

REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE.

CONDUCT OF VICTORIA CITY ELECTION.

MR. SPEAKER :

Your Committee appointed to enquire into the conduct of the last general election for the City of Victoria, and whether any ballot papers were supplied to any electors with a line apparently drawn through the name of the Senior Member of the City, Mr. Robert Beaven, a candidate at such election, after hearing the evidence of Mr. Combe, the Returning Officer, and Mr. Wolfenden, the Government Printer—the only witnesses produced before your Committee—and after careful examination into the facts of the case, beg to report as follows:—

1. That the ballot papers used at that election were printed at the Government Printing Office, and were bound together at Munroe Miller's Bindery, in the presence of Mr. Wolfenden, Government Printer.

2. That the Returning Officer produced before the Committee 17 of the ballot papers printed for that election, which remained over after binding, and it is shewn that a line, an inch long, as follows ————— printed at the back of all the ballot papers used at the election, does, in some cases, shew slightly through to the front of the ballot, under Mr. Beaven's name. Your Committee does not consider that any voter would imagine that Mr. Beaven's name was crossed off by this line, and no witness has been produced before your Committee who has intimated that he imagined that such could be the case; nor, indeed, has anyone been produced who observed the line during the polling, but Mr. Grant states that he knows of one voter who did observe the said line shewing through.

3. The Returning Officer's attention was not called to the line mentioned during the polling of votes; but afterwards, when the votes were being counted, he observed the mark through one ballot, and was about to throw the same out, on the ground of its being wrongly marked, when his attention was called to the fact that the impression was from the back.

4. Such a line at the back of the ballot paper does not appear in the form given in the schedule to the Ballot Act, although Mr. Wolfenden, the Government Printer, states that he thinks that it has been the regular custom during previous years, in every instance, to print a similar line at the back of the ballot paper, although not at the back of any particular name.

5. It is clear, upon the evidence, that the said line at the back of the ballot papers was not the result of intention or design.

6. Your Committee think that the line appearing at the back of the ballot paper, although in this case unproductive, so far as the evidence shews, of any effect upon the election, is a serious departure from the form given in the Ballot Act, and should not be allowed to happen again.

Your Committee herewith hand in the evidence taken and the exhibits produced, including the 17 ballots referred to.

J. H. TURNER, *Chairman*,
EDWD. GAWLER PRIOR,
THEODORE DAVIE.

Victoria,
26th February, 1887.