

said the paper was the most interesting he had ever heard read before the Association.

LAW OF LIBEL

Mr. John King, Q.C., of Berlin, explained recent changes in the Law of Libel, and the further amendments it was desirable should be made thereto. The definition of newspaper at present was a paper, the issues of which were published within 26 days. It was important that the time should be extended to 31 days, and the definition would then include monthly papers. He thought there was a good deal of doubt as to whether reports of public meetings containing libellous matter were privileged, and whether the newspaper publishing such reports was not liable to prosecution. It would be important to remove such a doubt and have it clearly stated that such reports were privileged if the reports were published in good faith. Another important amendment would be to change the law so that it should not be presumed a libel was malicious, and shifting the onus of proving malice on the prosecutor. Still another amendment advisable to secure in the law was that no prosecution for any defamatory article should be instituted without an order from a judge of proper criminal jurisdiction being first had and obtained.

A lengthy discussion followed.

Mr. Pattullo urged prompt action to get the desired amendments made. The new Criminal Code would soon go into force, and unless the Minister of Justice could be waited upon before that took place, it would be of little use trying to do anything afterwards. He suggested the appointment of a Committee for that purpose to co-operate with Mr. King. He also suggested that Sir Oliver Mowat be waited upon with a view to getting desired legislation from the Ontario Government.

Mr. Preston, of the *Brantford Expositor*, thought an amendment was necessary in order to protect newspaper publishers from frivolous charges.

Mr. J. S. Willison, editor *Toronto Globe*, was of the same opinion. Since his connection with the *Globe*, as editor, three or four frivolous cases had been brought against it and, although his paper had won, it was out some \$1,400.

Mr. McGillicuddy said that he had had several libel suits, and although he generally came out ahead in the courts, financially he was usually behind.

Mr. Dingman, *Stratford Herald*: The only libel we ever figured in we came out \$50 ahead.

Several members: Give us the receipt.

Mr. Ireland, of the *North Star*, Parry Sound, had only had one libel suit. It was for \$10,000 and he had settled by paying the plaintiff's lawyers \$45, and his own had cost him about the same amount.

Mr. McKay, of the *Windsor Record*, said that during the past eighteen months he had spent about \$1,150 fighting libel suits, although he had succeeded in three out of the four suits brought against him. He contended that further amendments were necessary in the matter of costs.

Mr. Climie, of the *Bowmanville Sun*: I think there should be an amendment limiting the power of the lawyers to impose fees. (Laughter.)

Mr. Pattullo: As newspaper men we don't want to protect anyone who is a libeller. We want protection for honest and conscientious publishers, something which we are very far from having at present.

On motion of Mr. A. F. Pirie, seconded by Mr. McGillicuddy, Messrs. E. E. Sheppard, P. D. Ross and J. A. McKay were appointed a Committee to confer with Mr. King as to the amendments to the criminal and civil laws relating to libel, and to report the next afternoon.

PUBLIC JOURNALS AS MOULDERS OF PUBLIC OPINION

Mr. E. E. Sheppard, of *Toronto Saturday Night*, delivered an address on the subject: "Public Journals as Moulders of Public Opinion." He began by saying that he was sorry that owing to his absence from the city he had been unable to prepare a paper on this subject as he had promised he would do. Too much, he said, was expected of newspapers in the way of moulding public opinion. Much could not be done for \$1.00 a year. The newspapers did not believe that their chief business was to mould public opinion; it was to make the paper pay, and to mould it in such away as to make the most money out of it. "We should not presume too much in the way of moulding public opinion. The newspaper is a commercial concern." Newspaper publishing was one of the businesses that every man thinks he can run. The teacher believes that if he could get the type he could start a newspaper. It is the man who edits the newspaper that moulds public opinion; not the newspaper. "In order to mould public opinion the people must believe that we are sincere. That we are trying to do right. That we cannot be coerced into doing wrong." He said that newspaper men should not expect to mould public opinion when they accepted advertisements of a questionable character. The line between the advertising and editorial columns was also becoming less defined, and instanced as proof the practice of editorially puffing every financial institution that gave the paper its annual report. He believed that if the men that wrote the leading articles in a newspaper were to sign their names the tendency would be to increase the power of the press as a moulder of public opinion. "No doubt newspapers sway public opinion, but I don't think they mould it. And of all newspapers that pretend