

1895.  
NEW ZEALAND.

REPORTING DEBATES AND PRINTING COMMITTEE.  
(FURTHER REPORT *RE HANSARD STAFF*.)

*Report brought up Friday, the 18th October, 1895, and ordered to be printed.*

FURTHER REPORT.

THE Reporting Debates and Printing Committee have the honour to report that, in consequence of representations made by members of the *Hansard* staff as to the incomplete nature of the evidence printed, your Committee considered it necessary to hold further inquiry, and that the evidence taken to-day should be printed and circulated before the discussion on the previous report of the Committee takes place.

18th October, 1895.

W. J. STEWARD, Chairman.

SIR,—

*Hansard* Office, 16th September, 1895.

I beg respectfully to enclose the correspondence respecting the letter by members of the staff with regard to the mode of carrying on the work.

I think, in justice to myself, Mr. Spragg, and Mr. Leslie, you should be placed in possession of this correspondence.

Yours respectfully,

C. C. N. BARRON.

The Chairman, Reporting Debates Committee.

DEAR SIR,—

Saturday, 3rd August, 1895.

There is certainly some mistake regarding the memorandum of suggestions forwarded to you. I understand the first suggestion to be that if you deemed assistance needful to the staff, you should consider whether a man who could go into the gallery would or would not be preferable to amanuenses. That this could express, in any degree, want of that confidence and esteem for which we have abundant grounds never occurred to me. I signed merely so as not to stand apart from those who desired to make the suggestion, believing it unobjectionable. Since it has apparently been taken by you as suggesting more than this, I regret having signed it, and assert that I had no intention whatever of expressing, in any degree, discontent or disrespect. The same opinion I am sure is held by other members of the staff.

C. C. N. Barron, Esq.

Yours truly,

S. SPRAGG.

DEAR SIR,—

3rd August, 1895.

I have written to Mr. Grey a reply to the suggestions made by him and some other members of the staff. I presume he has communicated my letter to you. The subject is an exceedingly painful one to me, and I cannot see that anything will be gained by further discussing it.

Yours, &c.,

C. C. N. BARRON.

S. Spragg, Esq.

DEAR SIR,—

5th August, 1895.

Having signed the so-called respectful suggestions under an entire misapprehension, I beg to withdraw my name therefrom, and to admit that the statements in your reply set forth most accurately the facts as to the work of the staff.

Yours, &c.,

S. SPRAGG.

C. C. N. Barron, Esq.

DEAR SIR,—

*Hansard* Office, Friday.

I may be under a misapprehension, but I have an idea that you may not have noticed the absence of my signature from a letter which I understand was given to you to-day. I refused repeated applications to sign it, and gave my reasons very emphatically for so doing. If I have made a mistake in my assumption, I am sorry.

I am, &c.

WALTER LESLIE.

C. C. N. Barron, Esq., Chief New Zealand *Hansard* Staff.

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, &amp;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, &amp;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.

The matter was submitted to me after I was informed that all the others had agreed to make certain suggestions to the Chief. I stated plainly that if the suggestion was intended as in any sense a complaint I would have none of it. I did not think the suggestion could be carried out, and said so plainly; but, as the majority desired to submit it for Mr. Barron's consideration, I then saw no harm in it. I asked if this meant a request that Mr. Barron should go into the gallery, and the answer was distinctly "No." First of all, a long series of recommendations had been drafted, by whom I do not know, but the members of the staff would not agree to this. Then Mr. Berry drafted a suggestion that, in view of the pending heavy financial debate, Mr. Barron should consider whether it would not be advisable to appoint one man to go into the gallery (temporary appointment) in lieu of transcribers. This I did not consider practicable; but I saw no objection to submitting it to Mr. Barron. Mr. Grey rejected this, and subsequently drew up his "respectful suggestion." Seeing no harm in it, and being assured that it was merely a matter for Mr. Barron's consideration, I signed it, although my opinion as to the relative value of one note-taker, or two shorthand writers to assist in transcription, differed materially from that of other members of the staff.

I distinctly remember saying, "This is not a complaint, and if Mr. Barron does not approve of the suggestion that ends it"; and I was answered quite as clearly, "Yes." I now recollect that Mr. Grey said nothing in answer to that remark, and it appears that his silence was not acquiescence. No sooner, however, did I learn that this document had been made the foundation of an attack on the Chief, than I considered myself "trapped" into signing it, and said so unmistakably, if not politely, in the presence of the other members of the staff, and I there and then wrote asking that my signature should be withdrawn.

Yours, &c.,

S. SPRAGG.

Hon. Major Steward, Chairman of the Reporting Debates Committee.

*The Chairman:* Mr. Grattan Grey has submitted a statement which I will call upon the clerk to read to the Committee.

GENTLEMEN,—

*Hansard* Office, Friday morning, 18th October, 1895.

I have the honour to acknowledge, from the clerk of your Committee, the receipt of certain documents sent in by Messrs. Spragg and Leslie, with a request that I should reply thereto before half-past ten o'clock this morning. These documents reached me only a minute or two before going into the gallery yesterday afternoon, and I think it most unfair that in the midst of reporting work I should be allowed so little time to reply to these communications. However, as I have been given to understand that it is necessary this reply should be in the hands of the Committee this morning, I have no alternative but to do the best I can with the scraps of time at my disposal between "turns" to answer with haste the sweeping assertions contained in these documents. If a little more time had been allowed me, I could have fortified myself with further evidence to completely disprove these unfounded statements. Mr. Leslie's evidence is so wildly reckless and extraordinary, and so utterly at variance with facts, that one is simply amazed at its outrageous audacity. From beginning to end it is a barefaced attempt to bolster up a bad case by unscrupulous and groundless assertion. The sycophancy that has been manifested throughout his action in this affair, and which characterizes the whole of his testimony, is not a matter of surprise to myself. One who knows nothing to the contrary would imagine that the Chief Reporter was a paragon of every virtue and accomplishment under the sun, and that, in fact, the publication of *Hansard* could not possibly go on unless Mr. Barron is continued in his present fat and comfortable sinecure—a sinecure, in fact, to which no parallel can be found in the whole range of the public service of New Zealand. If inquiry were pushed to the root of the matter, substantial reasons would be found to account for Mr. Leslie's excess of zeal on Mr. Barron's behalf, apart altogether from the *Hansard* question. His exertions in that direction in canvassing members have been most indecent and improper, and what underlies his whole action accounts for his desertion of his colleagues, towards whom he has acted the part of a traitor. I repeat again, as strongly as language can emphasize the fact, that Mr. Leslie's evidence is a tissue of the grossest misrepresentations. It is the coolest effrontery for a man of his limited professional experience to talk of "crass ignorance" on my part, and of a deliberate intention to mislead. Every statement I have made about the duties of the Chief Reporter is founded upon indisputable facts. What the Chief Reporter does in connection with the indexing of *Hansard* is the merest child's play compared with the work which the other members of the staff have individually to perform in its compilation. Then, as to Mr. Leslie's statement that there is not a day on which members of the staff do not put questions of detail: All the older members of the staff know as well as Mr. Barron what should be done under given circumstances; they merely refer to him as a matter of form, in order that there may be uniformity of action on particular points; and if he were not there—as very frequently he has not been—the senior reporter has done, and can do, all his work at least quite as well. Then, again, as to Mr. Leslie's assertion that "there are and always have been frequent exceptions" to the transcribed "copy" passing directly from the hands of the reporters to the messengers from the Government Printing Office, Mr. Leslie says "there have been occasions when Bills have been in Committee, and have undergone many or important amendments, the whole of the 'copy' is revised by Mr. Barron before going to the Printer. The whole of the recent tariff copy was, *inter alia*, revised in this way." With regard to the foregoing statement, the occasion pointed out by Mr. Leslie was the solitary instance in which "turns" have gone through the hands of the Chief Reporter. This new-born zeal on the part of the Chief Reporter was a source of considerable merriment to members of the staff, as they could see it was adopted in order to give colour to the plea of "editorial supervision"—which I again most emphatically declare is the shallowest pretence—in

view of the inquiry now going on with regard to the Chief Reporter not taking his turns in the gallery. Referring now to what Mr. Leslie says about the representations from members of the staff to the Chief Reporter, this witness again states what is untrue, and I will relate the circumstances connected with the letter of the 1st August to the Chief Reporter. They are these: There had been several discussions on various occasions amongst members of the staff as to what form these representations should take. After a certain form had been agreed to, on a certain Friday night, when the Chief Reporter was at home, it was decided that these representations should be typewritten for signature. On the following afternoon (Saturday) I came to the *Hansard* room and found Mr. Leslie engaged in writing a report of the Art Exhibition for the *New Zealand Times*. I at once proceeded to draft a memorandum, in accordance with the decision arrived at by members of the staff on the previous night. This draft was read over to Mr. Leslie, and approved of by him. Mr. Geddis having arrived in the meantime, that gentleman, at my request, proceeded to print it off on the typewriter for signature. Before it was finished Mr. Leslie left the room, and did not return. Mr. Spragg, however, arrived, and, having read over the memorandum, expressed his concurrence with it, and both Mr. Spragg and myself signed it. It was considered desirable that the members of the staff should sign in the order of seniority. Mr. Berry was out of town, and his signature was not therefore attached; but the other signatures were duly appended. On the following Tuesday Mr. Leslie, much to our surprise, declined to sign, after considering the matter, and said he would sign absolutely nothing. This document I now enclose, and it will be seen that it is signed by Messrs. Grey, Spragg, Geddis, Russell, and Gore. Mr. Berry's signature was not, as I have said above, attached, for the reason that he was then at Pimmerton; and Mr. Leslie's signature is not there either, for the reasons already stated. Several other discussions followed, and it was ultimately resolved to send in the document of August 1st in substitution of the first one. The latter was signed by all the members of the staff except Mr. Leslie. The reply of the Chief Reporter was considered most unsatisfactory. He attempted to "ride the high horse," and evidently thought that by assuming a bold front he would nip any further action in the bud. But the members of the staff considered that they had been "sweated" long enough, and hence the inquiry that is now going on. Up to the day that Mr. Barron handed me his very curt reply to the memorandum from the staff there had been perfect unanimity of feeling. On that day the Chief Reporter manifested towards all the other reporters a demeanour so distinctly cold that we could all see that he was sulking, and that he was determined to show us that we had incurred his severest displeasure. Mr. Leslie made an attempt to engage him in conversation, and, receiving a very snappish reply, he at once indited the note which has been sent to the Committee drawing Mr. Barron's attention to the fact that he had not signed the memorandum. Thereupon Mr. Barron's reserve was dissipated so far as Mr. Leslie was concerned, and ever since then they have daily taken counsel together, and made common cause. I deny altogether that Mr. Leslie heard first of the letter of the 1st August from myself. He had taken part in almost the whole of the discussions that had occurred concerning it. As a matter of fact, the letter of the 1st of August sent to Mr. Barron was not drafted by me at all. A draft was shown to me, and I refused to sign it. Then it was modified to some extent, typewritten, and handed to me again. I approved of this modified draft, and the signatures of the members of the staff were appended to it in their order of seniority. I was requested to forward this to Mr. Barron, with the covering note, which I read over to the members of the staff. Mr. Leslie says what is again absolutely untrue when he states that I had not been acting in harmony with my colleagues. After his treachery I ignored him altogether; and of course I did not consult Mr. Spragg, after his letter. But all along I have been acting in the most perfect harmony with my colleagues—Messrs. Berry, Geddis, Russell, and Gore. In other words, five members of the staff have had the courage of their opinions against two, and have therefore sought for a redress of their grievances. "Cabal," in Mr. Leslie's letter, is the precise term which very appropriately designates the attempt that is made by himself and Mr. Barron to persuade members of the House that the Chief Reporter's action in establishing a sinecure for himself by the "sweating" of his staff proceeds from anything but selfish motives. Throughout my long parliamentary and journalistic career I can confidently say that my veracity has never been called in question, and I maintain that every statement made in my evidence is strictly in accordance with fact. Coming now to Mr. Spragg's letter, I deny absolutely that Mr. Spragg was "trapped" into signing either of the two letters to the Chief Reporter. He took part in the discussions that were held concerning the representations that should be made, and recognised that an additional note-taker was necessary. Mr. Spragg signed both documents; and how he can reconcile this with his subsequent action it is impossible to understand. The only explanation that suggests itself is that on seeing the Chief Reporter's hostile attitude he "funked," went back on his former opinion, and left the other five members of the staff to maintain the position they had taken up.

In conclusion, I have only to say that Mr. Barron, Mr. Leslie, and Mr. Spragg, in the further action they have taken since the report of the Committee was presented to the House, have made a most sedulous attempt to obscure the real issue involved by raising a number of side-issues, and by a laboured attempt to justify the Chief Reporter's abstention from his primary duty. The real issue is, whether the staff is to be "sweated" in order that the Chief Reporter may continue in the enjoyment of a comfortable sinecure of £600 a year, which he was hoping would escape the notice of those in authority, never contemplating that the staff would dare to incur his displeasure by making any remonstrance.

I have, &c.,

The Chairman and members, Reporting Debates Committee.

J. GRATTAN GREY.

I ENCLOSE herewith for the inspection of the Committee the first document signed by Mr. Spragg. The second document (which was adopted in lieu of the first, and forwarded to Mr. Barron) was signed by Mr. Spragg after an interval of several days from the time of signing the first one.

Therefore Mr. Spragg's statement about being "trapped" is what Americans would call "altogether too thin."

The document which I now enclose was the one, a draft of which was read over to Mr. Leslie and approved by him on the Saturday afternoon, referred to in my letter of this day's date. In that letter the circumstances are detailed as to how Mr. Leslie left the *Hansard* room before it was ready to be signed, and Mr. Berry's signature would have been attached but for that gentleman's absence at Plimmerton.

18th October, 1895.

J. GRATTAN GREY.

"*Hansard* Office, Tuesday, 30th July, 1895.

"The undersigned members of the *Hansard* Reporting Staff respectfully submit the following representations for the consideration of the Chief Reporter:—

"(1.) That there is urgent necessity for strengthening the staff by the permanent appointment of at least one additional reporter for note-taking in the gallery. The effect of the time-limit has admittedly been to considerably accelerate the speed with which speeches are delivered in the House, and consequently to increase the quantity of notes. Moreover, the debating in the Council has gradually attained to larger proportions.

"(2.) That, if another reporter be engaged, three men should be detailed each afternoon for the Legislative Council, and that the duration of turns there should be reduced from half an hour to a quarter of an hour. That it would also be advisable to provide a room in the Legislative Council Chamber where the Council reporters could transcribe their notes, and so save the time now lost in going to and from the Council.

"(3.) That the turns in the Lower House should be: Quarter of an hour up till 10.30 p.m.; ten minutes up till 12.30 a.m.; five minutes thenceforward until the adjournment of the House. While House is in Committee, quarter-hour turns after supper adjournment.

"(4.) That when Mr. Ward is speaking on Bill or other subject, and when replying, five-minute turns should be resorted to at all times.

"J. GRATTAN GREY.

"S. SPRAGG.

"JAS. M. GEDDIS.

"W. H. RUSSELL.

"H. M. GORE."

*The Chairman*: I notice, Mr. Grey, you state that if you had had further time you could have laid a further statement before the Committee. Do you wish to supplement your statement now?

*Mr. Grey*: I am ready to answer any questions put to me. I am only too glad to have the opportunity.

*The Chairman*: Has Mr. Barron anything to say?

*Mr. Barron*: I have nothing to say beyond the fact that I received a letter from some of the members of the staff asking for a change, and to which I replied. I do not think I know anything about the statement submitted.

*The Chairman*: You have an opportunity to make any statement you wish.

#### MEMORANDUM AS TO MR. GREY'S STATEMENTS.

WITH regard to the indexing and the necessity for my revising it, I may say that in the index to the first volume of the *Hansard* this session I discovered four or five serious omissions in that portion which was compiled by Mr. Grey—letters A, B, and C. They will be found supplied by me in my handwriting in the manuscript now in the Printing Office. This indexing work is chiefly done while the House is in Committee, and practically very little is done on the off-days.

Mr. Grey misstates the facts as to the duties of the Chief Reporters in Queensland, South Australia, and New South Wales. My information is taken from a report of a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament, Queensland, this year, 1895.

Mr. Gilligan, the Chief Reporter, travelled through the Australian Colonies, by instruction of the Government of Queensland, and obtained information as to the system of working in each. He does not take "turns" in the gallery, but, as he says in his evidence before the Committee, "I get from each reporter a transcription of his notes." In New South Wales, as I have already stated, the Chief Reporter does not take any "turn" in the gallery. The work is let by contract in South Australia, and there are a leader and five reporters for the House, and a leader and three reporters for the Council, the leaders not taking "turns" in the gallery.

Why Mr. Grey should go out of his way to make such a misstatement as that which he makes with regard to the late Mr. Ebenezer Fox I cannot conceive. Mr. Fox was not on the staff in 1871. The only session during which that gentleman was a member of the *Hansard* staff was that of 1869, and he was far too straightforward a gentleman to make any representations to a Minister behind my back. We were friends, and he would have told me if he thought any change was necessary.

Both in Victoria and New South Wales amanuenses are engaged. The Chief Reporter of the New South Wales staff, speaking of the reporters dictating their "turns" to type-writers, says, "By this means the work is greatly facilitated." The chief of the Victorian staff says, "The type-writer is now regarded as an almost indispensable auxiliary to the reporter, who is thus relieved of the tedious drudgery of transcription, and is kept comparatively fresh for the physical and mental strain of note-taking." He also says that without the assistance of type-writers two additional reporters would be required.

C. C. N. BARRON.

*Mr. Pirani*: What is the system in Victoria?

*Mr. Barron*: There are only four reporters; but, as I pointed out, one of the reporters there told me some time ago they largely use the newspapers' reports, and the chief does take a turn in the gallery.

Mr. LESLIE examined.

*The Chairman*: Mr. Leslie, do you desire to say anything?

*Mr. Leslie*: I do not know that it is a matter of very much importance, but Mr. Grey began by stating that his reply required to be done very hurriedly between "turns," and I think he alluded to scraps of time. I may simply point out that the House was in Committee practically the whole time from half-past seven to half-past one, and I do not therefore think that statement requires any further reference. With regard to the statement that I agreed to sign any memorandum read to me, that is absolutely untrue and without the slightest foundation. Mr. Grey relates the circumstances correctly as to his entering a room where I was engaged in the compilation of an article. I was paying a great deal more attention to what I was doing than to what Mr. Grey was saying. Mr. Grey said that on the previous Friday "it had been decided by the staff" to do so-and-so, and I was surprised subsequently when other members of the staff came into the room and he used the same expression to them. I did not pay any great attention to what the proposals were. All the proposals mentioned in the memorandum of Mr. Grey were certainly mentioned to me, and with some of them I may at the moment have expressed some sort of qualified approval, but with others I expressed my decided disagreement; and as to saying I agreed to sign any document, that is absolutely without the slightest foundation. Whether the draft was read while I was in the room I could not for certain say, but I am inclined to think no draft was read to me at all, and the first written draft I saw was when I returned to town on the following Tuesday. At any rate, I never expressed to any one my intention of signing any document at all. With regard to the statements I made in my memorandum yesterday as regards the Chief Reporter's work, I have only to say they are absolutely true, and I believe an examination of other members of the staff on my statement would prove their truth. I have further to say, if the Committee intend entering further into the matter, I consider the evidence of Mr. Parkinson, who has been on the staff for a great number of years, and who only retired two or three years ago, should be obtained. With regard to the indexing, which two members of the staff have endeavoured to make out occupies the most of their time from Saturday till Tuesday, I cannot say for certain at what time it has been their custom to do most of their indexing; I can only say both of these members have occupied a considerable number of hours doing their indexing while the House was in Committee, and I repeat the assertion I have made in my memorandum, that any one member of the staff who chooses to do the work while the House is in Committee could easily compile the whole of the index. With regard to the Committee work mentioned, I have pointed out that after a night in Committee it takes Mr. Barron, and would take any other chief, the whole of the forenoon to arrange the division-lists, &c., for the Printer. To this I may add an instance of what occurs frequently when the House is in Committee. While the House was in Committee on the Tariff Bill, when there were a great number of amendments to be carefully watched, at about half-past three or half-past four one morning one member of the staff came out of the gallery, and, in stating what his turn had been like to Mr. Barron, mentioned a long amendment which he had not taken down, and he said to Mr. Barron, "I will leave that for you to get and fix up in the morning." Instead of Mr. Barron attempting to shirk his work, he invariably goes out of his way to save reporters in numerous matters of detail. With regard to the statement made by Mr. Geddis as to the reporters having to race at a gallop through their work, as I have already stated on a previous occasion, except in rare instances there is no necessity for a reporter to race at a gallop through his work at all. Between ordinary turns the work can be overtaken very easily with the two or three transcribers that are generally taken on when both Houses are sitting or the work is heavy.

*Mr. Pirani*: I would like Mr. Leslie to say something about the reported conspiracy between Mr. Barron and himself.

*Mr. Leslie*: I do not consider that wants an answer. I have endeavoured to maintain the position that should always obtain between a member of any staff and his chief.

Mr. SPRAGG examined.

*Mr. Spragg*: I should needlessly take up the time of the Committee if I were to repeat what I have already put on record, and I desire merely to say that I adhere to my former statements. I am now accused by Mr. Grey of moral cowardice for siding with the minority in what he considers a hopelessly bad cause. That charge is one which appears only to concern myself, and I am quite content to rest under it so long as it is made by Mr. Grey. The decision as to the badness or goodness of the cause, I am thankful to think, rests with men of more impartial judgment than is possessed in this matter by Mr. Grey—to put it very mildly. Mr. Grey is triumphant over the fact that I signed two documents, and says, so I understand, that I was told about this matter before either of those documents was drafted. This is contrary to fact, and no other member of the staff will assert that I was thus consulted. When I saw the first document I was informed that all the members of the staff had agreed to sign it. There were one or two matters in it with which I agreed, but a number with which I did not. The matter was argued out to me in this way: Whether you agree with the rest of the staff or whether you do not, why should you object to submitting the suggestions to Mr. Barron's decision. I said I did not object to that, and I put my signature to it. Subsequently, on thinking the matter over, it appeared to me to go into so many matters of detail as to become an improper interference with the functions of the chief, and the next day I withdrew my signature. Then Mr. Berry drew up a resolution which set out explicitly what I and other members of the staff meant. I think we

were somewhat unnecessarily frightened. The fearful financial debate was coming on, and without extra assistance we knew it would be very hard. The resolution which was drafted by Mr. Berry was simply submitting to Mr. Barron's judgment whether it would be better to appoint one man to go into the gallery, or to obtain assistance in transcription during the heavy pressure of the work. I was not of opinion that the appointment of one man to go into the gallery would be practicable, but I was quite willing that it should be submitted to Mr. Barron. What I mean by being "trapped" is this. Having signed an apparently innocent document, a mere suggestion for the consideration of the Chief, on the distinct understanding that it was in no degree a complaint or a request that Mr. Barron should go into the gallery, I found that a copy of that document was retained, and subsequently used as a means of attack: the very thing to which I would on no account have consented. If that is not being "trapped," whatever the intention may have been, the result seems to me to have been fairly successful. I distinctly deny that I ever signed anything, or consented to anything, that could be taken by any member of the staff to mean that I considered the Chief should be requested to go into the gallery. Having said that, I would merely add that I do not think I am usually regarded as being either cowardly or untruthful.

Mr. GEDDIS'S evidence.

*The Chairman:* Mr. Geddis, have you any further statement to make in addition to the replies given by you to the questions forwarded to you by the Committee?—I think the written answers which I have sent in to the questions of the Committee express all that I have to say. I have seen no reason since to amend or vary those answers in any way. As reference, however, has been made to what took place in the *Hansard* room when the draft memorandum for submission to Mr. Barron was shown to Mr. Leslie, I may just as well give my account of the circumstance. The matter was talked over by the members of the staff on the previous evening (Friday), and an understanding was come to that the various reporters should meet at the *Hansard* room on the following afternoon (Saturday), and then draw up and sign a memorandum. When I arrived at the *Hansard* room on the Saturday afternoon I found Mr. Grey and Mr. Leslie already there. Mr. Grey had drafted the memorandum, and in my presence he read it over to Mr. Leslie and myself. Mr. Leslie expressed his acquiescence with it, and intimated that he would sign it. It was thought desirable, however, that the members of the staff should sign it in the order of their seniority. At Mr. Grey's request I took the draft memorandum and proceeded to write it out on the typewriter. Before I had finished Mr. Leslie went away. Mr. Spragg arrived immediately afterwards, and the memorandum was read over to him, and signed by Mr. Grey and himself. As Mr. Berry was out of Wellington at the time a space was left for his name. Several other members of the staff signed, then the completion of the document was held over till the Monday. With regard to the personal matter which has been introduced, I have nothing whatever to say, except to express regret that it has been introduced. It seems to me that the paramount question involved in this inquiry is as to whether the staff is of sufficient strength to cope with the work. The Chief Reporter represented to the Government in 1892 that it was quite insufficient to cope with the work, and that it was likely sooner or later to break down unless strengthened by the addition of another reporter. Another reporter was appointed by the Government at the beginning of the session of 1893, but as towards the end of that session the Chief Reporter ceased to share in the work of the reporting the strength of the staff was brought down to its former position, so far as note-takers were concerned. During the two years that have elapsed since then the work of reporting has increased both in volume and severity, and if there was need for an extra reporter in 1893 there is far more need for one now. With regard to the drafting of the second memorandum, which was the one that was sent to Mr. Barron, I may say that several members of the staff were engaged in its composition, the object being to procure such a form of words that would accommodate Mr. Leslie's susceptibilities, and enable him to sign. I have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Spragg's statement as to his position with regard to that memorandum is quite correct. He made it perfectly clear, to my mind, that he was willing to sign so long as the representation which the staff made was only to the Chief Reporter, and that he was not going to be a party to carrying any representations beyond the Chief Reporter.

*Mr. Spragg:* That is so.

QUESTIONS PUT TO MEMBERS OF THE *HANSARD* STAFF, AND REPLIES THERETO.

*The Chairman:* Has the Committee any questions to ask the members of the *Hansard* staff?

*Mr. Pirani.]* Mr. Barron, ever since your snappish reply to Mr. Leslie, when you supposed he had signed those documents, but subsequent understanding to the contrary, you have daily taken counsel together?—We have talked over the matter, but I think every member of this Committee will bear me out when I say I have not once addressed any of them on the subject now before them.

Mr. GREY examined.

*The Chairman:* Has the Committee any questions to ask Mr. Grey?

*Mr. Pirani.]* I think Mr. Grey has had some experience in being in charge of the staff?—I have. In the latter part of the session of 1893, and on several occasions since then. Mr. Barron was taken ill in 1893, and I was then in charge.

Can you tell me how long?—Several weeks.

*Mr. Hogg.]* In this reply of yours, have you imputed any conspiracy?—I have imputed no conspiracy to any one, but, ever since Mr. Leslie's treachery, that witness and Mr. Barron have been in consultation with each other, and I believe the latter was fully cognisant of Mr. Leslie's active canvassing of members on his behalf.

I presume there is nothing to conspire about?—No; nothing beyond what I have just stated.

*Mr. Pirani.*] I should like to ask Mr. Grey what he means by the remark in his statement of Mr. Barron and Mr. Leslie “having daily taken counsel together,” &c.?—They have both been constantly talking over this matter, and Mr. Leslie has been known to have been very busily employed every day in canvassing members of the House?

Any members of the Committee? Can you name anybody?—He has been lobbying among the members generally. Last night, for instance, he was seen lobbying Mr. Wilson, and one other evening he was lobbying Captain Russell. It is well known he has been doing a great deal of lobbying during this inquiry.

I think it is rather a wide statement to say that he was canvassing members without giving some evidence?—I have given you evidence on that head.

*Mr. Carncross.*] Mr. Grey, you alluded to Mr. Barron’s office as a sinecure?—Yes; ever since withdrawing from the gallery his office has been a decided sinecure.

Some witnesses say they think another note-taker should be appointed. In the event of another note-taker being appointed, what is your opinion then?—He would have a more comfortable sinecure still.

Mr. LESLIE examined.

*The Chairman.*: Has the Committee any questions to ask Mr. Leslie?

*Mr. Pirani.*] Does Mr. Leslie know what Mr. Grey means about the private affairs between himself and Mr. Barron?—I have not the slightest conception to what Mr. Grey alludes.

What do you mean in your statement by “If inquiry were pushed to the end of the matter substantial reason would be found to account for Mr. Leslie’s excess of zeal on Mr. Barron’s behalf, apart altogether from the *Hansard* question”?—I have not the slightest idea as to what that can possibly allude. As regards my relations with Mr. Barron I have always endeavoured to do my duty to my chief and to the other members of the staff, and I think so far from anything Mr. Grey implies, Mr. Spragg will bear me out in saying that I have once or twice mentioned to him that I have considered that Mr. Barron has been a little unfair to me in small matters.

Do you remember the time when Mr. Grey was in charge of the *Hansard* staff?—I remember Mr. Grey being in charge on one or two occasions.

Do you think he carried out the duties satisfactorily?—So far as my observation went his duties simply amounted to writing up the “turns” in the book, and other unimportant details. I remember that on one or two occasions during the time Mr. Grey was left in charge there were serious altercations between him and one other member of the staff in consequence of a misunderstanding as to the length of time a member was left in the gallery. As regards the duties not connected immediately with the gallery I cannot say anything.

*Mr. Carncross.*] You heard Mr. Grey state he looks upon Mr. Barron’s position as a sinecure, Mr. Leslie. What is your opinion?—I think the statement as to the office being a sinecure must, if for one reason only, be seen by every one to be an absolute untruth, from the fact that Mr. Barron is engaged in transcription from the time the House meets till it rises; therefore any one saying that the office is a sinecure is not stating fact.

If another note-taker was engaged would Mr. Barron still have the same duties to perform?—If another note-taker was engaged Mr. Barron’s duties would be exactly as they are now. Of course the appointing of another note-taker would mean less work for the staff.

*The Chairman.*] With regard to this allegation of canvassing members in connection with this matter. How much truth is there in it Mr. Leslie?—In every action I have taken in connection with this matter I have consulted Mr. Speaker first. I have made it a practice, previous to this, never to mention outside the *Hansard* room anything in connection with the work at all. I have on several occasions been asked questions by members about the work and the staff, but I have always declined to talk about the room or the work. This session I was asked by a member of the Reporting and Debates Committee if I knew anything about a document that had been forwarded to the Committee. I did not know anything about it, but subsequently knew that other members of the staff had been communicating with members about the chief of the staff. I consulted the Speaker as to what he considered it my duty to do, and it was after consulting him that I have taken every action I have taken. Before I wrote the letter to you, Mr. Chairman, I consulted the Speaker. On no single occasion has Mr. Barron been consulted by me or informed by me as to what I was going to do. As regards canvassing members, I have spoken to a great many members in connection with this matter, but in almost every instance I have been spoken to on the subject first. I may say on one occasion I spoke to Captain Russell in connection with this matter.

*The Chairman.*: The suggestion apparently, as far as one can read it in Mr. Grey’s letter, is that there were some private relations with reference to the Chief Reporter and Mr. Leslie which would lead him to take the Chief Reporter’s side.

*Mr. Duthie.*: It is all in the report.

Mr. SPRAGG examined.

*The Chairman.*: Has the Committee any questions to ask Mr. Spragg?

*Mr. Pirani.*] I would like to ask Mr. Spragg if he remembers the time when Mr. Grey was in charge of the *Hansard* staff?—I remember it; but I really do not think it is worth going into.

Mr. Grey puts himself down as an authority as to how the chief of the *Hansard* staff should do his work. Mr. Grey had an opportunity of doing the same work, and I want to know if those members engaged with him were satisfied he would make a satisfactory chief?—The trouble which Mr. Leslie referred to between Mr. Grey and a member of the staff when Mr. Grey was in charge arose from a mistake. I was put in the gallery, and the “turns” were subsequently changed, when in Committee, from fifteen minutes to half an hour. The House resumed, and I had no time

*ERRATUM.*

In line 19, page 8 (Mr. Leslie's examination), the words "What do you mean in your statement" should read "What does Mr. Grey mean in his statement."



to intimate this. After I had taken twenty-five minutes' notes, Mr. Grey put on five-minute "turns," which would have brought me in half an hour's notes, against the other members' five minutes.

*Mr. Hogg.*] With regard to the necessity or desirability of the Chief Reporter taking his "turn," you consider it is not necessary, Mr. Spragg? Do you think, if a Chief Reporter were engaged, he should take his "turn?"—He would need to be able to do his work, as Mr. Barron has done his, before he would be qualified to manage and control the staff.

*Mr. Carncross.*] What is your opinion with regard to Mr. Barron's position being a sinecure?—I certainly do not consider Mr. Barron's position a sinecure.

If another reporter were engaged it would lessen the work?—Yes.

Mr. GEDDIS examined.

*The Chairman:* Has the Committee any questions to ask Mr. Geddis?

*Mr. Grey:* If I may be allowed, Mr. Chairman, I should like to put a question to Mr. Geddis.

*Mr. Grey* (to Mr. Geddis).] You remember the time when Mr. Barron was taken ill, in the latter end of 1893, Mr. Geddis?—Yes, I have a distinct recollection of it.

You are aware that I was in charge of the staff during Mr. Barron's absence?—Yes.

In what way did I perform those duties, so far as the staff was concerned?—In my opinion you performed them in a perfectly satisfactory manner. As to the alteration which Mr. Leslie has referred to as having arisen between yourself and another member of the staff, it was so trivial a circumstance that I do not consider any other member of the staff gave a thought to it in the following week, and I am surprised that it should be raked up to-day. If I may be allowed, I should like to make some reference to a point far more material than this. Mr. Leslie has called in question the statement in my evidence about "too limited time for transcription." I wish, therefore, to set forth the grounds upon which that statement rests. On every day on which both Houses are sitting five reporters are available for service in the House, and two are detailed for service in the Council. The five reporters who are engaged in reporting the House proceedings take quarter-hour "turns" in regular rotation, and therefore each of them has an interval of an hour in which to transcribe his "turn." But, as an average quarter-hour "turn" produces four columns of *Hansard*—that is to say, two pages—an hour is quite inadequate for the transcription. The case of the Council reporters is harder still. Their "turns" are half an hour in duration, just double those in the House, and consequently would each average about eight columns or four pages of *Hansard*; and, as these reporters take their "turns" in regular alternation, they have only half an hour for the transcription of each "turn," until the Council rises. It must therefore be obvious to the Committee that the time allowed for transcription is utterly insufficient; and, with only half an hour off in the case of the two Council reporters, it is simply preposterous to say it is adequate.

Mr. Geddis, I have also acted on very many occasions as Chief Reporter, have I not?—On various occasions.

Have I performed the duties satisfactorily?—As far as I am concerned, I consider them to have been satisfactorily performed.

You are aware I was the originator of the new "turns"?—I am not aware whether or not you were the originator of them. For all I know, they may have been tried before I joined the staff.

You know that I introduced them, at any rate, during Mr. Barron's absence?—Yes.

Did that system work satisfactorily?—Yes, it worked to the relief of the staff.

Do you know whether the result was satisfactory to the members whose speeches were reported?—I have heard so.

Do you know that the Colonial Treasurer has expressed his satisfaction with the reporting of his speeches under the shortened "turn" system?—I have heard it said that he has expressed his satisfaction.

*Mr. Leslie.*] Was it with your knowledge or consent any further steps were taken after Mr. Barron's reply was sent to the staff?—I was a consenting party to the matter being brought before the Committee.

*Mr. Pirani.*] What was done after Mr. Barron sent his answer to the staff?—I cannot say.

*Mr. Carncross.*] What is your opinion, Mr. Geddis, with regard to Mr. Barron's position being a sinecure?—Mr. Barron can take down from dictation a portion of the notes of any reporter, and transcribe them on the typewriter for him; but in taking no share in the reporting he can render no expert assistance to the staff, except in giving directions on those points which members of the staff may refer to him; for instance, as to whether certain debates should be reported in the first or third person, or whether matter which may seem to be extraneous or trivial should be reported at all. These are points which any one in charge would give the necessary directions for the purpose of securing uniformity of action on the part of the staff.

Then Mr. Barron's position is not altogether a sinecure, is it?—No; but it involves no expert work. As to the relative value of service rendered by an amanuensis, as compared with the work of a gallery note-taker, Mr. Berry struck the nail on the head when in his written evidence he stated that one note-taker in the gallery was worth four or five amanuenses. I fully indorse that opinion.

Mr. BERRY examined.

*The Chairman.*] Mr. Berry, have you any further statement to make in addition to the replies given by you to the questions forwarded to you by the Committee?—No; I have nothing to add.

*Mr. Grey.*] Mr. Berry, do you remember the period during which I acted as Chief Reporter?—Yes.

Did I perform the duties satisfactorily?—Yes; I had nothing to complain of.

What is your opinion of my alterations with regard to the duration of "turns"? Was the shortenings of the "turns" a relief?—Certainly, a great relief.

You think it is a relief to the members of the staff and does greater justice to the speakers?—Yes.

*Mr. Leslie.*] Was it with your knowledge anything further was done after Mr. Barron replied to the letter of the 31st August?—I was not consulted. As regards the request to Mr. Barron drawn up by myself, the statement made by Mr. Spragg is true.

Mr. RUSSELL examined.

*The Chairman.*] Mr. Russell, have you any further statement to make in addition to the replies given by you to the questions forwarded to you by the Committee?—I have nothing to add to my written answers. I still maintain the consensus of evidence is in favour of an additional reporter being engaged. If this was done, I think the Chief Reporter need not take his "turn," considering Mr. Barron's long service. The work is heavy at times, especially in the Council, where half-hour "turns" are taken, and with the assistance of another note-taker when a big debate is going on there, the work would be got through more expeditiously.

*The Chairman:* Has the Committee any questions to ask Mr. Russell?

*Mr. Carnecross.*] What is your opinion, Mr. Russell, with regard to Mr. Barron's position being a sinecure?—It is not a sinecure.

You recommend that another note-taker be engaged?—Yes.

If another note-taker were engaged do you still consider that Mr. Barron should go into the gallery?—It would not be necessary with eight note-takers, and I think Mr. Barron's length of service entitles him to consideration in that respect.

*Mr. Grey.*] Mr. Russell, you have had experience of my acting in the capacity of Chief Reporter. What is your opinion with regard to this?—I have no fault to find with you.

What is your opinion of the result of the short "turns"?—They are certainly a great benefit, and I understand Mr. Ward has expressed his appreciation of the five-minute "turns," as indicated in his proofs.

Are you aware that Mr. Ward says he finds a decided difference in reading the proofs—that is, he has not so many corrections to make in the five-minute "turns" as in the fifteen-minute "turns"?—Yes.

*Mr. Leslie.*] Mr. Russell, was it with your knowledge or consent any further steps were taken after Mr. Barron's reply was sent to the staff?—I cannot answer that question.

Mr. GREY further examined.

*Mr. Pirani.*] Mr. Grey, something has been said about representations being made to the Premier, and how a letter to Mr. Barron went further. I would like you to explain?—A matter of common conversation amongst members and others last session was, "What has become of Mr. Barron, I never see him in the gallery now"? I answered, "Oh, he has retired from taking notes in the gallery."

Did you make representations to the Premier with regard to the matter?—The matter was known to the Government last year.

But this year?—I represented that the staff was being overworked, that it was being "sweated"; that we had made representations to Mr. Barron, and if further representations were not made we would continue to suffer, and a gross injustice would be done to us.

*Mr. G. Hutchison.*] To a Minister?—Yes.

*Mr. Duthie.*] If Mr. Seddon says it was to him it would be correct?—If Mr. Seddon says it was to him that statement would be perfectly correct.

When did you make that representation?—When we found we could not get justice done, and after receipt of Mr. Barron's high-handed reply, it was evident to me the matter could not be allowed to rest there. I objected to being sweated any longer.

Mr. GORE examined.

*Mr. Leslie (to Mr. Gore).*] Was it with your knowledge or consent, Mr. Gore, further steps were taken after Mr. Barron's reply was sent to the staff?—No.

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