

plenty of time on their hands, and not much income, and these prefer to consult reports in the library of the bar, or in the office of a friend or senior partner, rather than become the proprietors of a copy under a compulsory tax. But a larger number seemed to object to the scheme, because it made them liable to an assessment without their knowing precisely what they were to receive for it. The reports, it was stated, were to be issued under the direction of a committee, which naturally would be of uncertain and varying composition, and there was no guaranty that the work would be acceptable to the profession. They were asked, in short, to buy a pig in a bag, and to bind themselves to repeat the transaction in every future year.

*Prima facie*, this objection has considerable force. Independent work is usually better done than official work. Those who take up a task because they have some special aptitude or liking for it, generally work better than those who assume an office merely because there is a certain number of dollars attached to it. In England, for centuries, there were none but independent reporters, and many of these early reports are of conspicuous merit.

But the great argument urged in favour of an official report, is that it would supersede all others, and avoid the duplication of the same cases in contemporaneous series in different hands. In answer to this, the objection was stated at the meeting of the bar, that there was no certainty of such a result, and that the effect might simply be to saddle the profession with an additional report of indifferent quality. This was a serious objection, to which the solitary representative of the general council present at the meeting had no answer to make. Unfortunately, judging by the experience elsewhere, the objection has considerable strength. In England, for example, there was no attempt at an official report until 1866. At that time, the contemporary reports cost about \$200 per annum. The bar then established the Law Reports, which it was expected would supersede all others. But what was the result? Notwithstanding the large staff employed on the Law Reports, and the great number of volumes published, the profession have con-

tinued to sustain three other independent systems covering the same ground. These are the Law Journal Reports, the Law Times Reports, and the Weekly Reporter. Recently, a fifth series, in connection with the London *Times*, has been established, and appears to prosper.

Our own experience here, as far as it goes, is to the same effect. Two years ago, knowing that many members of the profession were in favour of more systematic and complete reports, but knowing also that the feeling of the majority would resist taxation for this purpose, the writer went to Toronto to collect all the information available, in order to see how far the Ontario system (which includes the cost of the reports in the annual fees,) could be adapted to a voluntary system here. The result of our investigation was the establishment of the MONTREAL LAW REPORTS, in connection with this journal. This system was established after consultation with, and with the unanimous concurrence of the editorial committee of the *Jurist*, who had represented it for 27 years, from its first issue. It was fully expected that the new scheme, so far as Montreal was concerned, would have embraced and consolidated the promiscuous reports then existing. In the result, however, the printer of the *Jurist* announced his intention of continuing the work on his own account, even at a loss, and the expectation of a general consolidation, without which the new system would not have been undertaken, was defeated. The natural result of duplication is not only vexatious to the profession, but renders the work of reporting extremely unprofitable. This, in turn, affects the completeness of the reports, for those engaged in the work can only afford to devote a portion of their time to it, and sufficient assistance can not be paid for. The united profits of all the legal publications in this Province, it is safe to say, do not amount to one half of the sum paid to those engaged on the Toronto system of reports. There, the scheme of an official report has certainly succeeded well, but it must be remembered that the legal business centres in one city, instead of being scattered over many districts, there is but one language, and the profession is nearly double in