

former than of the latter being sold. These facts give some indication of what the Government is missing in the way of a market for its publications, by its failure either to advertise them or to offer them to the public in a readable form.

During the last few years the national publishing business has been the subject of inquiries on the part of a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which has issued annual reports. In 1906 this Committee reported as follows: "It is estimated that in 1905, 2,670,000 copies of Parliamentary papers were printed, of which 1,460,000 were distributed to the Houses of Parliament and public departments, and 750,000 were sold; leaving 460,000 for reserve. Probably one-half of the latter number will be sold for waste paper. The Sessional Papers for 1904 contained 140,000 separate pages, and occupied seventeen feet of shelving. The average cost of printing these publications for the last five years was £94,812." In addition there are "Stationery Office publications," which cost £33,365 in 1904-5, and "Departmental Documents," which cost £330,125. The total cost of printing official publications of all classes in 1904-5 was £456,852. But a large proportion of the "departmental documents" are not reports placed upon sale for the benefit of the public; some of them (such as the "Educational Pamphlets" issued by the Board of Education) are sold, but others, which might with advantage be published, are withheld in a spirit of unnecessary secretiveness.

The House of Commons Select Committee has concerned itself during the past seven years almost exclusively with the question of saving waste in the printing of unnecessary matter or the adoption of expensive styles of printing, in the methods of contracting with printing houses, in the conduct of the Stationery Office, etc. It has achieved considerable results in this direction, for which

it may receive due credit. But it has shown little conception of the problem of how to use the machinery of government publishing as a means of raising the standard of political thought throughout the community. Its report in 1906 contained only a few brief remarks on the distribution and sale of Parliamentary Papers. The contracts for the sale of these papers throughout the United Kingdom all expire in 1914: the moment therefore is opportune to consider how the national publishing department may be best made to subserve the needs not only of administrators and of specialists, but of a thinking democracy.

Into the details of this problem we cannot enter. They embrace questions of the shape, size, and price of publications; the desirability of a more generous free distribution to public libraries; and the possibility of disseminating information in a summarised form as well as in full reports. There is the further question of the popularisation of the many existing government newspapers and journals, such as the Labour Gazette. The methods of advertising and selling all publications need careful consideration; and it is worth noting here that the Select Committee of 1906 suggested that Parliamentary Papers might be advertised, ordered, and paid for in any post office.

As a further development, the Government might with advantage assist in organising the sale, collection, and distribution of the publications of local authorities. Outside London, we believe, no local authority has arranged for the marketing of its publications in anything like an efficient manner. If the Government adopted a proper system of selling its own publications, it could easily arrange for standardising the prices and placing on sale all the reports and other documents issued by local authorities. At the same time it might perform an additional public