

REPORT OF THE

South Australia.—A contract for three years has been entered into by the proprietors of the *South Australian Register*, and the *Observer*, by which reports of the debates are to appear daily in the former and weekly in the latter, “such reports to consist of a fair abstract of all speeches upon matters of general public interest so often as the same shall arise, and to deliver on the morning of the day following each debate a proof slip to each member.” A referee is appointed by the Government to act in case of dispute between the contractor and any member of the Legislature respecting the adoption of a correction. This decision is final. £5 per day is paid to the contractors for each day on which they publish the debates, and £250 as soon as 250 bound copies are delivered at the Colonial Secretary’s Office.

SELECT COMMITTEE WORK.

During the recess I had a communication from Major Campbell with regard to obtaining the assistance of shorthand writers to take evidence before Select Committees. I informed him that I did not think he could obtain competent men for this work at a less rate of pay than I was giving, which is considerably more than that given to Committee Clerks. The complaints respecting the way in which the Committee work was done were, however, so great, that I offered, if possible, to give him some assistance myself during the present Session, though it must be to a very limited extent, and only in case of a Select Committee sitting on days on which no important debate is going on in the Houses. I imagine that if once the system of employing a shorthand writer for Select Committee work is introduced, the improvement in the style of taking the evidence will be found so great as to render the system permanent. Under these circumstances I think it would be worth consideration whether I should not hold the position of sworn Reporter in connection with that of Chief of the *Hansard* Staff, and be authorized to engage extra sessional assistance. Of course it would be only necessary to take the evidence on important subjects, and no doubt one extra reporter would be sufficient.

C. C. N. BARRON.

Chief Reporter, *Hansard* Staff.

SIR,—

8th June, 1869.

I have been directed by the Chairman of the Reporting Debates Committee to forward you a copy of that portion of the Chief Reporter’s Report which refers to the printing of *Hansard*, with a request that you will be pleased to furnish the Committee, at your earliest convenience, with any remarks you may like to make on it.

I have, &c.,

JOHN S. M. CAREY,

Clerk of the Committee.

To Mr. Didsbury, Government Printer.

SIR,—

Government Printing Office, Wellington, 9th June, 1869.

Having considered the remarks of the Chief Reporter on the Printer’s work in connection with the publication of *Hansard*, and the suggestions he has submitted to the Committee, I beg to observe that while I concur in thinking that there is “considerable room for improvement,” I most decidedly disagree with him as to the direction in which that improvement should be made. To go to the root of the matter at once: relieve me of the work of correcting—in some cases, I may say, re-setting—honorable Member’s speeches, and the great cause of delay in publishing the debates would at once be removed. This has proved our greatest stumbling-block; and as long as honorable Members are allowed unlimited license in the correction of their speeches—unchecked by editorial supervision, as was the case last Session—so long will difficulty and delay attend the publication of *Hansard*. The causes, however, which led to the corrections being so heavy last Session may not now exist; and if the Chief Reporter is allowed to refuse all corrections which bear the character of embellishments, and admit those only which are necessary for the correct rendering of a sentence, the difficulty I complain of would then in a great measure be removed. This plan was adopted by the Head Reporter with some of last week’s debates, a number of corrections by Members being disallowed by him. But then this difficulty presents itself: will he always be in a position to examine Members’ corrected speeches before they are placed in my hands? He has not been able to devote the necessary attention to this matter in previous Sessions, and, as I considered it no part of my duty to do so, the proofs were sent into the composing-room for correction, in numberless cases, just as they were returned by Members.

Another cause of delay, and one which I certainly think it is in the power of the Chief Reporter to avoid, is the imperfect manner in which copy is at times supplied to the printers. I allude to the practice of trusting to honorable Members to furnish the extracts required when they return their proofs. In many cases the proofs are returned without the necessary extracts, Members either forgetting to supply them, or else considering it the Reporter’s place to hunt them up. It has not unfrequently happened that the “make-up” has come to an abrupt stoppage on discovering that an extract is wanting. In some cases the gap might be closed up, and the extract omitted; but in others the speech would be rendered quite unintelligible without it, and progress effectually stopped until it was supplied. This cause of delay could, I believe, be easily avoided were honorable Members requested to forward the extracts, or directions where to find them, to the Reporters’ Room immediately on the conclusion of their speeches.

With reference to the alteration in the hours of labour suggested by the Chief Reporter, I would remark that it would not in the least facilitate the early publication of the *Hansard*, but rather the reverse. If men have to work sixteen out of every twenty-four hours for a period of three or four months, I have found by experience that a much larger quantity of work is done during the hours of the day than is produced at night, while it is infinitely less exhaustive and trying to the men. Night work was tried during the first year of the publication of *Hansard*, and in my opinion signally failed. It did not prevent our falling into arrears, while it did prevent our proceeding as fast as we should have done with other work urgently required by the Assembly; and the result was that a number of the Bills and Parliamentary Papers had to be printed among the various