be done satisfactorily outside. There is a lot of it of a confidential character, and, moreover, a considerable portion has to be got out in a hurry.

13. On account of the peculiar nature of the work, is a specially-trained staff of skilled workmen required?—Yes; and they have it there. Of course I do not speak of the piece-hands—they get paid by results; but the permanent staff could not be equalled in the colony. I am speaking of them as a body.

14. As to the printing of the estimates, Ministerial statements, State documents, and all descriptions of parliamentary Bills?—You now mention a class of work that could not possibly be done out of Wellington. As to the estimates, to my own knowledge I have seen them altered, I should say, a dozen times a day.

15. That work would have to be done in Wellington?—It could not be done out of it.

16. As to the Public Works statements, Education and Mining reports—simple work of that class?—It all depends upon when the reports are brought in. Of course, reports of that kind could be done by private establishments during the recess; but, if I remember rightly, they generally come down during session time.

17. Now, is it not desirable, looking at it purely from an experienced printer's point of view, that there should be a Government Printing Office in order that the printing should have "style" and tradesman-like finish?—The work is done well, no doubt, and I believe the printing at the Government Printing Office here is infinitely superior to the Melbourne or Sydney work. That is generally conceded.

18. Do you think there would be any falling-off in that respect if the printing were done privately?—I think there would. I am sure there would.

19. Now, come to the commercial aspect of the matter. Suppose 10,000 copies of any particular form were required for Auckland, 10,000 for Wellington, 10,000 for Christchurch, and 10,000 for Dunedin; suppose those forms were perfectly simple in character; would it be more profitable to have them printed privately or in the Government Printing Office? I am speaking of a class of work on which there would be no risk as to correctness. What would the result be as to cost?—Well, of course, if the work were done in Wellington there would only be the one setting-up. If it were put out to tender in each of the provinces then it would have to be set up nine times.

20. It is a simple, well-understood principle with printers that it is the long numbers that pay?—Yes; very frequently the profit is made out of the paper alone.

21. Do you know what is the custom in England?—I believe the greater part of the work is done by Spottiswoode and Waterlow, and they have very large establishments.

22. They take what are called the "long-number" jobs?—Yes.

23. Do you know whether or not they make large profits?—They are generally considered pretty wealthy men.

24. There is another class of work which it is believed might be as well and as economically executed in private offices as in the Government Office. I refer to such work as Dr. Hector's catalogues, Handbooks of New Zealand, and semi-official publications of that character. Would it be advisable or not to treat that as "stock" work?—I should say that that work could be done quite as cheaply outside as in the Government Printing Office; but if you take that class of work away from the Government Office you simply jam the Printer at once, because he would have to discharge a large number of the permanent hands, and he could not get them together again towards the session. That work is invaluable to the Printing Office; but if you ask me if it can be done as cheaply outside, I say Yes, though it would not be fair to the establishment to take away this work, because to do the work efficiently there must be a good permanent staff; and there is no doubt the Government Printer has a lot of good men.

25. I understand you to say this: Although the work might be done as well and as cheaply outside, still it is advisable to keep it as a stand-by in order to keep the skilled staff together?—And a staff to meet emergencies. The work that comes in sometimes has to be turned out quickly, and without a sufficient available staff this would be impossible. In cases of that kind the Printer would take men off the ordinary work and put them on that which was required quickly.

26. You have worked as a printer in the Government Printing Office?—Yes.

27. And you have some knowledge of how the office is conducted?—Yes.

28. Is there much of what is called the "Government stroke" there?—Well, those who think so had better take three months in it. I consider the men there work as hard as in any establishment in the colony.

29. Well, now, Mr. Kirkbride, as the operations of an establishment of that kind grow larger are there not, as you have already indicated, certain advantages connected with the buying of paper. That is to say, the more work an establishment has to do, does it not gain by buying material largely?—That is a question which applies to every establishment. If it buys largely it naturally gets better terms. I may say Spicer and Co.'s traveller passed through Marton on his way to Auckland and called upon me. He said he had the contract for supplying the Government Printing Office with paper, and I think he said with stationery also; that the Government Printer had made very good terms with him; and, in fact, that he was about the keenest man he had come across.

30. Do you think the electoral rolls could be printed more cheaply in private establishments than at the Government Office?—This question is like asking one to cut one's own throat.

31. *Mr. Cadman.*] Mr. Kirkbride, you said something about a comparison between the Government Printing Offices in Melbourne and New Zealand. Have you worked in any Government Printing Office in the other colonies?—I have not worked at the Government Printing Office in Melbourne, but I have worked in Melbourne, Ballarat, and other places. I judge by the work I have seen turned out by both establishments.

Mr. GILBERT CARSON examined.

32. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Carson, the object of this inquiry is to ascertain whether it is or is not advisable to execute by private contract any portion of the printing of the Government of the colony. Will you give us your opinion upon that point?—You mean any part of it?

33. Let me put a prior question. Are you a practical printer?—I am.

34. How long have you been connected with the trade?—About twenty-eight years.

35. You have worked in the Government Office, I believe?—Yes, for about seven years, as printer and reader.

36. Will you now give the answer to my first question, keeping in view the point as to economy or cheapness?—I think it would be well sometimes to give a little work outside, as a test of prices and a check on the Government Office. But, as a whole, for cheapness I think the Government Office is far preferable to having a large amount of contract work. An odd job, for which there was no particular hurry, might be done outside.

37. You speak of testing the cheapness or otherwise of the work done in the Government Office by giving portions of it out to contract. In effect, then, you seem to be of opinion that there must be a Government Printing Office?—I think it must be obvious that if you had not a Government Printing Office to check the cost of printing it would get into the hands of a small number of the large firms of the colony, who would get their own prices.

38. Is not a great portion of the work of a secret or confidential character?—That is another question; but I am now speaking as to economy. Secrecy is, of course, an important consideration. But, as I am now referring to the question of cost, I would point out that the greater part of the work is work that must be done immediately—in the session. That is the time when it accumulates.

39. Then, do I understand you could not possibly get it done by contract?—Not unless there were well-equipped offices on the spot; and private offices, if rushed with work, would necessarily charge accordingly. It could certainly be done cheaper by the Government Office, because the staff-hands are all well-selected men—men who could not be bettered anywhere, and who can do any kind of work. These men work the full number of hours, are paid at ordinary rates, and have few privileges beyond those accorded to printers in private offices. Then, there is a large proportion of the work done on piecework, for which men are paid according to the work they do. In the recess, if there is not enough work to keep these men fully employed they have to work part-time, and the colony accordingly loses nothing, as the men are paid just in proportion to the amount of work they do.

40. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Would not that imply a high rate of prices?—No. I believe that in the recess the ordinary rates prevail. During the session, when men come from a distance for about

three months' work, of course larger rates rule. The ordinary colonial rate would be about 1s. per thousand; but during the session, in the Government Office, there is a slight advance—then 1s. 3d. is paid.

41. *The Chairman.*] Is not the advance made on account of the peculiar nature of that work. There is no "fat" with it, and the hands say that even at 1s. 3d. it is impossible for them to earn more than they could at the ordinary rate?—I do not know that the complaint was as to that; but I think the men said they were working for sixty-two hours at 1s. 3d. per thousand, and that they did not average £3 a week. If the facts are as I have stated them, I think they ought to be ashamed to confess it. An extra penny has, I understand, been given to the men. I think that the reason why the men do not make the work pay is that they must be inferior workmen. Very few of the better class of men, who are in constant work, can be expected to come to Wellington for the sake of three months' employment, even at 1s. 3d. or 1s. 4d. per thousand; consequently inferior men have to be employed, and the extra penny just granted I consider to be nothing more than a premium for incompetence. If the men had said that at 1s. 3d. a thousand they could earn £4 a week, but that was not fair remuneration considering the shortness of their engagement, their contention would have been understandable.

42. On account of the peculiar nature of the work, does not a Government printing office require to be specially equipped as to plant?—A much larger quantity of special material is required than would be requisite for a private office.

43. Are there Government printing offices in the other colonies?—I believe there are; but I have no personal experience of them. I have never been through them.

44. On account of the special character of the work are workmen of a skilled class required?—You want good all-round men. Your ordinary newspaper hands would not do for if you were to put these on such work, say, as a statistical table, they could not do it. I have known such men hand over what is known as tabular work, for which more is paid, to another printer for a trifle—that is, they have given away what is called "fat," because they could not do it. There is another thing with regard to a Government office: the work there is very much condensed. If work were given to a contractor, he would be paid at per page, and would consequently try to make as many pages as possible: where the Government could get a job done in forty or fifty pages, the contractor would try to make sixty or more pages of it.

45. *Mr. Dargaville.*] That is, they would put breaks in to make so many more paragraphs?—Yes, and they would make as many "breaks" as possible.

46. *Mr. W. F. Buckland.*] Would you do that?—Yes. Work looks better reasonably "whited" out. The men engaged on the work would do it. They would start it for their payment, and the contractor would carry it out for his.

47. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Could not that be checked?—To some extent it might; but it would be always done more or less. There are other ways in which advantage would be taken of the Government. In a contract a particular quality of paper might be stipulated for, but inferior qualities would sometimes be used, and very likely be passed. Occasionally a deduction might be made on that account, but the contractor would generally get the best of it. Then there is another thing—I know that it has been done in small places, and could be done in large places if there be not too many competing: contractors could arrange among themselves the profit to be made, and how the work should be done.

48. You appear to think that there is a large amount of work to be done which could not conveniently be done in proper time by a private firm?—It could not be done unless such offices were better supplied than I think they are at present. There would have to be special "founts" of type got for it. That would be a great difficulty. As to time, you would want the greater portion of the work done in the session.

49. Very often it would be wanted to be done next day?—You could not get it done in the colony in the time.

50. But I want to know whether it could be done by the offices here?—They could not possibly do it. Another disadvantage in the matter of tendering would be the cost of "corrections." Corrections would be charged for at per hour, but it would be difficult to check the number of hours that ought to be charged; and corrections form a very large portion of Government work. In these and other matters it would be difficult to keep an efficient check upon a contractor if there were no Government office.

51. *The Chairman.*] Will you more fully explain these minutiae for the information of the Committee?—Yes, I will explain. There is one matter I will refer to by way of example: In my district I am a member of the Education Board, and I was recently asked to look into the contractor's account for printing. It seemed to be heavy. I found that the contract price for printing the Board's report was a very reasonable one; but it was fixed at per page per hundred copies, any number over the hundred being charged at the same rate. An officer of the Board, not thinking, ordered 250 copies, with the result that what should have cost us £20 mounted up to £50. Then there was another matter: There was a large statistical folding table attached to the report, that might have been compressed into half the space it occupied. This table alone cost £18. No specific instructions were given that it was to be compressed, and it was consequently spun out. It certainly looked all the better for it, but it cost us double what it should have done. Things of that kind would constantly occur, and you could not check them.

52. *Mr. W. F. Buckland.*] Suppose we let some of the work by contract, would not that lessen the amount to be done in the Government Office?—Certainly it would; but it seems to me that the cost of the Government Office depends mainly upon honourable members themselves. Very often during the session bulky printed returns are ordered without members having the least idea what they will cost. If a member knew before moving for a simple return that its preparation and printing would cost the country, say, £100, he would probably think twice before asking for it.

53. *Mr. Cadman.*] But the printing cost is not the only cost?—No; there is the cost of compilation to be added.

54. *The Chairman.*] There is one question which materially affects the subject of our inquiry: there is a busy time of the year, say six months, and there is a slack time, which covers the other six months. A large staff of skilled men is absolutely required during the busy six months: is it not desirable to keep them together as much as possible during the slack time?—It is necessary to keep them together.

55. Could you give us any idea of the possible result of constantly engaging and dispersing the skilled men?—It would not be worth while for capable men who are in good situations to come down here for three months' work in the year. The result is that you get a large class of inferior men. It has always appeared to me that men should be put on some sort of trial, and be paid accordingly—the same as on the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Here it is no credit to a man to say that he has been in the Government Printing Office. Under an improved system the fact that men had been employed for a term in the Government Printing Office would be a guarantee that you could get first-class work turned out by them.

56. Would that be the case under the contract system?—Necessarily it would not. Contractors would want to make as much money as possible out of Government. What they would consider would be work that would pass. I think that if a good deal of work were given out to tender there might at first be a saving, owing to low tenders, contractors doing the work almost for nothing in order to get it into their hands; but after that it would be different.

57. But, from the fact that all private establishments are not provided in the way of plant for a rush of work, the cost would be increased and the work might not be so well done. Even in the Government Office, in the slack time, there is not provision for a rush of work, because the men are not kept on?—The whole sessional staff you could not keep employed in the recess. I have here a printed copy of statistical tables. This kind of work is altogether different from the ordinary work. You must have men who are trained to it. Even fairly competent men do not always take to it. Some cannot do it at all; and I have seen such men handing over what should have been their "fat" to more capable men for a consideration, the latter making a good thing out of it owing to the higher price that is paid for it. Upon the whole, I am thoroughly convinced that it is a great saving to the Government to have a printing office of its own. Whether odd jobs should be given out is another matter. I think they might be, as a test of prices, and as a check upon the Government Office. Some gentleman has asked me how the electoral roll is done, and suggested whether there are not many things that might be done locally——

Mr. Dargaville: The electoral roll is quite an exceptional thing.

Witness: There are a good many things that I would like to see done locally.

58. *Mr. Dargaville.*] What others?—A number of things: railway work, for instance. But work done locally would vary greatly in price. In different parts of the colony there are extraordinary discrepancies as to prices. There is at present no check upon the prices. There might be a limit fixed; and if it was found that much more money had to be paid locally than it cost the Government to do the same kind of work, localities should suffer.

59. *The Chairman.*] That is, a special price agreed to between them and the local offices?—There should be a limit fixed beyond which the Government would not pay. Jobs with long numbers should not be divided amongst localities, because it is the number that tells in the cheapness.

60. You would not recommend that tenders should be invited for that work?—No, not to split up the total contract to suit different localities; for, as I have said, it is the long number that tells.

61. There is also the question of stock work?—Much of the stock work consists of Government forms. They require to be set up only once, and are then stereotyped or electrotyped and are packed away for future use. The form remains the same; there would only be an alteration of a few words in any case.

62. Are you of opinion, then, that such work as Dr. Hector's catalogues, for instance, should be done as stock work to keep the men together—say those employed in Mr. Burns's and Mr. Costall's room?—If the men in those rooms were fully employed I would not go on increasing the staff. I think it would be desirable to have an occasional long job done in an outside office: it would be the means of getting a test.

63. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Testing the Government price?—Yes.

65. *Mr. Samuel.*] That is the only advantage?—Sometimes it would be done as cheap as the Government office could do it; but on the whole the Government would have the best of it, both in efficiency and cheapness. The men are paid the same as at other places, except on the *Hansard*; and these are only engaged for three months. The picked men who are kept on are only paid the average wages.

66. *Mr. Dargaville.*] As to interest on amount of capital employed, how would that affect it?—That would have to be considered by each contractor.

67. The Government, you say, would be in a better position than the contractors?—Yes. In tendering there is a great fluctuation of prices experienced. A man might tender at a very low price one year and increase the amount by 50 or 100 per cent. the next time.

68. In the Government office there is a large quantity of plant unused for a large portion of the year?—The whole of it would not be in use continually. For instance, "pica" is used for Bills, and "brevier" for *Hansard*, and the great portion of this type would be lying idle during the recess. I do not think that many offices in the colony would have much "pica" in stock. It is not used for newspaper work. Jobs once set up and stereotyped do not require to be set up again.

69. *Mr. Joyce.*] Do you not think it would be possible to separate what is ordinarily called Government printing from other kinds which, in respect to form, cannot be called Government

printing?—A portion of what is not necessarily Government printing might be let out to other offices in the colony.

70. Is there not a line to be drawn as to what should properly be Government printing, and what printing might be done by contract?—You must keep in mind that you have a number of hands employed during the recess, and you will want enough work to keep them going. The *Hansard* men are only engaged for three months. The best men are drafted from *Hansard* and placed in the other rooms on weekly wages. It would be desirable to give these men enough work to keep them going.

71. Because, as I understand you, it is desirable to keep them together?—Yes. There are a number of men in Burns's and Costall's room who are competent workmen, who can do work of this kind (statistical tables). The ordinary work would be mere child's play to them. That is simply what they call "type-sticking." It is necessary to keep your skilled men together.

72. *The Chairman.*] It has been assumed that, because the office is a Government printing office, there is a great deal of what is called the "Government stroke" there. Do you know whether that is so or not?—I was there for seven years: there was very little "Government stroke" during that time. There was a great deal of rush and drive, and very little leisure. During the recess only the competent hands are kept on.

73. *Mr. Cadman.*] How many years since you left?—It is nearly eleven years.

74. Was Mr. Didsbury there then?—Yes.

75. Are you acquainted with the details of the Government Printing Office?—I have occasionally visited the office and seen the work going on. I am presuming, of course, that the system which prevails is as efficient as it was then.

76. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Is the plant modern?—The composing-rooms seem well supplied with type, &c.

77. *Mr. W. F. Buckland.*] Is it calculated to secure cheapness in regard to machinery?—I have not considered that point. I was in the office yesterday, and went into the composing-room, but I did not look at the machinery.

Mr. Samuel: Perhaps Mr. Carson, if he is not going away immediately, would visit the Printing Office for the purpose of obtaining the information which the Committee might require.

79. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] There are great improvements in machinery used for printing?—Yes.

80. *Mr. Bruce.*] I assume from what you have told us that in the event of printing offices throughout the colony wishing to compete for Government printing they would have to provide themselves with special plant. You do not think they are in a position to compete at present?—They would have to provide themselves with larger quantities of a special kind of type than they have any need for at present. I ought to say that I am speaking without actual knowledge; but I cannot suppose that even large offices would have anything like the quantity requisite, because they do not at present need it.

81. Then, in such circumstances we may naturally assume that they could not, considering that the work would be of a remittent character, turn out work at anything like the price?—I should not expect it.

82. Even suppose they had a certain amount of work annually, that their plant would be of no use to them for so long a time, that they would have a proportion of their capital lying idle?—Yes. Then there are the corrections. The corrections would be a heavy item.

83. Then, with your knowledge, do you hold a very pronounced view that anything in the direction of letting work out occasionally would not be an improvement upon the existing arrangement in respect of economy?—Rather the reverse. I would like sometimes to see an odd job given out.

84. But merely as a test?—Yes, as a test. It is impossible for any who are not practical men to know what is the average price. Giving a job out now and then would enable the Government to get the outside price.

85. Is it possible to get a fair test of what a particular sheet would cost?

86. *Mr. Dargaville.*] What, for instance, the cost of any sheet of the electoral roll would be?—You can take the total of the work done in the Government Office; or you can take a sheet of *Hansard* and tell the cost of it. You can ascertain what it actually costs, but only by occasional outside competition can you institute any comparison.

The Chairman: I believe Mr. Didsbury will be able to give specific answers on those questions.

88. *Mr. Bruce.*] Is it not true that a number of the men at present working in the Government Printing Office would not get employment elsewhere?—I judge there are a good many who are not very quick at their work. There are all kinds of workmen. You must bear in mind that while one man might earn his £4 per week on piecework, another might not be able to earn much more than half that amount.

89. *The Chairman.*] That would apply to men on *Hansard*, and not to the permanent staff?—Quite so. It does not apply to men who are up to their work. I may say that the total amount of the work has enormously increased since I was in the office. *Gazettes*, *Hansards*, and printed documents of all kinds are being distributed all round the colony. All this work is poured into the Government Office; and, if I may be permitted to say so, a great deal of costly but totally unnecessary work is done, and sometimes done over and over again, as if expense were a matter of no consequence at all.

90. *Mr. Bruce.*] I would like to ask Mr. Carson where his printing office is?—At Wanganui.

Mr. J. P. LEARY examined.

91. *The Chairman:* You are, I believe, a practical printer of many years' experience?—I am.

92. And are now a master printer in business on your own account?—Yes.

93. In what part of the colony?—Palmerston North, Manawatu.

94. The one definite point which this Committee is appointed to inquire into is, as to the advisability or otherwise of executing by private contract any part of the Government printing. Will you give the Committee your opinion upon that point?—Speaking candidly, I do not think that the private printer could successfully compete with the Government Printing Office; for the private printer would naturally expect to make a profit upon his work, and it appears to me that that profit is now made or saved by the Government Printer for the Government.

95. Then you think the colony gets the benefit?—Yes, I feel quite sure that it does.

96. Is it necessary that there should be a Government Printing Office?—I think so. I think that the Government Printing Office is a great safeguard to the Government in matters of expenditure on printing, because all printing done outside the Government Office for the Government is, I understand, checked by the Government Printer, who is able to say whether the work has been properly performed or not. He is likewise able to report as to the charge for it, whether it be moderate or otherwise.

97. Can you illustrate by any experience of your own the practical effect of the two systems—that is, printing in the Government Office, as contrasted with printing in private offices?—In the matter of uniformity, I consider the Government gain largely by having the work done in their own office. The printing done in the Government Office possesses uniformity. The work is classified, and one uniform style adhered to. If given to different offices the style would vary very much. There is another important matter in connection with the Government Office. Everything is very much condensed, and brought into the smallest compass possible with due regard to utility; but in a private office the natural disposition is to make what the printers call “fat”—that is, to make everything as white and open as possible. I remember having seen some years ago a number of bills and estimates which had been printed for one of the Provincial Governments. The sight of that work astounded me. I noticed that what are termed “pica whites” had been run between the lines of the Bills. That simply meant that the work would cost the Government double the contract price; because the matter which should honestly form but one page had been, by the introduction of blank spaces between the lines, made into two pages. That is, what the Government Printer would put into one page the private printers would make two pages of.

98. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Have you ever printed the electoral roll?—Yes; frequently. I know that printers sometimes make a good deal of profit if the work is tabular. They turn over words that there is no necessity to turn over.

The Chairman: I am glad the witness has given us this illustration, because it shows the difference between the cost of the Provincial Government printing—which may fairly be taken as the private-office style—and that of the Government Printing Office.

Witness: The prices for printing the electoral roll vary very much. I will give you my experience: When I am asked to tender for the electoral roll I put in a price that I think will compensate me for any loss I may sustain from being unable to execute other work that I may have in hand. If we are slack in my office I would naturally put in a very much lower price than if we were busy. In small offices general work has sometimes to be laid aside so as to produce the roll within contract time. I have received as high as £1 10s. per page for printing the roll, and as low as 17s. 6d. I believe this last is the price fixed by the Government Printer as a paying price for the work. But there are times when it would not pay the private printer at this rate. Therefore when I am asked to tender for it I am simply guided by circumstances: if work is slack, low price; if plentiful and but a short time be given in which to produce the roll, I want a higher price.

99. *The Chairman.*] You have yourself worked in the Government Printing Office, have you not?—Yes, I have for about eleven years. I was in it when it was first established in Auckland.

100. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] About how long is that ago?—About twenty-one years. It is ten years since I left.

101. *The Chairman.*] Are you acquainted with the details of the working of the office now?—I cannot say that I am thoroughly acquainted with the details; but I passed through the office about five months ago. I also went there yesterday for a short time.

102. *Mr. Samuel.*] Do the same men hold the principal positions as when you were there?—Yes; the principal men are still there.

103. *Mr. Joyce.*] But there is one practical difficulty which I might suggest to you against printing the electoral roll at the Government Printing Office: it is district work; the rolls have to be revised by the Clerks of Courts?—Yes.

104. It is absolutely necessary that they should be revised within a given time: would it not therefore be necessary for the revising officer to come to Wellington?—Yes; or delay would be caused by having to send the proofs to him.

105. *The Chairman.*] Is the work done in a Government Printing Office of such a character as to require the employment of specially-skilled men?—Yes: it requires men specially skilled to produce good results. Men accustomed to do Government work can do a larger amount of such work within a given time than men who are not accustomed to it: they know what is termed the “style” of the office; they know when they receive a piece of copy whether it is a Bill or a parliamentary paper; they can tell at once the type in which it ought to be set, and the manner in which it should be set. Then there are men in the Government Office who are specially adapted to set tabular matter. There is a great deal of that kind of work done in the Government Office. It is the most expensive work done in connection with Government printing. If at all complicated, it is usually charged for at double rates. If it were given out to a contractor, it would cost a great deal more than it would in the Government Printing Office. Besides, the Government work runs upon certain “sorts” in printing material. It is necessary to have a sufficiency of such sorts as the Government work absorbs most of.

106. *Mr. Dargaville.*] You mean sorts of type?—Yes.

107. *The Chairman.*] Having got together a specially-skilled staff, do you not think it should be kept together as much as possible during the slack period by providing it with any stock work

the colony may require?—I think so. It is a great hardship to many of the men to be sent adrift immediately after a session. A great many of them find a difficulty in getting work again. In my own district I have known as many as three or four printers apply to me for work after a session, and when I have been unable to employ them they have either had to tramp further afield or turn to bush-work. That kind of work puts a printer's hand out for his particular business. I think the result is to be seen in making such men unsteady in their habits.

108. *Mr. Joyce.*] Does not it mean that there is a surplus beyond the number that can be employed—that there is, so to speak, a “floating population” of this sort—of men who may be called “grass” hands. Their opportunity is during the session, when the “grass” grows for them, and when the session is over they are no worse off than before?—There may be something in that: they certainly ought to be better off. But it would be much better for the Government to retain some of these men, and, if possible, keep them employed all the year.

109. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Do you think they could do so?—I think it could be arranged, if all, or nearly all, the Government printing was done in the Government Office.

110. *Mr. Joyce.*] Do you think it would be economical to keep the whole effective staff?—I do, if there were sufficient work to keep them employed.

111. *Mr. Bruce.*] You say that you were working in the Government Printing Office for several years?—Yes; for eleven years.

112. Have you had experience of any other Government Office in the other colonies?—No: I was, while in Sydney, in the New South Wales Government Printing Office, but I never worked there.

113. How many years' experience have you had as a printer?—Very nearly thirty.

114. What is your experience of the amount of work performed in the Government Printing Office as compared with the amount done in the private offices of the colony. I ask you this question because an impression appears to have got abroad that the “Government stroke” obtains there?—All I can say is, that it did not obtain while I was in the office. Men were expected to do a fair amount of work. If they did not or could not do it, they were not retained as permanent hands.

115. You think that the men in the Government Office put as much work through their hands as those of the private offices do?—I am sure that was the case whilst I was there. There were one or two exceptions, and these men were discharged.

116. If some of this tabular work were tendered for by various offices, I assume that they would be obliged to get different kinds of plant, so as to be able to compete?—I would have to increase my own plant very much if I attempted to compete for the tabular work.

117. Do you think, from your knowledge, that you could compete from an economical point of view? Could you turn out work of that kind as good as the Government Printer does at present, or as it was turned out during your period of working there?—I could not do so without making preparation. I would have to increase my staff. That would take me some time. It takes time to get together a good staff of men; for you frequently meet with men who are called printers, but they are not at all up to the mark of a good office. They cannot do a fair amount of work, it being in many cases bad in quality and deficient in quantity. In this particular kind of work it would be necessary to have careful men, who are able to do the work thoroughly.

119. Then I understand from your evidence that, with the exception of the electoral rolls, it would not be advisable to disturb the existing order of things?—I feel positive that it would cost the colony vastly more to have the work done by contract than, as now, by the Government Office.

120. *Mr. Cadman.*] What is your idea of the 1s. 3d. a thousand paid now: do you think that competent men could put in good work for that, and have good wages?—Yes, I think competent men could make good wages at that price, provided that the copy was at all fair. I have worked for 1s. 3d. a thousand before now, and have made as much as £6 a week at it.

121. *Mr. Cowan.*] Would that imply work for sixty-two hours a week?—Not so much. A good deal depends on the copy. If the matter is very solid and the copy bad, it takes the printer a longer time to set a thousand “ens” than when the copy is good and matter open.

122. *Mr. Cadman.*] I was speaking as regards the *Hansard*?—I have not looked at the *Hansard* recently, but it is generally composed of pretty solid matter. I understand, however, that the copy for *Hansard* is now very plain.

123. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] It is type-writing?—Then I certainly think that a man ought to make £4 a week at that price. But I believe that nearly all the printers who apply are taken on for the session in the piece-room; but if the Government Printer finds a smart man among those taken on he puts that man in the time-room, so that for the most part it is only the inferior men—the waifs, so to speak—that remain in the piece-room.

124. *The Chairman.*] Is it a fact that men who work on the *Hansard* staff never come back to it if they can help it?—I have heard printers say that they would never come back to *Hansard* work again.

125. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] At that time there was a great deal of the copy very hard to read?—It is solid work, and I think at that time there was also some little difficulty about type. The constant dispersal of the men has a bad effect. Printers, as a rule, are not inclined to be steady unless in constant employment.

126. *The Chairman.*] Will you be good enough to illustrate the effect of this dispersal of the men after the session?—I believe it has a very bad effect on the men to send them away at the end of the session. The effect is that when you once disperse them you cannot easily get them together again; the further effect is, as I have stated, that you get an inferior class, as the better men will probably have found employment elsewhere and will not come back.

128. *Mr. Samuel.*] You say that you were eleven years in the Government Printing Office. Were those who are now the principal officers then in the office, and were they capable men, likely to manage an establishment of that kind economically in their respective positions?—They

are the same officers. I believe they are all as good men as the Government would be likely to get for the respective positions. I do not like to answer the question fully; but, taking them all round, I think they are as good men as you could get.

129. *Mr. Bruce.*] Is it not generally supposed that Mr. Didsbury is an exceptionally good man, and especially fitted for the position he holds?—I think he is a very good man indeed. He was doubtless somewhat inexperienced when first appointed, but I was very much pleased with the change that took place in his administration before I left the office. I think he now grasps the position thoroughly. He understands his position. I believe he does his best for the Government, and also endeavours to act justly to the men under him.

130. Do you think he is an able and a painstaking official?—I believe he is.

131. *The Chairman.*] How many years is it since he was appointed?—I think it was about 1865. He was overseer when the office was removed from Auckland, but was made Government Printer when Mr. Joseph Wilson, the then Government Printer, declined to leave Auckland.

FRIDAY, 24th July, 1885.

Mr. PATRICK GALVIN, examined.

132. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—Patrick Galvin.

133. What are you, Mr. Galvin?—A journalist.

134. You are also a practical printer?—Yes.

135. Will you give the Committee some idea of your experience as a printer?—My experience is rather a varied one. I was apprenticed in the year 1859, and at that office we had all the country printing to do for a population of about four hundred thousand people. I then came to Victoria and worked in various offices there.

136. Will you give the Committee your opinion as to whether you think any part of the Government printing could be done cheaper by private contract than at the Government Printing Office?—I am quite satisfied in my own mind that the general run of the work would be done much better at the Government Printing Office; and I speak having had some knowledge. I was for a time at Mr. Dick's printing office in Dunedin when they did Provincial Council work, and was previously employed at the Government Printing Office, Melbourne, and I was for a short time at the Government Printing Office here; I afterwards worked at the *New Zealand Times* office, and they did some work for the Government; I worked also at Messrs. Lyon and Blair's and they also did some for the Government; and my experience is that the work is exceedingly well done at the Government Printing Office. It is done cheaper and better than it could be done at any private office; because the ordinary run of the work there is not like newspaper work. At the Government Printing Office men come from all countries, and the good are weeded out from the bad and the good are placed on the 'stab. I myself was picked out, but I disliked the work; it was so close that I left shortly afterwards. In regard to the wages, I may explain that when I left Mr. Dick's office at Dunedin I was getting £3 a week for eight hours' work, and we got overtime, and some made £5 a week. At the time I left I told Mr. Woodfield, the foreman, that I was going to Wellington to work at the Government Printing Office, and he told me that I should be disappointed. I told him I would like to go because I wanted to see what the work was like. After I arrived and started to work I found I had been greatly mistaken, for, instead of earning £5, I found the general run of wages on piece was £3 a week.

137. There was no "Government stroke" there?—Nothing there. I saw a little of that in Melbourne; but not in the Government Printing Office at Wellington. Every man had to work hard.

138. Are there Government printing offices in the other colonies?—Yes; they have them at Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, and Hobart. At the latter place the *Hobart Mercury* people do it all. Davis Brothers do the printing.

139. I suppose we may take it for granted that there must be a Government Printing Office?—It would be entirely impossible to do without one. In Melbourne their office is well ordered. The machinery and paper are all on one floor; bookbinding on another floor. The place where the compositors work is also well arranged, and those doing confidential work are so arranged that they are entirely separated from the others.

140. *Mr. Dargaville.*] The building here is so arranged that they could not preserve secrecy if they wished?—Yes. I know myself that things have leaked out of the office here because it is so badly constructed. Of course it is not Mr. Didsbury's fault; but the building is so arranged that complete secrecy is impossible.

141. *Mr. Samuel.*] The building does not afford the necessary accommodation?—Just so. I would just like the Committee to understand that the only gentleman I know at the office is Mr. Costall, and I am not on speaking terms with Mr. Didsbury. I would also state that I have no feeling in the matter at all.

142. *Mr. Dargaville.*] You are not friendly with Mr. Didsbury?—No; but there is no coldness between us.

143. The managing officer is still there?—Yes.

144. *Mr. Joyce.*] There was an opinion expressed by some to give out to private tenders to printing offices such works as those by Dr. Hector, more in the way of a check—Yes; that may be advisable. Classes of works of that sort and philosophical societies' works could be done anywhere. I think provincial work, such as appertaining to railway time-tables, might be done in each of the large towns, such as Dunedin, Christchurch, Auckland, and Invercargill.

145. *The Chairman.*] What about the electoral rolls?—They would be better done at the Government Printing Office, because they have stereotyped blocks and other conveniences.

146. What is the custom in other colonies?—I do not know myself. I think the general prac-

tice is to have the rolls printed at Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide at the Government Printing Offices. They let out very little work in Melbourne.

147. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Then you think the rolls might be printed in each of the chief centres?—Yes, as far as practicable. In offices in Melbourne they use a lot of stereotyped blocks, and put them into the columns. They have them at the Government Office here; but it would not pay private offices unless they had a large job.

148. *Mr. Joyce.*] Under the present state of the law the rolls are made up upon a certain day before the elections?—I am not aware of that. I speak more from a printer's point of view.

149. *The Chairman.*] But you consider there must be a Government Printing Office?—Yes. I believe it is absolutely necessary so long as you have a Responsible Government.

150. And there must be a skilled staff of workmen?—Yes.

151. And in order to keep them together, and to keep the plant going, as much stock work as possible should be kept for the recess?—Yes. In a lot of private offices they must keep the machinery going, and you must have a staff of men to keep it going; because when the machinery is idle the place is not generally regarded as paying.

152. Would you venture to state at what percentage the work could be done cheaper in the Government Printing Office than by tender?—I would not like to give an opinion. I could not tell the percentage without having time to work it out; but I think it could be done cheaper.

153. *Mr. Bruce.*] Do you think it would be advisable to retain the hands during the recess?—Yes.

154. And to have works such as those by Dr. Hector printed?—Yes; granted they could be done as cheaply.

Witness: I may state that I do not think the Government Printing Office is fit for a large number of men to work in. There are many men who have grown old there. I speak feelingly on this point, as my father-in-law was there. A gentleman I dare say Mr. Samuel knows very well, Mr. James Kenworthy. He contracted a deafness for the rest of his life, and he would have made one of the best journalists in the colony.

Mr. GEORGE FENWICK examined.

155. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—George Fenwick.

156. What are you?—I am managing director of the *Otago Daily Times* and *Witness* Company.

157. This Committee has been appointed to inquire into the question of the advisability or otherwise of having part of the Government printing done by contract. Will you tell us whether you consider it could be done better by tender?—To some extent I think it could. I have examined some of the prices of the work at the Government Printing Office, and, from what I can see at present, I feel satisfied that some of the work could be printed at a cheaper rate if it were tendered for.

158. Can you specify the particular forms which you think might be printed cheaper?—Before going into details, I would like to say that the time at my disposal has not been sufficient to warrant me in giving a full explanation. To answer the question fully, I should require a much longer time to look over the work. I, however, picked out a few of the forms, and I am confident those few could be printed cheaper if the work was tendered for. To give one instance from a schedule of prices supplied by the Government Printer for the information of witnesses who are being examined in connection with this inquiry, I may mention a charge for machining 16,000 copies of a small form, the cost being scheduled at 3s. 6d. per thousand. To judge from this price, it would almost seem to be the practice to machine from one form.

159. What is the size of the form you refer to?—Octavo.

160. Do you know that 16,000 were printed from one form? That seems extraordinary?—I took the Government Printer's estimate of cost as indicating that.

161. I should scarcely think it possible that 16,000 were worked from a single form?—The price is down in black and white; and if it is the custom to stereotype, so that, say, four of the forms would be worked at once, then the price of £2 17s. for machining 4,000 is tremendously high.

162. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Where could that estimate be seen?—The Clerk of the Legislative Council Printing Committee has it in his possession.

163. *The Chairman.*] Must there not be a Government Printing Office for the printing of parliamentary papers, estimates, and so on?—I do not think it would be right to do away with it altogether; because a lot of the work is of a confidential nature, and in the Government Printing Office is no doubt under more direct control. Work is, moreover, often wanted in a great hurry, and is also subject to considerable alterations, so that the extra charges would be heavy if done in the other offices.

164. You agree that there should be a certain amount of uniformity and style about the work?—Yes; but there need be no difficulty about that.

165. I understood you to assume that tenders would be sent in by first-class offices only?—Yes. Before I left Dunedin I communicated with several of the principal printing offices, and they answered that they would be glad to tender for the work.

166. What if a second-class office undercut you, and got the work?—The Government would have the remedy in their own hands if the work was badly executed. The Government could exercise their right to reject it.

167. Who is to decide in matters of that kind?—I presume there would be some one whose duty it would be to see that the work was properly executed.

168. If a tender came in from a second-rate office—one that could not be classed as a first-class office—and that tender was not accepted, would it not lead to difficulty and unpleasantness? Might

not members of the House be put up to ask questions about it, and so cause a soreness and irritation which do not exist at present?—I do not think a very inferior office could do the work; but at the same time I do not think a second-rate office should be debarred from tendering.

169. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Do you not think it would be impossible for them to do the work properly, because of not having the necessary machinery?—The remedy, as I have said, would be to reject it if it was not properly done. I presume the work would be submitted to Mr. Didsbury if done in Wellington, or some other person, to be appointed for the purpose, if executed in one of the other cities; and if it was inferior it would be rejected.

170. Do you not think that might lead to a suggestion from some one that Mr. Didsbury should be removed?—No doubt some dissatisfaction might be caused; but if contractors supplied inferior work they should be made to take the consequences.

171. *The Chairman.*] A great part of these forms are open-work "stock" forms for the various departments. You are aware of that?—Yes.

172. How would you recommend that the tenders be called?—The printers in the chief districts of the colony should be allowed to tender for the work required in their own particular districts.

173. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] That is, each district to print for itself?—I do not think there would be any saving unless such a course were adopted.

174. To be done during the recess?—Yes, and during session too.

175. Does it not follow from that that the staff would have to be lessened?—Yes; but I know as a fact that there has always been a plentiful supply of extra hands during session time.

176. *Mr. Dargaville.*] But there are compositors and compositors?—Yes.

177. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Does not Mr. Didsbury keep a good staff altogether?—No doubt he does; but were the staff reduced, I do not think he would experience any greater difficulty in getting the extra hands required during the session than he does at present.

178. *The Chairman.*] You know, Mr. Fenwick, that it is the long numbers that pay?—Yes.

179. Then, if each provincial district were to do its own provincial work, as you suggest, would not these forms be set up in four places—would not the same form be set up four times over?—Yes, no doubt.

180. Is not that a needless multiplication of work?—Yes, to a certain extent; but that would not operate against the work being done at lower prices, because it would be regarded as stock work, and would keep machines employed at odd times which might otherwise be idle. It is always considered an advantage to have work of this kind in an office.

181. Suppose twenty thousand copies of a particular form were required in each principal district of the colony, which would mean eighty thousand in all, would there not be a considerable saving if they were printed in one office?—Probably; but the desire to obtain a share of the work is so strong that the separate tenders that would be received for the smaller number would be at very low rates. I might here mention that many of the machines at the Government Printing Office are cramped into a totally inadequate space, and also that some of the machinery is of an obsolete character, especially the cutting-machines, in the working of which a great deal of time must be lost. While there I was shown some books which I do not think is a class of work that should be done at the Government Printing Office, as it is interfering with private trade.

182. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Could you mention any of them?—I could not just now remember the titles of any of them, but copies of them are among the books and forms in possession of the Legislative Council Committee.

183. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Books to be sold, do you mean?—Yes; and my impression is they could have been done cheaper if tendered for by private offices.

184. *The Chairman.*] I remember some of the books. One is Mr. Alderton's book on orange-culture, and then there are Maori legendary works, and so on?—Yes, these may have been among them. There is a work in progress now, entitled "The Aryan Maori," which seemed to me to be in course of being printed for some private person.

185. They were printed there because they were a class of work to be disseminated for the public good, and this applies to the Maori work you have alluded to. Then I understand you to say that a Government Printing Office is necessary for printing the confidential documents of the Government, &c., and it is necessary to have a skilled staff of workmen?—Yes; there is a class of work which the Government should retain, such as the Government *Gazette*, *Hansard*, and forms of which there are small numbers only printed.

186. Take, again, the estimates, Bills submitted to Parliament, the Financial Statement—is it not necessary to have a skilled staff of workmen for that class of work?—Yes.

187. *Mr. Bruce.*] Then you would not abolish the Government Printing Office altogether?—No; I do not think it would be wise to do so.

188. Would it not be difficult to draw the line as to which part of the work should be tendered for?—No; I do not think so. A large proportion of the work might be done with advantage outside.

189. In the event of the work being done in each of the provincial districts, would it be done more economically than at present?—Yes, I feel certain that it would.

190. Have you any personal acquaintance with the department?—I have gone over it two or three times.

191. Is it not generally understood that the men work harder there than in a private office?—I have not heard so.

192. You assume that the greater part of the work could be done cheaper in the private offices. To which work do you refer chiefly?—Forms of various kinds. I saw them when I gave my evidence before the Committee of the Legislative Council.

193. You told us that some of the machinery used in the Government Printing Office was of an

obsolete character. Would not that rather tell against your argument, supposing they were furnished with the newest ones?—Yes, to a certain extent.

194. In the event of the work being tendered for, is there any chance of a combination?—Not the slightest. Competition is too keen for that.

195. Is it not your opinion that the Government Printing Office do their work more expeditiously than any other office?—I cannot answer that question. I have not had any opportunity of judging as to the speed with which work is got out. I think the whole question might with advantage be thoroughly inquired into by means of a Commission, as witnesses have not had time to look into it properly.

196. *Mr. Samuel.*] I would like to know more about the class of work you would like tendered for?—Customs forms, and numbers of other departmental forms, of which large numbers are used throughout the colony. If I had the sample forms here I could point them out to the Committee.

197. Is it not a fact that a great deal of the profits in the printing trade come from the paper?—Yes; and many of the printing firms are very large importers of paper, and have the best facilities for buying in the Home market, enabling them to do work at cheap rates. I am not aware under what system the Government supplies are obtained.

198. *The Chairman.*] When you speak of the competition being so keen, you do not mean to say tenders would be sent in at prices which would entail a loss?—No; I do not think anybody would tender at prices which would involve a loss.

199. Then, supposing there is a profit, is it not right that the colony should get the benefit of the collective profit?—Yes; but I contend that private offices can do the work at a cheaper rate than it can be done at the Government Printing Office.

200. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] You think there is sufficient competition in the trade to prevent a combination?—Yes, certainly.

Mr. ALFRED GEORGE HORTON examined.

201. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—Alfred George Horton.

202. What are you?—I am a printer, and part proprietor of the *New Zealand Herald*.

203. This Committee has been appointed to inquire into one definite question. Will you give us your opinion as to whether any part of the printing done in the Government Printing Office could be done at a cheaper rate by tendering for it?—Some of it, I think, might.

204. Can you tell us what portion of it?—Some of the forms might be done in any of the private offices, such as ordinary work or “stock” work. I think that this kind of work mentioned might be taken at a cheaper rate than it is at present charged by Mr. Didsbury. A portion of the printing, of course, consists of tables, and would not pay to give to private offices, because of the numerous alterations and corrections required to be done here in Wellington.

205. Have you any of the work picked out—that which would yield the most profit?—No; I cannot say that I have. It is “stock” work, of course, which would pay us to take at low prices in slack times, when the machines are idle, so as to keep them occupied.

206. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Would not that argument apply equally well to the Government Printing Office?—I think not, because most of their pressure of work is during session, and they know exactly when their slack time is. In private offices the demands are more uncertain.

207. *The Chairman.*] Is it necessary that there should be a Government Printing Office?—Yes, clearly.

208. Then you do not think these “stock” forms should be retained to fill up the time in that office, so that its large plant should not lie idle and unproductive?—I think you might very well relieve the office of much work, as has been done in railway work. I cannot give the Committee a very clear opinion on any particular class of work that I would recommend to be tendered for: it would take a long time, and is a matter for careful examination.

209. How would you suggest that the work should be tendered for?—I would suggest that it would pay the Government to have, say, three experts, to examine the whole question, and to select what kind of work might be given out to tender; because, of course, there is a certain class of work which could not be given out.

210. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Do you think, from your knowledge of the trade, that the Government could replace their staff each session?—Yes; certainly. There are plenty of men obtainable.

211. Of good character?—Yes. I am not speaking of foremen or skilled experts of labour; but simply compositors or printers.

212. *The Chairman.*] Men who could set-up the Registrar-General's returns?—Any ordinary job.

213. Could you give any idea of the proportion of compositors out of the whole who could set up such tables as the Registrar-General's returns?—No. I am not sufficiently acquainted with the casual labour obtainable to answer that.

214. Do you know the class of work that is given out in England outside the Government printers'?—Telegraph and other forms; and in Scotland some of the supplies for general office use are given out in the towns in which the forms are required. The Government contract printers do all the work of importance or relating to Bills, &c.

215. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Do you think there is sufficient competition to prevent anything like a combination occurring with the private offices?—Yes: it is just as keen here as it could be in any country.

216. Still, you would not expect to lose?—No; but we have better appliances than the Government possess.

217. In what respect is the place defective?—In the machinery; for instance, I saw some very old cutting-machines—they ought to have self-clamp guillotines: whilst the office is much scattered; and they have to carry their work from one place to another. To work to the best advantage you must have plenty of room and good light, as well as good plant.

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

after their business. What is the custom in the other colonies?—There they have the seat of Government at the principal centres, and they are differently situated to New Zealand.

249. *The Chairman.*] But the difference in circumstances between New Zealand and Victoria simply means sending away a hundredweight or so of printed matter by steamer instead of by rail. Are there any first-class printing offices in Melbourne?—Yes.

250. Also a Government Printing Office?—Yes.

251. Which goes to show that a Government establishment must exist even there?—Yes.

252. What, in your opinion, is the class of work which the Government, as you put it, have no right to do at all?—Books:—

253. Name some?—I saw some of a private nature.

254. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Printed for private individuals?—Yes, I think so.

255. Could you name any?—“Savage Life in Polynesia,” for instance. I do not remember the names of the others; but there was a long list of them.

256. Any Maori works?—Yes, I think so.

257. *Mr. Bruce.*] The works printed there are of a scientific nature, and if the Government were not to assist the authors a lot of information would not have come to light as at present?—I think some of it would have come to light.

258. *The Chairman.*] It occurs in trade that there are corrections to be made?—Yes.

259. Now, would the Government have to pay for these?—No, not in the forms I have been speaking of, because they are not changed.

260. And you agree that a Government Office is necessary?—Yes.

261. But, according to you, it should be limited. Where are the men to come from for session work?—I may answer that by asking, where do they come from now?

262. Is the railway work now let by contract?—Yes; the whole of the books and forms, &c., are tendered for.

SATURDAY, 25th July, 1885.

Mr. GILBERT CARSON re-examined.

263. *The Chairman.*] We asked you, Mr. Carson, to go over the Government Printing Office, and tell us what you thought of the plant, &c. Will you make us a short statement on the subject?—I have been through the office. Everything seemed to me to be in fair condition. Some of the machinery is old, but there are a number of fairly-new machines suited to the work.

264. Will you specify the machines which are unsuited to the work?—I do not say unsuited. Some few are old, but they are suited to the work.

265. There are some without flyers, are there not?—Yes. I did not take a note of them, but Mr. Leary did. I might say that in an office of that description there is not the necessity for complicated machinery that there is in a newspaper office. I have seen in one newspaper office in New Zealand a machine that must have cost as much as them all put together. In a newspaper office with a large circulation speed is the first consideration.

266. Did you look at the guillotines?—Yes.

267. Could they be improved upon?—Yes; I think one could be. But there are always improvements being effected.

268. I ask these questions because they bear to some extent upon the evidence given by other witnesses?—The question of space affects the matter materially. It is difficult to put in new machinery.

269. Is that all you wish to say as to plant?—I think so; that is, speaking generally. There is one large machine there—a recent purchase—which was not working when I went over the office. I believe there is not power to drive it during the session. I asked Mr. Didsbury about that machine. He says it is made available for printing the statutes as soon as the session is over. It was, I believe, originally procured by a Christchurch office, and Mr. Didsbury purchased it for £300. Its cost would be about £700. I suppose he could sell it for £500 if it were not required.

270. There is one question, Mr. Carson, which I hardly care to put to you, as it is of a somewhat pointed and unpleasant nature; but as it was put to some of the experts examined yesterday it may as well be put to you. Would there be any possibility or probability of collusion amongst tenderers if the work were put up to tender?—That is a broad question, which applies to all kinds of tendering. I think it is more likely to occur for this than for any other kinds of work, because there are only a few offices in a position to go in for large contracts. If the work were to be given out very largely there would be only a very few offices in a position to compete, and they could easily arrange matters. If the work were such that thirty or forty offices could compete then there could be no collusion.

271. Can you tell us what would be likely to happen, suppose the House decided to adopt the tender system? Would there be any probability of the tenders for the first time being extremely low, and then, after the Government Printing Office was to some extent broken up, of their being exceedingly high?—I think so; but it would depend very much upon what work was given out.

272. We asked the experts who were examined yesterday to tell us what class of work they thought should be given out to tender, and they gave it as their opinion that a number of the stock forms, such as these, should be given out. [Court forms, Customs forms, &c., exhibited before Legislative Council Printing Committee produced.] Would you recommend that class of work to be given out to private contract?—I think they would be much better done by the Government Office.

273. Is not that really the profitable part of the Government printing?—That depends. If you were to call for tenders for this kind of work, it would be at per thousand for the job. Where work is profitable to contractors is when “fat” work like this occurs in the middle of a job.

274. These are standard forms, which require no alteration. They can all be stereotyped?—Yes; and by so doing there is a large saving. A job like that is first set up in type, then

stereotyped, labelled, and put away for future use; and when further copies are wanted they are printed without re-setting.

275. There are about four hundred of these different forms which, once set up, require no alteration. Would not the cost to the colony be very much greater if they were given out to private offices?—It would double it, I think. I do not know how many of these forms there are, but there is a room full of them. It is a vast convenience to have them stereotyped. If they were given out there would not be any competition, because only a few offices go in for stereotyping.

276. Then there is another class—of difficult tabular work, such as the Registrar-General's statistics. Now, as contrasted with these heavy tables, is not the other class of work [the standard or stock forms] extremely profitable?—Yes.

277. Now, would it be fair to the Government or to the country to pick out this profitable class of work and leave the other behind?—I would not give out either class, because the Government Office is specially equipped for the work. I do not think any private office could turn out the tabular work in reasonable time. The Registrar-General's statistics is difficult work, and it is a special feature of the Government Printing Office that it is able to turn out that work.

278. It was also said yesterday that the private offices would print the standard forms very cheaply, because they could print them at leisure during slack times?—Yes; that is so.

279. But does not exactly the same argument apply to the Government Office?—Yes.

280. *Mr. Bruce.*] I understand you to say that the accommodation at the Government Printing Office is entirely inadequate?—Yes.

281. Am I to understand from that statement that if there were a better office with better accommodation the work could be turned out still more cheaply than at present?—Certainly.

282. Even under existing circumstances they are able to turn out work as cheaply as could be done by contract?—I should say they must turn it out more cheaply.

283. Then we must assume from that that if better accommodation were given it would be attended with still greater advantages to the country? Will the same apply to machinery? Other witnesses have said the machinery is of an obsolete character?—It is not so.

284. It does not stand in the front rank of machinery?—There are always slight improvements being made.

285. Well, we may take the same assumption that we have already done, that if better machinery were provided the cost of production would be further lessened?—I do not think a great deal of extra machinery is required.

286. I think I understood you to say that some of the machines had not that speed which they ought to have?—No, I do not say that. I said that in large newspaper offices there was a necessity for speed that there is not in the Government Printing Office. In large newspaper offices, where they go to press, say, at five o'clock in the morning, speed is a first consideration; but that is not the case in the Government Printing Office.

287. I do not understand you to say that speed and economy are the same thing?—Not necessarily.

288. I understood you to say, if no probability, there was certainly a possibility, of collusion in tendering for the work?—I should say so.

289. Have you seen the scale of the cost of printing that was issued by Mr. Didsbury? It was alluded to yesterday by some of the witnesses?—No, I have not seen it. I saw, a few days ago, some figures showing the cost of printing the rolls in various parts of the colony.

290. I am sorry you have not seen it, because it was given in evidence yesterday that some work that was done for 3s. 6d. could be done for 2s. 6d. if it had been tendered for. Do you know any work of that kind?—I have not seen the figures.

291. I have only one question to put to you. With all the knowledge in your possession, I assume you to believe that it would be most undesirable in the public interest that the existing order of things should be disturbed?—That is my opinion. It will be obvious that if the men do not do the "Government stroke" and the rates of payment are fair, the Government must get the profit instead of private firms. I still adhere to what I said the other day, that now and then it would be desirable to give out work, so as to keep some check upon the Government Office.

292. *Mr. Cowan.*] Looking at the work turned out of the Government Office, in your opinion is there any appearance of the machinery being unfit?—No; the machinery does the work well enough.

293. *The Chairman.*] It is admitted that two machines are old; but you would not recommend, I suppose, that they should be thrown away. If Mr. Didsbury wished to get rid of them, I suppose there would be no sale for them?—No; and he is simply utilizing them as long as possible.

294. Have you any suggestion to make in regard to new machinery?—There are two or three labour-saving machines that might be got. The guillotine might be replaced by an improved one; but there is not much wanted.

295. If Mr. Didsbury were authorized to displace the two old machines, and procure new "Wharfadales," would that be better?—Yes; but the present ones might still be used.

Mr. LEARY re-examined.

296. *The Chairman.*] The Committee asked you when you were here before, Mr. Leary, to look through the Government Printing Office: have you been over it?—Yes; but I was unable to go into every little detail in connection with the office.

297. You need not say anything as to that at all, but as to machinery and plant?—As to these, I made a few notes at the time, which I will refer to. In going over the office I came to the conclusion that the Government have a large plant and an efficient staff there; but the building is altogether inadequate to accommodate them. That is, the plant and the staff would be much more

effective in a larger and more suitable building; there would be a larger profit made for the Government. Mr. Didsbury was called away, and so he was unable to go over the building with Mr. Carson and myself; and Mr. Costall therefore accompanied us. We first walked around his room, in which there were fourteen compositors and Mr. Costall himself. Mr. Costall pointed out to us how badly the room was ventilated, the atmosphere being then in a foul state. It was also badly lighted. There is insufficient light in the day-time to work at the "randoms" in the centre of the room. This is the room in which Bills are altered; consequently a large amount of "stone" space is necessary. There are only two imposing-surfaces in this room, and about four are required; but, if there were other two, there would be no floor-space for them. The workers there also suffer inconvenience from want of rack-accommodation for galleys. These are piled up upon the floor. That is a bad practice, and often injures the type; but there is no room to put up more racks. The same holds good in reference to "chases," or iron frames in which the types are locked up. For instance, there are eighty double-demy chases and only rack-accommodation for forty, the others being placed in piles leaning against the walls; and if a workman wants to get the chase next to or near the wall he has to move all or nearly all the others, thus entailing a great loss of time. With proper rack-accommodation any chase of type could be drawn out with ease. We then went to the machine-room. There are quite a number of machines there—one double-royal, two double-demy, two double-crown, a treadle, and an address machine—and all the machines in that room, with the exception of one double-demy, are very fair, one or two being excellent machines. The one exception, I think, is nearly useless to the Government. It is old—one of the first that was in the office. It cannot be driven at a rapid rate, and the impression obtained from it is not very good. There, again, the want of room is very patent. We noticed that between two of the large machines there is a passage through which men are continually going (often with loads of paper), and there is only a space of something like twenty-one inches between the fly-wheels of the two machines. One fly-wheel is exposed; so that those passing to and fro are in constant danger of accident. At the head of one of these machines the machinist himself has to pass from time to time to see to the ink-duct. He does not allow the boys to go there, for fear of accident; and he himself, when the machine is working, has to wait his opportunity to get in behind. He says he runs a constant risk of being seriously injured.

298. *Mr. Cowan.*] That is solely for want of room?—Yes. From the machine-room we went into the "damping" room, where the paper is damped and cut up. We found there one ruling-machine, two cutting-machines, and also a folding-machine. They are all good machines of their kind. The folding-room is not a very large room, and there are twenty-one girls and several men at work there. The light is not any too good in that room. In what are termed the store-rooms, where the leather, millboard, &c., are kept, I observed that they had to use artificial light, and candles were taken in, which is risky. There is no room to dispose of the material. The leathers have to be pushed away into holes and corners, and there is certainly some loss on account of the rats eating the binding-leather. In the sub-overseer's room—Mr. Burns's—there are also fourteen hands employed. In that room *Hansard* is made up, and most of the tabular matter is there set. Mr. Burns complains of want of accommodation for the work. There is not sufficient rack-accommodation for either the forms or the galleys.

299. Perhaps you would explain, Mr. Leary, that the *Hansard* "making-up"-room is not the composing-room?—It is quite distinct from the *Hansard* composing-room, being the room where the matter is taken after the piece-hands have corrected their "takes." The matter is made up here into page form. The authors' corrections are also made in this room. While in Mr. Burns's room I noticed a number of galleys—I think twelve—on which the dust was standing thickly. On questioning him about them, he said the matter had been standing for at least eighteen months or two years. It belonged to the Marine Department, and they did not send in an order to print it. There is certainly a considerable loss in that. It would not be permitted in a private office. A contractor would distribute the matter and charge for setting it up again. So that the Government Office is not worked altogether with a view to profit, but in some respects for the convenience of departments.

300. I suppose, to remedy that you would recommend that the Government Printer be armed with sufficient authority to say to a department, as a private printer would say, that he could not keep plant locked up in that way?—I think it very desirable that the Government Printer should have that authority, and beg to make a recommendation to that effect.

301. *Mr. Samuel.*] Do you know the reason why this type is kept locked up?—I do not know. The matter is something in connection with lighthouses.

302. I merely ask if it is necessary to keep it locked up like that? If so, that would be a great reason in favour of the work being done by the Government Office?—A private printer would certainly not keep type standing like that, or, if he did, he would charge heavily for it. Then, again, the overseer informed me that frequently matter is sent into the Government Printing Office to be put into type, marked "Very urgent," and they put ten or a dozen hands on it; but if it were sent to a private office only two or three hands would be put upon it so that the Government would not get the very urgent work turned out so quickly as from their own office. The piece-room, to which we next went, is the best lighted and ventilated in the establishment; but it is overcrowded. There is frame-room for only twenty-one, and thirty-four hands are employed in it. I asked for the measurements of the several rooms, and was informed that the Government Printer had the measurements and had given them in his evidence before the Committee. The apprentices' room is, I think, sufficiently large for the number in it. There are five apprentices and a sub-overseer in that room. In that room, too, all the titling letter is kept; so that men working in other rooms have to go a considerable distance for perhaps one line of type. That arises from the fact that there is no available space for it anywhere else. It is kept there because there is a little spare space. Anything I have said about the insufficiency of light does not apply to the artificial light. I think the electric light,

as used in the Government Printing Office, is excellent. We were shown into another room containing a very large four-feeder machine. That machine, I understand, has only been worked once or twice since it was purchased by the Government Printer. I think it is an unsuitable machine for Government work, but it is very well adapted for a newspaper with a long number. It takes a long time to get it into running order, and it would be necessary to run it on the same-sized form day after day to run it profitably. It would be an advantage if the machine were sold and a smaller one obtained. It was purchased very cheaply, and ought to sell for double the amount of the purchase-money.

303. *Mr. Joyce.*] Is it suitable for a newspaper office?—For a newspaper publishing a large number. It would not be suitable for a small country paper.

304. *The Chairman.*] It is in reality a newspaper four-feeder?—Yes.

305. But, though not exactly suitable for a Government office, there would be no loss on it if it were sold?—I think there would be a gain of £200 or £300.

306. Does that conclude your statement?—Yes; I do not think I can add anything more.

307. There is a question which has been put to other witnesses, Mr. Leary, and it may as well be put to you. Do you think, if it were decided to put any part of the Government work out to private tender, there would be any probability of collusion amongst the tenderers?—I am afraid there would be a very great probability of that; in fact, almost amounting to a certainty.

308. That would apply to all classes of tendering outside of printing, would it not?—Yes; but more especially to printing.

309. *Mr. Cowan.*] Is that on account of the small number of persons in the trade?—I think not: there are enough in the trade.

310. *The Chairman.*] In answer to a question yesterday, Mr. Leary, as to what part of the Government printing should be given out, some of the experts recommended that the stock forms should be given to private offices—forms such as those you have before you [Customs and Court forms, &c.]. Is that not really the most profitable part of the Government printing?—Yes. These are forms that would be charged for at a pretty high rate; but the office tendering for them need not necessarily have a large staff.

311. They are forms which require no alteration, and are therefore stereotyped?—I have no doubt the Government have stereotypes of these forms. I do not wonder at any contractor naming these forms.

312. Would you call that picking out the eyes of the printing?—Yes; or the plums from the pudding. Another thing is, if it be desirable that a large staff should be kept up in the Government Office, so as to be available for sessional work, these are the forms the Government ought to retain to furnish employment for the men during the recess.

313. It was said also yesterday that those forms could be printed cheaper by private offices than by the Government, because in slack times they could fill up spare time with them. Is not that exactly what would happen in the Government Office?—It is exactly what is done at the Government Office.

314. You said, when formerly examined by the Committee, “Speaking candidly, I do not think a private printer could successfully compete with the Government Printing Office.” Do you still adhere to that opinion?—I do.

315. *Mr. Cadman.*] Supposing it were decided to call for tenders for some of the printing, is there much of it that all the offices could compete for?—If tenders were called for short numbers, all the offices, no doubt, could compete; and if the work were given out to tender I think it would be better to call for tenders for short numbers, so as to secure competition.

316. By short numbers you mean a few?—I mean five, or ten, or twenty thousand forms; but then there is the risk of having the forms badly printed by giving them to the smaller offices. The proprietors of many of them do not keep careful men—they do their work by boys; and the forms in parts might not be readable.

317. *The Chairman.*] This class of work [the Registrar-General’s statistics] is a very expensive class of work, and from a printer’s point of view would not be regarded as profitable. Now, as a contrast to this, I suppose the other class of work [the standard forms] is very profitable?—Yes. The Registrar-General’s returns is an expensive class of work, requiring care and skill in its production; consequently the margin for profit is diminished.

318. *Mr. Bruce.*] I understand you to say that the state of the office is such as to endanger the health of those employed there?—Yes.

319. And that there is danger to life and limb owing to the unprotected state of the machinery?—Yes, there is.

320. You appear to believe that, owing to the very limited space, work cannot be so economically carried on as if there were better accommodation?—That is my conviction. The work could be produced more cheaply if there were better accommodation.

321. Is the machinery obsolete?—By no means. One of the machines might be so classed.

322. You appear to believe that even under the existing order of things the printing is done, perhaps, all things considered, more cheaply than could be done by private contract?—That I feel confident of.

323. You also believe that in the event of the Government putting up a suitable office and having the best machinery the work could be much more cheaply done than under existing conditions?—Unquestionably it could.

324. Then, having worked in that office, and with all the knowledge of which you are in possession, you would think it to be undesirable to make any departure from the present system—that is to say, in the direction of letting the work by tender?—I think it unadvisable.

325. Have you any idea of what number of offices throughout the colony would be able to

compete in the event of the work being offered to tender? Would it be only the larger offices?—Yes; only the larger offices would be in a position to compete.

326. Then that would add much to the danger of collusion?—Very much.

327. *Mr. Samuel.*] Do you think that stock work, of all other work, should not be let out for contract?—I do, because that is the work which would enable the Government Printer to keep on hands during the slack period, and thus have an efficient staff for the session.

328. That work has been selected by certain witnesses who gave evidence here as the only description of work they would recommend should be done outside?—I think it would be better to give the solid work out.

329. Under all circumstances you think this [the stock work] should be retained?—Yes; because the office would be able to make more profit out of this work, seeing, too, that they have the forms standing.

330. Then it would be simply a reckless waste to give it out?—Yes.

331. *Mr. Cowan.*] Do you consider any man who said this stock work should be given out to contract must have been an interested person?—I should think so. I would like to get it myself, but I certainly could not conscientiously recommend the Government to give it out.

TUESDAY, 28th July, 1885.

Mr. GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, examined.

332. *The Chairman.*] You are probably aware, Mr. Didsbury, of the exact terms of our order of reference. We are appointed to inquire into the advisableness or otherwise of printing under contract with private offices any part of the printing required by the Government of the colony?—Yes.

333. Do you think the Government printing can be done cheaper by private contract than at the Government Printing Office?—I do not think so.

334. Will you give us your reasons?—Because, while we are not paying higher rates than are paid in private establishments, we have the necessary appliances for doing all classes of work which come into the office, and doing it with economy and expedition. Therefore I do not think there is any ground for supposing that an outside printer could do it any cheaper than we can.

335. Have you any experience that will guide you in forming an opinion in favour of one system as against the other?—Yes; I might cite the printing of the electoral rolls, for instance. It is the only instance which occurs to me at present.

336. Are they printed by contract?—They are printed by contract at the various printing offices in each electoral district.

337. Can you give us figures bearing on that point?—The contract price in 1881–82 ranged from 7s. 6d. to £2 10s. per page, and in 1884 I think it ranged from about 8s. to £1 10s. per page.

338. Is that anything in excess of what you could print them for in the Government Printing Office?—Yes, if you take the average. I find, in 1881–82 they averaged 18s. 4d. per page, and in 1884, 15s. 6d. per page. I estimate that they could be done in the Government Printing Office for about 8s.

339. Are there any other advantages, irrespective of price, for printing in the Government Office?—Yes, there are. There is the advantage of compression. We generally go in an exactly opposite direction to contractors in that respect, inasmuch as we compress all we can into one page, while contractors make it spin out. On examination of the electoral rolls of 1884 I estimated that they would have been compressed, if done at the Government Printing Office, into sixty-eight pages less than they were.

340. What would that represent in money value?—That would represent over £52.

341. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Would they be reduced in space?—They would go into something like sixty-eight pages less than at present.

342. What space did they occupy?—About two thousand pages.

343. That is a very small difference—sixty-eight pages out of two thousand?—The reason they make so much is that some printers put in two or three white lines between each letter of the alphabet, and they make small turns-over that might be avoided. In a great many cases I found the pages were short of the actual measurement, which of course makes a considerable difference in a long job. I have printed no rolls lately.

344. I fancy there is another matter by which a comparison of prices might be made—that is the railway printing?—I have nothing to do with that. I have had isolated jobs, when the contractor was unable to do them, and my prices have generally been under contract price. The Railway Department is different from other departments, inasmuch as it pays for all work done at the time, whether in or out of the Government Office.

345. *Mr. Joyce.*] Do you think the electoral rolls are quite a fair comparison? They have to be made up to the last moment, just before an election. The difficulty is that the rolls must be printed locally, and the circumstances of some of the local offices are such that they are not prepared for the work, and it must impose upon them considerable expense. Would it not be better to take some other illustration?—The electoral rolls are printed in the Government Printing Office at Sydney for the whole of New South Wales.

346. Under our regulations the rolls are made up to the last moment, and consequently they could not be done at the Government Printing Office?—I understand that it is only the supplementary rolls that are required in such great haste. In New South Wales I understand they are printed during the first three months of the year. The whole of the type is kept standing, and they have only to make the alterations. This is decidedly an economical way of printing the rolls. You simply incur the outlay necessary for the type in the first instance, and after that all that is necessary is to make the alterations each year to complete the rolls. Of course, under present circumstances I do not think it possible for me to do the printing of these rolls, except under some

such system as is adopted in Sydney, where the type is provided for keeping them standing. I do not know of any other comparison I could make except as regards ballot-papers: they afford an illustration. For instance, the ballot-papers for the whole colony are printed at various private offices, at an average cost of about 2s. 3d. per hundred. The number usually printed for each electoral district is about fifteen hundred. These, according to our scale, are charged at 10d. per hundred.

347. Have you any data about bookwork, such as, for instance, Dr. Hector's works and the work on orange-culture?—I do not think I can cite any illustration. Works of that description I generally give out to the 'piece-hands, and consequently the men get paid by results. As the price paid to them is not greater than that paid in private establishments, the profit, if any, must go to the Government:

348. *The Chairman.*] I understand you to say the New South Wales rolls are printed in the Government Printing Office. Then, is there no difficulty in regard to proofs and revision?—I do not see what difficulty there can be if the copy is carefully prepared.

349. As to supplementary rolls, they must be printed hurriedly?—Necessarily. With regard to the electoral rolls and their accuracy, I certainly, after looking at some of them, think they could be printed more accurately at the Government Office than at private offices. Some of the rolls I have seen bristle with printer's errors.

350. *Mr. Cadman.*] What do the electoral rolls cost in Wellington?—I think they are very cheaply done here. I think the price was 10s. 6d. per page; but in some of the offices in other parts of the colony £1 10s. is demanded.

351. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Do you know why the railway work is done privately?—Principally because I was unable to do it. I did it for over two or three years, but, owing to want of accommodation, I could not continue it, especially during session. It was not on account of our prices being high that it was discontinued.

352. *Mr. Dargaville.*] How do the prices compare?—I am not quite sure what they pay at present. The tenders do not pass through my hands. It is many years since I did the work, and the forms have been entirely changed since then. I do not think a comparison could be made, except, perhaps, in one or two isolated cases.

353. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Then the accommodation will not permit of any increase of work?—No. We want more accommodation and more machinery.

354. *Mr. Cadman.*] You say you do not check the railway printing?—No.

355. I understand you check the most of the advertising?—I do not individually, but it is done by the clerks in my office.

356. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Have you sufficient stock work to keep up an efficient staff during the recess?—I should not without having extra work, such as that on orange-culture, &c., to fall back upon. It is necessary that many of the casual hands should be kept about the place; otherwise a number of them would leave Wellington, and would not be available when required.

357. Hitherto there has been sufficient stock work to keep them going?—Yes; a moderate number.

358. *The Chairman.*] Is it not as necessary in a large printing office to keep up an efficient staff as in any other large establishment?—Just as necessary. I take on a great many additional hands during the session; but very few are qualified to go into the time-room. They are principally newspaper hands, and I would only employ them at piece-work. Good jobbing hands are very scarce; and when I have a good staff, it would be a great pity to disperse it.

359. To give the Committee an idea of the comparative merits of the compositors, would you state as near as you can how many of your *Hansard* men are competent to set up tables like those in the Registrar-General's reports?—I suppose that out of the thirty hands in the piece-room there are not more than two or three good table-hands among them. Most of those capable of setting tabular matter, as I say, I draft off into the time-room.

360. Then if the staff of men who are kept for setting this work were dispersed, it would be difficult to get them together again?—Decidedly so. I found some difficulty this session in filling up the time-rooms.

361. *Mr. Cadman.*] How many men do you keep in Mr. Costall's and Mr. Burns's room?—About twenty-six men.

362. *The Chairman.*] The 8s. per page which you say is the cost of printing the rolls in the office—that means in tabulated form?—Yes.

363. Can the matter be compressed?—Yes. I suggested a plan in my report of 1882, whereby the tabular shape should be dispensed with, and that the matter should be printed in double column, in smaller type.

364. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] In estimating the cost on the plan you suggested, did you consider just the money paid out, or did you include wear and tear?—I allowed for all expenses—management, depreciation, wear and tear, and interest upon capital.

365. *The Chairman.*] What was the cost of printing the rolls in 1881–82, and in 1884?—In 1881–82 they cost about £2,150, and in 1884 about £1,600.

366. Now we come to the question affecting the real gist of the inquiry. Do you think any portion of the printing could be given out with advantage?—Only in some cases—when we are very much pressed during the session. I have occasionally to give out some parliamentary papers and work of that description, which are wanted very urgently in the House. I do not think it is a monetary advantage to give it out. It is not given out from economical considerations, but simply because it is wanted in a hurry, and must be done in a certain time. In other respects I do not think any advantage is to be gained by giving work out to private contract.

367. *Mr. Cadman.*] What test have you had besides the electoral rolls to prove how much cheaper you do the work than private offices?—Well, I can only cite the cost of the Provincial Government printing. That used to be done in the provinces by contract; and the prices charged

for Government printing in the various provincial districts were greatly in excess of the prices which I charge at present. The work was spun out to an enormous extent under the contract system. I have a volume here showing work done for the Provincial Government of Wellington. It occupies 360 pages; whereas if it had been done in the Government Printing Office it would not occupy more than two hundred pages. They were paid so much per page under the contract system, and of course it is the object of contractors to spin the work out as much as possible.

368. Is it not possible in a printing contract to draft specifications binding the contractors?—There is nothing so elastic as a printing contract. It is astonishing how they can get outside even the most stringent specifications. For instance, in the electoral roll there is a specimen handed to the printers to guide them; and yet, as I have pointed out, the rolls occupy sixty-eight pages more than they should have done.

369. I should think you would be able to say whether the work is done in accordance with agreement, and you would not pay more than had been agreed upon?—Well, in the case of the electoral rolls sometimes the accounts are reduced; but they are generally paid for at the time the work is done locally, and the accounts do not come to me for examination until after payment is made, and it is a very difficult thing to get money refunded. After the matter is set you can seldom take exception to it. If I said "You will have to compress or reset it," the printer would probably charge time for alterations.

370. Could you not tell him to reduce his account, instead of asking him to reduce the space?—That is sometimes done.

371. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Mr. Cadman means, could you not say before the printer sets the matter, "This will have to go into so many pages"?—No. I could scarcely do that without very careful calculation, even if the copy passed through my hands, which it does not. It is handed to the printers by the local Revising Officers.

372. *The Chairman.*] Would you give the Committee some general idea of the system upon which you work your office?—There are a certain number of compositors employed on time at £3 per week, and the piece-hands are paid by results.

373. Do your piece-hands earn more than those in private offices?—No. They complain that they do not earn quite so much.

374. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] I understand you to say that, with the present accommodation, if the work increased you would have to put it out?—Yes; during the session, especially.

375. *Mr. Cadman.*] Do you consider the Government establishment is as fully equipped as other large offices in the colony?—No; we are very deficient in many respects. We want more labour-saving machinery; but I have not a single corner where I could put it. With regard to type, a great deal of expense might be saved if we had more of it; but it cannot be procured because, with more type we should require more chases, galleys, frames, &c., and other material in proportion, and our store-rooms and composing-rooms are too small to accommodate more material.

376. If additions were made to the accommodation, would it be advisable to discard the present machinery and procure new stock?—I would not discard all the machinery—only some of the old machinery. There is still a quantity in use which is fit for service in any office.

377. I have asked the question because I heard outside that the plant is out of date?—Well, of course, as I say, I want more modern labour-saving machinery, and would procure it if I had room for it.

378. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Did you furnish your schedule of prices to the Select Committee of the other House?—Yes, for the specimens of work they asked me to give the prices for.

379. *The Chairman.*] Other witnesses have referred to the guillotine cutting-machines. Could they not be improved upon?—There are now self-clamping machines made, but I purchased those I have now in use before these improved machines were invented. Of course you cannot throw out machinery till it gets pretty well worn out; and I bought those now in use nine or ten years ago.

380. Could the clamp be added in any way?—I do not think so; and, even if it could, it might not prove suitable for all classes of work.

381. Then you have some Wharfedales without flyers?—I have one. That is a machine I have had in the office for ten or twelve years.

382. Is that the worst of the machines?—No. I have one which I purchased about eighteen years ago. It is nearly worn out.

383. I suppose there would be no sale for those machines: it is simply a question of continuing them or throwing them away?—Yes; they could not be sold except at a sacrifice, and I think it is not desirable to do that.

384. I suppose they are good enough for some classes of work?—Yes: work that is not of a very particular kind can be done on them. I have been able to sell one old machine to make room for another.

385. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Supposing you had plenty of room, would the additions and alterations to the plant run into much money?—I should want something like three or four thousand pounds' worth of additional plant.

386. *The Chairman.*] I understand you to state that you have no means of comparing the work done in private offices and your office?—Not beyond the instances I have given you—the printing of the rolls and ballot-papers and the printing done under the Provincial Governments.

387. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] When the Provincial Government printing was done, did you keep accounts, so that the work could be compared?—Yes.

388. *The Chairman.*] Will you give us some information that will enable us to form an idea of the cost of management?—The cost of management is a little over £1,400. That includes the salaries of myself and four overseers.

389. Are your overseers to-day the same men who occupied the positions ten years ago?—With

one exception they are the same. There has been an alteration in the overseership of the binding branch.

390. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] I believe that in corrections there is room for adding very much to the cost?—I have often found that to be the case. The percentage for corrections is very high, generally speaking, for work done in private offices.

391. In fact, it is a chance for making money which you cannot check?—Yes; for I very often do not see the revises.

392. *Mr. Joyce.*] Supposing the Government Printing Office were abolished altogether tomorrow, what would be the immediate effect?—The Government would be at the mercy of the contractors.

393. Would there require to be a department of supervision, and would it not involve the establishment of a new department?—I can hardly say what it would involve.

394. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] In the event of a lot of the work being given out, would there be sufficient competition to keep down the price and prevent combination?—I do not think so. To do the Government printing you require a special stock, which printers who are in the habit of working for commercial people do not keep on hand. If they went in for Government contracts, they would require to reorganize their offices to a great extent, and purchase material which they do not at present possess. For instance, I might cite the parliamentary bills. I have to keep a very large quantity of type standing for these during the whole session, because when once Bills are put in type they cannot be distributed until it is finally known whether they are passed or not. Bills have to be printed on very short notice, and altered as they pass through Committee, and from one House to the other. If they were not kept in type it would greatly impede the work of legislation. It would be impossible to do the work of the Legislature outside Wellington; and to do that work you must have a very large establishment—a large staff of hands and a large office. The work could not be done with a smaller staff than I have at present, and it ought, properly speaking, to require a larger staff, because I consider the men are at present overworked.

395. *The Chairman.*] Some of the witnesses examined state that they think portions of the Government printing could with advantage be put out to private contract. Do you think they would be likely to select such work as the Registrar-General's statistics?—I do not think they would. I think it is a kind of work which commercial printers would, as a rule, jib at.

396. How many offices could turn out that kind of work?—There are very few which could do so. I called for tenders for printing the Domesday Book about twelve months ago, and asked them to state the number of pages they could produce a week, and an office like the *Auckland Herald*, which is one of the largest in the colony, undertook to do no more than twenty pages a week, and those only conditionally on the proofs being read in Auckland; while the *Otago Daily Times* and the *Lyttelton Times*, both large offices, only guaranteed to print twenty-four and twelve pages respectively per week: which proved to me that their offices were not equipped for doing tabular work.

397. Then, it would take them altogether about three or four months to turn out a work like the Registrar-General's Statistics?—Quite four months, I should think. The prices also for the Domesday Book were very high in most cases. They ranged from 11s. 6d. per page up to as much as £1 7s. 6d., which latter was the price the *Otago Daily Times* offered to print it for.

398. Will you give the list of prices sent in by the different tenderers?—*Wellington*—Lyon and Blair, 11s. 6d.; *New Zealand Times*, 11s. 6d.; J. Hughes, 13s.; Edwards and Green, 13s. *Canterbury*—C. Redfern, 12s.; Angus Turner, 12s.; Willis and Martin, 15s.; *Lyttelton Times* Company, 15s.; J. Caygill and Co., £1; *Daily Press* Company, £1 5s.; Whitcombe and Tombs, £1 4s. *Otago*—Fergusson and Mitchell, 14s.; J. W. Jago (*Evening Star*), 14s. 6d.; Coulls, Culling, and Co., £1; J. Mackay, 18s. 6d.; *Otago Daily Times*, £1 7s. 6d. *Auckland*—Wilson and Horton, 15s.; W. Atkin, £1 3s. 6d. The actual cost of that portion of the work which was done at the Government Printing Office did not exceed 10s. per page.

399. Some of the witnesses, Mr. Didsbury, selected this class of work [standard forms] as that which should be given out. Is this of a profitable character?—Yes, it is of a very profitable character. I should never think of giving out that class of work if we had appliances for doing it at the Government Printing Office. If I gave out any work at all, it would be of a solid description.

400. It was said that these forms could be done cheaply in private offices, because they could be done during slack times. Does not that apply to the Government Office?—That is exactly the case with me. When there is no other work for the machines, I make up these forms, and keep them engaged. Besides, we have most of those forms stereotyped, and, once having set them up, all we have to do is to work them off as occasion requires. Now, a private printer would not have those conveniences.

401. *Mr. J. B. Whyte.*] Of course you have the appliances for four times the quantity of work that any office in either of the four big centres have?—For special kinds of work we have; such as for standard forms, &c. I possess facilities for printing that kind of work much cheaper than private offices, because, having the whole of the forms under my control, I can frequently print eight or nine at once, and thus effect a considerable saving in machine work. A private contractor would not, perhaps, be able to do that.

402. *Mr. Samuel.*] Then these forms [standard forms] are about the last it would be advisable to give out?—Yes; about the last.

403. There would certainly be a large loss to the Government to do so?—I should consider so.

404. *The Chairman.*] This question carries with it its own answer: If the Government work were tendered for in the provincial districts, it follows that the same forms would have to be set up in each district?—Yes.

405. With regard to books, can you tell us whether the authors of books printed in your office derive any profit from that printing?—In regard to books like those on orange culture and

Consul Griffin's "Commerce and Resources of New Zealand," the manuscript is handed to the Government for printing, and in some cases the author receives a certain number of copies for disposal, but he does not receive any direct payment for the work. The Government recoup expenses by the sale of the work.

406. Does the return usually cover the cost of printing?—In some cases it exceeds it. In others I do not think it does quite, because the Government issue such a large number of free copies. In regard to the work on orange-culture, I think the Government distributed a thousand copies free. In such a case the cost of printing cannot be recouped.

407. *Mr. Samuel.*] But there is another object—the dissemination of knowledge?—That is exactly it. It was necessary the book just referred to should be distributed at a particular time in order to save the season; otherwise the object would have been lost. Mr. Alderton, the author of "Orange-culture in New Zealand," received, I think, a bonus of £50 for preparing the work, and also had his passage paid to Sydney and back in order that he might gain knowledge on the subject.

408. Certain witnesses have said that the Government compete with private offices in this kind of work, and it follows that if they are not paid by the authors for printing these works then the objection falls to the ground. Do the Government receive payment for printing these works, save in so far as the sale of copies is concerned?—No; they receive nothing.

409. *The Chairman.*] Would you like to supplement your evidence by any statement?—I would like to point out that the work done in the Government Printing Office could be done very much cheaper than it is, provided the accommodation were improved and the machinery which I consider necessary were procured, as well as a large addition made to our stock of type. With regard to the system adopted, I do not think there is any suggestion I have to make by which any considerable reduction in expenditure in printing could be effected, further than this: that a very large quantity of parliamentary papers, Bills, and things of that kind come in for printing and are circulated free. I daresay a good many of them might be very much curtailed, and a saving thus effected. Very often I have supplies of those papers remaining on hand after the session, and they eventually find their way into the waste-paper bin and thence to the paper-mill. That is the only direction in which at present I can suggest any saving.

410. *Mr. Samuel.*] Supposing you got this extra plant and accommodation, could you not also do the railway work, which is now given out, at a considerable saving to the Government on the present cost?—Yes, I think so.

411. *Mr. Bruce.*] I understand you to say, Mr. Didsbury, amongst other things, that, owing to the corrections and extensions involved in letting out printing by tender, there might be a considerable loss as compared with the present system?—I pointed out that in the matter of corrections and compressions we printed at the Government Office to greater advantage than would be the case if the work were given out to private offices.

412. Would not the advertising involved by letting out the work add much to the cost?—No doubt that is an expense that would have to be incurred, as well as the preparation of specifications.

413. In the event of a quantity of the work being let by tender, and the consequent dispersion of a number of your hands, it would be impossible to get them together again when you wanted them for tabular work?—Yes: I should very likely have to put up with an inferior staff of workmen, which, of course, would mean a very considerable addition to the expense of the establishment.

414. Do you not think it would be possible for the Government to keep pace with the times in the matter of machinery?—I think it is the duty of the Government to provide all necessary appliances of the very best class for doing the work. In some private offices a very large expenditure is incurred in machinery. For instance, Messrs. Wilsons and Horton (*Auckland Herald*) have lately introduced one of the web printing-machines at a cost of something like £3,000 or £4,000; and if private firms go to that expense to keep up with the times I think it is equally the duty of the Government to do so.

415. You have spoken of the question of space. If you had a larger building could you do the work more economically?—Undoubtedly so. The want of accommodation is a serious drawback, and causes delay in getting out the work, especially in the binding-room and in the girls' room—in fact, throughout the whole establishment we have that inconvenience to contend with. Nothing contributes so much to expedition as plenty of room and light, and those are matters in which we are deficient at present. We have to burn gas in some rooms all day long, which not only pollutes the atmosphere, but causes additional expense. It is impossible to do satisfactory work under such circumstances.

416. Is it the case that some of your machinery is not sufficiently protected?—It is. There have been occasional accidents, the result of the machines being in too close proximity to each other. The Inspector of Machinery has drawn attention to the matter; but it cannot be remedied till more room is provided.

417. I believe it was asserted by some of the witnesses that the atmosphere was so foul that it had seriously affected the health of a number of the employés. Is that so?—I certainly think it has. During some sessions I have had four or five men away at one time; and in the girls' room there have been three or four away together through illness.

418. What was the nature of their illness?—Colds and lung complaints, owing to the pestilential atmosphere. I believe it was the cause of death in some cases.

419. *The Chairman.*] What are your arrangements for buying paper; do you make favourable terms?—At present the paper is purchased from one of the wholesale manufacturers at Home—James Spicer and Sons—at something like 18 per cent. cheaper than the price paid when the Agent-General tendered for supplies at Home. The supplies in former years used to be tendered for by the Agent-General, and, to my surprise, the representative of one of the firms who tendered for the goods told me he was prepared to supply them at 10 per cent. lower than the lowest

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.

