

to determine that such a law was void, as being unconstitutional, to say nothing of the many other reasons they could have given for squelching "official reporters" along with the laws passed by the accommodating Legislatures in their behalf.

C. L. D., Shorthand Reporter.

Enclosure E in No. 15.

REPLY TO PRO AND CON. OF OFFICIAL STENOGRAPHERS.

SIR,—

On the subject of official reporting, discussed by Mr. Driesslein, I should like permission to offer a few suggestions. The matter is always of interest to stenographers, because of all the vocations to the needs of which the stenographic art ministers that of the law is the chief, both with reference to the amount and the quality of the service required. As to the latter, its exaction, as we know, is accuracy, as great as can be obtained. It must be so from the nature of the case. In other departments of shorthand work, in reporting lectures, orations, the proceedings of conventions and of legislative bodies, and from these down to the quieter and less-exciting labours of the amanuensis and corresponding clerk, the shorthand-writer works more or less in conjunction or in sympathy with those whose utterances he records, and his patrons are usually more solicitous of elegance than of verbal accuracy. If the stenographer can make his transcript an improvement on his notes he is generally welcome to do so, and will get thanks for fortunate changes. I have seen a book which the author dedicated to a stenographer in grateful recognition of his value in that respect. But in legal employment the situation is entirely changed. In this as in other matters the law is jealous, and will make no concessions. The law reporter works in an atmosphere of hostility—his work is scrutinized by interested eyes, to see that through no error or correction of his are their owners subjected to loss. The parties themselves nowadays are witnesses, and the manner and the matter of their testimony are often infected with the vices which have brought them into Court. They, as well as other witnesses, are sometimes tricky, willing to be misunderstood, unwilling to tell the truth, equivocating. The foreigner, too, is largely prevalent on the witness-stand, and, often speaking our language imperfectly, the art of the lawyer entangles him in errors, the cure of which, by explanation, is generally worse than the disease—to the stenographer. The counsel, absorbed in the struggle for present victory, frequently become unmindful of the record, or indulge in the hope that they will never read it. They sometimes do not want a matter made clear, and are then very ready to resent any attempt on the part of the stenographer to get it made so, being apt to say that they do not want him to help try the case. Under such circumstances, when they occur, the reporter must endeavour to make a record which will commend itself, and, if official, upon which one side or the other may rely for the maintenance of their rights, or on which the Court can reasonably trust in endeavouring to mete out justice. The law stenographer therefore requires to exercise more care than any other—the interests at stake demand it; and this care and the necessary qualifications should be properly compensated.

The basis upon which legal patronage shall be fixed and dispensed is therefore important to all who propose to make a business of shorthand. They naturally desire that the field of employment should be as extensive as possible, and eagerly inquire whether existing arrangements favour that wish. It is right and proper that they should do so, for out of such inquiry improvement probably will come. Whether it will come in the shape of the abolition of official positions may well be doubted. While by no means of the opinion that the existing system, as established in most of the States, is the perfection of human wisdom, or even as advantageous to stenographers as it might be made to be by judicious modifications, I think it well to recall the fact that its introduction was an extension of the field of employment which the stenographers of the time regarded with great favour. It is not long since the newspapers were the chief patrons or our art, and its adoption by the Courts was the occasion of pride and pleasure, and, let us admit it, of profit also, to shorthand men. Properly so, because, as I have already suggested, it brought with it greater responsibilities and severe and less agreeable labours.

Your correspondent, Mr. Driesslein, however, averts forcibly to amendments which have, in several cases, robbed official enactments of their pristine glory. Indeed, one has but to look over the legislation of the various States to see that there is a pretty general disposition to deal closely and sharply with stenographers. I do not know that the temper of the times is any more exacting with them than with others who seek public employment. Still, the disposition is a little surprising, in view of the saving of time which their labours effect—often the time of many whose compensation is out of all proportion greater than that of the shorthand-writer. It might be expected that that compensation would prevail, and prompt to liberality. That it does not is largely due to the notion that the art is of easy acquisition. In the intellectual sense it is not very difficult; in the physical sense it is decidedly so. The difference is the difference between knowledge and skill. It is one merit of shorthand that it furnishes employment for many of different degrees of dexterity, who all, properly enough, call themselves and are known as stenographers. That circumstance has misled many into the belief that the best capabilities of the art were within easy reach. I once knew a young lawyer who was a candidate for appointment as an official stenographer to a Court. I had not supposed that he wrote shorthand, and said so to him. He replied that he did not, but that, if he got the place, he would engage some one to do the work until he was himself qualified, which he supposed would be in about three months! This underrating estimate of the time and effort required to become proficient lies at the root of much trouble experienced in the matter of compensation, and it is a duty to impress upon the mind of the public (already prepared for the information by some sad experiences) that one stenographer differeth from another in glory. Whatever may be the cause of it, the tendency pointed out by Mr. Driesslein certainly exists, and he has not over-