

EDITORS AND COMPOSITORS: CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEW ZEALAND PRESS*

WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW about the day-to-day workings of the nineteenth-century New Zealand press? Journalists have left some accounts, as one would expect of these members of the Fourth Estate,¹ but these are from the end of the nineteenth century and do not describe the lot of the compositor, the daily grind of the pressman, or the hour-by-hour activities of the editor.

There are, though, some contemporary accounts in existence which describe the nineteenth-century newspaper press in New Zealand. They are few and lamentably far between. I examine here three of the more significant sources, and other more minor sources will be noted in passing. The three major sources are, in chronological order, the reminiscences of James Arthur Barrett Fry, 1850-1876, two volumes of the diaries of David Burn covering the periods 1850-1851 and 1855-1858, and the report of the Sweating Commission, 1890 (referred to hereafter as 'Fry reminiscences', 'Burn diaries' and 'Sweating Commission').² From these sources it is possible to learn more of the detail of the hours worked by the compositor and for what reward and of the working conditions of the pressman and to find out exactly which tasks the editor carried out, and so start to refine the background knowledge which is an essential prerequisite for an accurate account of the nineteenth-century New Zealand newspaper to be written.

Before examining the three main sources, I will note a letter from 1852 or 1853, at the other end of the country from the Auckland of Fry and Burn. The newspaper described here is the *Otago Witness*, published weekly in Dunedin from 1851 to 1932.³ Daniel Campbell was employed as a printer on the *Otago Witness*. He and his wife, in a letter written in 1852 or 1853 to friends in Edinburgh, describe their voyage to New Zealand, their impressions of the country, and Daniel's working conditions.⁴ He did not consider his duties on the newspaper at all onerous and appeared to be more than satisfied with wages and working conditions:

all that is required is to get the paper out on the Saturday morning; and that we can do in less than a week counting 8 hours a day, which is the New Zealand hours of daily labour⁵ . . . When we are detained with any extra work beyond the 8 hours a-day, we are paid 1s. for every hour extra. I have about £2 a-week, and all extra time paid, with no body to say what time is this to come to your work, or is such a thing not done yet . . . As we can finish the paper in less time than a week, I often take a day's sail on the river, or work away in the garden . . . and as I seldom go to the office till between 8 and 9, and drop work at 5 in the evening, I can find plenty of time to work in the garden.

Although we are told nothing about the working conditions at the printing office itself, the general framework of a newspaperman's lot is evident. Just how these working conditions and hours of work differed from those of forty years later shall be seen below.

* A revised version of a paper read to members of the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand at their annual conference, 29-30 September 1989.

The Fry Reminiscences

The first of three important sources is reported from a totally different point of view from that of Campbell, that of a boy eleven years old making his way up through the ranks in a large printing establishment in Auckland. James Barrett Fry was born in London on 10 July 1850, emigrated to New Zealand in 1860-61, and immediately started work in Auckland in the office of *The Southern Cross*, at this date published twice weekly. Fry relates that he began as

printers devil and assistant reader to the foreman printer, Scales, at 8s. a week. I commenced at 8 a.m. . . . Did you ever read out loud for some hours together when not accustomed to it? And was a lot of the 'stuff' written by an editor utterly careless how he formed his letters? . . . I read well, and got through the manuscript fairly, but what annoyed the chief was that I became at times quite incapable with laughter when getting through the column headed Wit and Humour.

The *Southern Cross* was printed on a hand machine by two men who turned a wheel. The firm was Creighton, Tothill and Scales, respectively Editor, Publisher, Printer. They were long days, there were no Union rules . . .

Creighton, editor, was upstairs in a holy room where he created those wonderful products of human intellect called 'leading articles,' and sent them downstairs to the desperate printer who got greyer every day in his efforts to read them . . . Tothill was the financial and general manager: we never saw him except on pay day. Scales, down below, was my boss and daily mentor and actually responsible for the bi-weekly bringing out of the paper . . . Had he failed, and the machinery gone wrong, or the two-man power engine got intoxicated, the inhabitants of that part of the antipodes might have perished in their ignorance. Or they would have had to fall back on our rival and contemporary, the *New Zealander*.

Fry later moved with his family to Dunedin, where he was found a situation with Shaw Harnett and Company, jobbing printers, at 15s. per week. He moved to another firm of printers, Ferguson and Mitchell's, at £1 per week. Fry offers us some comments on the Dunedin newspapers of the day, although he was not working on them:

There were in 1861 two newspapers, the *Colonist* . . . and the *Witness* . . . The *Colonist* was owned by the Lambert family . . . Hattie Lambert . . . served during the day in the little bookshop [attached to the newspaper] . . . Lots of admiring youngsters used to go there for their copy-books, pencils, and works of fiction . . . The *Daily Times* was started soon afterwards, and I can well remember how energetically Mr. (since Sir) Julius Vogel kept running round the town picking items of news and persuading business men that sweet are the uses of advertisements.

Colourful though this detail is, it is not of particular use to the newspaper historian. We can, though, distil from it a few useful items about conditions in Auckland in 1861. Details of weekly wages can be found — 8s. for a printer's devil and assistant reader. Hours of work are noted — work commenced at 8 a.m. and 'they were long days'. There was no union to represent newspaper workers. Of the *Southern Cross* specifically, we

learn about the distribution of duties among the senior staff, Creighton, Tothill and Scales. Of Dunedin newspapers in about the same year some aspects of common newspaper practice are described, for example that a bookshop selling copy-books, pencils, and works of fiction was attached to the *Colonist* (a common practice elsewhere) and that when setting up the *Otago Daily Times* Vogel actively canvassed Dunedin business for advertisements.

The Sweating Commission

The report of the 'Sweating Commission' in 1890 again deals with the conditions of those working in the press room rather than those employed on the 'literary' aspects of newspaper production. It can thus offer a useful comparison with the conditions experienced by Campbell in Dunedin and by Fry in Auckland.

In 1890 the 'Sweating Commission' reported to the New Zealand House of Representatives. The Commission (more properly known as the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire Into Certain Relations Between the Employers of Certain Kinds of Labour and the Persons Employed Therein) was established as a result of concern expressed by unions about the growing practice of employers requiring workers to work from their homes for long hours at very low rates of pay.⁵ Its terms of reference are too long to quote here (they can be found in the published report) and are in any case rather vague, but the kernel of them was 'to inquire into the modes and terms in and on which persons are engaged or employed in . . . business establishments . . . in . . . New Zealand', with special attention to be paid to manufacturing establishments. The Commission held both public and private meetings throughout the country to which interested parties made submissions. In addition, the results of visits to workplaces by factory inspectors were reported. Newspaper offices as well as other printing offices and related businesses, for example manufacturing stationers, were included within the Commission's purview. There is a wealth of detail given about employment conditions in the New Zealand printing trade at the beginning of the 1890s, but only the newspaper offices will be noted here.

One submission in particular is worth quoting in some detail. It was presented to the Commission in Christchurch by Frederick Charles Gerard, a journeyman compositor employed on piece-work on the morning daily *Lyttelton Times* and Secretary of the Canterbury Typographical Association:

1145. Our hours are from 8 o'clock at night to 3 in the morning, and two hours in the day for distribution.

1146. Piecework is at the rate of 11d. per 1,000 'ens.' . . . I earn about £3 10s. a week: that is the average.

1147. Owing to the excessive competition which has been carried on for a number of years boys have been largely introduced . . . The boys are employed on all sorts of terms. The proportion is two boys to every man. That is in the jobbing offices. Boys are not allowed on the morning and evening newspapers. They are employed on the weekly papers.

1148. We have one establishment in which there have been female compositors lately introduced, and there is some trouble about it. I do not think they should

be allowed, as they are not fitted for the work. Only one branch is fitted for females: that is the type-setting . . .

1149. Some firms take the boys on without being legally apprenticed.

1150. The Typographical Association are endeavouring to secure legal binding of apprentices, so as to insure competent tradesmen, and to limit the number. When the apprentices complete their term, though not legally bound, the Association have hitherto accepted them on a letter from their employers, showing they have served their six years . . .

1153. Jobbing hands get from £2 10s. to £3 per week.

Expressed here we find concerns which are reflected in all of the other evidence presented to the Commission — in particular the introduction of boys and females into printing offices (although not, apparently, into newspaper offices except the weeklies) and the lack of legal apprenticeship agreements for boys employed in printing establishments.

Newspaper-related points noted in the Commission's report include a comment from George H. Whitcombe that 'In Auckland a large staff of female compositors was employed in the *Evening Star* office, to great advantage both to employer and the girls' and his opinion that 'He did not consider it unhealthy employment — quite the contrary, as could be seen by going through their factory' (paragraph 1225). The boy-labour question was raised at some length by Mr. C.M., an Auckland compositor, who in addition touched on many other questions:

1567. . . . Our complaint is of the undue proportion of boys to men. I am the only man out of a staff of eleven . . . the proprietor of the *Star* . . . employs an overseer and a sub-overseer, three journeymen, and from forty-five to fifty girls. The *Star* also brings out the *Family Friend* and the *Farmer*. The work that is given to the men is what the girls cannot do. The girls' ages range from fourteen to twenty-three, and their wages from 2s. 6d. to £1 per week, with perhaps one or two exceptions who receive £1 5s.

1568. In the *Star* jobbing-room there are fifteen journeymen, and a boy to every man as near as possible — more if anything. There is no piecework. All the boys are indentured. After they have served it is optional whether they go on for another year at reduced wages, or leave.

1569. The recognised wages for journeymen is £2 10s., and for piecework 1s. per 1,000.

1570. In the *Herald* office there are not girls employed except at bookbinding. Apprentices can learn better on weekly papers, or in jobbing-rooms, than on daily papers. The Society allows one boy to three men, but no boys on daily papers. In the *Herald* the proportion of boys to men is greater.

1571. The ventilation is very bad in the *Herald* office. In the *Star* office it is all right. The *Herald* paper is worked fairly well . . .

1572. I know this for a fact: when a girl has served a certain number of years, and her earnings are beyond £1 a week, she is found fault with for some trivial mistake and sacked.

Mr D.I., a sixteen-year-old apprentice at the *New Zealand Times* office, Wellington, stated that he was indentured and paid 7s. 6d. per week but was dissatisfied because he was not aware until after he signed articles that he 'should not learn jobbing' (paragraph 1708). Another apprentice, Mr G.H., an apprentice compositor on the same newspaper, also complained that he was not 'taught the trade in all its branches' and was not being taught jobbing or general newspaper work, rather being 'kept setting up reprint for the weekly *Mail*' (paragraphs 1788-93). He was paid £1 7s. 6d. a week after five years.

Before summarising this evidence we should note the results of some of the visits made by the Commissioners to inspect various premises.⁷ In Dunedin on 25 and 26 February 1890 they found:

'Star' Office. — Well adapted for its purpose. Every convenience necessary. Ventilation good. Girls employed in binding department. One of the girls just over fourteen years of age, but said she was in the Seventh Standard when she left school. Compositors all work in accordance with rules of Typographical Society.

'Times' Office — Well adapted; every convenience. No women or girls employed.

'Herald' Office — The Commissioners visited the Herald office, but after being kept waiting some time, left without inspecting it . . .

Jolly, Connor, and Co., 'Tablet.' — . . . Two women employed here as compositors.

In Wellington on 1 and 2 May 1890:

'Evening Press' Office — Found rooms well ventilated and not overcrowded.

'New Zealand Times' Office. — Satisfactory.

In addition to these site inspections a list was provided of the Wellington businesses which employed females and the number of females employed. Those which are readily identifiable as newspaper offices did not employ females while other printing establishments did.⁸

Some of this considerable mass of evidence from 1890 can be recast in a form which will allow useful comparison with that of Campbell and Fry three and four decades earlier. Weekly wages paid were: compositors on piece-work about £3 10s. a week (11d. per 1,000 ens in Christchurch, 1d. less in Dunedin — compare this with compositors on jobbing work, £2 10s. to £3 per week); females (nature of work not specified) 2s.6d. to £1 5s.; newspaper jobbing office, journeymen £2 10s. (piece-work 1s. per 1,000 ens); apprentice aged sixteen, 7s. 6d.; apprentice compositor, £1 7s. 6d. There is only one specific mention of hours worked: a compositor on piece-work for a daily morning newspaper worked from 8 p.m. to 3 a.m., plus two hours during the day for distribution. Attitudes to unions appeared to be generally supportive in newspaper offices by this date, so much so that an official of the Canterbury Typographical Association could state that 'the relations between employer and employed in our business are now better than I have ever known them',⁹ and two Christchurch newspaper offices were specifically noted as 'working Union hands without objection'.¹⁰ The physical

conditions of work were generally considered acceptable, adequately ventilated and not overcrowded, although the *Herald* office (Auckland) was singled out for its inadequacy in the former area.

Much evidence is noted in the report on the obviously contentious issues of employment of boy and females and of apprenticeship conditions. Boys were not employed on daily newspapers, although they were on weekly newspapers, and their employment was widespread in other branches of the printing trade, the Society's ideal being a ratio of one boy to three men. The *Herald* office (Auckland) was noted as having a greater proportion of boys to men, being employed to set advertisements; these boys were treated 'fairly well'.¹¹ The use of females warranted much more mention than boy labour and was more widely condemned. As noted above, the *Star* office (Auckland) was the prime offender, employing five males as overseers and from forty-five to fifty girls, who earned wages well below what males were paid, and whose employment was usually terminated once their wages reached over £1 per week.¹² Women were also employed in the *New Zealand Herald* office (Auckland) and in the *Tablet* office (Dunedin).

Concerns about apprenticeship were largely about the lack of legal binding of apprentices. The Typographical Association was concerned that legal binding occur in order to 'insure competent tradesmen, and to limit the number';¹³ the period of apprenticeship was noted in one case as five and in another as six years. The testimony of two apprentices at the *New Zealand Times* office (Wellington) indicated that both were indentured, although one was uncertain whether the agreement was legal or not. A premium to become an apprentice was not paid by one, and neither was 'taught the trade in all its branches'.¹⁴ In the *Star* office (Auckland) jobbing-room there were more boys employed than men. All of the boys were indentured and were required, after completing their time, to work at the same wage as they had been paid in the final year of apprenticeship or else to leave.¹⁵

A comparison of these 1890 wages and conditions with those of Campbell in 1852 and Fry in 1861 indicates how little had changed in the intervening years, although it must not be forgotten that the data is by no means directly comparable and can only provide general indications.

Working hours: eight hours per day were worked (assuming a meal break of one hour), plus paid overtime, in all examples. Note, though, that the 'Sweating' Commission provides only one example of actual hours worked. Both Campbell and Fry worked during the day, but the compositor on piece-work for a daily newspaper in 1890 worked from 8 p.m. to 3 a.m., plus two hours during the day for distribution.

Wages: there is a difference over forty years. Campbell earned about £2 per week, plus 1s. per hour for occasional overtime, whereas compositors in 1890 earned between £2 10s. to £3 10s. a week (piece-work, at the rate of either 11d. or 1s. per 1,000 ens depending on the city of employment). The 1890 amounts do not indicate whether overtime is included. For workers at the lowest end of the wage scale, the figures are unclear: Fry earned 8s. per week as a printer's devil and assistant reader, and the two specific wages recorded for apprentices in 1890 were 7s. 6d. and £1 7s. 6d.

Unions: the only point which can be usefully concluded here — and it is stating the obvious — is that for Campbell and Fry there were no unions but that by 1890 they had become of considerable importance in the industry.

There is without doubt considerably more evidence concerning working hours, wages and the development of unions in the newspaper industry awaiting the researcher who cares to look. The most fruitful starting points are in the trade periodicals. From *Typo* we learn, for example, that the *Timaru Herald* was in 1887 paying 1s. per 1000 ens or £2 10s. per week for compositors.¹⁶ C. Janion in 1900 recalled that in 1865 he was paid £5 per week as overseer of the *Colonist* and *Daily Telegraph* newspapers in Dunedin and later that year was paid £4 per week as overseer of the *Nelson Examiner*.¹⁷ Papers of the trade unions and of employers' organisations will probably reveal more.¹⁸

The Burn Diaries

To move now to the 'literary' side of newspaper production, we find in the diaries of David Burn an account of the daily activities of a newspaper editor in Auckland around 1850 and what a daily newspaper shipping reporter's duties entailed in Auckland around 1855. I have located only two volumes of these diaries, volumes six and ten of a series. They contain only moderate detail, but it would be churlish to hope for more when what is present enables us to paint a much more rounded picture of Auckland society in the 1850s and 1860s and in particular of the workings of three newspaper offices.

David Burn (1805-75) came to Auckland in the 1840s from Tasmania, where he had edited the *South Britain or Tasmanian Literary Journal*. He worked on the *Southern Cross*, the *New-Zealander*, the *Auckland Register* and the *New Zealand Herald*, of which he was apparently co-proprietor for a time, and also edited the *Maori Messenger*.¹⁹

Entries from the diaries for one week in 1850 indicate the routine followed by Burn as editor of both the bi-weekly *Southern Cross* and the *Karere Maori or Maori Messenger*, issued fortnightly. It covers the week Wednesday 26 June to Tuesday 2 July 1850.

Wednesday 26th. Saw Brown [proprietor of the *Southern Cross*] who wished me to defer entering upon the Court of Requests or Treaty of Waitangi matters, and to write on the subject of the Archdeacons expulsion.

Thursday 27th. Penned a letter on Archdeacon Williams' affair. Off with it to town, and found the 'Shamrock' had arrived in port from Honolulu. More disastrous intelligence of the state of the California markets . . . Got some Polynesians, and extract of letter from Bain. Kept back my Leader and made a good Summary . . . Saw revise of proofs, and got home about the midnight hour.

Saturday 29th. At home 'til four o'clock, rewriting my article on the Archdeacons expulsion, and preparing Shipping List for Messenger. To town with both.

Monday 1st July 1850. Yesterdays brig proved to be the 'Moa', fifteen days from Sydney, and with English news to the 8th of March. At work all day preparing a Summary.

Tuesday 2nd. Occupied the entire day preparing matter for the Messenger. Finished it about half past four and off with it to town . . . Took my copy to Davis.

Burn referred, regrettably infrequently, to his profession as editor. That he was not always totally enamoured of this vocation is made clear in his entry for 20 July 1851, a Sunday: 'Slave of the press, I was compelled to prepare an English summary'. A more detailed lament was made a few weeks later, on 9 August:

Hard is the fate of the petty provincial journalist, but, much more is that of the petty colonial editor, who is looked to to supply a never ending, still increasing supply of sauce piquant, no matter whether he may be furnished or not furnished with materials for compounding it. How very different is this constant drain upon the brain from the occasional, vivid, and spontaneous contribution on a pet and long considered subject! It is a weary effort to be ever wise, and on every varying subject. It is really marvellous that so little nonsense should creep into papers, with but one or two minds to direct their machinery. It is a weary, thankless sort of life.

Certainly the diaries reveal that the hours were long and often extended over seven days of the week, although it should not be forgotten that Burn was also actively involved in Auckland's social life (in particular the theatre), owned several properties (which he let and which required expenditure of some time), and was the editor of not one newspaper but two.

It is very easy indeed to establish that the proprietor of the *Southern Cross*, William Brown, paid considerable attention to the running of his newspaper at the day-to-day level, frequently seeking out his editor and expecting him to take heed of his detailed advice, to publish his writings, or to rewrite according to his wishes. Brown's motivation in establishing and maintaining the newspaper, often in the face of heavy financial losses, is clearly spelt out by R.C.J. Stone in his biography of Brown's partner, John Logan Campbell.²⁰ It had begun as 'a cherished political weapon to be used against governors'²¹ and became a powerful tool to be used to support and extend the trading activities of the merchants Brown and Campbell. Campbell himself

never would have anything to do with it. It was always making enemies & injured the B & C business & was never carried on for commercial purposes.²²

An example chosen almost at random illustrates Brown's 'interventionist' activities:

Monday 14 October 1850: Up early, and penning another thunderer for the Cross, wrote fourteen pages and away to town . . . showed Brown my article, and received seven pages of hints to furnish forth another, on the subject of representative institutions. At work on it until dark, it extending to twenty one pages . . .

This entry may suggest that Burn was totally directed by Brown, but this was not the case, for there are other excerpts which show Burn dissuading Brown from some courses of action:

Thursday 17 April 1851: Saw Brown and urged upon him the necessity of moderating the rancour of our political tone. To deal more with measures than with men. Convinced him that the commercial prospects of the paper were

suffering, and obtained his sanctioned praise where praise was due, and to censure where censure was required. Tore up yesterday's leader, and wrote a new one . . .

At times a close mutual collaboration between Brown and Burn is hinted at, although it is never made explicit:

Tuesday 19 August 1851: . . . It is a very difficult matter in a small place like Auckland where printers are few, tastes dissimilar, and subscribers capricious, to conduct a journal to the general tastes — especially a journal of such strong political opinions as the *Cross*. W. Brown and I talked over all these difficulties, I showed him that a less bitter style would carry more weight, and insure us more friends. I satisfied him of my willingness to follow out any course he might deem best, and that not only my interest, but my reputation was involved in the prosperity of the paper. Our views were confidentially, clearly, and kindly, stated to each other . . .

Also very clearly stated in Burn's diary is the importance, even dominance, of 'external' news (overseas news and news from New Zealand towns other than Auckland), certainly in terms of the activities of the editor, and especially so when compared with the lesser emphasis in the diary on local news gathering. Almost every entry notes the arrival of ships and which newspapers they provided for excerpting from. Noted, too, is the drudgery of the work involved in 'gutting' or 'culling' or — in slightly more positive terms — 'rummaging' or 'gleaning' from other newspapers to provide summaries of events. Amply reinforced here is the nostalgia for the mother countries, the isolation felt by the colonists, and the conviction that reality was represented not by the country they had chosen to settle in but by England and Europe. Two excerpts give the flavour:

Saturday 21 December 1850: Again wading through those tedious masses of old, London, papers.

Sunday 31 August 1851: Oh, that these ships would come in early in the week, and leave me the sabbath to myself. Busy throughout the day culling matter for the relentless press and off as the sun was setting with copy for the printer.

As already noted, excerpts relating to the gathering of local news are notable for their relative infrequency, at least when numbered against mentions of overseas newspapers. Again, to give only a few examples, Burn 'wrote a notice of the Military theatre' (Thursday 15 May 1851), 'inspected Col. Wynyard's model pah [then] proceeded to the office and penned a notice of it' (Monday 16 December 1850), and — this one a busy day for local events — 'added a paragraph to [his] theatrical notice, and a note to native lands letter [and] wrote notice of intended concert, and of Custom House doings' (Monday 11 August 1851).

Burn also carried out some of the day-to-day operations of the *Southern Cross* in addition to his literary duties as editor. Although the precise duties required in this context are not particularly apparent from the diary, a few entries indicate the nature of the tasks. He acted as a liaison between the compositors and pressmen and the proprietor, as two entries attest. On 10 July 1851, as one of the compositors was 'away from frame' most of the day and another employee (Hansard) was infuriating the

printer (Kunst) 'for never attending to his duties', Burn 'was compelled to acquaint Mr. Brown of the matter', and action against Hansard swiftly followed. In a later entry (2 August 1851) Burn 'saw Mr. Brown and recommended him to make Kunst's salary £2 a week'. Burn also sent contributions to the *Sydney Herald*, but they were apparently not acceptable. The entry for 9 May 1851 notes that an account for £6 5s. for the *Sydney Herald* (Burn was evidently a subscriber) had been tendered, but he declined to pay it, 'no notice having been taken of [his] contributions'.

Burn was also editing a second newspaper. The Government-run *Maori Messenger: ko te Karere Maori* was published from 1849 to 1863. It was published once every two weeks for most of its life, with its contents in both Maori and English. It aimed to educate the Maori and also to interpret government policy for the native population. The diary entries for 1850 and 1851 clearly indicate that Burn was writing under close government direction. For example, in the excerpts for 28 and 29 August 1850 Burn recorded that his leader, 'a brief memoir of Heke', was in the opinion of Dillon (the Governor's military and civil secretary) 'too favourable', and so Burn had to hurriedly write another.²³

Burn's dual editorial role was clearly public knowledge, and on several occasions it provided a reason for an attack by the editor of the *Southern Cross's* rival, the *New-Zealander*:

The *New Zealander* had an article strongly insinuating that I had used information possibly acquired as editor of the *Maori Messenger* in improper enlightenment of the *Cross*. The gist of the writer being to attempt to get me removed from my situation . . . I . . . saw Nugent and showed him my articles of agreement with the *Cross*. Nugent said the attack was beneath my notice, and that as long as I performed my contract with the Government, that, in his opinion, was all they had to look to. (Saturday 31 May 1851).

This point is worth noting because it indicates some dissatisfaction with Burn as editor of the government's Maori newspaper, discontent which was to culminate in 1860 with his dismissal from the position.²⁴ It is, however, expressed at this date as no more than rivalry, albeit fairly intense, between the two Auckland newspapers.

At this point the first part of the Burn diary stops, and it is not until 1855 that we can take up the thread again. By this time Burn was living at Emily Place in central Auckland and was the *New-Zealander's* shipping correspondent and parliamentary reporter and still also the editor of the *Maori Messenger*. His relationship with Brown and his associates had undergone a severe reversal in the intervening years, as a bitterly expressed entry for Thursday 26 June 1856 indicates:

Paid up, and received a receipt in full from Baker on behalf of Brown, of my hard earned, but defrauded profits of the *Southern Cross*. Felt in ecstasy in being relieved from all claims from such an infamous gang.

The reasons for this reversal are not made clear in the existing volumes of the diary.

Burn's routine on the *New-Zealander* was dominated by the arrival of shipping. As shipping reporter he was expected to board newly arrived ships at the earliest opportunity. One example is:

Monday 29th October 1855 . . . The brig, and a schooner came around the north head together between eight and nine. Swallowed my breakfast and boarded them; the schooner was the 'Queen of Perth' from Sydney, and the brig, 'The Neander' from Melbourne to Liverpool, put in leaky . . . Got some papers from Captain Hurley which I gleaned and gutted. Wrote several shipping pars.

He also reported parliamentary events, attending when the Legislative Council was sitting; for example, on Tuesday 16 October 1855 he 'prepared an extract of the nominations and their results', on 29 May 1856 he 'went to the House — nothing of moment beyond the intimation that Stafford had been sent for', and on the following day he again 'attended Legislative Council, and gave in report to date.' He was doing much more besides, acting on occasion in the editorial role. An entry for 30th October 1855 notes that Wilson (William Chisholm Wilson, who with Williamson owned the *New-Zealander*) was not pleased with the editor's performance. When Burn visited the office of the paper there was

no editor there. A queer customer seemingly. Wilson likes him less and less and makes no secret of his dissatisfaction in buying a gin in a poke.

This explains why Wilson requested Burn two days later (2 November 1855) to 'write a leading article on the duty of preparation on the part of the superintendent', normally the editor's prerogative.

Other activities already described for the earlier period are also described in this later diary. Burn frequently notes that he and Williamson had 'long yarns' (for example, 24 November 1855, 26 November 1855), although it is unlikely that the relationship between the two men was of the same nature as that between Burn and Brown, for Burn was not the editor of the *New-Zealander*, as he had been for the *Southern Cross*. He was still supplying material to Fairfax for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and also for the *Empire* (noted in the entry for 3 June 1856). And he was still editing the *Maori Messenger*, although again not much useful information can be extracted from the occasional mentions of this paper.

First-hand accounts such as the sources noted here help us to describe more clearly the activities and working conditions of those involved with the nineteenth-century newspaper press. While some useful information is present which helps to name key personnel for specific newspapers or to describe more accurately the political bias of some titles, it is the less tangible information which is of most significance. Such eyewitness accounts can bring a sense of reality to the otherwise stark details furnished by reading the newspapers themselves and by measuring and describing the contents of the newspapers. Any new history of the nineteenth-century New Zealand newspaper press will need to note and incorporate such sources as these so that they become more than merely another recitation of titles, names, and dates.

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NOTES

1. For example O.T.J. Alpers, *Cheerful Yesterdays* (Hamilton: Paul's Book Arcade, 1952), William H. Thomas, *The Inky Way* (Auckland: Clark & Matheson, 1960).
2. 'Reminiscences of James Arthur Barrett Fry, 10 July 1850 – 7 January 1876', typescript, microfilm at the Mitchell Library, Sydney, FM3/770; David Burn, 'A Diary of Passing Events by Land and Sea', v.6, 1850-1851 and v.10, 1855-1858, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MLB 191; 'Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire Into Certain Relations Between the Employers of Certain Kinds of Labour and the Persons Employed Therein, New Zealand, 1890', *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (1890), H.-5. I am grateful to Margaret Incoll for her assistance in transcribing the Burn diary.
3. Further bibliographical and historical details of New Zealand newspapers can be found in D.R. Harvey, *Union List of Newspapers Preserved in Libraries, Newspaper Offices, Local Authority Offices and Museums in New Zealand* (Wellington: National Library of New Zealand, 1987), and Guy H. Scholefield, *Newspapers in New Zealand* (Wellington: Reed, 1958).
4. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, MS Papers 2333. The excerpts quoted here come from p.[5].
5. The eight-hour day was established in New Zealand almost from the beginning of the Crown Colony's existence: see H. Roth, *Trade Unions in New Zealand Past and Present* (Wellington: Reed Education, 1973), chapter 1.
6. Roth, *Trade Unions in New Zealand Past and Present*, p.128.
7. Sweating Commission, pp.91-93.
8. The list of printing establishments and employees is: Edwards and Green, Brandon Street, printing, &c., 5 males and 3 females. F.Rough, Brandon Street, printing, &c., 1 male and 2 females. Bock and Co., Brandon Street, printing, &c., 6 males and 2 females. J.C. Harris, Lambton Quay, printing, &c., 4 males. Wakefield and Roydhouse, Lambton Quay, printing, &c., 9 males. Blundell Bros., Willis Street, printing, &c., 2 males. Brown and Thompson, Lambton Quay, 3 males and 3 females. Lyon and Blair, Lambton Quay, printing, &c., 17 males and 9 females. T. Dwan, Farish Street, printing, &c., 2 males. Francis Redwood, Boulcott Street, printing, &c., 2 males. W.J. Lankshear, Lambton Quay, printing, &c., 1 male and 2 females. George Didsbury, Lambton Quay, printing, &c., 31 males and 23 females.
9. Sweating Commission, paragraph 1151.
10. Sweating Commission, paragraph 1200.
11. Sweating Commission, paragraph 1571.
12. Sweating Commission, paragraph 1572.
13. Sweating Commission, paragraph 1150.
14. Sweating Commission, paragraphs 1706-11, 1788-93.
15. Sweating Commission, paragraphs 1568.
16. *Selections from Typo* (Wellington: Wai-te-ata Press, 1982), p.9 (entry for 27 August 1887).
17. Letter from C. Janion to Hocken, 27 May 1900 (Hocken Library, Dunedin: MS451).
18. Some are listed in H.O. Roth, *New Zealand Trade Unions: a Bibliography*, 2nd ed., rev. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1977).
19. From several sources: G.H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940); David Burn, *Narrative of the Overland Journal of Sir John and Lady Franklin and Party from Hobart Town to Macquarie Harbour 1842*, ed. George Mackaness (Sydney, 1955), p.4; T.M. Hocken, manuscript titled 'N.Z. Notes' [1892?-1898], p.80 (Hocken Library, Dunedin); letters from Burn to Serle in 1848 and 1859 (Mitchell Library, Sydney, MLDOC 637); letter from Burn to Serle, 1848 (Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, qMS BURN).
20. *Young Logan Campbell* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1982); *The Father and His Gift* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1987).
21. Stone, *The Father and His Gift*, p.30.
22. Letter from John Logan Campbell to T.M. Hocken, 28 October 1904 (Hocken Library, Dunedin).
23. Hone Heke had been a constant thorn in the side of the New Zealand government, being responsible, among other deeds, for chopping down the flagstaff at Kororarereka. For further details about Heke and Dillon see the entries in Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.
24. New Zealand National Archives, IA 1861/2131. Papers are present covering the period 1855 to 1861 concerning Burn's employment as editor, alleged misdemeanours, and appeals against dismissal.

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