

The influence of Congregationalists in my own colony at all events is all-pervading, and it is quite out of proportion to the number they bear in the colony in general. They are keenly intellectual and wonderfully enthusiastic in all matters affecting the higher citizenship¹⁰.

REFERENCES

1. *Ten Decades: The Australasian Centenary History of the London Missionary Society* (Lond., n.d. = 1895), pp. 9-88.
2. 'An Estimate of the Contribution made in New South Wales by Missionaries of the London Missionary Society arriving there between 1798 and 1825' (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Sydney); 'The Foundation, Development and Influence of Congregationalism in Australia' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Queensland), pp. 1-113.
3. Incorporated since 1 July 1966 in the Congregational Council for World Mission, but retaining its headquarters (and its archives) at Livingstone House, 11 Carteret Street, Westminster, S.W.1.
4. In two series: 'L.M.S. Records relating to the South Seas, 1796-1906' (118 reels), and 'L.M.S. New Series' (63 reels).
5. Renamed the Commonwealth Missionary Society in May 1955 and, since 1 July 1966, incorporated in the Congregational Council for World Mission.
6. The writer holds the Australian sections of these Reports from 1837 to 1910 in microfiche.
7. Christ Church, Launceston, has preserved among its local records the Minutes of the Northern Auxiliary of the Society for the period 1846-57.
8. Access to the papers of Congregational Unions may be sought through their Secretaries at the following addresses:
Australia: 15 Russell St., Eastwood, N.S.W., 2122.
Tasmania: Box 766H, G.P.O., Hobart, Tas., 7001.
New South Wales: 250 Pitt St., Sydney, N.S.W., 2000.
Victoria: Independent Hall, Collins St., Melbourne, Vic., 3000.
South Australia: Box 1207K, G.P.O., Adelaide, S.A., 5001, and the Hon. Archivist, Parkin College, 64 North Terrace, Kent Town, S.A. 5067.
Queensland: 446 Ann Street, Brisbane, Qld., 4000.
Western Australia: 563 William St., Mt. Lawley, W.A., 6050.
9. E. H. Burgmann, 'Religion', in C. Hartley Grattan, *Australia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1947), p. 326.
10. Quoted by S. B. Capen, *Vol. of Proceedings, Second International Congregational Council . . . 1899* (Boston, 1900), p. 6.

A NOTE ON THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CHIEF SECRETARY'S OFFICE

By

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The Chief Secretary's Office (formerly Colonial Secretary's Office) originated in the appointment of Robert Gouger as the first Colonial Secretary in South Australia by an Order in Council of King William IV, dated 13 July 1836¹. Gouger had been prominent in England in the promotion of the province of South Australia through the South Australian Association of which he had been secretary². His appointment as Colonial Secretary in the new province might be seen as a due reward for his important role as one of the founders of the province. He formally assumed his office at Glenelg, South Australia, on 28 December 1836. The Colonial Secretary's Office can be said to date from this event.

No explicit instructions have yet been found about the work and office procedures of the Colonial Secretary, but, from its inception, the office was the main executive and co-ordinating authority of government administration. It had a special function as the correct channel of communication with the governor by other government departments and by the public generally. The business of the office touched on nearly

all aspects of the life of the province — postal arrangements, Aborigines, petitions, legislation, and pastoral lands are just a few important examples.

The earliest evidence of office control of records is found in a series of Rough Entry Books for letters received, commencing in 1839 (GRG 24/7). An annual single number system was used, sometimes employing the fractions $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ to link up related papers³. The Rough Entry Books were also intended to give some account of the action occurring on a particular piece of correspondence. The numbering system, perhaps by error, was continued without break from 1841 to early March 1842, at which time a new sequence of numbers commencing with No. 1 of 1842 was instituted and carried through to the end of that year³. Subsequent years followed the annual single number system without complication, the system and the series (GRG24/6) continuing in operation down to the present time. (Items registered before March 1842 have been incorporated in GRG24/1, or are presumed lost.)

The above series of letters received (GRG24/6) was 'docketed' — i.e. a very brief precis of the letter was written on the outside of it, together with the registered number and the year, and the letter was stored folded lengthwise. In the early 1860s a plain paper jacket was placed round each letter and any attached papers, and an embossing stamp applied to give further identification of the office. A printed paper jacket also came into use in the 1860s and continued in use until the 1920s when a manilla-type cover was introduced. Minutes were often written on the folded original letter or its jacket. Each gathering of papers (or 'file') became popularly known as a 'docket', a term not widely used elsewhere in Australia. 'Dockets' continued to be stored folded, right down to 1965 when a flat cover-file procedure was introduced.

Original finding aids in the Colonial Secretary's Office for the series of registered correspondence included some special groupings of entries in the first Rough Entry Books. From 1842 separate indexes to letters received were maintained. These were mainly alphabetical lists of names of writers of letters, but some classified sections such as Consuls, or Governments, and special sections for other departments, were gradually introduced. Copies of letters sent in reply were made in letter books, later in the form of press copies. With the introduction of the typewriter, copies of letters were increasingly added to the original correspondence (i.e. to the 'docket'). Today the original 'docketed' inward letter has developed into a folded or flat file of all kinds of papers relating to the original letter or memorandum that has given rise to the file.

The staff of the Colonial Secretary's Office has always been quite a small one, despite the volume and wide variety of the matters it has had to deal with. The officers of the Office have always been keenly aware of the administrative and historical value of the records they create and maintain. As early as 1852 the Chief Clerk in the Office wrote —

It is of special consequence in an office of reference like that of the Colonial Secretary that all the Entry and Index Books should not only be kept in the most complete and distinct manner possible, but that all entries in the books of reference *should be kept posted to date*; and that all official documents should be carefully arranged and filed under their separate numbers and headings, immediately

after they have been made use of. This work — if fully and carefully performed — is almost sufficient to occupy the whole time and attention of one clerk; but in consequence of the time consumed during sessions of Council especially in the compilation and alteration of Returns of various kinds, which are — in most cases — required at very short notice, and the preparation of which devolves upon the officer who has in his immediate keeping all the documents for reference — the Record Clerks attention is distracted from his principal duty, and the Index Books unavoidably get into arrear, thus occasioning great loss of time — and inconvenience, by increasing the difficulty of reference ⁴.

With the proclaiming of the Constitution Act in October 1856, the Colonial Secretary became a responsible cabinet minister, henceforth known as the Chief Secretary. The Colonial Secretary's Office was re-named the Chief Secretary's Office, and its conduct was in the charge of an Under Secretary, a permanent member of the civil service. The functions of the Chief Secretary and of his office were spelled out in detail in a circular which he issued in May 1858 —

The Chief Secretary is, by courtesy or arrangement, the Leader of the Cabinet (i.e. virtually Premier), and is the only recognized channel of official communication between the Ministry and the Governor-in-Chief, and between members of the Ministry and each other. He is the principal Executive Officer of the Government; and while exercising a general supervision over all the Departments of the Service, has under his special control those included in the following list ⁵.

There follows some 25 agencies and areas of responsibility, including the Board of Education, Companies, Government Residents, Military, Police, Government Printer, and Colonial Surgeon. Despite his 'general supervision' over all departments, the Chief Secretary could not communicate directly with those outside his immediate control, but had to go through his ministerial colleagues. However, the Chief Secretary could correspond with other governments, the judges of the Supreme Court, and the legislature, he remained the proper channel for communication with the Governor, and was responsible for the publication of official notices in the *Government Gazette*.

Though the Chief Secretary did not always remain the Leader of the Cabinet — i.e. Premier — his office continued to function as the Premier's department in effect, even though the Premier might be the Commissioner of Public Works, the Attorney General, or, as in recent times, the Treasurer. Because of their close association with the Premier, the records of the Chief Secretary's Office have always been of the highest administrative importance, closely related to the records and activities of other state governments, and with the Commonwealth government. All types of matters are dealt with in its files — Federation, defence, the River Murray, even — in recent times — access to 'shared records' of State and Commonwealth administration. And, of course, the purely local administrative activities remain — supervision of the Places of Public Entertainment Act, for example, and the issuing of documents under the seal of the State.

A special function of the Chief Secretary's Office from its inception is its connection with the Executive Council of the State. Because the Under Secretary acts as Clerk of the Executive Council, the Council's records are held in the Office, though they have been treated as a separate record group in the Archives Department.

With the creation in 1965 of a Premier's Department, some of the matters that might have been dealt with through the Chief Secretary's Office will no doubt pass to the new department.

The series of registered correspondence files commenced in 1842 and still accruing (GRG 24/6) is the 'backbone' as it were of the Chief Secretary's Office record group, and, together with related registers (GRG 24/7, GRG 24/9) and indexes (GRG 24/8), constitute the only clearly articulated series in the 93 series which have been identified or established for this group in the Archives Department. Fragmentation seems a feature of the Chief Secretary's Office records, many small gatherings of papers being brought together for specific purposes it would appear. The Archives Department has maintained these small collections so far as possible, even though in some cases they involve over-stamped or specially labelled sequences of files drawn from the registered series of correspondence (GRG 24/6) to make small subject collections (e.g. Wheat Scheme, Parliament) which were at one time used in the Office. For many items received from the Chief Secretary's Office it has been possible only to list them individually as part of a general series of miscellanea. Possibly the extremely varied nature of the work of the Chief Secretary has much to do with the growth of small clumps of unregistered papers and innumerable disparate and unregistered documents.

Records of the Chief Secretary's Office were among the first government records transferred to the Archives Department upon its establishment in 1920, and from an historical point of view they are certainly the most valuable government records held. In 1954, as part of the proposed Guide to Pre-Federation Archives a somewhat sketchy Preliminary Inventory of the Chief Secretary's Office records was issued for the records then held in the Archives Department. A revised edition was issued in 1964. Since that time, however, major new transfers from the Office have rendered the Preliminary Inventory quite out of date. The main finding aid to the group now is a Series List — which is, in effect, a Preliminary Inventory without the descriptive paragraphs. All 93 series are labelled and available for reference. In addition, a special name and subject index to the series of registered correspondence (GRG 24/6) up to 1856 has been compiled in the Archives Department. Unrestricted research access to the records of the Chief Secretary's Office is available up to 1918; but, with approval from the Under Secretary, access has been granted for scholars to use records down to 1932.

REFERENCES

1. *S.A. Gazette and Colonial Register* 3 June 1837, p. 1.
2. Professor D. H. Pike ed. 'Robert Gouger's South Australian Association Letter Books', *South Australiana*, vol. VII, no. 1, March 1968, pp. 1-38.
3. For this and related points of detail I am indebted to some official research carried out in the Archives Dept by Mr C. G. Kerr.
4. Circulars issued by the Chief Secretary's Office, 1849-1859. GRG 24/17/1, p. 180.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 181.