

DEAR SIR,—

Hansard Office, Tuesday, 15th October, 1895.

Attached to the report of the Reporting Debates Committee on the matter of the working of the *Hansard* staff, there appears under the head of "Addenda" a general statement by Mr. J. G. Grey. This statement bristles with misrepresentations, inaccuracies, and misstatements regarding matters connected with the staff, and I submit, as a common matter of justice, that opportunity should be given to any members of the staff who may desire to do so to make their statements *per contra*. Like the other members of the staff, with the exception of Mr. Grey, I confined myself to answering, as desired, the questions put to me in writing by the Committee, and I do not consider that I should be justified in allowing to appear uncontradicted before the Committee or the House statements by one member of the staff which affect the staff as a body.

I have, &c.,

WALTER LESLIE.

The Chairman, Reporting Debates Committee, House of Representatives.

SIR,—

Hansard Office, 16th October, 1895.

In accordance with your request, I have the honour to forward the enclosed remarks, following upon my letter of yesterday's date.

I have, &c.,

WALTER LESLIE.

The Chairman, Reporting Debates Committee, House of Representatives.

THE statements of Mr. J. G. Grey, contained in Addenda on page 5 of the report, are so obviously the result of either crass ignorance or deliberate intention to mislead that they demand immediate contradiction.

Mr. Grey says, "The only duties discharged by the Chief Reporter . . . has (*sic*) been to cut out the questions from the day's Order Paper, and to write cross-headings to them. . . . Another duty has been, with a pencil coloured blue at one end and red at the other, to tick off the printed division-lists supplied either by Mr. Otterson or Mr. Rutherford." That this is untrue, reference to my answers will show; but I omitted to mention one very important and arduous duty undertaken by Mr. Barron. The indexing of *Hansard* is divided as equally as possible amongst the members of the staff except the Chief, who hand over their "copy" to Mr. Barron. Mr. Barron reads over and checks with the published numbers of *Hansard* every item in the whole of this index before this copy is sent to the printer. He afterwards corrects the proof-sheets of the whole index. As a matter of fact, therefore, he does considerably more work in connection with the indexing than any other two members of the staff. It will be noticed that all mention of this has been carefully avoided in the endeavour to prove that the Chief has no work to do.

In this connection I wish to state that, while an endeavour has been made to show that the compilation of the index occupies a considerable time of members of the staff on "off" days, this is not the case. A very large proportion of the indexing is done while the House is in Committee; and any member of the staff who chooses to do so could with the greatest ease do double the amount of indexing he has to do, entirely while the House is in Committee.

Mr. Grey says, "It is absolutely ridiculous to talk of editorial supervision in connection with *Hansard*." There is not a member of the staff, including Mr. Grey, who does not refer daily to Mr. Barron numerous questions of detail, which come under the head of "editorial supervision"; and these collectively occupy no little time and attention. Other important matters of editorial supervision are pointed out in my answers.

Mr. Grey says, "Hitherto the copy transcribed by the reporters has passed directly from their hands to the messengers who convey it to the Government Printing Office." There are and always have been frequent exceptions to this. On occasions when Bills have been in Committee and have undergone many or important amendments, the whole of the copy is revised by Mr. Barron on the following morning before going to the Printer. The whole of the recent tariff "copy" was, *inter alia*, revised in this way.

Mr. Grey says, "The sense of injustice and grounds for complaint, no doubt, suggested themselves simultaneously to the whole of us." That is quite untrue. Personally, I felt no sense nor expressed any ground for complaint, and I know that other members of the staff can say the same thing. With regard to the letter to Mr. Barron, dated the 1st August—which I refused to sign—its subject-matter was first mentioned to me by Mr. Grey, and in my presence he mentioned it to other members of the staff, who then heard of it for the first time.

Mr. Grey says, "The necessity for action, so far from being prompted by myself, originated with the other members of the staff." I presume by this Mr. Grey means the desire for action—otherwise there is no meaning. This statement is quite untrue.

Mr. Grey says, "Having acted in perfect harmony with my colleagues from beginning to end." It is not the case that Mr. Grey has acted from beginning to end in perfect harmony with his colleagues. On the contrary, in taking any further action, after forwarding the letter of 1st August to Mr. Barron, he acted without the concurrence of certainly five of the staff. I have firmly opposed the whole cabal from the very first.

16th October, 1895.

WALTER LESLIE.

DEAR SIR,—

Wellington, 16th October, 1895.

I desire to explicitly contradict a statement made by Mr. J. G. Grey, in the "Addenda" to his evidence, upon a matter of fact.

Mr. Grey says, "The necessity for action, so far from being prompted by myself, originated with the other members of the staff. Feeling as they did that a great injustice was being inflicted upon us, I agreed," &c.

Now, as a simple matter of fact, I never felt even any discontent, and therefore could not possibly have expressed any sense of injustice, gross or otherwise, either to Mr. Grey or to any one else.