

these cases would be brought prominently under the notice of the Minister, when the requisition was placed before him for approval, and thus a check put upon it.

I concur in the opinion that the several branches of the printing establishments—printing, stamp-printing, bookbinding, photo-lithography, and lithography—should be under one head officer. It is not advisable to arrange permanent establishments to suit personal peculiarities, or what in the papers referred to me is termed the natural antagonism between type-printers and lithographers. This antagonism has little to do with the question whether several branches should be under the control of a chief officer, instead of being split into a number of independent offices. The real difficulty in the way at present is, that the time of the Government Printer is frittered away in trifling work, which cannot economically be imposed on an officer overlooking so extensive and important an establishment. No branch should receive orders except through the Government Printer, and no order should be taken by the Government Printer except on the approval of the head of the department, if not of a Minister. No harmony can be expected under a practice which almost challenges a subordinate to assert independence.

The Government Printer should be relieved of the sale of Parliamentary and other papers; these sales might conveniently be given to the Storekeeper; and in so simple a matter as giving certificates of the correctness of the charges for advertising, &c., referred to by Mr. Anderson, it is recommended that the respective departments should be required to certify, instead of the Government Printer being called upon for his certificate.

It is necessary to call attention to the fact that no assurance against fire has been entered into on account of the Printing Offices and Public Store; and as the Public Works Offices have, by their extension, become attached to the buildings in which the printing is carried on, the insurance of £2,000 on those offices is probably vitiated, unless the Insurance Company has accepted the increased risk. It is also necessary to notice that there is no hose to attach to the water pipe in case of fire. I do not know whether Mr. Didsbury has reported this, but it is quite clear that it is his duty to bring such deficiencies prominently under the notice of the Government.

Since Mr. McKenzie's letter of the 18th June was received, alterations have been made in the buildings, that render it almost impossible for the printers of stamps to perform their work satisfactorily from the want of sufficient light. It is scarcely possible to express in too strong terms one's condemnation of the defective arrangements for this important branch of the printing establishment. The loss of time, the annoyance to the workmen, and the impossibility of doing the work creditably, are really deplorable, and, I must add, quite discreditable to any establishment, however mean. Indeed, throughout the printing offices, I noticed a most extraordinary want of attention to secure good diffused light by whitewashing the ceilings of the rooms.

No attempt, as far as I can learn, has been made to exclude from the stamp printing room persons not directly employed in the printing of postage and duty stamps. There are perforating and numbering machines in the adjoining room, and men and boys have no other access to their work but through the stamp printing office. In the Government Printing Office in Sydney the room is locked up all day, and no one is allowed either ingress or egress without the sanction of the officer in charge.

It is also found that one of the checks on the issue of watered paper—that of machine-numbering the sheets—has been omitted in a late supply of fifty reams of paper for postage stamps. In future orders for supply of watered paper, directions should be given for numbering in England each sheet consecutively.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES KNIGHT,

Commissioner of Audit.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, &c., &c.

No. 2.

REPORT of Mr. J. G. ANDERSON on the PRINTING DEPARTMENT.

As directed, I beg to submit the accompanying Profit and Loss Account, and report of the result of my inquiries concerning the working and management of the Government Printing Office, called for by resolution of the House of Representatives of 15th September last. I would premise that owing to the incompleteness of the accounts kept by the Government Printer till within a comparatively recent period, and especially on account of stock never having been taken till the 30th June, 1872, it has been found impossible to comply strictly with the resolution of the House by furnishing an account covering the four years to 30th June, 1873. The earliest period at which satisfactory data could be obtained for the purpose, was the 30th June, 1872, when stock was first taken. This date has therefore been adopted to start the account, which has been brought up to the 31st December last; and it therefore shows the business of the department for eighteen months only. As, however, the period is comparatively recent, it is hoped that it will be considered to give a fair idea of what is at present being done, and whether the printing office is a paying concern or not.

A preliminary inspection of the department was made by the Auditor-General; and early after receiving my instructions, I made an appointment with Mr. Didsbury, to consult as to the