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MR. HARTNEY'S FURTHER, OR SECOND, REPORT.

COMMITTEE ROOM, 21st March, 1873.

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON PRINTING:

GENTLEMEN,—The present state of the Printing Services of Parliament require a further Report, which I have thought it better to submit separately, to be dealt with by the Committee as they may deem proper.

In December last, rumors were rife that there was to be a strike among the employés of the Contractor for the Printing. I called on the Contractor, and enquired as to their truth. He said he had heard that such was the intention, but did not seem inclined to take any action in the matter. I impressed on him that, being fully employed as he then was in printing the blue books, if a strike did take place, that the disorganization which must follow, would involve such serious loss of time, that he would be unable to recover himself before the work of the session would commence; and I urged upon him the necessity of looking seriously into the matter, and to let me know the result. He wrote to me a few days afterwards, stating that he had satisfactory evidence that a strike was to take place in his establishment on the eve of the meeting of Parliament, if the demands then to be made for increased rates of pay were not acceded to. He also stated that he was not in a position to meet those demands, having lost money under the contract for the past two years, and asking relief. That letter I handed to the Minister of Justice. He seemed to consider the matter as very serious, and asked me if I could make any suggestion. I answered that I considered the provisions of the Contract could not, under any circumstances, be infringed upon, but to meet the present emergency, and to avoid the serious embarrassment that must follow a stoppage of work so close to the Session, I would recommend that we should become responsible, week by week, for the advance of wages demanded, and so carry the Contractor through till the organization of the Committee. He said he would bring the matter before Council. I have received no communication as to the result; but on applying for the return of Mr. Taylor's letter that I might lay it before the Committee, I received from Mr. Drinkwater, the Secretary, a note, stating that, after diligent search, the letter could not be found, and suggesting I should apply to Mr. Taylor for a copy. I enclosed that note to Mr. Taylor, and in reply he sent me the following letter, accompanied by a note stating he had kept no copy of the original, and that this one was made up from short hand notes taken at the time.

(Copy.)

Ottawa, December 6th, 1872.

HENRY HARTNEY, Esq.,
Clerk, Joint Committee on
Printing of Parliament.

SIR,—I deem it right to call your attention to the position in which I am placed in relation to my contract for the Printing of Parliament.

Since I tendered for (in May 1869) and entered into the contract for the performance of that work, the price of labour and material has advanced to such an unprecedented and unexpected extent, that all my calculations, based on the state of things then existing, have been entirely overthrown. The price of labour has at least increased 25 per cent. and I have reliable information that a further increase will most certainly be demanded by my men in a very few days, to take effect from the 1st of January—making the increase, over the prices at the time I tendered, fully 40 per cent.