

1884.
NEW ZEALAND.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY

(REPORTS ON).

Laid on the Table by the Hon. Mr. Rolleston with leave of the House.

LIBRARIAN'S REPORT.

SIR,—

General Assembly Library, 2nd June, 1884.

In accordance with your instructions I have the honour to submit to you the following report on the administration of the Library during the recess, and on its present position :—

Immediately before the close of last session two resolutions were passed by the General Assembly for the management of the Library during the recess. By the first of these its administration was vested in a Committee consisting of all members of the Legislature residing in or within fifteen miles of Wellington. Of this Committee the Hon. Randall Johnson was appointed Chairman, the Hon. Mr. Mantell to act in his absence. By the second, the privileges of the Library were confined to members of the Assembly only, and to those who, along with them, enjoy these privileges during the session.

As soon as these resolutions were published, the Under-Secretary and the Secretary for Customs addressed a joint letter to the Committee, respectfully requesting that the privilege of using the Library during the recess, which they had enjoyed so long and appreciated so much, should not be withdrawn. This letter was considered at a meeting of the Committee on the 2nd October, and the following resolution was passed: "That the Committee request the Chairman to undertake the responsibility of granting admission to the full privileges of the Library to the Under-Secretaries and such heads of departments as he may think fit." This the Chairman agreed to do, and drew up the following list of Under-Secretaries and heads of departments to whom the freedom of the Library should be allowed, as in former years: Clerk of the Executive Council, Secretary to the Cabinet, the Under-Secretary, Assistant-Controller and Auditor, Registrar-General, Inspector of Lunatic Asylums, Government Printer, Secretary to the Treasury, Property-Tax Commissioner; Department of Justice—Under-Secretary, Inspector of Prisons; Post Office and Telegraphs—Superintendent, Under-Secretary; Customs—Secretary and Inspector; Secretary of Education, Inspector-General of Schools; Under-Secretary of Native Affairs, Under-Secretary for Land Purchase, Under-Secretary for Gold Fields and Mines; Public Works—Under-Secretary; Colonial Architect, Marine Engineer; Railways—Under-Secretary, General Manager; Defence—Under-Secretary; Crown Lands—Under-Secretary, Surveyor-General; Government Insurance Commissioner, Public Trustee, Governors of the New Zealand Institute. Most of these fully availed themselves of the privilege thus extended to them, no less than 700 works on various subjects having been issued to them during the recess. These were all returned in good order. I may add that during the same period 610 works, and 235 magazines, were issued to members of Assembly.

But, while the issue of books was thus restricted, the Library was open for two hours every day, for reference to any book on its shelves, to all who applied to the chairman for admission. Only forty persons, however, took advantage of this privilege.

The Joint Library Committee, having found it necessary last session to terminate Mr. Parsons' engagement as their Home agent, applied to the Government for permission to avail themselves of the services of the Agent-General for the management of their business in England, and the Government at once acceded to their request. As the Agent-General had previously, in the course of correspondence with the Committee, expressed his willingness to do anything in his power to promote the interests of the Library, the Chairman, at the request of the Committee, addressed a letter of instructions to him on the 1st August of last year, authorizing him to make such arrangements as he might deem best for the execution of the Committee's periodical orders for books, magazines, &c., from England. Enclosed in this letter was a copy of all the orders that had been sent Home to our late agent for the two previous years, as well as the standing orders of the Committee. Acting on the authority thus conferred on him, the Agent-General, after some correspondence and one or two personal interviews, appointed Messrs. Bell and Bradfute, of Edinburgh, as agents to conduct our business in the Home-country, and they will continue to act as such under his supervision. From the long-established position and high reputation of the firm, it may reasonably be hoped that the arrangements now concluded will prove satisfactory. They have entered on their duties with the utmost promptitude and energy. Already we have received two consignments, numbering 440 volumes, and a third consignment of 310 volumes will be here by the "Doric" in the course of a few days. They have thus, in the short space of five months, sent us out 750 volumes.

During the period that we were receiving nothing from Home, we were obliged from time to time to procure in the local market various works that were exciting general attention. About fifty volumes have in this way been added to the Library. If to these we add sixty volumes of serials, we find that the accessions to the Library by purchase this year amount, in all, to 860 volumes, in the various departments of literature.

By way of exchange—Imperial, international, and intercolonial—the accessions amount this year to no less than 389 volumes, bound and unbound. Adding to these the official publications of our own Government, of each of which we receive at least two copies, we have to record an increase in our collection of parliamentary records, official statistics, and other works of a kindred character, of 420 volumes. And here I must not omit to take note of our various newspapers, the vast majority of which come under the head of exchanges, as they are received by the Library in return for the Parliamentary Papers regularly forwarded to their several proprietors. Of these 120 volumes are year by year being added to this department of the Library, which now amounts to 1,580 volumes.

Early in April last the Acting-Chairman received from His Excellency the Governor a letter, covering copy of a despatch from the Earl of Derby, Secretary for the Colonies, intimating that the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury had been pleased to grant the application made by the Library Committee last session, through His Excellency, for a complete set of the “Journals of the House of Lords.” These were sent down to the Agent-General’s office last January for transmission to the Library, and lately arrived. They number 114 large folio volumes, and fill up an important gap in our collection of parliamentary records. From the Trustees of the British Museum we have received, as usual, the publications issued by them during the year, consisting of four volumes.

The only private donations I have to announce in my present report are: A collection of the Cobden Club publications, from the Hon. the Premier, Major Atkinson; a series of pamphlets on the Contagious Diseases Act, from Sir William Fox; “Rambles with a Philosopher,” from the author, J. T. Thomson, Esq.; “Mr. Spencer’s Unification of Knowledge,” from the author, Malcolm Guthrie; and an additional supplement to Brand’s Decisions, from Mr. Blackmore, Clerk of Parliament, Adelaide. The donations for the year thus amount to 126 volumes.

Summing up, then, I find that the additions to the Library, from all sources, for the present year, are 1,526 volumes, of all sizes and on all subjects; and that our total collection now numbers close on 24,200 volumes.

I have given these details in order that honourable members may have some idea of the rate at which the Library is growing, and of the demand that is made year after year on the limited space at our disposal. Indeed, to such a pass have things come that serious difficulty is beginning to be experienced in disposing of the constant accessions to our accumulated stores. Every available corner is now nearly full. In some of the cases, indeed, I am obliged to place the books in double rows—a mode of arrangement attended with many inconveniences. So that the question of additional accommodation must soon force itself once more on the attention of the Legislature.

By a resolution of the Joint Library Committee last session it was decided to accept an offer made to the Government by Lord Derby, in a circular despatch dated 19th June, 1883, to send us regularly all the Imperial official publications on condition of our sending in return, to the Librarian of the British Museum, all the official publications of this colony. Accordingly, as soon as all the Government publications for 1883 were ready, they were despatched by the “British Queen,” which left Wellington on the 6th March. In this way closer and more direct relations have been established between this Library and that great national institution.

A good deal of important and even necessary work has been overtaken during the present recess. The pamphlets in the Library have been carefully gone over, and a list of them prepared, so that they may be all printed together, instead of being interspersed with other books all through the catalogue. There are 377 of them in all, of which 196 have already been bound, while 181 are still unbound. It is matter of regret that no means have ever been devised to secure a more complete set of the pamphlets that appear from time to time in various parts of the colony, many of which, though published in this fugitive form, are of permanent value. A list of all the maps and charts in the Library, both geographical and geological, has now, for the first time, been made. A want much felt by many members, for some years back, has been supplied by the preparation of an index of subjects for the general Catalogue of 1880, and for the first Supplementary Catalogue of 1882; and, as usual, a fresh supplement, with which, for greater convenience, that of last year is incorporated, has been published. It contains all the books that have been added to the Library for the last two years, and has also a carefully-prepared index of subjects.

Stock was taken twice during the recess, and I am happy to be able to say that there were only ten volumes or so of those that were here three years ago of which we were unable to find any trace.

I have, &c.,

A. MACGREGOR,

Librarian.

The Acting-Chairman of the Recess Library Committee.