

private printing offices in town, at a very heavy cost to the Government. But mark the difference last Session: not one of the 120 Bills printed were done outside of the Government Printing Office, neither was a single Parliamentary Paper printed elsewhere. It frequently is of more importance—as you will readily concede—for the House to be placed in possession of a Bill than it is that they should be supplied with the debates. There are times when the contrary is the case; and a necessity of this kind having arisen during last Session, I issued a supplementary number of *Hansard* to meet the case. It has, however, been an established rule—fixed, I believe, by the first Reporting Committee—to publish the *Hansard* on every Tuesday, and the reasons which weighed with the Committee in fixing that day were, that Saturday and Monday being non-sitting days, would be available for pulling up any arrears that might occur—a state of things which cannot possibly be prevented at times, owing to the unequal length to which the reports extend.

I come next to the cost of corrections. The Chief Reporter states that my estimate of their cost last Session he thinks excessive. Now that reliable data is available for computing the time and cost of such corrections, I find that my estimate considerably overstated the amount. I must, however, demur to the statement that “bad composing” had anything to do with the matter, the “office proofs” throughout the Session being rather above the usual average.

The proposal to have the debates printed by “piece-work,” instead of by day-labour, although at first sight it may appear specious and attractive, will, upon calculation, be found neither to diminish the expense of printing nor to expedite the publication of the debates. The crowded state of the office does not admit of the *Hansard* staff being kept in a room by themselves; they are obliged to mix with men engaged upon other work; and although this is unobjectionable while the men are all employed on daily wages, it would, under other circumstances, become a constant source of bickering and dispute. Again, the work required by the Assembly is of such a varied description as to prevent my setting apart any definite staff of hands for any particular work. When work of an urgent and pressing nature is placed in my hands, it is absolutely necessary that I should have the entire resources of the office at my disposal, and regulate them accordingly—a proceeding which would be quite impracticable if one portion of the staff were on their “lines” and another on establishment wages.

Taking last year’s *Hansard* as a basis for calculation, I find the cost of printing under the present system amounted to £937 19s. 11d.; of this sum £208 2s. 3d. consisted of salary of Sub-overseer, Reader, and Reader’s Assistant; £226 11s. 8d. in making corrections in Members’ speeches; the balance, £503 6s., being the cost of composition. The amount here put down for corrections has been accurately ascertained by the time-checks of the office, which show a total of 2,719 hours devoted to this work during the Session. Were the work done on the “piece” system, the cost of last year’s *Hansard* would have been increased by the sum of £183 7s. 4d. A sheet of eight pages of *Hansard* contains 49,984 letters, which, at 1s. 4d. per 1,000, would cost £3 6s. 8d. As last year’s *Hansard* made 206 of these sheets, the total cost for composition would have amounted to £686 13s. 4d.; and if to this is added the salaries of Sub-overseer, Reader, &c. (£208 2s. 3d.), and the cost of correcting Members’ speeches (£226 11s. 8d.)—for of course all authors’ corrections would have to be paid for on time—the total cost of printing *Hansard* last year would have reached £1,121 7s. 3d., as against £937 19s. 11d. under the present system. I do not include the cost of machine work in the above totals, the amounts being the same under both systems.

The experiment of doing certain work on the “piece” system has been already tried in the Government Printing Office of Victoria, in the printing of the *Gazette*, and, from its being discontinued shortly after its inauguration, I presume it signally failed in reducing the expense of the publication. Both the *Gazette* and *Hansard* of Victoria are now got out on the system adopted in this office—namely, by day labour.

In reference to the Chief Reporter’s remarks as to the readership of *Hansard*, I may state that I have already procured the sanction of the Government to his being paid during the Session at the same rate as the permanent Reader in the establishment. I cannot, however, agree with the suggestion that the Reader (who is also a Compositor on the permanent staff) should do reading and nothing else during the Session. It sometimes happens that his services are not required during the whole or a greater portion of the day, and I fail to see why he should not, on such occasions, fill up his spare time at case.

Apologizing for the rather lengthened remarks I have felt myself called upon to make, and thanking you for affording me the opportunity of doing so,

W. H. Harrison, Esq.,  
Chairman of Reporting Debates Committee.

I have, &c.,  
GEO. DIDSBURY,  
Government Printer.