

SESSION II.
1906.
NEW ZEALAND.

JOINT REPORTING DEBATES AND PRINTING COMMITTEE.

REPORT AS TO EXPEDITING THE PUBLICATION OF "HANSARD."

Report brought up 22nd October, 1906, and ordered to be printed.

THE Joint Reporting Debates and Printing Committee, to whom was referred the question of expediting the publication of *Hansard*, have the honour to report that they have taken thereon the evidence of the *Hansard* Supervisor, the Chief *Hansard* Reporter, the Government Printer, and the Chief Postmaster of Wellington.

They are of opinion that an up-to-date publication of *Hansard* depends, in the first place, upon the prompt return by members of the type-written reports of their speeches, but that with the co-operation of honourable members, with a reasonably quick distribution by the Post Office, and with improved machinery in the Government Printing Office, it is possible to expedite the publication of *Hansard*, especially as regards its issue to the public. At present instalments of *Hansard* are published twice a week, as a rule on Tuesdays and Fridays. There is, however, an interval between the dates on which such instalments are issued to members and to the public of Wellington, and this interval has varied from time to time. In the earlier part of the session it extended to seven days, but recently it has been reduced to two days. In more distant parts of the colony the period that has elapsed after the issue to honourable members has been proportionately greater.

The evidence taken shows that the publication of No. 11 of *Hansard* may be said to constitute a record for this session. This number, containing part of the proceedings of the Legislative Council of Wednesday, the 26th September, the whole of the proceedings of Thursday, the 27th September, and the proceedings of the House of Representatives for Wednesday the 26th and Thursday the 27th September, was issued to honourable members on Tuesday, the 2nd October, and was in the hands of the public of Wellington on Thursday, the 4th October.

An examination of the dates mentioned shows that the proceedings of Thursday, the 27th September, reported in that number, were five days old when it was received by honourable members, and seven days old when it was delivered to the public of Wellington; while the proceedings of Tuesday, the 26th September, were six days old when received by honourable members, and eight days old when delivered to the public in Wellington.

The Committee do not recommend any change at present as regards the issue of bi-weekly instalments of *Hansard* to honourable members, but they are of opinion that better results would be obtained, so far as the public are concerned, by issuing to the public a weekly number of *Hansard* instead of bi-weekly numbers as at present. The advantages to be derived from the proposed change would be that the work of the Government Printing Office and the work of the Post Office in connection with the publication of *Hansard* would be considerably lightened, while if the weekly number of *Hansard* were published on Tuesday, in time to catch the southern mail, and contained a report of the proceedings of Parliament up till the hour of 4 or 5 o'clock on the preceding Friday, the reports of *Hansard* would be more up to date than they have been hitherto.

In order that this proposal could be successfully carried out, it would be necessary that the reports of members' speeches should be returned to the *Hansard* Supervisor not later than 1 o'clock on the Saturday preceding the day of publication. This would give to honourable members a period of at least twenty hours in which to correct the reports of speeches delivered by them on Friday afternoon, a period which seems ample for the purpose.

The Committee are of opinion that it is desirable that a weekly number of *Hansard*, as above described, should be issued to the public instead of bi-weekly numbers as at present, and they recommend that the proposal should be tried as an experiment next session.

The Committee are also of opinion that delay which may be avoided has occurred in the transmission and distribution of *Hansard* by the Post Office, and they recommend that the suggestions hereinafter mentioned, made by the Chief Postmaster at Wellington, should be given effect to next session. It was stated by the Chief Postmaster that it would be of very great assistance in disposing of *Hansards* if the printer's distribution lists were subdivided into districts corresponding to the postal districts, and if to each *Hansard* were added the name of the postal district, of which there are seventeen in the colony. "The *Hansard* could," he says, "if this were done, be cleared out of the office in about half the time at present occupied."

In the course of their investigations the Committee visited the Government Printing Office and carefully examined the process of printing and publishing *Hansard*. The information obtained, taken in conjunction with the evidence given by the Government Printer, impressed the Committee with the pressing necessity for improved machinery in that office. It is true that some of the machinery in use for the printing of *Hansard* is the best of its class, but it is of a kind that appears to have reached its limit as regards speed, namely, 1,500 copies per hour. A rotary web machine should be obtained. Such a machine has many advantages over other printing-machines. The Hoe quadruple web machine, for instance, prints and delivers folded four-, six-, or eight-page papers at a speed of 48,000 per hour, while multiple web machines are built which produce large papers at the rate of 96,000 per hour.

The Committee are satisfied that the publication of *Hansard* would be considerably expedited by the use of more efficient machinery. They are also aware that it may seem premature to suggest the importation of a rotary web machine for the purpose of printing *Hansard*, but they would point out that the steady increase in the amount of general work printed in the Government Printing Office will shortly render imperative the provision of more suitable machinery. At present a large amount of time is occupied with printing telegraph-forms, of which 12,000,000 are printed annually, and with printing long numbers of other work required by the Railway Department. The result is that the machinery of the office is now taxed to its utmost capacity, and it is running night and day. In giving evidence the Government Printer stated that he was of opinion that it would be possible to have a high-speed machine made that would be suitable for printing *Hansard*, as well as telegraph-forms, and that, if he could obtain such a machine, not only would the work of publishing *Hansard* be considerably expedited, but the general work of the office would also be more expeditiously performed.

On the grounds of economy alone, therefore, it would appear desirable that more efficient machinery should be procured as soon as possible, and the Committee therefore recommend that the necessary machinery should be obtained without delay.

In order that such machinery may be entirely suitable to the special requirements of the office, they also recommend that the Government Printer should be sent to England and to the United States of America to select or have constructed such machine or machines as he may deem necessary.

In conclusion, the Committee would emphasize the fact that the publication of *Hansard* is governed entirely by the time occupied by honourable members in the revision of their speeches, and that unless honourable members are prepared to dispense with the privilege of correction, they may look in vain for that quick publication of *Hansard* that is necessary if reports of the debates in Parliament are to reach the public before the interest in the questions discussed has evaporated.

22nd October, 1906.

CHAS. C. BOWEN, Chairman.