

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.

It is very difficult to suggest any remedy for the heavy expenditure for printing. It runs through all departments. *Hansard* is involved in it; but members appear to resist any attempt at reform. For example, the attention of the Committee was drawn to the expense of correcting the *Hansard* proofs, amounting for last session to £375, and certain to be very much more this session; and, with the view of being able to suggest some improvement, the Committee were anxious to examine some of the proofs, taken indiscriminately, with the authors' corrections. But, seeing that the House refused the Committee such inspection, the Committee being thus precluded from making any suggestions, further remark on this point is unnecessary.

Considering the price paid for paper, the stationery supplied to the House of Representatives and the Library is hardly of so good a quality as members have a right to expect, and contrasts somewhat unfavourably with that used by the Legislative Council, which, the Committee were astonished to learn, is not supplied from or printed at the Government Printing Office, but is ordered direct from Home, and paid for presumably out of the Legislative vote.

This Committee consider it specially objectionable that this printing, or Government printing of any kind, should be executed out of the colony.

WAGES OF COMPOSITORS ON PIECE.

Some friction having arisen between the Printer and the employes on piecework, the question came before the Committee, by the request of the Minister in charge, and they have taken a large amount of evidence on the nature of the work and the prices paid for it; and in reference thereto the Committee have to recommend, in regard to the composition of "The Transactions and Proceedings of the New Zealand Institute," the "Law Reports," and similar technical work, that an increase of 2d. per thousand be paid for the same, or, as an alternative, that the work be executed on time at the usual rate of wages.

7th October, 1892.

WILLIAM HUTCHISON, Chairman.

REPORT *re* TRANSPOSING OF ROOMS OCCUPIED BY COMPOSITORS AND BOOKBINDERS, GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE, WELLINGTON.

SIR,—

Public Works Department, Wellington, 3rd October, 1892.

It is proposed that the most satisfactory solution of the difficulty of providing proper and sufficient lighting for compositors would be to exchange their present accommodation on first floor for the rooms now occupied by the bookbinding branch on top floor. If this exchange were made, each of the departments would have exactly the same floor space that they now occupy, but the compositors would have the most perfect light for their work—namely, an overhead light by means of roof-skylights placed on southern slopes of roofs, avoiding glare of sun, and securing steady light and immunity from shadows or shade for every man in the room, not possible to be obtained by the ordinary side windows, whatever size they may be. Every man, too, would have equal advantages as regards light—an important matter with piece-workers.

To accomplish this transposition would mean the removal and re-erection of a few wood partitions, the construction of roof-skylights and wells for light in ceilings, and the removal and re-erection of the lavatory and water-closet for females, all of which work could be done at a cost of £400.

In addition to these alterations to the building, the shafting and the several machines driven therefrom in the bookbinders' department would be removed without difficulty by means of the lift, and re-erected in similar manner on floor beneath. The lift worked by this shafting could remain as it is, with exception of alteration to belting, so as to work it from the shafting removed to floor beneath by means of a vertical belt, instead of existing horizontal one. The lever and gear for working the belting of this lift would also be transferred to floor beneath. This lift is used chiefly by the bookbinding department, so that if the transposition were accomplished it would only require to work through one floor instead of two as at present time. The vertical shaft which conveys the power from ground-floor to top-floor horizontal shafting could be reduced in length, so as to work the shafting removed to first-floor. There is a small steam-engine which works a short shaft in the stitchers' room which could with little difficulty be removed, with the shafting and the machines which it works. The stereotyping and electrotyping department would also be transferred to floor below, which I believe would be an advantage, in respect of the noise produced therein being a nuisance to the readers in composing department at present beneath.

Chemicals are used by the above departments, but ventilating flues can be carried up through the floor above to carry off any fumes which might be hurtful to those working above if these departments were transferred to the floor below. The same provision would be made for carrying off the steam and smells from the glue-pots used in the binding department.

The work entailed in altering and transferring of shafting, machines, &c., would not be very great or costly; an expert machinist alone could give an estimate with any degree of accuracy, but the work is not of any magnitude, and could be accomplished in a very short time.

It might be pointed out that the floor of the bookbinding department is heavily loaded compared to that of the compositors' department, and that the walls of the former are not so thick and strong as those of the latter, so that the transposition of departments proposed would be better for the building from a construction point of view, putting the heavy department on the floor best able to bear it.

I have, &c.,

WILLIAM H. HALES,
Engineer-in-Chief.

The Chairman, Government Printing Office Committee.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, nil; printing (1,160 copies), £1 6s

By Authority: GEORGE DIDSBURY, Government Printer, Wellington.—1892.