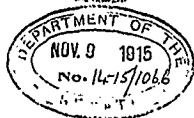


Brought up by
Senator Stuy.
in R. House of C.
Clerk of the Senate
4-11-15.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS



P A P E R S

to be laid on the Table of the
S E N A T E.

R E P O R T

together with Minutes of Evidence
relating to the proposed

ALTERATIONS and ADDITIONS to the CUSTOMS HOUSE, SYDNEY.

1915.
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC WORKS.

R E P O R T

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

RELATING TO THE PROPOSED

ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO
THE CUSTOMS HOUSE, SYDNEY.

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

First Committee.

EDWARD RILEY, Esquire, M.P., Chairman.

Senate.

Senator the Honorable John Henry Keating.
Senator Patrick Joseph Lynch, Vice Chairman.
Senator William Harrison Story.

House of Representatives.

James Edward Fenton, Esquire, M.P.
William Fyfe Finlayson, Esquire, M.P.
The Honorable Henry Gregory, M.P.
Sydney Sampson, Esquire, M.P.
William Henry Laird Smith, Esquire, M.P.

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

PROPOSED ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE CUSTOMS HOUSE, SYDNEY.

REPORT.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, to which the House of Representatives referred for consideration and report the question of the proposed alterations and additions to the Customs House, Sydney, has the honour to Report as follows:—

1. The Customs property in Sydney which was taken over by the Commonwealth at the inauguration of Federation, is included in the Schedule of Transferred Properties, and valued at—

Structure	£91,317
Fixtures	3,000
Furniture	1,500
Site,	30,000
Total	£125,817

2. During the past 30 years the original building has been to a considerable extent altered and added to in an endeavour to cope with the growing needs of the public and the staff. It is represented, however, that a point has now been reached when a radical remodelling of the interior of the building is necessary to provide facilities for effectually dealing with the Customs work in Sydney, and at the same time providing for its growth during the next 25 years.

3. In recent years the staff has of necessity been somewhat crowded, and accommodation for the public has become inadequate owing to the immense increase of business transacted through the Customs at the port of Sydney. The trade and Customs revenue for the State of New South Wales, which amounted in 1901 to £2,383,709, had increased by 1914 to £7,045,196, of which £6,772,492 was collected at Sydney—the collections for this port alone during the month of July, 1915, exceeding those of the whole of the rest of Australia put together for that month.

4. The Works Officers represent that the only satisfactory solution of the difficulty is extensive alteration of the interior of the building, substantial additions to the existing structure, and a re-planning of same to meet the requirements and volume of present and future business. It is estimated that these proposals will meet all requirements for the next 25 years.

PROPOSED WORK.

5. In the scheme of alterations provision is made for the re-arrangement of the building so as to give ample space for the requirements of the public. The "Long Room," in which a great deal of congestion has taken place in the past and which is at present most inconveniently situated on the first floor, is to be removed to the ground floor and have adjoining it the Invoice Room, which is at present located on the second floor. Both these rooms will be large and commodious and remodelled to suit present-day requirements. Under this scheme the whole of the business in which the public takes part will be confined to the ground floor; greater facilities will be provided for the efficient grouping of the staff; and in addition, temporary provision will be made for the office accommodation of the Works and Electoral Branches of the Department of Home Affairs. Two new electric lifts are allowed for, and provision is made for the electric lighting and steam heating of the building.

EXTRACT FROM THE VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

No. 90 of 10th September, 1915.

12. PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE—REFERENCE OF WORKS—CUSTOMS HOUSE, SYDNEY, &c.—Mr. Archibald moved, pursuant to notice, That, in accordance with the provisions of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1914*, the following works be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for their report thereon, viz.:—

Alterations and Additions to the Customs House, Sydney.

Mr. Archibald having laid on the Table plans, &c., in connexion with the proposed works,
Question—put and passed.

The remodelling will provide a total increased space of approximately 20,000 square feet, which is allocated as follows:—

	In existing building. sq. ft.	In proposed building. sq. ft.
Comptroller-General	546	546
Collector	520	520
Sub-Collector	370	433
Inspectors	203	573
Staff Clerks	176	264
Examining Officers	1,316	1,272
Jerquers	1,161	1,560
Boarding Branch	742	1,066
Long-room staff	1,243	3,220
Long-room public space	850	1,496
Invoice-room staff	2,332	3,800
Invoice-room public space	870	1,192
Warehouse Branch staff	1,600	1,028
Warehouse Branch, public space	492	671
Registrar of Shipping	544	516
Office, Stores, and Records	1,072	1,525
Excise Branch	746	1,292
Drawbacks	522	1,122
Accounts Branch	1,017	2,332
Correspondence Branch	1,112	1,786
Statistical Branch	1,750	2,256
Conference room	1,033	1,033
Patents, Trade Marks, and Designs	1,265	1,560
Laboratory	1,500	1,700
Unallotted space	..	3,560
Navigation Department (first floor)	1,925	2,218
Navigation Department (second floor)	788	1,716
Navigation Department (third floor)	972	1,946
Harbor Pilots	257	506
Home Affairs	7,504	11,870
Ministers' rooms	1,004	1,004
Caretakers' quarters	973	950
Federal Members' rooms	798	..
	<u>36,659</u>	<u>56,533</u>

ESTIMATED COST.

6. The total cost of the project is set down at £37,500, and the time for completion two years from date of commencement.

COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS.

7. The Committee inspected the building and subsequently examined the Collector of Customs, New South Wales, as to the accommodation required; the Works Director, New South Wales, who explained the plans of the proposed alterations and additions; and the President of the New South Wales Chamber of Commerce, as to the want of convenience of the existing building, &c.

8. It was suggested that the present site of the Sydney Customs House was not the most central one, and that it might be possible to obtain a more suitable site and erect a new building planned to meet up-to-date Customs requirements. The Committee made inquiries into this question, but is satisfied that no adequate reasons exist for removing from the present site, which is most central and conveniently situated for persons having most business with the Customs House.

9. The Committee learned that, at the present time, the Customs House, Sydney, provides accommodation for several other branches of the Commonwealth service, but ascertained that the existing building is so planned that even if the space so occupied were vacated the additional accommodation would not fully meet Customs requirements. When the projected alterations and additions shall have been completed there will still

be sufficient space to accommodate most of those branches other than Customs now occupying space within the building. The Committee is of opinion, however, that it should be made quite clear that such occupation is to be merely temporary, and that when the growth of the Customs Department, Sydney, demands it, such branches must be prepared to secure accommodation elsewhere.

10. It was stated in evidence that the period of two years set down for the completion of the alterations and additions was fixed upon on account of the intention to endeavour to carry out the work without the removal of staff or disturbance of Customs business. The Committee ascertained, on the other hand, that if the building were vacated the proposed work could be completed within a period of about one year at an estimated cost of about £29,500, while less inconvenience to the public would be caused by removing temporarily to another building than by endeavouring to carry on Customs business in the present building during alterations. In view of these facts the Committee is strongly of opinion that an endeavour should be made to obtain accommodation to which the officials engaged in the Customs House could be removed during the alterations. This would permit of the work being completed 12 months earlier and effect a saving of approximately £8,000, less cost of removal and rent of temporary premises.

RECOMMENDATION.

11. The Committee is satisfied from its investigations and from the evidence tendered, that more accommodation is urgently required for Customs purposes at Sydney. The alterations and additions projected meet the wishes of the Customs Department and appear to the Committee to be sufficient to provide for normal growth for the next 25 years. The Committee therefore recommends that the work be put in hand as early as conveniently possible.

DECISION.

12. The decision arrived at by the Committee is shown in the following extract from its Minutes of Proceedings:—

Mr. Gregory moved—That the proposed alterations and additions to the Customs House, Sydney, be proceeded with in accordance with the designs submitted to the Committee.

Seconded by Mr. Laird Smith.

Carried unanimously.

Edward Riley

Chairman.

Office of the
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,
120 King-street,
Melbourne, 26th October, 1915.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

(Taken at Sydney.)

TUESDAY, 28TH SEPTEMBER, 1915.

Present:

Mr. Ruxx, Chairman;	
Senator Keating,	Mr. Finlayson,
Senator Lynch,	Mr. Gregory,
Senator Story,	Mr. Sampson,
Mr. Fenton,	Mr. Laird Smith.

George John Onkeshott, F.I.A., Works Director for New South Wales, Department of Home Affairs, sworn and examined.

1. To the Chairman.—I submit plans prepared by me showing the Sydney Customs House as it is at present and as we propose to alter it. Following is a brief abstract of the history of the building:—

Prior to 1883.—The original building, which consisted of the central portion (between east and west wings), now occupied by longroom, invoice room, &c., was standing, three stories in height. (No record plans for date of completion in drawing office.) 1883.—The addition of east and west wings to a height of three stories, also colonnade on ground floor at front, and the addition of King's Warehouse and lavatories, &c., in yard. One story in height. 1898.—The addition of two stories over King's Warehouse, making that block three stories in height. 1898 and 1899.—The addition of two extra stories over front portion of building and east and west wings, also the addition of colonnade to first floor at front. 1905.—Re-modelling of main stairway.

The present building, owing to the increase of trade generally in Sydney, and the imposition of Protective duties, has been found insufficient for requirements. Customs business is considerably hampered, particularly in the long-room and the invoice-room, which are hopelessly inadequate for their purposes. An attempt is made in the new plan to confine the whole of the business in which the public take part to the ground floor, to save them mounting the stairs or using the lift. They will pass from the front entrance into the lobby, and from there have direct access to the long-room, invoice-room, and warehouse-room. On the same floor will be also a small room for the Registrar of Shipping. The public also have to have touch with the Collector, the jerquers, and the drawback officers, but the volume of business in that direction is much smaller. The principal congestion is in the long-room. To carry out this scheme on the ground floor it is necessary to demolish entirely the central wing. This is not a costly matter, as it is only brick and cement, and not, structurally, of very great value. The King's Bond is at present accommodated in a small room in the yard. A place must be found for it elsewhere, and to this the Comptroller-General of Customs has agreed. The Shipping Department, F.14537.—B.

which is now under State control, must also be removed. It occupies the east wing, and its principal business is signing on men and giving them their discharges. I do not know under what Department that office will come when the Navigation Act is put into force. We have asked the State to remove the office elsewhere, and I believe their reply has been, "What is the good of our turning out and getting fresh offices when the Commonwealth in a few weeks will have to take the branch over itself?" It is desirable to move that service away from this building in any case, because the most undesirable lot of men gather and lounge about on the eastern pavement, where the tram terminus is. Some other building nearer to the docks would be much more suitable, and avoid the present serious congestion on the pavement. The Federal members' room is also to be transferred from this building to the new Commonwealth Bank Building, now going up in Pitt-street. The present staircase is considered to spoil the entrance, and the stairs are to be placed in a fresh position, leaving a clear 18-foot vestibule leading from the front entrance into the public lobby. Desks for the public are provided opposite the counters in the long-room. On the eastern side is a space in which a fireproof staircase will be built from the ground floor to the fifth. The present antique curiosity called a lift must go. On the western side will be a lobby for two electric lifts, each with cages 7 feet by 6 ft. 6 in. The present proposal is that one shall be attended and the other automatic. A good deal of overtime is worked in all the Departments, and it is thought desirable that officers should be able to avoid climbing the stairs after office hours. We propose to build over the whole area on the ground floor, including the yard. On the western front a staircase will lead down to basement strong-rooms, needed for warehouses and long-room purposes. On the south-east corner an excavation will be made for the boiler-room, which will carry the boilers for heating, vacuum cleaning, and ventilating purposes. The electric power will be obtained from the City Council. On the first floor, the main alterations are the raising of the floor of the central front block to the same level as the remainder of the floor, which will not be very costly, but is most necessary; and the building of an annex to each wing, practically doubling the accommodation in the wings. The floor of the open area left will consist of a flat roof, covered with pavement lights, in order to give a flood of light in the long-room below. There will be very efficient lighting in both the invoice-room and the long-room. This will make the long-room very imposing. We have had to include a somewhat undesirable element in the boarding branch, because its officers are in close touch with the Collector, undesirable because the people they deal with are mostly Asiatics; but we have made a separate entrance for them from the south-eastern corner, with a staircase to an entrance on the first floor. This part is shut off from the rest of the building. On

the second floor, the main alteration consists of the addition of two annexes to the east and west wings and the elevators. The external walls of the annexes over the long-room are to be of reinforced concrete. We do not propose to touch the facades. On the third floor, the main alterations are the two annexes. The pavement lights for the glass roof are now so perfect that we can guarantee that they will not leak, and the hose can be played on them. Doors will lead on to it, and it can be used for recreation purposes. The annexes are carried one floor higher than the rest of the buildings, the main object being to get the double light, on one wing for the laboratory and on the other for the drawing offices for my own staff. On the sixth floor will be situated the caretaker's quarters and the motor-room for the lift. The lavatory accommodation is provided on the southern side towards the late, one block in the western wing, and the other in the southern end of the annex to the eastern wing, on practically all the floors. These are not connected directly with the corridors, but by an open balcony, so as to cut off all possibility of smell entering the building. On the second floor a special retiring room and lavatories are provided for all the female employees, who are mostly engaged in the statistical branch on the floor above. These lavatories were put there because there was much less traffic in that part. On the fifth floor we have a luncheon-room for the women. On the first floor we had a vacant space at the end of the east wing, and we made that also into a lavatory. The sanitary plumbing will all come down in the one space on the east wing. We are putting in a new series of counters in the long-room, invoices and warehouse rooms. The floors and vestibule and public space on the ground floor will be of marble. The walls of the vestibule and hall will also be of marble. Australian stone will be used. New South Wales furnishes the best marble in the world.

2. To Senator Keating.—We can obtain local marble in commercial quantities. A great quantity has already been shipped for use in the Commonwealth Offices in London.

3. To the Chairman.—The Comptroller-General has at present no room here. In the new plan he gets 546 square feet. The Collector of Customs remains in his own room. This space in square feet compares as follows:—

	Old Building.	New Building.
Comptroller-General	—	610
Collector	620	620
Sub-Collector	370	433
Inspectors	203	573
Staff Clerks	175	204
Examining Officers	1,210	1,272
Surveyors	1,104	1,603
Boarding Branch	742	1,008
Long-room Staff	1,243	1,220
Long-room public space	850	1,494
Invoice-room Staff	2,332	3,800
Invoice-room public space	870	1,192
Warehouse Branch Staff	1,600	1,028
Warehouse Branch public space	492	671
Registrar of Shipping	644	1,620
Office, Stores, and Records	1,072	1,292
Excise Branch	740	1,122
Drainage	623	2,332
Accounts Branch	1,017	1,780
Correspondence Branch	1,112	2,250
Statistical Branch	1,750	1,033
Conference Room	1,033	1,033
Patents, Trade Marks, and Designs	1,265	1,500
Laboratory	1,500	1,700
Unallotted space	—	3,600
Navigation Department (first floor)	1,025	2,218

	Old Building.	New Building.
Navigation Department (second floor)	788	1,710
Navigation Department (third floor)	672	1,940
Harbor Pilots	257	605
Home Affairs	7,604	11,870
Ministers' Rooms	1,094	1,094
Caretaker's Quarters	915	900
Federal Members' Rooms	708	—
Total	30,630	56,533

The total increased space is thus, roughly, 20,000 square feet, of which the Trade and Customs Department takes 13,000, the Navigation Department 2,400, and Home Affairs Department 4,600. Where a cutting down is shown it represents the elimination of waste space. The counter length in the long-room is increased from 74 feet to 100 feet, and in the invoice-room from 74 feet to 130 feet, and in the warehouse branch from 73 feet to 98 feet. In the Home Affairs Department, the space for the clerks of works has been more than doubled, this great increase being required owing to the introduction of the policy of day labour. The accommodation for the accounts branch, which is at present very congested, is also nearly doubled, and the electoral branch receives an increase of 1,600 square feet, principally on account of the new system of cards. It is for the Cabinet to decide whether the two rooms for the use of Ministers will be kept in this building. Rooms have been allotted to Ministers at the new Bank premises, but I recommend having two rooms here in case the Minister of Customs visits Sydney, so that he may be near his Collector or Comptroller-General. It is also very desirable to have good rooms vacant in offices of this kind for conferences and deputations. The Comptroller-General thinks the extra space for the Navigation Department will be sufficient. We have made the space in the long-room and invoice-room sufficient for a good many years. We generally calculate about twenty-five years ahead. The electric light will be installed throughout the building, from the basement to the top floor. Gas will be kept for the luncheon-room, the laboratory, and elsewhere where it is specially required. The vacuum cleaning installation will be worked by suction from the basement, and the refuse disposed of in the heating furnace. The heating system will, I presume, be by radiators. The present entrances from Loftus-street and Young-street are abolished by the new scheme, as is also the yard entrance from the western front. There will be only two entrances—the general entrances from the front and a small entrance in the south-east corner of the boarding branch. The estimated cost of the alterations is £27,500, which covers everything, including lighting and heating. Extra furnishing will be required by the extra space. That estimate covers all the fixtures, but not the furniture. The vacant ground in front of the building does not belong to the Commonwealth. If we could turn the whole of the Customs Department out during the progress of the work, and have the building to ourselves, we could carry out the alterations in about half the time; but that is considered impracticable. We shall have to do the work piecemeal. The first operation will be to find a new habitat for the King's Bond and the Shipping Master, demolish the yard, and begin on the portion of the long-room and the invoice-room included in the yard space. We can then build the annexes to the wings to

a certain height. When these are completed we shall have a certain amount of room to which to transfer officers, so that the work can go on elsewhere. The next stage will be to proceed with the eastern wing, where the shipping office on the ground floor would at once give us accommodation for a number of clerks. The next thing to do will be to raise the floor of the first floor and then proceed with the whole of the front block. The ceiling of the ground floor of the front block will necessarily be raised when the level of the first floor is altered. The present lift would remain in use until the permanent lifts are completed. We should build the electric lifts as soon as possible, and the next operation would be to build the new staircase. We could then demolish the existing staircase, and complete the hall through into the long-room. Then would follow a general finishing up stage, very inconvenient to all concerned. The Comptroller-General of Customs tells us that it is hardly practicable to move his Department out of the buildings. As an architect, I say that there is no comparison between the convenience of doing the work in an empty building as against an occupied one.

4. To Mr. Fenton.—My Department could move out, but the Customs authorities say it would dislocate the business of the country so much if they moved out that it would be almost impracticable. The structure passed over to the Commonwealth as a transferred property at a valuation of £91,317, fixtures £2,000, furniture £1,600, site £30,000; total, £125,917.

6. To Mr. Finlayson.—The time occupied in making the alterations will depend on the facilities I have to move the Departments. I expect the work will take two years.

6. To Mr. Laird Smith.—I have had to leave a big margin in estimating the cost on account of having to do the work piecemeal.

7. To Mr. Finlayson.—Under the new scheme the idea is that the Home Affairs (including the Electoral Branch) may be turned out at any moment when the Trade and Customs Department requires the space. The extra space for Customs business includes the space now occupied, and proposed to be occupied, by my branch, the Electoral Branch, and the Federal members. Undoubtedly, in time we shall have to go out of the building altogether, when the Customs Department requires the space. I am not in favour of the shipping office being retained in this building, even if it should mean a distribution of activities connected with the Trade and Customs Department. The removal of the shipping office will take away from this building a very undesirable element. The men I refer to would be better accommodated by a building nearer the docks. Captain Cunningham, the Superintendent of Navigation, will be in this building. It will be most inconvenient to keep the King's Bond here, as it necessitates bringing heavy drays in through the lane. A bond somewhere near the quays would be much more convenient. Both Colonel Owen and myself have been in consultation with the Comptroller-General in Melbourne in the preparation of the plans. I have also consulted Mr. Barkley, and we have arrived at what we regard as a mutually satisfactory conclusion. The plans have met with the approval of the Customs Department; they have made no suggestions which I have not been able to adopt.

8. To Senator Story.—If the premises were vacated I could save, roughly, £8,000 in the cost of the work, bringing the total cost down to about £29,000. The Home Affairs Department could be temporarily housed elsewhere. It would help a great deal if the other Departments were moved temporarily, allowing the Customs Branch to remain, but the Electoral Branch could not be moved until the Referendum has been taken. It would be worth while to effect a portion of the saving, but against that would have to be set off the rent paid for temporary premises and the cost of transfer both ways.

9. To Senator Keating.—There may be some difficulty in finding a convenient place to which to move the Departments. I understand that the Commonwealth Bank is to be finished, according to the estimate, in six months. There will be no room there for any officers from this building, except temporarily. The land tax branch, I believe, is going there. Against the saving of £8,000 would have to be set off the cost of housing the Departments elsewhere and the cost of removal each way. That matter would have to be gone into very carefully. I know of no State building in the locality available. The State wants extra accommodation as it is. It is unlikely that I shall be able to do the work with an empty building. I am afraid it will be necessary to carry out the work piecemeal. I would certainly adopt the alternative if possible. I tried to persuade the Customs Department that it was possible, but they decided not, and from their point of view I think they are right.

10. To Mr. Sampson.—There would not be enough room for the Trade and Customs Department in this building without any alterations being made, even if the Home Affairs and the Electoral branches and Federal members' rooms were removed, because the present Customs accommodation is so wrongly planned. We should perhaps have sufficient superficial area, but the convenience of the Customs Department and the convenience of the public could not be properly met without alterations. It would greatly help certain branches of the Customs work to leave them the building to themselves, but the pinch is being felt mostly in the long-room and the invoice-room, and that congestion would still exist unless alterations were made. No doubt minor alterations could be made, but it would only be patchwork. I believe all the space at the new Commonwealth Bank is allotted.

11. To Mr. Laird Smith.—I do not think the form of counter matters much. It all depends on the planning of the room. We have introduced a semi-circular counter to deal with possible congestion. In the New York Customs House they have an elliptical-room, with the counter running round the ellipse, and a comparatively small amount of space for the staff, the whole of the centre part being devoted to the public; but my objection is that the public have too much room, and it becomes a sort of gossiping room. The staff there are inconvenienced by being out of touch with the other officers who have to deal with the papers. In our plan the officers are brought much closer together.

12. To Senator Lynch.—I doubt whether the present building will carry more than five stories. It already carries two stories more than it was originally intended to carry, and I should not like to add another without careful examination. I am not an advocate of sky-scrapers. Five

stories is a good height. It is a different matter if you are sure of proper foundations. I understand that two rooms will do for the lighthouse branch in Sydney. All the actual administration is done from Melbourne. This building was built on the harbor foreshore, and the tides come up under it now. What was known as the Tank was run under a corner of it. The main cause for alteration is the inconvenience of the present building to the Customs Department and the public. The present accommodation undoubtedly greatly impairs efficiency. The conditions in the long-room at times are ghastly. I have heard of no complaints from the Board of Health. The inconvenience is felt by the staff, but more by the public. The Collector of Customs has had complaints from the public about the accommodation in the invoice and long rooms. I do not know that the public grumble about climbing the stairs, but it will be a great convenience to have all the rooms used by the public on the ground floor. They do grumble about having to go up one floor for one branch and down for another. I have submitted my estimate to Colonel Owen, and he has not disapproved of it. The estimate was made on the 3rd September of this year.

13. To Mr. Gregory.—The space at present occupied by Departments other than the Customs is 8,804 square feet. If straight out tenders were called, with no preference, they would be very high if it were arranged that the Customs Department should not be removed during the progress of the work, because no tenderer would put in a low tender on such an inconvenient arrangement. He would not know how much he would be delayed. For that reason day labour is infinitely better in a case of this kind, because there would be no compensation to pay for delay. It would not put the Home Affairs Department on its mettle if tenders were called. It does not need to be put on its mettle; it is at high pressure now.

14. To Senator Lynch.—I am not prepared to start building immediately if the work is approved, because the first thing I should do would be to remove the King's Bond and Shipping Master. Negotiations to secure premises for that purpose would have to be begun. So far as my construction branch is concerned, I could start to-morrow.

15. To Mr. Finlayson.—I could furnish the Committee, if instructed, with an approximate estimate of the alterations that would be necessary to make the building suitable for the Customs Department only. I am afraid I should still have to erect annexes if Home Affairs and Electoral branches were removed.

16. To Mr. Sampson.—The plans have been made for the building for the Customs Department only, in the distant future. I do not hope to keep permanent accommodation here for my own branch.

17. To Senator Lynch.—I cannot say how long the proposed alterations will meet the requirements. The Navigation Branch is an unknown quantity to me. The Quarantine Branch was against coming in here. It is at present in a rented building belonging to the Sydney Ferries. The Customs Department has gone into the question of its future requirements, and it is understood that the Home Affairs will have to give up its space when the Customs Department requires it.

William Henry Barkley, Collector of Customs, New South Wales, sworn and examined.

18. To the Chairman.—I control the 173 Customs employees in the building. The premises are not adequate for carrying on the work. I have made no complaints to the Minister, but the matter was gone into by my predecessor, Mr. Mills, and certain proposals were made for remodelling the building. This, I think, is necessary. The plans will meet all our requirements for probably fifteen or twenty years, or possibly double that period if the whole building be devoted exclusively to Customs purposes. To remove the Home Affairs, Electoral Branch, and Federal members would not be sufficient for present needs, because the difficulty is structural. The two large public rooms—the long-room and the invoice-room—are not big enough. Simply to give us extra space would not overcome the main difficulty. The public are not well catered for in this building. The accommodation in the long-room is altogether inadequate. At times it is much overcrowded. The gross Customs and Excise revenue collected for the twelve months ended 30th June last for New South Wales was just over £7,000,000, of this £6,772,492 was collected at Sydney. This is an increase over last year, which would be accounted for to some extent by the alteration in the Tariff, especially as regards the Excise duties. The trade of the port shows a gradual increase all the time. It is undoubtedly growing every year. Not much additional work has yet been put on the Customs Department by the taking over of Lighthouses or the contemplated taking over of the Navigation Department. I do not think those services will affect the present Customs staff very much. I expect a separate sub-branch will be formed to control those Departments. It would certainly be advisable to have them all under one roof, and there is little doubt that as time goes on this building will become more and more insufficient for our purposes. We have an immense transhipment trade in this port with the Islands and New Zealand. This is not represented by revenue, although it is trade over which we exercise control. The Customs collections for this port for last July exceed those of the whole of the rest of Australia put together for that month. The Home Affairs officials consulted me several times about the plans for altering the building, and I had a small sub-committee of my chief officers appointed to look into them and report on their suitability. Certain suggestions were made which I understand have been adopted. It would be a great advantage if all the activities associated with the Customs Department were housed in this building. It is no disadvantage to have the other Departments—such as Home Affairs and Electoral—here. If the alterations on the ground floor, the remaining space in the building, as it stands, would be sufficient for the present requirements of the Customs, Quarantine, and Lighthouse Departments, if we had the Home Affairs floor. There is a great disadvantage in having the shipping office in this building. It should be somewhere at the water-side, not because it is under State control, but because of the class of men who have to attend at it. Even if that office comes under the Customs Department under the Navigation Act, it will be no disadvantage to have it in a separate building. We have practically no King's Warehouse in Sydney. There is at the back of

this building a small room where we look up opium and other seized goods. The practice here is to send the goods, which in other States go to the King's Bond, to licensed general warehouses, where the proprietors charge special rates prescribed by regulation. We really have no accommodation for a King's Bond. It would be physically impossible, for instance, at the present moment to put 100 bales of paper into our present King's Warehouse. It would be an advantage to establish a King's Warehouse elsewhere; but it should be handy to the Customs Office if possible. I understand that no provision is made in the new plans for such a bond, and it may, therefore, be necessary to hire accommodation for the purpose. If the present plans for the long-room and invoice-room are adopted, there will be no room to build a King's Warehouse on this site, because these rooms practically take up the whole of the ground space. If it were possible, it would be an advantage to have the King's Warehouse here. I know of no other Commonwealth building in the city suitable for accommodating branches of the Customs Department in case of an overflow from this building.

19. To Mr. Fenton.—The Brisbane Customs House has accommodation for bonded goods, and makes revenue by charging a rental. If we had a bond store, it would mean extra revenue which at present goes into private pockets. Not very much work is involved on this Department in dealing with exports, apart from the statistical records. I take it that an exceptionally high protective Tariff would lessen imports and decrease our work, which would mean a decreased staff; but it is possible that, even with a decreased revenue, our work may not diminish. Legislation such as the new Protection proposals of a few years ago would enormously increase our work. We had a taste of that in the Harvester case. I can see no reason why we could not shift temporarily, if by so doing Mr. Oakechott could save £8,000 in remodelling this building, and we could get a building to move into. If this place were burnt down, we should have to shift. Building alterations must necessarily hamper the public and officials; and if a conveniently-situated place could be obtained at a reasonable rental, and with reasonable accommodation for the staff, it would serve the interests of the public and the staff better than to remain here. Of course, some portion of the saving would be expended in fitting up the temporary premises. If it meant a saving of only £4,000, it would be worth while to make the attempt, and I would do my best to help in that direction.

20. To Mr. Sampson.—I could not suggest any other way of altering the building to suit our requirements, even if the Home Affairs and Electoral branches vacated their present space. It is essential to have the long and invoice rooms officers each occupying one large room, and those two main rooms must be kept together. This renders structural alteration imperative. No other practical course is open. I am afraid it would not meet our requirements simply to give us full possession of the whole of the present building, as the difficulty regarding the invoice-room and long-room would still remain. If we could get over the difficulty without the fundamental alterations now proposed, I should be delighted. Even when

these alterations are made, if the rooms at present occupied by other Departments and by Federal members are not available, we can occupy them with advantage as time goes on.

21. To Senator Story.—If by removing temporarily we could get back to our own offices in one year instead of two, I would prefer to move.

22. To Mr. Laird Smith.—If the offices are not conveniently situated, loss of time is caused to the public as well as to our own staff. At present our correspondence-room is on the third floor. It should be on the same floor as the other main branches. In the scheme provisionally approved, the correspondence-room is to be on the same floor as the Collector's room. Our present drawback-room is up three or four flights of stairs, entailing considerable waste of time on the part of the public and the staff. As far as we can, we put on special officers to assist when there is a rush of work. The room where there is most delay is the invoice-room, where the invoices for goods subject to ad valorem rates are examined. The officers who do that work must be skilled in the Tariff, and in the decisions relating thereto. If the invoice work is behind, I generally require the whole of the invoice staff to remain behind for an hour in the afternoon to pull it up. The proposed semi-circular counter will be an advantage to the public.

23. To Senator Lynch.—The public is considerably inconvenienced at present. I have gone into the long-room and the invoice-room on a summer's afternoon, and been very glad to get out of them owing to their crowded condition. The invoice-room is at present on the third floor, and it will be a great convenience to the public to have the three principal rooms on the ground floor. Our total staff is 400; but that includes the outside staff. There has been no appreciable increase in the staff in the last year or two. We are now working short-handed, as forty have gone to the war, and we have taken on about twenty temporary hands in their places. Ten per cent. is a rough approximation of the decrease in the efficiency of the staff owing to the present cramped space. The existing accommodation is also unhealthy. The congestion in the invoice-room has existed since the inception of the first Tariff. We relieved it somewhat by taking in another large room as an invoice-room; but this is a serious disadvantage, as it necessitates a division of the invoice staff. The increase in the trade of the port—both import and distributing—has been gradual ever since Federation.

(Taken at Sydney.)

FRIDAY, 1st OCTOBER, 1915.

Present:

Mr. RILEY, Chairman;

Sensor Keating,	Mr. Finlayson,
Sensor Lynch,	Mr. Gregory,
Sensor Story,	Mr. Sampson,
Mr. Fenton,	Mr. Laird Smith.

Perry Thomas Owen, Director-General of W.A., Department of Home Affairs, sworn and examined.

24. To the Chairman.—I have grave doubts whether this is the proper place for a Customs House at all. It was probably located here soon

after Captain Cook arrived. In the early days all the traffic was at Circular Quay. When evidence was being taken with regard to the Central Postal Sorting Station, Sydney, the Secretary for the Harbor Trust told us that the inevitable extension of the mercantile marina was towards Darling Harbor and westward, and that Woolloomooloo Bay and other bays must, in time, become pleasure resorts. This building is close to a certain number of merchants; but the development of Sydney is going on south from here, and in fifty years the Customs House will be on the outskirts of a Greater Sydney. The Committee should consider the question of trying to get it closer to the main centre of the mercantile marine and future population. I suggest west of George-street, and south of Darling Harbor bridge. The present Central Railway Station is really the correct centre of a Greater Sydney.

23. *To Mr. Gregory.*—I do not think the expenditure of £37,000 would be a good addition to the present property. It cannot be a good investment for the people to locate a big Commonwealth function in the wrong part of the city.

(Taken at Sydney.)

WEDNESDAY, 6TH OCTOBER, 1916.

PRESENT:

Mr. RULEY, Chairman;

Senator Kenting	Mr. Finlayson
Senator Story	Mr. Gregory
Mr. Fenton	Mr. Laird Smith.

George Arthur Parkes, President, Sydney Chamber of Commerce, sworn and examined.

26. *To the Chairman.*—At a full meeting of the Council of the Chamber of Commerce this morning, I submitted the question whether the present was the best position for the Customs House. The reply was that the Customs House was in the best position possible, so far as members could understand, without knowing where it was proposed to move it to. The shipping offices are in close proximity, and it has Woolloomooloo Bay on one side, Circular Quay in front, and Darling Harbor on the other. There is no doubt in our minds that the Customs House is now in the most convenient place. All the softgoods people in York-street are near it, and the trans pass it. A lot of goods come in through Woolloomooloo; but still that is as convenient to the Customs House as you can get it. The Inter-State trade goes to Darling Harbor; but that does not trouble the Customs House so much as the overseas trade. There used to be a branch of the Customs House at the bottom of King-street, at the corner of Six-street; but that may be closed up now. The Union line, from New Zealand, still comes in to Darling Harbor, but the shipping offices that have to do with the Customs House are in George-street. I have heard on many occasions that the public are inconvenienced by the present inadequate accommodation in this building. I cannot say from actual experience, but my clerks tell me that the crowded condition of the offices retards the work greatly. It ought to assist a great deal to make the ground floor one long room. I have been connected with shipping in Sydney since 1884. It will be a great convenience to have

the invoice-room near where the entries are passed on the ground floor. The proposed alterations shown on the plan submitted to me will be a great advance on present conditions. The suggested public lobby is an excellent idea. The present long-room is not nearly big enough. With these additions there is no doubt about Sydney commercial people being satisfied with the Customs House remaining here. One or two people might want it removed, but this is the most convenient centre.

27. *To Mr. Finlayson.*—The Newcastle and Hunter River boats used to come in at the foot of King-street. It is better to have the Customs House in a convenient centre than to distribute the work. Some of the overseas shipping will have to go up towards Darling Harbor and Johnson's Bay when accommodation is available. The Harbor Trust plan is to run wharfs round Jones' Bay, and right round Balmain. If that occurs, the Customs House will still be conveniently situated, because the shipping people have to work from their offices, and not from the ships. No matter where the shipping is located, the entries have to be passed here. The Customs House must be centrally situated for the importers. Merchants and importers have written to the Chamber of Commerce regarding the delays experienced by their clerks in the Customs House, but not so much within the last six months. I am not sure whether the stoppage of complaints is due to better management or slacker business. There has undoubtedly been great congestion; and six months ago I know that efforts were made to improve matters. We wrote to the Minister, asking that something be done to relieve the congestion, and the Department did its best to help us.

William Henry Barkley, Collector of Customs, New South Wales, recalled and further examined.

28. *To the Chairman.*—It would not be advisable to remove the Customs House from here. The firms whose business is most largely connected with the Customs House have their offices in proximity to it. Large shipping companies, many large importers, and all the Customs House agents have their offices handy, and it would be extremely inconvenient to have the Customs House in Darling Harbor. Woolloomooloo Bay is likely to be largely used for overseas shipping, which is another reason why the Customs House should not go to Darling Harbor. It would not improve matters much to have it between the two, nearer King-street, because it is at present excellently served with the existing tram system. It is very convenient to the wharfs, where the P. and O., Orient, and Japanese vessels berth. Any attempt to move the Customs House away from this locality would be strongly resisted by the people most interested in Customs House matters, such as Customs agents and shipping companies. It does not necessarily follow that it must be near the wharfs. The outdoor staff which attends to Customs duties on the wharfs have no business to transact at the Customs House, and do not come here, even for their salaries.

29. *To Mr. Finlayson.*—If the Customs House were placed near the railway station, it would still be necessary for most of the merchants and others concerned to take the tram; and if they get on a tram, they might as well come down to Circular

Quay. A very large volume of business is transacted here by Customs agents on behalf of importers other than Sydney importers, and they all have their offices established within a stone's throw of this building for the sake of convenience. They are in and out of it all day long. I have been Collector of Customs here for nearly two years. I have had a good many complaints from outside of delays in the passing of entries and the transaction of business at the Customs House during that time. I think they are decreasing; but none has been occasioned by the remoteness of the building from the importers' or agents' offices. They have all been due to the congestion of work caused by pressure of business and, in some cases, insufficient accommodation. Since I last gave evidence it has occurred to me that during the proposed alterations it might be possible to obtain sufficient accommodation to house the officers of the Department temporarily in Goldsbrough Mori's building next door. If this could be done it would be an excellent arrangement. I have come to the conclusion that it would be

almost impossible to carry on here during the rebuilding satisfactorily to the public and the officers, much as I dread going out at all. Floors could, I think, be obtained in Goldsbrough Mori's building, which would be an ideal locality. I understand one floor is unoccupied.

30. *To Mr. Fenton.*—It would be a very important consideration to know that we could get back quicker if we moved out temporarily. I will get in touch with the Home Affairs Department to see if the building I have suggested can be obtained. Most of the inward shipping discharges at Woolloomooloo Bay and Darling Harbor, from Miller's Point right round to Pyrmont. The Japanese boats discharge at Circular Quay, and the American boats in Darling Harbor. Our trade has, of course, decreased with Austria and Germany and increased with Japan and America—very extensively with Japan. There will, I think, be no difficulty in accommodating the increase in American and Japanese vessels, because the large wharfs which the Germans previously occupied are available.