

398. *The Chairman.*] Will you give the hours during which the library is open during the recess?—From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., with the exception of Saturday, when we close at 4 p.m.

399. Is there any book or account kept of the persons who have the *entrée* to the library during the recess?—Yes.

400. *Mr. Dargaville.*] Is there, or has there been, any loss of books and papers?—To a very small extent, considering. I made up a list last year of the books lost or missing. I dare say the loss since the library began would be found not to exceed 100 or 125 volumes of one kind or another. That is since 1865. A number of these books can hardly be considered as lost, because books are always coming in. I think I am stating rather over than under the number actually lost.

401. In reference to the newspapers that are laid on the table, do we pay for them?—No; they are received from the newspaper proprietors as exchanges—that is, by supplying the library with their papers they are entitled to the parliamentary papers free.

402. Are you aware of the practice—a most objectionable practice, I think—that obtains of members abstracting papers that are laid there occasionally?—During the session we miss them, but who takes them I could not say.

403. Do you think they are taken by any of the employés?—No.

404. You are aware that copies of these papers are taken from time to time: can you refer to any particular paper more than another that is dealt with in this way?—The *New Zealand Herald*.

405. An Auckland paper?—An Auckland paper.

406. Can you suggest any means by which that practice might be put a stop to?—I could not. I have tried to see how it has been done, but I failed to find out. I have tried one or two plans to discover the way in which it was done. The *New Zealand Herald* is a double paper. Generally the inside is taken and the outside left. I am now gumming the paper in the middle.

407. The inside is the reading part?—Yes.

408. Then, the library is left without any copy of the *New Zealand Herald*?—You mean on the table; there is a copy filed.

409. Can you suggest anything by which this irregularity could be detected or the practice stopped?—I do not think I could. Perhaps the Committee would allow me to explain: We get two copies of the papers, but both copies are not laid on the table; one is kept on a file, in case we should be short, and for convenience of binding.

410. You put that away so that it cannot be stolen?—Of course, if the Library Committee so directed that one must also be laid on the table when the other is taken away, it would have to be done.

Mr. WILLIAM LETHAM in attendance, and examined.

411. *The Chairman.*] Will you, Mr. Letham, state the date of your appointment, and your duties?—I was appointed in 1873; my duties are to take charge of the Parliament Buildings. The power was given to me by both the Speakers to take charge of the buildings; to see that they are kept in thorough order, and to superintend the work of renovating before the House meets. I have charge of everything.

412. When you speak of Parliament Buildings, do you include the library?—Everything; but I have no access to the library after the library is closed.

413. What do you mean by closed?—It closes at 5 o'clock.

414. You have charge of the whole block and the grounds?—I am in charge of the buildings and the grounds outside. Every week I have to make a report to Sir William Fitzherbert, the resident Speaker.

415. Do you include the furniture and fittings?—Yes.

416. What control have you over the parts of the building that are used as offices during the recess?—I keep the keys.

417. Are they locked up?—Yes.

418. Are none of the offices in connection with the building used?—Not the Committee-rooms. The *Hansard*-room is open; one of the rooms of the Legislative Council is open; the library is open; but none of the Committee-rooms, except when occasionally used by Government departments.

419. What are your duties during the session?—They are much the same, except taking charge of Bellamy's as well.

420. Will you explain what you mean by taking charge of Bellamy's?—I have the supervision of the catering on behalf of the Committee.

421. That is, both of the table and bar, and the kitchen?—Yes.

422. You also keep the accounts?—Yes.

423. Bellamy's is under the management of a Committee?—Yes; of each House. There is a Joint Committee; then there are five members of each House for the management of Bellamy's alone.

424. *Mr. Dargaville.*] With reference to the carrying-on of Bellamy's, do the amounts paid by members from time to time suffice?—They have done so; we have received no remuneration from the Government for the last four years.

425. That is, you have no vote in aid from the public fund?—None whatever.

426. And, as things are going on, you are not likely to require anything?—I do not think so.

427. For the sake of placing it on record, I will ask you this question: There seems to be an impression on the public mind that the wines and spirits consumed in Bellamy's do not pay duty. I am going to ask you whether you get any wines or spirits free of duty?—We have to pay the usual duty the same as any one else—the same as any merchant in town, and always have done.