

2. On receipt of this from the Speaker, the Government to point out any items to which exception is taken.

3. Should the Speaker be unable to concur in the proposal to omit or reduce any item, the Government, of course, to accept the full responsibility of making any such omission or reduction.

4. The Speaker to be supplied as early as possible with a copy of the estimates for the Legislative Department as finally agreed to by the Government.

5. The Speaker to retain, as hitherto, the right of recommending for appointment all permanent officers of the department to the number provided for on the estimates, and at the salaries therein specified.

6. As vacancies arise in the present staff of messengers, application for appointment to be made through the Labour Bureau, and by the Bureau transmitted, together with such recommendations as the Minister may see fit to make, to the Speaker.

7. The employment of such extra clerical assistance as may be required for the working of the department during the session to remain, as hitherto, with the Clerk of the House.

I shall be glad to receive a notification of your concurrence in the foregoing.

I have, &c.,

W. J. STEWARD,  
Speaker, House of Representatives.

The Hon. W. P. Reeves, Minister of Labour, &c.

[As far as I am aware, no reply has been received. —A. J. R.]

SIR,—

Speaker's Rooms, Wellington, 10th October, 1892.

On looking over the *Hansard* proofs, I am surprised to find that, in Committee on the legislative estimates, Mr. Seddon is reported to have said, "As regards the utilisation of the Interpreters and Mr. O'Rorke and Mr. Rutherford during recess, it is the intention of the Government to grant those officers one month's holiday after session and then make use of them during the remainder of the recess for Government work. Reduction of salaries was mooted, but not agreed to; but it is considered that the colony should get better value for the money."

Now, as all the officers in question belong to the department which is under my control as Speaker, I am bound to demur to the right of the Government to take any independent action with relation to them, and I claim to be consulted before any such action as indicated is attempted to be taken.

As regards Mr. Rutherford, who, during the session, at all hours through the day and night, is continually in attendance, to whatever hour the House may sit, the proposition is cruel to him and unjust to Mr. Friend, to whom his assistance is indispensable. Nor does his work terminate with the session. On the contrary, for some three months thereafter it is impossible that he could take holiday, his time being fully occupied in the work appertaining to the publication of the Journals and appendices. The compilation of the Journals from the Clerk's notes is the work of Mr. Rutherford as Second Clerk-Assistant during session, and the proceedings in connection with the printing of the Journals, indexing, preparing schedules, &c., have always been special duties appertaining to that office during the recess. For fifteen years his predecessor, Mr. Otterson, performed the same duties, and was never called upon to perform other duties outside those of his own office, and, though Mr. Otterson still continues his valuable assistance in the above work, it would be very unfair to that officer to deprive him altogether of Mr. Rutherford's help. In view of the large quantity of matter which passes through the hands of the officers of the House in preparation for publication, two supervisors are essential, and Mr. Rutherford is constantly engaged in assisting Mr. Otterson in this work. Then, again, there is the charge of the office, which is kept open during office-hours during the recess, custody of records, attendance to correspondence, preparation of vouchers, accounts, &c. (this branch of work will be largely increased in consequence of the passing of the Payment of Members Bill), in all of which Mr. Rutherford has his share, being in daily attendance at the office during office-hours, and not averaging more than a month's leave of absence (taking usually a few days at a time) during the whole recess. There are constant applications from other departments and the outside public for reference to reports, documents, papers, &c.; and if Mr. Rutherford were removed other assistance would constantly have to be obtained to enable the work of the department to be overtaken. These facts make it abundantly clear that no such proposal as that of the Minister could possibly be given effect to.

I may also point out that, while the work of the Legislature, and consequently of the department, is constantly growing, the staff has not only not been increased but actually decreased, as we are now working with one permanent officer less than there were for a period of twenty years under Major Campbell, who had three permanent assistants during the recess, as against the present staff of two under Mr. Friend. If one of these were taken away the work of the office could not be performed satisfactorily.

The question of the services of subordinate officers of the Legislature being placed at the disposal of the Government during the recess formed the principal subject of a whole day's debate only four years ago, the result being a majority of fourteen against the proposal of the then Premier, who endeavoured to obtain the sanction of the House in that direction. Nothing has since occurred to affect this decision, the vote in Committee of Supply last year referring solely to the estimates, Ministers themselves, as pointed out in my letter to you of the 30th May last, distinctly stating that they advanced no claim to exercise control over the officers of the department.

As regards Mr. O'Rorke, the office which he now holds was first created in 1872, and in the case of Mr. Otterson, the first holder of that office, the letter of appointment distinctly made it a sessional one. Mr. Ernest Bell succeeded, on the distinct agreement that the appointment was sessional, and Mr. O'Rorke succeeded Mr. Bell. In each case their services were and have been at the disposal of the Clerk of the House for a fortnight before the session and a fortnight after it.