

*Mr. Pirani*: What is the system in Victoria?

*Mr. Barron*: There are only four reporters; but, as I pointed out, one of the reporters there told me some time ago they largely use the newspapers' reports, and the chief does take a turn in the gallery.

Mr. LESLIE examined.

*The Chairman*: Mr. Leslie, do you desire to say anything?

*Mr. Leslie*: I do not know that it is a matter of very much importance, but Mr. Grey began by stating that his reply required to be done very hurriedly between "turns," and I think he alluded to scraps of time. I may simply point out that the House was in Committee practically the whole time from half-past seven to half-past one, and I do not therefore think that statement requires any further reference. With regard to the statement that I agreed to sign any memorandum read to me, that is absolutely untrue and without the slightest foundation. Mr. Grey relates the circumstances correctly as to his entering a room where I was engaged in the compilation of an article. I was paying a great deal more attention to what I was doing than to what Mr. Grey was saying. Mr. Grey said that on the previous Friday "it had been decided by the staff" to do so-and-so, and I was surprised subsequently when other members of the staff came into the room and he used the same expression to them. I did not pay any great attention to what the proposals were. All the proposals mentioned in the memorandum of Mr. Grey were certainly mentioned to me, and with some of them I may at the moment have expressed some sort of qualified approval, but with others I expressed my decided disagreement; and as to saying I agreed to sign any document, that is absolutely without the slightest foundation. Whether the draft was read while I was in the room I could not for certain say, but I am inclined to think no draft was read to me at all, and the first written draft I saw was when I returned to town on the following Tuesday. At any rate, I never expressed to any one my intention of signing any document at all. With regard to the statements I made in my memorandum yesterday as regards the Chief Reporter's work, I have only to say they are absolutely true, and I believe an examination of other members of the staff on my statement would prove their truth. I have further to say, if the Committee intend entering further into the matter, I consider the evidence of Mr. Parkinson, who has been on the staff for a great number of years, and who only retired two or three years ago, should be obtained. With regard to the indexing, which two members of the staff have endeavoured to make out occupies the most of their time from Saturday till Tuesday, I cannot say for certain at what time it has been their custom to do most of their indexing; I can only say both of these members have occupied a considerable number of hours doing their indexing while the House was in Committee, and I repeat the assertion I have made in my memorandum, that any one member of the staff who chooses to do the work while the House is in Committee could easily compile the whole of the index. With regard to the Committee work mentioned, I have pointed out that after a night in Committee it takes Mr. Barron, and would take any other chief, the whole of the forenoon to arrange the division-lists, &c., for the Printer. To this I may add an instance of what occurs frequently when the House is in Committee. While the House was in Committee on the Tariff Bill, when there were a great number of amendments to be carefully watched, at about half-past three or half-past four one morning one member of the staff came out of the gallery, and, in stating what his turn had been like to Mr. Barron, mentioned a long amendment which he had not taken down, and he said to Mr. Barron, "I will leave that for you to get and fix up in the morning." Instead of Mr. Barron attempting to shirk his work, he invariably goes out of his way to save reporters in numerous matters of detail. With regard to the statement made by Mr. Geddis as to the reporters having to race at a gallop through their work, as I have already stated on a previous occasion, except in rare instances there is no necessity for a reporter to race at a gallop through his work at all. Between ordinary turns the work can be overtaken very easily with the two or three transcribers that are generally taken on when both Houses are sitting or the work is heavy.

*Mr. Pirani*: I would like Mr. Leslie to say something about the reported conspiracy between Mr. Barron and himself.

*Mr. Leslie*: I do not consider that wants an answer. I have endeavoured to maintain the position that should always obtain between a member of any staff and his chief.

Mr. SPRAGG examined.

*Mr. Spragg*: I should needlessly take up the time of the Committee if I were to repeat what I have already put on record, and I desire merely to say that I adhere to my former statements. I am now accused by Mr. Grey of moral cowardice for siding with the minority in what he considers a hopelessly bad cause. That charge is one which appears only to concern myself, and I am quite content to rest under it so long as it is made by Mr. Grey. The decision as to the badness or goodness of the cause, I am thankful to think, rests with men of more impartial judgment than is possessed in this matter by Mr. Grey—to put it very mildly. Mr. Grey is triumphant over the fact that I signed two documents, and says, so I understand, that I was told about this matter before either of those documents was drafted. This is contrary to fact, and no other member of the staff will assert that I was thus consulted. When I saw the first document I was informed that all the members of the staff had agreed to sign it. There were one or two matters in it with which I agreed, but a number with which I did not. The matter was argued out to me in this way: Whether you agree with the rest of the staff or whether you do not, why should you object to submitting the suggestions to Mr. Barron's decision. I said I did not object to that, and I put my signature to it. Subsequently, on thinking the matter over, it appeared to me to go into so many matters of detail as to become an improper interference with the functions of the chief, and the next day I withdrew my signature. Then Mr. Berry drew up a resolution which set out explicitly what I and other members of the staff meant. I think we