

1892.

NEW ZEALAND.

GOVERNMENT PRINTING-OFFICE COMMITTEE

(REPORT OF THE).

Brought up 7th October, 1892, and ordered to be printed.

REPORT.

THE Committee appointed to inquire as to the buildings, arrangement, and working of the Government Printing Office have the honour to make the following report:—

The Committee regret that the time at their disposal makes it necessary to report *ad interim*, because it has absolutely precluded them from entering into the important question of the management and working of the office in its internal organisation, which yet remains to be inquired into. They are, however, desirous that, so far as the House may be prepared to agree with the recommendations they now make, these should be carried into effect during the recess.

1. THE BUILDING.

The lighting of the office is confessedly very defective; but, after hearing the evidence of the Engineer-in-Chief on the subject, your Committee cannot recommend an enlargement of the windows, as proposed by Messrs Jacobsen and Miller in their report of the 14th July last, as any breaking of the walls would, to a certain extent, weaken the stability of the structure.

But another suggestion which has been made appears to the Committee to satisfactorily meet the requirements of the case. It is that the composing-room should be transferred to the top flat of the building, and lighted from the roof. Of course such a change would involve a certain amount of rearrangement of the various departments of the office, but such as in the opinion of your Committee would be generally beneficial. The report of the Engineer-in-Chief, appended hereto, supplies information on the several details of this proposed change, and, subject to such modifications as the Government Printer may consider necessary, your Committee recommend that this improvement be made.

The Lithographic Department requires suitable accommodation, and to effect this object your Committee recommend that a simple one-story building should be erected to the rear of the office, suitably designed for such technical work. They would also suggest that in this building accommodation should be provided for the electrotype and stereotype workers, so as, by their isolation, to obviate any injurious consequences arising from the noxious gases used in and generated by these processes.

Provision should also be made, in connection with any such building, for adequate storage for stationery and other material, the want of which at present Mr. Didsbury finds to be a serious disadvantage.

2. ARRANGEMENT AND WORKING.

Your Committee have arrived at the conviction that the Printing Office has outgrown the necessary limitations of such an establishment, and is already assuming proportions beyond adequate supervision and control; and yet the tendency continues in the direction of further centralisation.

From the information your Committee have received as to the bearing of the Government Office on the general printing business of the colony, they are of opinion that there is much reason for the dissatisfaction expressed by the master-printers with the way in which private enterprise is interfered with.

Looking at the list of books printed and published by the Government Printer, it is impossible to find any good reason for having spent public money upon them. In the earlier years of the colony there might have been some justification for the Government printing books containing information which it was desirable should receive publicity, but the time has now come when literary work of a private or semi-private character, like all other kinds of work, should depend upon the support to which its merits entitle it.

The Committee therefore recommend that no printing should be executed at the Government Office which is not official in its character; and that the printing of the Government departments in the several localities of the colony, where such printing can be as cheaply executed as at the Government Printing Office, should be distributed among the local printers.

The expenditure of the Printing Office is very large. The sum on the estimates for the year 1892-93 is £36,245, and this amount arises not from any excessive payments made to the employes of the establishment, but from the mass of papers and documents of no practical use which are printed and then thrown aside.

The members of the Government, and the members of the Legislature, are alike to blame in moving that returns be printed in large numbers which nobody ever reads.

As a proof of the waste in this way, it may be mentioned that last year the Printer sold 53 tons of waste paper—that is, paper which had been printed upon and never left the office—for which he obtained £161 9s. 6d. On a moderate calculation, it must have taken £250 a ton to convert that paper into the condition of waste.