

167. *The Chairman.*] Then, with regard to your own duties?—With respect to my own duties I may state that I have to conduct the business of the Council, similarly to the work as conducted by the Chairman of the House of Representatives, with the exception of Committees of Supply, which are not within the jurisdiction of the Legislative Council. I am likewise Chairman of all Committees on private Bills, where the procedure is similar to that in the House. There are three Committees of which I am *ex officio* Chairman under the Standing Orders, in accordance with parliamentary practice as laid down in May. I may state that on the estimates there is £120 additional put down—in addition to the £300. I may state that this £300 was originally passed by Act of Parliament. I do not know exactly when it was—I believe in 1863 or 1864. But since that date the duties have materially increased. Since I was appointed in 1879 appropriations have been made of £100 for the first year, and nothing for each year until 1884, and then £120 in 1884 and 1885, and that sum is put down for 1886. During that time—seven years—there have been nine sessions of Parliament. Taking the average I have received £271. When there was an extra session I never received anything. With the exception of the last one I never received any addition whatever.

168. What did you receive last time?—£120. That was to make it up to £420, equal to members' pay for the two sessions. For the time I have been Chairman of Committees I have received £349 a year, but those seven years include nine sessions.

169. You have given your evidence as to the Clerks, but you have said nothing with regard to the Interpreter and the Shorthand-writer?—As to the Interpreter I do not think you could get a man for less money. He has to interpret speeches, and to translate all papers connected with Maori.

170. During the session?—Yes, during the session.

171. Do you not consider £200 a rather heavy fee for such service?—If it were only for actual services. If he is in regular business how would he be able to drop that and take this up? The question is how you will be able to get a reliable man. It is, moreover, desirable that the Interpreter should be free from all outside influences, such as being employed by others. To get a good man you must give him a salary sufficient to keep him.

172. *Mr. Levestam.*] What are the average hours of sitting of the Legislative Council?—I do not think I have ever taken them out. I suppose three and a half or four hours.

173. *The Chairman:* We can get that; we have a return taken from *Hansard*.

174. You have a number of Committees in the Council; do your Clerks attend any of them?—Occasionally; when they are short-handed. The other day I had to send for one to attend the Standing Orders Committee. There were four Committees sitting.

175. Have you a shorthand-writer constantly in attendance?—Two years ago we had a great difficulty in getting a shorthand-writer. It was therefore resolved that a shorthand-writer for Committees should be appointed.

176. Is he a separate officer?—My impression is that he is a separate officer; not connected with the House.

177. He is attached to the Council?—Yes; that is my impression.

178. Is he supposed to have a permanent salary?—I think he has been employed on the Rabbit Committee daily; they have sat five days each week; he has been attending that Committee every day.

179. Then, we have extra clerical assistance; what is that for?—For extra clerks, I suppose.

180. When the sittings of the Council are short, ought not your regular clerks to be able to attend?—I do not see how they could do it.

181. You say there are three extra clerks?—Yes, generally, taking them altogether; that is what we have had for the last ten years.

182. Do you know if these clerks are good clerks?—They are fairly average clerks. I do not come in contact with them often. Of the three senior clerks, two of them have been there now for three sessions, if not four.

183. Are you aware what the item contingencies is for?—It comes in for various purposes.

183A. Who has the expending of that sum?—The House Committee spends some of it, and the Speaker spends some.

184. Is there any return made of that expenditure?—The Audit Department would be able to furnish you with a return. There is one officer who does not appear in the Legislative Department, that is under my control almost completely. He is Clerk of Private Bills. I think the Hon. Mr. Reynolds proposed to do away with him entirely, and give his work to another clerk. This particular clerk is appointed by the two Speakers under a standing order. His duties are to examine all petitions presented on private Bills. He has had considerable experience. I know of no man better qualified for the work. He is often put in an invidious position: if he has to report against a private Bill, which he often has to do. I do not think that any clerks could, compatibly with their other duties, do that work. It entails considerable research and knowledge of private-Bill legislation. The guide for all this legislation may be found in May's Parliamentary Practice. It is, no doubt, cumbersome, but necessary in the maintenance of private rights. I do not see any other way of carrying out the objects of many of the Bills that are introduced.

185. *Mr. Brown.*] Do I understand you to say that these private Bills may originate in our House, and this clerk goes over them to the satisfaction of yours?

*Hon. Sir R. Stout:* He means private bills: that is, Bills on petition.

*Witness:* He is also clerk to Mr. Hamlin, when he sits, on private Bills.

186. Do you think that he could act as Committee Clerk during the session?

*Hon. Sir R. Stout:* He is doing that now, in order to get some extra pay?—By the Standing Orders he has to keep an office the whole year round. A month before the session he is obliged to be there to receive the petitions sent in.