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Miscellaneous Stamp Journals Volume 30

British Quarterly Review Feb. 1852

130057 Coke - Foreign St. Advertiser June 1873

130081 Tozer - Amateur Exchange Mart - Apr 80 to Mar 81

130088 Spink - Monthly Philatelist Oct. 1880 Nov 82.

Stamp Society - Rules - 1881.

130092 Davill - Phil Advertiser May 81 - Apr 82.

130093 Heedmann Phil. Star. Wk 81 - Nov 85.

130099 Nunn - St. James Gazette Jan 82 - Apr 82.

130100 Stevens Phil Observer Jan 82 - Feb 82.

130101 Whitfield King Philotypist Jan 1882.

130110 Sayer Philatelic Press Dec 1883.

130120 Mortimer Collector Dec 84 - Aug 85.

130130 Laphouse Oxford Phil. Monthly Jan - July 85.

130133 Lloyd Hints to St. Collectors. May 1886.

120015 Bunkley Blunson N.S.W. St Col May Nov. 79 - 81.

120022 Vinden N.S.W. St Col May. Aug 1882.

120018 Henderson New Zealand S.C. Quarterly Oct 80.

120019 Henderson Philatelic Times May July 1881. ^{about the} ~~American~~

120017 Stanley Australian S.C. Journal Nov 79. Feb 80.

Crawford 2426

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The British Quarterly

Tiffany



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REVIEW.
No. XXIX. February 1852

ART. V.—*Report from the Select Committee on Newspaper Stamps.*
Ordered by the House of Commons to be Printed 18th July,
1851.

AMIDST all that deluge of blue books which the Parliamentary press is continually pouring forth, to the great horror of Colonel Sibthorp and his friends, there has seldom appeared one possessing such claims to public notice as the Report from the Select Committee on Newspapers, with the accompanying evidence, small as the acceptance of these documents has been among the daily papers. The committee, as will be remembered, was appointed last April, on the motion of Mr. Milner Gibson, 'to inquire into the present state and operation of the law relating to newspaper stamps, and also into the law and regulations relative to the transmission of newspaper and other publications by post.' It consisted of the following members:—Sir William Molesworth, Sir Thomas Frankland Lewis, Sir Joshua Walmsley, Colonel Mure, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Gibson, Mr. Ewart, Mr. Tuffnell, Mr. Ker Seymer, Mr. Rich, Mr. Stafford, Mr. G. A. Hamilton, Mr. Chichester Fortescue, Mr. Shafto Adair, and Mr. Sotheron; but as neither Sir William Molesworth, Mr. Ker Seymer, nor Colonel Mure, appear to have attended any of the meetings of committee, their names may as well be struck off the list. Those who attended most punctually were—Mr. Milner Gibson, chairman of the committee, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Ewart, and Sir Joshua Walmsley. The principal witnesses examined were Mr. Joseph Timm, solicitor to the Board of Inland Revenue; Mr. T. Keogh, assistant secretary to the Board of Inland Revenue; Mr. Rowland Hill, secretary to the Post-master General; Mr. R. Parkhurst, senior clerk in the secretary's office of the Post Office; Mr. Bokenham, superintending president of the Inland Post Office; Mr. W. E. Jackson, late editor of the *Westminster Review*; Mr. Mowbray Morris, manager of the *Times*; Mr. F. K. Hunt, editor of the *Daily News*; Mr. John Cassell, newspaper publisher and proprietor; Mr. Alexander Russell, editor of the *Scotsman*; Mr. Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*; Mr. W. H. Smith, newspaper agent, London; Mr. Abel Heywood, newspaper agent, Manchester; Mr. Whitty, editor and proprietor of the *Liverpool Journal*; Mr. C. D. Collett, secretary to the Newspaper Stamp Abolition Society; Mr. T. Hogg, secretary to the Lancashire and Cheshire Union of Mechanics' Institutions; the Reverend Thomas Spencer; and Mr. Henry Cole. Most of these witnesses were examined at

considerable length, and as the greater number of them were thoroughly conversant with the newspaper trade, their evidence contains a large mass of interesting information on the subject, from which many valuable deductions may be obtained.

The committee commenced its labours by subjecting the two official representatives of the Board of Inland Revenue to a rather severe examination, with a view to ascertain their opinion of what the law for regulating the publication of newspapers actually is. On this point Mr. Timm, solicitor to the Board, was quite as explicit as any lawyer could be upon so complicated a question. First of all, he stated that any person who prints a paper liable to stamp duty as a newspaper, on unstamped paper, incurs a penalty of 20*l.* for every copy thus published. This seems very plain at first sight, but then comes the puzzling question as to what constitutes liability to pay the penny stamp duty. Mr. Timm is utterly unable to see any difficulty in the case. The practice of the Board has always been to consider 'any paper containing public news, intelligence, or other occurrences, printed in any part of the United Kingdom, to be dispersed and made public, as liable to stamp duty.' Now, although we must admit that this is a very comprehensive definition of what is to be considered a newspaper, it is very far from being precise. It turns out also that the Board has not had quite so much confidence in the clause as to apply it without discrimination. Many publications containing a considerable quantity of news are not deemed liable to the duty, although published weekly; while humbler periodicals not containing news, and published only once a month, have been put down by the arbitrary mandate of the Board, which thus usurps the odious un-English character of a literary censorship. The *Athenæum*, the *Builder*, the *Legal Observer*, the *Architect*, and some forty or fifty other weekly papers of a mixed character, are all at liberty to publish without the stamp duty; while cheap periodicals, though only published once in four weeks, and with much less resemblance to newspapers, have been given up, in consequence of a threatened prosecution by the Stamp Office authorities. It is so far satisfactory, however, that, since the Committee terminated its labours, the highest legal authority has given its decision against that overstrained interpretation of the law by which the Board of Inland Revenue has attempted to put down cheap monthly publications. The case of 'The Attorney General *v.* Bradbury and Evans,' for the publication of the *Household Narrative*, in defiance of the Board, was pending at the time of Mr. Timm's examination before the committee, and various questions were put to him regarding the strange delay which had occurred in bringing it to a decision. It appears that the Board, although always exceed-



ingly prompt to hang the terrors of the stamp laws over the head of any poor delinquent who is not likely to contest their usurped authority, was somewhat chary of meddling with a respectable firm. It is now nearly two years since Mr. Timm wrote his first letter to Messrs. Bradbury and Evans, warning them against the continuance of the *Household Narrative* without a stamp; and yet the case, which ultimately went before the Court of Exchequer, was allowed to hang over, on one excuse after another, till the beginning of last December. The important decision was given by Sir Frederick Pollock, who, in delivering judgment, admitted that the question was not free from doubt, but the benefit of the doubt was very properly given to the defendant. His opinion was summed up as follows—

‘Looking at the whole course of the statutes on this subject, I think it has been considered by the legislature that a certain infrequency of publication gives to a publication the character of a chronicle or history, and not that of a newspaper; and however it may afford useful information, as it is not likely to compete successfully with the daily or weekly papers, it has not been rendered liable to the stamp duty. An interval of more than twenty-six days is what I think the legislature has fixed as the criterion. If the interval be twenty-six days or less, it is a newspaper, if it is more it is a chronicle or history: and the whole question turns on the distinction between news and history.’

This decision settles the question as to the legality of publishing unstamped monthly papers, containing news and interesting events, and it may also be considered as involving a condemnation of the Board of Inland Revenue, for the arbitrary manner in which they have interpreted the law during the last two or three years. Mr. Cobden referred to several monthly papers which had been suppressed within that period by a threat of prosecution.

‘I will mention the case of Mr. Bucknall, of Stroud, who published the *Stroud Free Press*, of which he sold 1700 copies monthly, and that paper was dropped. There was another paper, called the *Norwich Reformer's Gazette*, that was published monthly, under the belief that as it was at so long an interval it was not a newspaper. You threatened the publisher with a prosecution, and he being in a small way of business and in humble circumstances, discontinued the paper immediately. There were one or two papers published in Welsh which were discontinued in the same way. A mere letter from you frightened these poor people into submission, and they dropped their papers, saying that they had acted under the belief that the newspaper was not a newspaper if published monthly. They had purchased type, had made arrangements for reporting, and advertised their newspaper, and it was stopped because it was still a newspaper by your interpretation of the law, although published monthly.’

The case of these country publishers was a very hard one. And it appears even worse now in looking back to it, when we bear in mind, that the Board of Inland Revenue had not the sanction of law for the harshness of their proceedings, confident as Mr. Timm was on the subject. He was quite clear as to the liability of Mr. Dickens's *Household Narrative* to the stamp duty; and Mr. Keogh, the assistant secretary to the Board, was equally decided. The decision of the Court of Exchequer shows what value we must attach to the legal opinions of those two gentlemen in future. The Select Committee, after listening to all that the representatives of the Board could urge in favour of the wisdom and legality of its proceedings, points out the difficulty of carrying the law into effect with any degree of fairness, without exercising such a severity as would soon be found utterly intolerable. In their report to the House of Commons, they say—

‘It appears to your Committee, that, with respect to comments on news in cheap publications, the law has been allowed, to some extent, to sleep. One witness, extensively engaged in publishing periodicals of various kinds, pointed out the difficulty of keeping within the law about commenting on events; and it is notorious, that a great number of publications issued at intervals of less than twenty-six days, and at prices less than sixpence, by philanthropic, religious, political, and other societies, are published without a stamp, and contain comments and observations upon public events.

‘It appears to your Committee, that if the law imposing a stamp on public intelligence and on observations thereon were carried out, nearly all periodical printed matter, and a large portion of occasional printed matter, would be subjected to the stamp duty; whilst if it be understood that the law is not to be fully observed, much unequal competition must continue to arise between different publishers; and the Board of Inland Revenue will continue to be placed in the undesirable position of having to decide upon what periodicals the law is to be enforced, and in what cases its provisions may be dispensed with.’

Were there no other evil connected with the maintenance of the newspaper stamp duty than the one here described, the House of Commons could hardly resist the demand which has lately been made for the abolition of that iniquitous tax. Mr. Rich, who took an active part in the examination of witnesses, and who is strongly opposed to any change of the law, contends that there is very little dissatisfaction with the penny stamp; in proof of which he points to the small number of petitions presented against it during last session, compared with the number against the former stamp duty in 1836. But in making this comparison, Mr. Rich ought to bear in mind that the former

movement against the stamp duty was supported by a considerable portion of the newspaper press, while the agitation for the abolition of the penny stamp is either opposed or passed over in silence by nearly all the leading journals of the present day. The warmest advocates of free trade and unrestricted competition, in every other branch of industry, shrink with unreasonable dislike from any application of those principles to that trade in which they are engaged. We are far from ascribing this reluctance of the press to agitate the question to mere selfish calculation on the part of its conductors. The slightest reflection on the subject must convince any one who knows much of the history of newspapers, that the proposed change would, in very few cases, injure the position of any well established journal, while the more successful papers would all derive more benefit from the change than any new organ of public opinion could reasonably hope to receive for many years.

One branch of the question upon which nearly all the witnesses appear to agree, is, the present anomalous state of the law relating to the transmission of newspapers, and other printed matter, by post. Not to speak of the gross injustice of making newspaper proprietors pay stamp duty on a large part of the impression of each paper, for which no postal advantages are received, it is clear that in many instances, the number of which is daily increasing, the stamp duty is not paid upon periodicals and other printed matter where postal advantages are obtained. This abuse appears to have arisen from the practice lately adopted by the Board of Inland Revenue, of allowing the publisher of any kind of printed matter, although it may not bear the slightest resemblance to a newspaper, to register it as one, and, under that guise, to send any number of tradesmen's circulars, or 'prices current,' through the Post-office at the rate of one penny, although weighing perhaps four ounces each. As the publishers of these registered circulars and prices current have, like the *Legal Observer*, and other favoured periodicals, the privilege of stamping a portion of their impression, and printing what number they please on unstamped paper,—the result is, that many unstamped papers are sent through the Post-office, thereby defrauding the revenue of a considerable amount annually. Nor does it appear that any means can be adopted to prevent such frauds upon the Post-office from going on and even increasing considerably. The great increase of work which the clerks are now obliged to perform, in the sorting and dispatching of so many newspapers, circulars, prices current, and other printed matter, renders them careless in examining whether the papers which pass through their hands are all stamped. Their instructions are to examine,

in certain cases, if the time admits of such an examination. But there is seldom time for any such scrutiny, and the consequence is, as Mr. Rowland Hill remarks, that 'no effective examination takes place.' Under the present lax state of the law, and the carelessness in the Post-office, produced by that laxity, a person who purchases an unstamped copy of *Punch*, the *Athenæum*, the *Builder*, the *Legal Observer*, or any of the other fifty London papers enjoying the same privilege, may send it by post to a friend in the country without much chance of the fraud being discovered. The truth is, that the Post-office cannot afford to make such an examination as would be required to prevent such frauds. The only remedy against this abuse is the one suggested by the Committee. All newspapers and other printed matter passing through the Post-office, must pay a certain rate of postage, according to weight.

Another gross abuse of the newspaper postage law, although not viewed in that light by the public, is the privilege which all newspapers enjoy, of being carried free of postage as many times as the persons receiving them may choose. A letter, though so much less in size and weight, is not carried more than one post for one payment; but a newspaper may be sent up and down the country some twenty or thirty times without incurring any charge at all. This remarkable privilege, which is urged by some of the witnesses as an unanswerable argument in favour of the retention of the penny stamp, was never contemplated by Mr. Spring Rice when the reduction of the duty took place. By the law passed at that time, to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the conveyance of newspapers by post, it was enacted that 'newspapers re-directed shall be forwarded free of postage, if not opened.' This clause proves beyond all doubt what the intention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was in 1836; and it was stated by Mr. Hill, before the Select Committee, that the Post-office authorities, who consider the present custom an abuse, have lately had the subject under deliberation, with a view to ascertain what measures ought to be adopted to prevent newspapers from passing more than once through the Post-office without payment. On the other hand, Mr. W. H. Smith, the extensive newspaper agent, appears to think that the chief value of the newspaper stamp consists in its giving this privilege of repeated transmission. Taking the whole of the newspapers that are sent by post, it would appear from his evidence that, on an average, each paper passes through the Post-office three times; so that, as Mr. Cobden shrewdly remarked, 'the Post-office is not getting a penny per newspaper for carrying, but only one-third of a penny.' If Mr. Smith's

estimate be correct, it is no wonder that the Post-office authorities should have come to the conclusion that the cost of carrying and delivering the whole of the newspapers sent by post is greater than the whole amount received in the shape of newspaper stamp duty. A still more important inference to be drawn from the above estimate, is the gross injustice of imposing a tax upon the whole of the newspapers published in Great Britain, on account of postal services, when little more than one-fifth part of the papers thus taxed are ever sent through the Post-office at all. According to Mr. Rowland Hill, the number of newspapers passed through the Post-office in 1849 was 65,500,000; and as, in this estimate, a newspaper is counted every time it passes through the office, we must divide the gross amount by three—the average number of transmissions—in order to ascertain the actual number of newspapers thus sent. Putting the two estimates of Mr. Smith and Mr. Hill together, it thus appears that, of the 90,000,000 of stamps consumed annually, not quite 22,000,000 are sent through the Post-office, leaving upwards of 68,000,000—considerably more than three-fourths of the whole—without any return for the penny stamp which has been paid upon each. By some newspapers the injustice may not be much felt. The editor of the *Scotsman*, for example, is of opinion that the penny is a ‘favourable arrangement for the newspapers on the whole.’ He does not consider it a tax, but ‘a payment made to the Post-office for services, which he does not think could be so efficiently performed in any other way for much more cost.’ On that point, however, Mr. Rowland Hill—the highest authority on such a question—gives very different evidence. He seems to think that, under a postage tax instead of the stamp duty, it would be difficult to compete with the news-agents; but he evidently calculates that the proposed postage of one penny on each paper would be amply remunerative. In reply to a question on that head, he says, ‘I believe that a penny per paper would remunerate us under any circumstances; but, if we attempted to beat down competition, we should be obliged, in the large towns where we delivered a great many, to deliver them for less than a penny.’ He subsequently states that, in the event of a large increase taking place in the number of newspapers sent by post, the net revenue from that source would be considerably improved, as the expenses of the establishment would not be much increased.

Taking all things into account, then, it appears that, if the stamp duty were entirely abolished, the Post-office would find it profitable to carry newspapers for one penny each. This once ascertained, the task of devising a scheme by which not only

newspapers, but cheap periodicals of every kind, may be included under one cheap postage system, cannot be very difficult. First of all, it might be enacted that the maximum weight to be carried by a single stamped envelope should be four ounces, that being about the weight of a copy of the *Times* with a single supplement. Mr. Hill does not contemplate fixing a lower rate than a penny; but there we think he is wrong. Without speaking of *Chambers' Journal*, *Household Words*, the *Family Herald*, and many other highly useful cheap weekly publications, to which the privilege of cheap postage would be a great boon, we must remember that the change in the law would doubtless call into existence a large number of small cheap newspapers, in London and elsewhere. If these could be transmitted by post for a halfpenny each, the working classes would be enabled to participate much more largely in the benefits resulting from the proposed reform, than they can possibly do with a postage duty equal to the whole price of the paper they may wish to purchase. Should Government decide upon issuing halfpenny stamped envelopes for all newspapers, and other printed matter not exceeding two ounces in weight, the Post-office revenue from the carriage of newspapers would soon equal that which Government now derives from the penny stamp, as the privilege would doubtless give a great impetus to the newspaper trade.

Mr. Rich, who, as one of the two representatives of the insignificant town, or rather village, of Richmond, must naturally be in favour of things as they are, expresses himself strongly against any change in the law regarding newspapers. In a draft report which he presented to the committee, he remarked that 'generally the demand, unless strongly checked, governs the supply. In the present healthy state of the periodical press, and of public opinion in respect to it, there are no signs of an obstructed demand. The press seems fully to supply the demand which education creates; and there is much plain good sense in the observation of Mr. Greeley, the publisher of the *New York Tribune*, that the schools create a demand for newspapers, rather than that newspapers create a demand for reading.' Now it happens that the evidence of Mr. Horace Greeley, so far from bearing any such meaning as the one which Mr. Rich has given, told strongly in favour of cheap newspapers as tending to promote popular education. Mr. Greeley, who is editor and proprietor of one of the most widely-circulated journals in America, gave some interesting evidence regarding the newspaper press of the United States, from which we learn that, besides the *Tribune*, with an average circulation of 19,000, there are 14 other daily papers published in New York. He

estimates the entire daily aggregate issue of those 15 papers at 130,000, two-fifths of which are sent into the country, leaving 78,000 for the town circulation, or rather more than one copy to every ten inhabitants in New York. What a difference from the state of things in this country! From the stamp returns given in the Appendix to the Report of the Select Committee, it appears that the aggregate issue of the ten daily newspapers published in London, for a population of more than three times that of New York, is only about 65,000, of which it is estimated that only one-third is retained for the town circulation, giving rather less than one copy to every hundred inhabitants. In America, where the working classes are all well educated, nearly every mechanic takes a daily paper. In England a large portion of the labouring classes cannot read; and of those who can, it is only a small number who can afford even a weekly newspaper. Mr. Rich wished the Committee to agree to his proposition, that the limited circulation of newspapers in England, compared with the United States, is owing to the want of education among the working classes in this country; but, after hearing Mr. Greeley's opinion on that subject, they could hardly be expected to stultify themselves so completely as to embody such an untruth in their report. The following evidence of Mr. Greeley regarding the influence which cheap newspapers have in promoting a taste for reading—the foundation of all intellectual progress—will be read with much interest by the friends of education:—

Chairman. Your extensive circulation of those cheap newspapers is based, to some extent, upon the fact that your whole population can read?—*Mr. Greeley.* Yes.

‘Do not you consider that newspaper reading is calculated to keep up a habit of reading?—I think it is worth all the schools in the country. I think it creates a taste for reading in every child's mind, and it increases his interest in his lessons. He is attracted to study from the habit of always seeing a newspaper, and hearing it read.

‘Supposing that you had your schools as now, but that your newspaper press were reduced within the limits of the press in England, do not you think that the habit of reading acquired at school would be frequently laid aside?—I think that the habit would not be acquired, and that reading would often fall into disuse.

‘*Mr. Rich.* Does not the habit of reading create a demand for newspapers, rather than the supply of newspapers create a habit of reading?—I should rather say that the capacity that is obtained in the schools creates a demand for newspapers.

‘The greater number of persons who read in the United States accounts for the greater number of newspapers that are published, does it not?—There is no class in the Free States who do not know how to read, except the immigrant class.

‘But in proportion to the number of persons who can read will be the number of papers supplied?—Yes.

‘*Chairman.* But the means of obtaining cheap newspapers enables people to keep up their reading, does it not?—Yes.

‘*Mr. Ewart.* Must not the contents of a newspaper have a great effect upon the character of the population, and give a more practical turn to their minds?—I should think the difference would be very great between a population first educated in schools, and then acquiring the habit of reading journals, and an uneducated non-reading population.

‘If a man is taught to read first, and afterwards applies his mind to the reading of newspapers, would not his knowledge assume a much more practical form than if that man read anything else?—Every man must be practical. I think that the capacity to invent or improve a machine, for instance, is very greatly aided by newspaper reading, by the education afforded by newspapers.’

The whole of this evidence is amply corroborated by that of other witnesses, who, in describing the condition of our rural population, say they have always found that the most effectual thing to awaken a desire to learn to read, and keep up the habit of reading, is a local newspaper. Mr. Hickson, late editor of the *Westminster Review*, who has had excellent opportunities of studying the condition of the working classes, and who has paid much attention to the subject of education, says he has been frequently struck with the effect of newspapers in reference to the mere elementary art of reading. Boys who have attended the National and British Schools, where they were taught apparently to read, are often found afterwards to have lost all the knowledge they had acquired at school, so as not even to be able to read, simply from having nothing within their reach which could create the taste for reading:—‘All the knowledge acquired at school was just to spell painfully through a chapter of the New Testament, and nothing had been afterwards put into their hands that had sufficient novelty to induce them to keep up the habit of reading, till they had overcome the mechanical difficulty, and found a pleasure in the art.’ How very different this from the state of things in America, where, as Mr. Greeley remarks, ‘the child is attracted to study from the habit of always seeing a newspaper, and hearing it read.’

But the opponents of change express much fear lest a reduction in the price of newspapers should lead to the demoralization of the press. Mr. W. H. Smith, the most extensive newspaper agent in London, whose house has been carrying on that business ever since the first French Revolution, has a great dislike to cheap newspapers. Although forced to admit that the *Family Herald*, which is published at a penny, and sells 200,000 copies

weekly, is perfectly unexceptionable in its tone, he thinks 'it would not be possible for a newspaper publisher, at a penny or twopence, to publish at a profit, without pandering to a very immoral taste.' Mr. Mowbray Morris, manager of the *Times*, holds pretty much the same opinion regarding the evils which would accompany the abolition of the present newspaper monopoly. In his examination before the select committee he speaks, in the most self-satisfied, flippant tone, of the advantages which the public derive from the penny stamp; but his knowledge of the matter must be rather limited, as he says he 'knew nothing of newspapers except within the last four years.' Having expressed his decided conviction that the stamp improves the character of the English paper, he was asked whether he would not, therefore, be favourable to an increase of the duty, with a view to improve it still more. In reply he admits that 'there is a point at which it might,' but upon the whole he is very well pleased with things as they are. 'You have just hit the happy medium,' he says. 'You raise a considerable revenue without imposing any sensible burden.' Mr. Cobden having wished him to explain the process by which the penny stamp improves the tone of the press, his answer was, that it does so by confining the production of newspapers to a few great capitalists. Were the business thrown open to men of moderate capital, he is afraid that the character of the press would be greatly lowered. 'You would have different kinds of papers published—papers advocating perhaps opinions not quite so advantageous to society as are now advocated by the press.' As for the common objection to the stamp, that it prevents a large portion of the people from reading newspapers, on account of their dearness, he can see no force in it. He finds that 'the common people read the best newspapers now: the *Times*, for instance, is in the hands of large numbers of the common people.' Were the stamp abolished, he is afraid the common people might become fonder of some inferior newspaper. 'If it came to be a question in the Trades' Unions between the *Times* and some paper which advocated violent doctrines, and which pandered to the feelings of persons who are often excited, they would choose the latter.' He then proceeds, in the most absurd style, to prognosticate the evils which would result from free discussion, if the newspaper trade were thrown open, in utter ignorance of the notorious fact that the penny unstamped periodicals are constantly in the habit of discussing these very questions from which he apprehends the most alarming danger to all our institutions. Speaking of seditious and blasphemous doctrines, he says, 'I would not care at all what was discussed by word of mouth, or what was said;

‘but if those things were written in leading articles I think they would do very great injury.’ Now it is well known to all who are familiar with our weekly periodical literature, that those things *are* written in the leading articles of various penny publications, as Mr. Morris may easily ascertain by sending for a shilling’s worth of last Saturday’s sedition and blasphemy ‘for the million.’ By referring to these cheap periodicals Mr. Morris will find, that in spite of his grand safeguard against free discussion, and in open defiance of the Stamp-office, the unstamped press is at this moment actively employed in discussing all the most exciting topics of the day. The only effect of the penny stamp is to prevent the circulation of news. Information of what has happened in the next street, or the next village; of what is going on in France, or any other part of the world; of what taxes are about to be imposed or repealed; of where a man might obtain better wages or more constant employment than he has at present: all these things are carefully withheld from the working man, unless the sheet on which they are contained has paid the enormous tax which the Stamp-office authorities demand of ‘one hundred per cent. on a penny newspaper.’ But the poor man is not prevented from reading, in cheap unstamped publications, the most daring speculations in religion or politics, coupled with the most flagrant perversion of facts, and the wildest appeals to his angry passions. In the face of such facts as these, what utter absurdity to talk of the newspaper stamp as no tax upon knowledge, but merely ‘a safeguard against the dissemination of blasphemous and anti-social doctrines!’

Mr. Morris is not singular, however, in his defence of the stamp duty as a means of preventing the diffusion of dangerous writings among the labouring class. The doctrine has long been current among that numerous class of persons who find it easier and more comfortable to take their opinions upon trust, than to be at the trouble of asking any evidence in support of them. On the other hand we have the concurrent testimony of all the best friends of progress in favour of abolishing all restrictions on the press. Lord Brougham, who laboured so manfully for many years in favour of the entire abolition of the newspaper stamp, and whose opinion on this question is of the highest value, had no fear of any danger to be apprehended from popular enlightenment. In his evidence before the select committee of the House of Commons on the libel law, in 1834, he made the following remarks on the advantages which the labouring class would derive from cheap newspapers:—

‘The people wish to read the news in which they take an interest, and in which it is fit they should take an interest. In public affairs

they are nearly concerned, and it is both their right and their duty to attend much to public affairs. I am of opinion that a sound system of government requires the people to read and inform themselves upon political subjects, else they are the prey of every quack, every impostor, and every agitator who may practise his trade in the country. If they do not read—if they do not learn—if they do not digest by discussion and reflection what they have read and learned—if they do not thus qualify themselves to form opinions for themselves, other men will form opinions for them; not according to truth and to the interests of the people, but to their own individual and selfish interests, which may, and most probably will, be contrary to that of the people at large. The best security for a government like this, for the legislature, for the crown, and generally for the public peace and morals, is, that the whole community should be well informed upon its political as well as its other interests; and it can be well informed only by having access to wholesome, sound, and impartial publications. Therefore they will and ought to read the news of the day, political discussions, political events, the debates of their representatives in parliament, and in the other house of parliament; and on not one of these heads can any paper be published, daily or weekly, without coming under the stamp law, consequently the people at large are excluded by the dear form in which alone the respectable publishers can afford it, while they pay the duty. If instead of newspapers being published for sixpence they could be sold for a penny, I have no manner of doubt there would immediately follow the greatest possible improvement in the tone and temper of the political information of the people, and therefore of the political character and conduct of the people. It is my decided and deliberate opinion, from very long and anxious consideration, that the danger is, not of the people learning too much, but knowing too little. It is no longer a question of whether they shall read or not; it is no longer a question whether they shall be instructed or not; it is no longer a question whether they shall be politicians, and take part in the discussion of their own interests or not,—that is decided long ago. The only question to answer, and the only problem is, how they shall read in the best manner; how they shall be instructed politically, and have political habits formed the most safe for the constitution of the country, and the best for their own interests. I can devise no other means than making that accessible at a cheap rate which at present they must have at a rate they cannot afford without having it bad as well as cheap. I wish to give it them both cheap and wholesome.

It would be difficult to add anything to the weight of these arguments, which apply with quite as much force now as they did in 1834. Many people fancied that the reduction of the stamp duty, which took place two years after that evidence was given, would lead to the publication of cheap newspapers for the million; but they soon found out their mistake. The late Mr. Charles Buller and Mr. H. Cole attempted to start a threepenny

newspaper under that impression; but after losing a good deal of money they were obliged to give it up. They found, as had been foretold by Lord Brougham, that the penny which was left when the stamp duty was reduced was the worst penny of all, as its retention just made the difference between being able to publish a cheap newspaper and not being able. Another obstacle to cheapness is the greatly enlarged size of newspapers compared with what they were formerly. This change, in which the *Times* has taken the lead, has been going rapidly forward during the last fifteen years, and threatens to go to the most absurd extent, unless checked, as it must necessarily be, by the abolition of the penny stamp, and the imposition of a postage tax on newspapers according to weight.

The only two witnesses connected with the press who opposed the abolition of the Stamp duty, were at pains to show that their doing so is from no fear that they would be injured by the change. Mr. Russell, editor of the *Scotsman*—the most prosperous paper in Edinburgh—is exceedingly well satisfied with things as they are; but he ‘thinks the effect of such a plan as ‘seems proposed, upon such a paper as his own, for instance, ‘would be to increase the circulation.’ In like manner the manager of the *Times*—the most prosperous newspaper ever published—while he endeavours to prove that the abolition of the stamp duty would not tend to the public advantage, takes care to add, that this opinion has not been drawn from selfish considerations. ‘In order that my opinions may not be thought ‘to be dictated by interest, I beg to state my conviction, that if ‘you take off the stamp duty, the commercial advantages to the ‘*Times* will be very great.’ Mr. F. K. Hunt, editor of the *Daily News*, and author of ‘*The Fourth Estate*,’ a clever history of the London newspaper press, thinks ‘the *Daily News*, the *Morning Chronicle*, and the *Herald*, would be improved in their position ‘by the removal of the stamp. The general circulation of papers ‘would be greatly increased, but some of them would be obliged ‘to infuse new blood and a more popular feeling into their ‘columns; for they would doubtless have a number of popular ‘rivals.’ Mr. Horace Greeley, who appears to be a shrewd man of business, and whose opinion could not be biased by any selfish motive, seemed to think that the abolition of the advertisement duty would be a greater boon than that of the stamp duty to all the London daily papers but one. When asked how he accounted for the great increase which has taken place in the circulation of the *Times* during the last fifteen years, while that of most other papers have gone down; his answer was, that it chiefly arose from the advertisement duty. ‘The limited circulation of papers

generally is caused by the stamp; but the advantage of any one journal must be caused by the advertisement duty, which, in effect, is charging ten times as much for an advertisement in one paper as in another. An advertisement in the *Times* may be worth 5*l.*, while in another paper it is worth only 1*l.*, but the duty is the same.' The obvious effect of this is to give a virtual monopoly of advertisements to one newspaper. 'Suppose the cost of a small advertisement is 5*s.* (the usual charge in the *Times*) if you have to pay 1*s.* 6*d.* duty it is not worth the duty in a journal with a fourth part of the circulation of the *Times*.' Viewing the question in this light, it is clear that the repeal of the advertisement duty would tend more than even the abolition of the stamp duty, to interfere with that monopoly which the *Times* now enjoys, and which has assumed so formidable a character as to render interesting a brief glance at its rapid rise and progress.

It is more than thirty years since the *Times* first claimed for itself the ambitious title of the 'leading journal of Europe,' and, with the exception of a violent, short-lived protest, now and then, against its right to any such distinction, the public has long ago acquiesced in its ambitious claim. Of late years the overwhelming superiority it has gained in circulation over all the other daily papers, partly by its advertisements, and, not less probably, by its liberal expenditure on literary talent and news, has led to the belief that its high position among newspapers is a thing of much older date than it really is. As a first-class newspaper, the *Morning Chronicle*, under Mr. Perry, who held the office of editor for forty years of the most brilliant period of its history, and under Mr. John Black, who succeeded him, bore a far higher character for genius and talent than the *Times* has ever done. But Mr. Black, although his masterly articles on politics and social life have never been surpassed in newspaper literature, was unfortunately not the proprietor and manager of the paper, as his predecessor had been. Mr. Perry was a man whose sound political principles, not less than his tact and talents, combined to give the *Morning Chronicle* that high character, as the organ of the liberal party, which it preserved for so many years, even after his death. But the proprietors who succeeded him cared for nothing but their dividends, or the personal influence which the command of so powerful an organ of public opinion might give them with the ministry of the day. Hence the success of Mr. Walter, chief proprietor and manager of the *Times*, the great object of whose long life had been to place that journal at the head of the metropolitan press, a task which he would never have accomplished had Mr. Perry

been succeeded in the proprietorship and management of the *Chronicle* by a man of such rare editorial talent, unflagging industry, and political honesty as he himself possessed. When he died, the copyright of the *Chronicle* was sold for 30,000*l.*, but the purchaser was not one who knew how to make a newspaper successful. For several years it languished in circulation, having fallen at one time to little more than 2000. Soon after the passing of the Reform Bill it was purchased by Mr. John Easthope, a stock-broker, for 17,000*l.*; and a large sum was expended for several years, with considerable success, in the attempt to raise it to its former position. But the old spirit had vanished from its columns. The Whigs were in office, and the *Chronicle* stuck to its old friends with much more fidelity than they deserved, or than its readers could tolerate. It is true, that Mr. Black still continued editor, but of what avail was his political consistency so long as a power behind the editorial chair, greater than the editor himself, was able to give the tone to the general politics of the paper? Had it been at that time under the management of a wise and liberal proprietary, of men to whom the control of a great political organ would have seemed a much greater thing than a paltry baronetcy, or a third-rate government appointment, the *Morning Chronicle* might now have been a much more influential newspaper than the *Times*, and little if at all inferior even in circulation. During the first two years after the reduction of the newspaper stamp duty, the *Chronicle* rapidly gained on its great rival, as will be seen at once by the following return of the number of stamps consumed by each:

	Times.	Morning Chronicle.
1837	3,065,000 1,940,000
1838	3,065,000 2,750,000

While the *Times* was standing still, in spite of the reduction in price, the *Chronicle* had actually increased 810,000. Then was the time to have adopted a bold and liberal course in the politics and management of the great Whig organ. But that would not have suited the personal views of Mr. (now Sir John) Easthope. The golden opportunity was lost, and the two following years placed such a distance between the circulation of the two papers, as to leave all chance of successful competition out of the question. The agitation against the new poor-law, mingled with chartism, rose to its full height in 1839, and bore along with it the great denouncer of the 'finality' Whig ministry and the 'Three Tyrants of Somerset House.' The circulation of the *Times* rose from 3,065,000 to 4,300,000 in that troublous year, while that of the *Chronicle* fell to 2,028,000. Instead of the distance between them being separated by the trifling difference

of 315,000 stamps a-year, it had leaped suddenly up to the formidable height of 2,272,000. Since that period the rapid increase in the circulation and advertisements of the *Times* is one of the most remarkable events in the history of the newspaper press. The author of 'The Fourth Estate' says it was during the editorship of Mr. Barnes that the *Times* acquired its great circulation. This is not quite correct; the most remarkable increase having taken place since his death, in the beginning of 1841. With the exception of 1843, which shows a slight decline, while the *Post* appears to have gained a great, but short-lived increase, the progress of the *Times* during the last eight years has been at the rate of nearly a million a-year. In order to show at one glance the fluctuations in the circulation of the morning papers since the reduction of the stamp duty, we have compiled the following table from the returns given in the appendix to the Report of the Select Committee:—

Year.	Times.	Morning Chronicle.	Morning Herald.	Morning Advertiser.	Morning Post.	Daily News.
1837	3,065,000	1,940,000	1,928,000	1,380,000	735,000	
1838	3,065,000	2,750,000	1,925,000	1,565,000	875,000	
1839	4,300,000	2,028,000	1,820,000	1,535,000	1,006,000	
1840	5,060,000	2,075,000	1,956,000	1,550,000	1,125,000	
1841	5,650,000	2,079,000	1,630,000	1,470,000	1,165,000	
1842	6,305,000	1,918,000	1,559,000	1,445,000	1,195,000	
1843	6,250,000	1,784,000	1,516,000	1,534,000	1,900,000	
1844	6,900,000	1,628,000	1,608,000	1,415,000	1,002,000	
1845	8,100,000	1,554,000	2,018,025	1,440,000	1,200,000	
1846	8,950,000	1,356,000	1,752,500	1,480,000	1,450,000	3,520,000
1847	9,205,280	1,233,000	1,510,000	1,500,000	990,000	3,477,000
1848	11,025,500	1,150,000	1,335,000	1,538,000	964,000	3,530,000
1849	11,300,000	937,500	1,147,000	1,528,000	905,000	1,375,000
1850	11,900,000	912,547	1,139,000	1,549,000	828,000	1,152,000

The most startling fact which this interesting table presents, is the overwhelming superiority which the *Times* has gained over all the other morning papers. In 1837 the aggregate number of stamps taken by the five morning papers then existing was 9,060,000, of which rather more than one third was taken by the *Times*. In 1850 the aggregate circulation of the morning press had nearly doubled, having risen to 17,840,000; but the whole of that increase and more has been monopolized by the *Times*. It has increased nearly 9,000,000 during those fifteen years, while the other papers have fallen off about 400,000. How much higher the circulation of the *Times* would continue to rise if the proprietors could print them fast enough to supply the demand, is more than any one can pretend to say. With

their present machinery they are able to produce only 10,000 an hour, so that when the demand goes much beyond 40,000 they cannot supply the additional number required at so early an hour as would suit the newsagents. It will thus be seen that, practically, the circulation is kept from extending greatly beyond its present limits, by the mechanical difficulty attending the production of so large an impression within a few hours. If the proprietors of the *Times* could obtain a printing machine which would throw off 20,000 copies an hour, they would probably double their present circulation within a few years. Many people fancy that the main check to the circulation of 'The Leading Journal' is owing to another cause, and as that impression was much strengthened by what took place before the select committee, we shall take the trouble of pointing out where the mistake lies.

In the evidence given by Mr. Mowbray Morris, manager of the *Times*, regarding the injurious influence of the halfpenny stamp upon supplements, a remark was made to the effect that it greatly injured the circulation of that paper. The committee appear to have been unable to understand how this could happen, and several attempts were made to obtain an explanation. Mr. Milner Gibson asked if the supplement really caused a loss upon the entire circulation of the paper, as had been stated by a previous witness. The answer given by Mr. Morris was not very explicit: indeed he seems to have been more disposed to mystify than to enlighten the committee. 'The supplement,' as he states, 'consists of advertisements, which have a fixed value: it is the same on one paper as on 100,000. The sum paid for paper and printing, and so on, fluctuates, and is increased with the circulation. Suppose that the value of the advertisements in the supplement was 200*l.*, you would know that you could publish as many papers as would cost 200*l.* to manufacture in paper, stamps, and printing, and if you go beyond that you publish at a loss: that is of course obvious.' This explanation was not deemed satisfactory. The chairman of the committee did not understand the matter a whit more clearly than he had done before, and accordingly the inquiry was carried on by Mr. Gibson, assisted by Mr. Cobden, in the following manner:—

'*Chairman.* The greater the circulation the greater the loss?—*Mr. Morris:* The greater the loss beyond a certain limit.

'*Mr. Cobden.* Do you not mean that the profit is less?—No: the greater the absolute loss from a circulation beyond the point at which the expenditure and receipts balance each other.

'Including the advertisements, you do not speak of an absolute loss, do you, but of a comparative gain?—No: of an absolute loss.

'*Chairman.* Do you not mean this, that when you have a supplement, as far as that supplement is concerned, if you only printed one copy of it, your gain would be the greatest?—Yes.

'And for every copy you sell, you diminish your gain, and when you pass a certain line, it becomes an absolute loss?—Just so: that is to say, when the expenditure exceeds the value of the advertisements.

'*Mr. Rich.* Does it ever occur that the cost of publishing a supplement in all its branches exceeds the amount that you have received for the advertisements contained in the supplement?—Whenever a double supplement is published, it always does, and we have exactly reached the limit at which a single supplement can be published without loss. This day the cost and the value of the advertisements published in the supplement of the *Times* exactly balance each other, the circulation of the *Times* now being nearly 39,000.'

Here we are told that the circulation of the *Times* has now 'exactly reached the limit at which a supplement can be published without loss.' Now what does Mr. Morris really mean by talking about an 'actual loss' being sustained on the circulation of that flourishing paper? We must confess that after all his cross-questioning by the committee, he leaves the subject quite as much in the dark as ever. Mr. Rich seems to have felt this, for he again recurs to the subject by asking whether there was not a point at which the circulation of the *Times* would actually become a losing concern, to which Mr. Morris replies in the same indefinite style: 'I have just stated that a balance is just struck this day; that is to say, that the value of the advertisements in the supplement exactly covers the expenditure.' Mr. Rich is not at all satisfied with the answer. He cannot understand why Mr. Morris should always mystify the question by riding off upon the supplement, as if supplements were ever printed and sold by themselves, and therefore he puts the query, point blank, in the most unmistakable manner, but with no more satisfactory result. Mr. Morris was either too obtuse or too astute for him.

'*Mr. Rich.* My question rather had reference to the whole publication of the *Times*?—That is a question of management from day to day. Sometimes there is no supplement published, and then the gains are balanced against the losses when a double one is published.'

Of course, any novice would conclude from all this that in spite of its enormous income, the profits of the *Times* must be nearly all swallowed up by the loss incurred upon its large circulation. This would seem to be a very common impression, if one may judge from the evidence of Mr. C. D. Collett before the committee. In reply to a question relating to the cost of supplements, he says, 'I have heard it said that the *Times* would

'find it more profitable if it could only sell one copy instead of its whole number, and I believe it to be true, that when it has a supplement, the *Times* pays on each copy, for the striking off of the paper and the stamp duty, more than the paper brings in.' There never was a greater mistake, as must be obvious to any one who has ever had anything to do with newspaper financial matters. Let us take the case mentioned by Mr. Morris, for example, as the basis of our estimate; and it will be very easy to show how he has been mystifying the committee, when he spoke of there being an actual loss on the circulation of the *Times* when it publishes a single supplement.

In making an estimate of the profit or loss on a newspaper, it must always be kept in mind that a large part of the expenditure continues the same, whatever the circulation may be. The salaries of the editorial staff, of reporters, correspondents, compositors, and clerks, as well as the whole of the rent, insurance, interest on capital, and a number of other items, all remain the same, whether the circulation happens to be 50 or 50,000. The only important item of expenditure which fluctuates with the rise and fall of the circulation, is that of *stamps*, under which term is included, not only the paper, but the penny stamp. In estimating the cost of a thousand *stamps*, we simply add one thousand pence—4*l.* 3*s.* 4*d.*—to the price of the thousand sheets as they come from the paper-maker. In order to show that Mr. Morris is wrong, we do not need to find out the fixed expenditure of the *Times*; that has nothing to do with the question. All we have to do is to ascertain the cost of the 'stamps,' and the wholesale price at which these 'stamps' are sold, after they have been converted into newspapers. The difference between the two items, *minus* the trifling cost of 8*s.* or 10*s.* per 1000 for working-off, is all profit. On the day to which Mr. Morris refers, the circulation of the *Times* is said to have been 39,000; now let us calculate what profit there would be on that number, taking, as the elements of our calculation, the price of 39,000 'stamps' and the cost of working them off as the entire outlay, and the wholesale price of 39,000 newspapers, at 8*s.* 9*d.* per quire, or 17*l.* 10*s.* per 1000, as the income:—

39,000 'stamps' at 14 <i>l.</i> 10 <i>s.</i> per 1000	£560	0	0
'Machining,' or working-off the above number, at 10 <i>s.</i> per 1000	19	10	0
	£579	10	0
39,000 copies of the <i>Times</i> at 17 <i>l.</i> 10 <i>s.</i> per 1000	£682	10	0
		579	10
		103	0
		0	0

It will thus be seen that, instead of a loss, there is a profit upon the whole transaction of 103*l.* as compared with printing only one copy of the *Times*. If we wish to ascertain what the gross aggregate income from the paper amounts to, we must add the sum received for advertisements, which, after payment of the duty, amounts on the average to about 300*l.* each publication. When no supplement is given, the profit on the circulation is much larger. The cost of 39,000 'stamps,' or stamped sheets, in that case is only 374*l.*; and as the price to the newsmen is always 8*s.* 9*d.* per quire, whether with or without supplement, the profit on those days must be 298*l.* 15*s.*, leaving an ample margin for any loss which may be sustained by the publication of double supplements. Assuming, then, that the loss in the latter case is made up by the extra profit when there is no supplement at all, the gross aggregate income of the *Times*, from circulation and advertisements, must be 403*l.* a-day, or 2418*l.* a-week. As everything is done upon the most liberal scale at Printing-house Square, we may calculate that 800*l.* sterling per week are expended in the shape of wages, salaries, rent, taxes, interest on capital, &c. Deducting that sum from the gross income, there will still remain a nett profit of 84,136*l.* per annum, affording a much more liberal dividend to the proprietary than any one would have estimated from the evidence given by Mr. Morris. As to his statement, that 'the limit 'has been reached at which a single supplement can be published without a loss,' a very simple calculation will show its utter absurdity. If a circulation of 39,000 yields a profit of 103*l.*, one of double that number, which could easily be attained 'within a couple of years,' according to Mr. Morris, would clearly give a profit of 206*l.* Or, taking it the reverse way, if 39,000 gives a profit of 103*l.*, half that number would have yielded only 51*l.* 10*s.*, so that instead of being better off with a smaller circulation, as Mr. Morris wished the committee to believe, they would clearly have been losers to the above extent. He talks about the value of the advertisements in the supplement being only 200*l.*, and then goes on to say that 'you could 'publish as many papers as would cost 200*l.* to manufacture in 'paper, stamps, and printing, and if you go beyond that, you 'publish at a loss.' As if there could possibly be any loss in a transaction where you buy paper, including stamps, at 14*l.* 10*s.* per thousand, and, after passing it through the printing-machine at a very trifling cost (all the heavy expenditure having been previously incurred), are enabled to sell it for 17*l.* 10*s.* per thousand. If Mr. Morris had stated in plain terms that the gross profit derived from the ordinary circulation of the

Times, after payment of paper and 'stamps,' is 298*l.* 15*s.* per diem, and that when a single supplement is given the gross profit from the same source is reduced to 103*l.*, the committee would have understood him at once. But, in that case, what would have become of his reiterated statement, in reply to Mr. Cobden, that the publication of a supplement did not merely cause a diminution of profit, but inflicted an 'absolute loss'?

The extension of the railway system, the improved means of transmitting foreign intelligence, and various other subsidiary causes, have had a damaging effect upon the circulation of the evening papers, most of them having declined considerably since the reduction of the newspaper stamp duty. In 1837, the first year after the reduction, the evening press consisted of the following journals:—the *Courier*, quasi-Tory, and unprincipled, with an average circulation of 1400; the *Globe*, Palmerstonian, and rather unpopular, on account of its dry political economy of the Colonel Torrens school, nearly 3000 daily; the *Standard*, ultra-Tory, but nevertheless much higher on the list, having reached an average of 4300; the *Sun*, Whig-Radical, pluming itself on its late editions, with full but inaccurate reports of parliamentary and other intelligence, little more than 2000; and last of all, the Radical *True Sun*, which in spite of the host of clever writers engaged on it, had a circulation of only 1250 in 1837, the last year of its existence. The *Courier*, after many a desperate struggle to keep alive, expired in 1842, a warning to all unprincipled journals of what their fate must ultimately be. Under Daniel Stuart, who contrived to make it the ministerial organ during the war, it ranked among the first newspapers in point of circulation; higher, indeed, at one time, than even the *Times* of that day. In 1814, it was said to be worth 12,000*l.* per annum, but it declined very much soon after the war. Hazlitt described it in 1823 as 'a paper of shifts and expedients, of bare assertions and thoughtless impudence, which denies facts on the word of a minister, and dogmatizes by authority.' No one could regret the death of such a disreputable organ. At present there are only four evening newspapers published in London, whose daily circulation is as follows—*Sun*, 2666; *Express*, 2493; *Globe*, 1869; and *Standard*, 1571. The aggregate circulation of the evening press, instead of advancing with the population and intelligence since 1837, has actually fallen from 12,000 to 8599, or little more than one-half of what it was forty years ago. The whole of the evening newspapers put together do not circulate as many copies daily as are contained in a single impression of the *Manchester Guardian* or the *Leeds Mercury*. This would not be the case were the same pains bestowed on the editing

and sub-editing on the London evening papers as there is on the provincial journals we have named. Were the stamp duty abolished, we should probably witness a very great improvement in the evening press, as it would then be worth while to publish a paper not much less than the *Globe* or *Standard*, containing a clever abridgment of all the news of the day, at twopence, which, with a halfpenny for postage, would still leave it 50 per cent. below the present exorbitant price of the evening papers; a sufficient cause of itself for their very limited circulation.

As regards the morning papers, exclusive of the *Times*, we agree with Mr. F. K. Hunt, that the removal of the stamp duty would greatly improve their circulation, but we question whether it would tend so much to improve their position in other respects, unless accompanied by the abolition of the duty on advertisements. Were that iniquitous and oppressive impost abolished, the virtual monopoly which the *Times* now possesses would be checked, if not considerably broken up by the necessity which would then arise for other newspapers, with space sufficient for the enormous increase of advertisements which may reasonably be anticipated under a moderate tariff. With such an impetus to advertising, the *Daily News*, *Chronicle*, *Herald*, *Post*, and *Advertiser* might all expect to enjoy a good share of patronage from the ten thousand tradesmen who are continually striving to find out some new method of letting the public know how to spend their money to the best advantage. Many new papers would doubtless be started immediately after the change, but an old-established, well-organized journal has always a great advantage over new competitors. As Mr. Hunt remarks in his evidence before the committee, 'You could not get up the organization of the *Daily News*, for instance, under any circumstances, without the loss of some two or three years.' During that period, a paper managed with so much spirit and talent as are displayed in the *Daily News* might easily distance any new rival. As regards the *Morning Chronicle*, having spoken of it formerly as suffering from illiberal management on the part of its proprietary, we must candidly admit that no such charge can be brought against its present owners. For several years past, everything possible has been done to render it a worthy competitor of the *Times*, but one. Were the zeal which it now displays so conspicuously in favour of Anglo-Catholicism converted into political fervour in support of popular rights, the liberal expenditure which the new proprietary has made upon the concern, during the last few years, would not only be returned with interest, but a position in the morning press might speedily be achieved not much inferior to what the *Chronicle* occupied thirty years ago.

Of all the witnesses examined by the committee, Mr. Russell, editor of the *Scotsman*, a newspaper which has long stood at the head of the Scottish press, was the most decided in his opposition to the proposed abolition of the stamp duty, but he candidly admitted that his knowledge of the subject was chiefly confined to Scotland. When asked whether he was aware that there are fifty or sixty publications in London which publish a part of their impression on stamped, and the remainder on unstamped paper, he said he had only heard of it lately, from which we infer that he cannot be familiar with the practical difficulties which the Stamp-office authorities must encounter if they attempt to maintain the law in its present state. So far as the *Scotsman* is concerned, he thinks that the proposed change would be a benefit rather than an injury. 'It would kill off the weak large-town 'papers'—a consummation most devoutly to be wished in Edinburgh and Glasgow, which are overrun with them—while 'it would improve the stronger large-town papers and cause a 'crop of papers to spring up in the thinner peopled districts.' The latter result would, in our opinion, be a public benefit rather than an evil, much as Mr. Russell appears to be alarmed on the subject. He thinks 'it would be a misfortune that there should be local papers of a more petty character than exist at present.' So far as local news are concerned, the small towns and villages are very well served, in his opinion, by the present system. The large-town papers employ a correspondent in each district throughout the neighbouring counties, who furnishes all the news that are deemed of sufficient importance within a given range. If every little town and village had a newspaper of its own, these petty organs of public opinion would, of course, devote a larger space to local news and topics of interest, which, according to Mr. Russell, would be a great misfortune, as 'it would tend to local and personal gossip.' When asked, whether it might not possibly be an advantage for the inhabitants of the smaller towns to have a paper which would give a larger amount of local news, which are interesting to them, than a paper like the *Scotsman* has space to give, he still answers in the confident editorial tone that 'it would be a disadvantage that local news and local subjects should be more fully dealt with than they are at present, 'as they would be then: it is rather overdone now, and it would 'be regrettable that papers should become more petty in their 'range and tone.' Now it seems to us, after considerable experience in the matter, that this very increase of local papers, which Mr. Russell dreads so much, will tend more than anything else to improve the character of the newspaper press, while it must greatly diminish one of the most irksome tasks of those engaged in newspaper editorial labours.

Among all the disagreeable and thankless duties which the editor of a widely-circulated provincial newspaper must undertake, there is nothing to compare with the distracting toil and trouble which arises from the modern innovation of attempting to give what is very erroneously styled 'a judicious summary of all the interesting intelligence in each district.' The Colonial Secretary, snugly seated at his desk in Downing-street, where he must manage in the best possible manner the affairs of some forty or fifty various British settlements, in opposite quarters of the globe, has a hard enough task, no doubt, but it is not half so harassing as that of an editor who tries to satisfy the insatiable thirst for news of half a hundred constituencies, within the limited space of a single newspaper. In Edinburgh or Glasgow, the task is comparatively easy, because the surrounding country is not so thickly studded with towns and villages, all swarming with an active, intelligent population, and all alike requiring a full and accurate register of whatever events may be deemed interesting in each locality. It is in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire that the evil of which we speak is felt most severely. Take the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Manchester Guardian*, or the *Manchester Examiner*, for example: all first class papers, of the largest size allowed by law, and all giving four-page supplements once a week. In spite of their immense size, there is not one of those journals which can give a faithful weekly record of all that is worthy of note in the forty or fifty towns and villages by which they are surrounded, and through which those papers circulate. An attempt, indeed, is made to give as many 'Town Council Meetings,' 'Board of Guardian Proceedings,' 'Temperance Demonstrations, and 'Meetings of Rate-payers,'—with a due mixture of change-rings, friendly anniversaries, elections of churchwardens, elections of town councillors, elections of guardians, offences, accidents, and crimes,—as can be crammed, by rapid abridgment, into a certain number of columns. But after all has been done in this way that the most skilful and industrial editor, aided by the most indefatigable sub-editor, can accomplish, or that any reasonable newspaper reader in any of the smaller towns could possibly require, there still remains a great number of equally important events, which are necessarily left unnoticed altogether by the mammoth journal, for sheer want of space, or given in a form so much abridged as to render them of little or no value. The people of Oldham are perhaps waiting with intense anxiety for a long and amusing account of the 'Extraordinary Scene' at the last meeting of the board of poor-law guardians; or those of Ashton are looking forward with equal interest to Saturday's paper, for a report of the animated debate in the town council on the proposed increase of two policemen

for that borough; or perhaps the news-agents of Rochdale, in anticipation of a brisk demand, have ordered twice the usual number of papers, because of a church-rate contest in which the vicar has been beaten by an overwhelming majority. But the columns of the *Manchester Guardian*, though nearly double what they were twenty years ago, are not made of India-rubber; and therefore, much as the editor may wish to give all due latitude to Ashton, Bolton, Bury, Middleton, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, or Wigan news, he is generally forced, by the pressure of advertisements, or some other equally potent cause, to compress everything within the narrowest limits. Whatever interest a piece of district news may possess in its own locality, it must not be allowed to encroach upon the space belonging to 'the general reader,' who buys nine-tenths of every newspaper, and who does not care a farthing for Rochdale or Ashton news, unless when it happens to be a very horrid murder or an exceedingly destructive fire. Were the stamp duty abolished, the large-town papers would be relieved from all the drudgery and annoyance attendant upon this department of editorial work. There would no longer be any necessity for devoting six or eight closely-printed columns of the paper to local news, which are not read by one-twentieth part of those who purchase it. Each small town in Lancashire and Yorkshire, as well as elsewhere, would have its penny or twopenny newspaper, in which local news, local politics, and local talent, would have fair play; while large papers, like the *Manchester Guardian* or the *Leeds Mercury*, would be greatly improved by the change. They would be enabled to substitute good readable matter, literary or political, of which there is always abundance, for the very dull stuff which they are now obliged to give under the head of 'District News.' By this improvement in character, and by the reduction of price, in such papers as we have named, from 5*d.* to 3½*d.*, their circulation would be greatly increased, in spite of the number of penny and twopenny papers which would then supply the demand for news among that numerous portion of the working classes who cannot afford such a luxury at present.

The effect which cheapness has in promoting circulation may be seen by a single glance at the newspaper stamp returns, in the appendix to the Report of the Select Committee. With the exception of the *Illustrated London News*, which owes its enormous weekly sale of 66,673 copies chiefly to the profusion of wood engravings with which it is embellished, the most widely circulated weekly papers are all low priced. The *News of the World*, 56,274; *Lloyd's Weekly News*, 49,211; and the *Weekly Times*, 39,186 are all threepenny papers, while the older and far more

celebrated, but high-priced *Weekly Dispatch*, though well adapted to the popular taste, has fallen from 62,000 to 37,500; and *Bell's Life in London*, another sixpenny paper, in spite of its universal popularity in bar-parlours and tap-rooms as 'the highest sporting authority in the world,' has fallen from 30,000 to 24,721 since 1845. Among papers of a higher class, we find that even the *Spectator* and *Examiner*, after having long stood at the head of the weekly press, have been gradually losing ground during the last few years, under the combined influence of dearness and increased competition. At present the weekly circulation of the *Spectator* is only 2932, not one-third of what several provincial journals can boast. The number of stamps issued to the *Examiner* last year gives a weekly average of 4389, a very great decline from what it was six or eight years ago; while the *Leader*—which in point of boldness, talent, and heterodoxy, appears to occupy pretty much the same advanced position among its contemporaries as the *Examiner* did some forty years ago, under Leigh Hunt—stands midway between the two respectable journals we have named, having already attained a circulation of 3152.

One very striking fact, ascertained from an examination of the stamp returns for the last fifteen years, is the very limited circulation of Conservative newspapers compared with that of papers which advocate commercial and political reform. Out of London there is only one Tory journal circulating more than 4000 copies weekly, and only two besides it which can boast of a circulation above 3000. On the other hand, there are no less than eighteen Liberal newspapers circulating upwards of 3000 copies each, and of these there are nine with a circulation above 5000 each, six with a circulation above 6000, three above 8000, two above 9000, and one circulating upwards of 11,000 copies weekly. If this comparison of the respective circulation of first-class Liberal and Conservative newspapers may be taken as a fair criterion of the comparative political intelligence and activity of the two great parties, the facts we have stated are well worth the serious attention of statesmen. From that comparison, it will be seen that the proportion of Liberal to Conservative papers of the class mentioned is as six to one, while the difference becomes still more striking if we take into account the small aggregate consumption of stamps among the Protectionists, compared with the large number required by the friends of progress. It appears, for example, that the number of stamps taken in 1850 by two free-trade journals in Lancashire—the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Manchester Examiner*—was equal to the whole of the stamps consumed by the entire Conservative press of the following fifteen counties—Bedford, Berks, Bucks, Cambridge,

Cornwall, Cheshire, Devon, Dorset, Essex, Herts, Kent, Leicester, Lincoln, Wilts, and Warwick. Not less significant is the fact, that, while nearly all the thirty-three Protectionist papers in those fifteen counties have either remained stationary or decreased in circulation, during the last ten years of agitation for and against free-trade, the number of stamps taken by the free-trade newspapers of Manchester and other large towns has nearly doubled within that period. This broad fact, while it shows how strongly the current of public opinion is flowing in one direction, and how worthless the boast of a reaction against free trade, may well encourage ministers to proceed boldly with their proposed measure of parliamentary reform.

And now, as regards the Report of the Select Committee, the only fault we have against it, is, its want of decision. After having resolved that the attention of the House of Commons ought to be called to 'the objections and abuses incident to the present system of newspaper stamps, arising from the difficulty of defining and determining the meaning of the term 'news,' to the inequalities which exist in the application of the Newspaper Stamp Act, and the anomalies and evasions that it occasions in postal arrangements: to the unfair competition to which stamped newspapers are exposed with unstamped publications: to the limitation imposed by the stamp upon the circulation of the best newspapers, and to the impediments which it throws in the way of the diffusion of useful knowledge regarding current and recent events among the poorer classes,' and having also stated that 'they do not consider that news is of itself a desirable subject of taxation,' one might have reasonably expected that they would sum up with a strong recommendation in favour of the immediate repeal of the newspaper stamp duty, and the adoption of a moderate postage charge in place of it. In justice to Mr. Milner Gibson, whose services as chairman of the committee deserve the thanks of all earnest reformers, we ought to mention that the draft report drawn up by him distinctly recommended 'the entire repeal of the tax on news, and the adoption of a low postage-charge on all printed matter to a certain weight, when the post is used for its transmission and distribution.' This would have been a proper conclusion to the Report; but the majority of the committee did not like to overstep the terms of their appointment, and therefore they have left the House of Commons to say what ought to be done. Fortunately, after such evidence as has been adduced, and after the conclusive summary of that evidence by the committee, no one can doubt as to what the decision of Parliament will be. The doom of the newspaper stamp duty is sealed.

