

1920.



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21-7-20.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
PUBLIC WORKS.

FIFTH GENERAL REPORT.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

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MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

Second Committee :

The Honorable HENRY GREGORY, M.P., Chairman.

Senate.

Senator George Henderson.  
Senator Edward Needham.  
Senator John Newland, Vice-Chairman.

House of Representatives.

William George Mahony, Esquire, M.P.  
James Mathews, Esquire, M.P.  
Sydney Sampson, Esquire, M.P.  
Hugh Sinclair, Esquire, M.P.  
The Honorable William Henry Laird Smith, M.P.

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To His Excellency the Right Honorable SIR RONALD CRAUFURD MUNRO FERGUSON, a Member of His Majesty's Most Honorable Privy Council, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth of Australia.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY :

In accordance with the requirements of Section 11 of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1914*, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works has the honour to submit the following Report of its Proceedings for the year ended 31st December, 1919.

1. During the year the Committee held 75 meetings and examined 47 witnesses in connexion with the proposed works submitted. In making its inquiries the Committee travelled 2,328 miles by rail.

QUESTIONS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE.

2. When the Committee presented its last General Report the following question was under consideration, namely :—

Erection of Ordnance Store, Leichhardt, New South Wales.

3. Since that date the following additional question was submitted to the Committee for inquiry and report, namely :—

Erection of Commonwealth Note Printing Offices.

COMPLETED INQUIRIES.

4. The Committee has dealt with both these questions and has presented reports in connexion therewith, namely :—

	Estimated Cost.
	£
(a) Erection of Ordnance Stores, Leichhardt, New South Wales .. .. .	69,283
(b) Erection of Commonwealth Note Printing Offices .. .. .	47,800
Total .. .. .	<u>£117,083</u>

(a) *Erection of Ordnance Stores, Leichhardt, N.S.W.*

5. This was a proposal to erect on an area of about 9 acres acquired for the purpose at Leichhardt, New South Wales, a reinforced concrete building in which would be stored various articles required for the Defence Forces in that State.

This building was to be of three stories and of a size approximately 535 feet long by 83 feet broad, giving a floor space of about 127,680 square feet.

The Committee carefully inquired into the matter and investigated generally the manner of housing "Ordnance stores" in and around Sydney, and as a result recommended several departures from the original proposition. Evidence obtained by the Committee showed that inconvenience, lack of economy, and waste of effort resulted from the fact that the existing Ordnance Stores are located in various unsuitable buildings around Sydney, and that the building proposed would not be of a storage capacity sufficient to permit of the relinquishment of those subsidiary stores. It therefore recommended the addition of another story to the building proposed, which would provide sufficient floor space for the storage of all the material now housed in the various smaller buildings, simplify administration, minimize the handling of goods, give more effective supervision, and reduce the cost of management and distribution. It was shown that by concentration at Leichhardt two large buildings now used as stores could be vacated and made available for other purposes, that about 25 drill halls, &c., now used for storage purposes could be made

available for the purposes for which they were intended, and that administrative charges could be reduced by approximately £5,400 annually. This sum capitalized at 5 per cent. would exceed the additional expenditure which would be involved in providing the increased accommodation and facilities recommended by the Committee.

Certain recommendations were also made as to the more effective development of the site, and in particular to the location of the railway line designed to connect the site with the New South Wales railway system, by which it is estimated an amount of approximately £6,300 would be saved.

In regard to the size and capacity of the lifts suggested by the Department of Defence, a perusal of all the evidence obtained and the inspection of many lifts in Defence and Postal buildings, as well as in private stores, failed to convince the Committee that any necessity existed for such large and powerful lifts as proposed. In view, therefore, of the space required for six lifts of a size of 14 feet by 8 feet, and the installation and running costs of lifts designed to carry 3 tons when the maximum load would rarely exceed 1 ton, the Committee unanimously recommended that in the interests of economy and without in any way hampering the efficiency of the store it would be better to have lifts of a carrying capacity of 30 cwt. each and of a size approximately 9 feet by 7 feet, and instead of having them in the centre of the building to have three lifts on each side.

This recommendation has, however, not been followed, and an intimation to that effect was conveyed to the Committee by a letter addressed to the Secretary by the Secretary, Department of Works and Railways, under date 29th April, 1920, in the following terms:—

In calling for tenders for the Leichhardt Ordnance Store a departure was made from the recommendations contained in the Public Works Committee's report of the 26th June, 1919.

Before the working plans embodying the fourth store were begun, the Department of Defence stated that for the working of the store the lift cages as originally proposed were desired, but with a reduction of gross load of from 3 tons to 2 tons per lift.

It is understood that the object of the large platform lift is to enable trailers or trucks to be loaded and despatched per lift from one floor to another floor, or to the road or railway platforms, to facilitate the quick handling of stores. The Department of Defence considered, however, that, under the circumstances, four lifts should be provided instead of six, although the construction of the buildings would admit of the provision of two more lift wells if necessary. Provision was made accordingly in the working plans.

The Committee stated that in its opinion provision for the administrative staff and for the armourers' and artisans' workshops should be in separate buildings apart from the store.

For the comfort and convenience of the employees it was recommended that a room should be provided for the store staff and artisans, not in, but adjacent to the store, where the men could wash, change their clothing, and have lockers in which they could leave their bags containing the midday meal; also that a dining room should be provided where the meal could be taken in comfort, where boiling water could be made available, and where smoking would be allowed. It was suggested that similar provision might well be included for the clerks in the building recommended for office accommodation.

It was urged that as many as practicable of the habitations at present on the site be retained and that employees of the stores be given first preference to occupy them, and that if at all possible such of the buildings which occupy land required for store purposes be removed bodily to any suitable portion of the site not likely to be required for some time and let to employees. Furthermore, the Committee expressed the opinion that it would be a good business proposition for the Commonwealth to provide dwellings at a reasonable rental, and recommended that the Government take into consideration a scheme for the housing of employees of the Stores on suitable unoccupied land within reasonable distance of the Leichhardt site.

(b) *Erection of Commonwealth Note Printing Offices.*

6. The Note and Stamp Printing operations of the Commonwealth are at the present time carried on in premises in Flinders-street extension, Melbourne, under cramped conditions in an unsuitable building constituting a dangerous fire risk, and the proposal submitted was that a four storied fire-resisting building of modern construction be erected to provide better accommodation for the employees and more space for the machines turning out this high-class work in a location less inimical to good results than the present situation.

The Committee inspected the existing premises and made careful inquiry into the working of the factory and having satisfied itself of the disadvantages of the present position and premises, and being convinced that no reasonable expenditure would limit these disadvantages, recommended that in the best interests of the Commonwealth the establishment should be removed from its present quarters with as little delay as possible.

Investigations were made as to the feasibility of establishing the Note Printing Offices at Sydney or Canberra, but after mature consideration the Committee was of opinion that in view of all the circumstances of the case the new building should be erected on the site acquired by the Commonwealth in Victoria parade, Fitzroy, Melbourne, and recommended accordingly.

EXEMPTIONS.

7. Mention has been made in previous reports of the action taken at various times to exempt from the operation of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1914* certain works to be carried out for the Navy and Defence Departments of the Commonwealth. The effect of these exemptions is that no investigation of the proposed work is made by the Committee, and Parliament is asked to vote large sums of money without being fully informed of the reason for or the extent of the expenditure and its necessity.

It is possible that the initial expenditure of a few thousands of pounds on naval or military works in any particular locality may commit the Commonwealth to a huge expenditure or the continuance of a policy having far-reaching effects, and if such is to be the case Parliament should know the ultimate expenditure anticipated and have a voice in determining whether the policy suggested is advisable.

On the other hand, the carrying out of certain works piecemeal may be neither politic nor economical, and the Committee considers that the proper course to pursue in connexion with any large undertaking would be to draw up a programme for such work spread over a number of years, to be carried out in accordance with a definite plan. Having in mind the possibility of a change of officials or Ministries during a lengthy period of construction, it would undoubtedly be more satisfactory that such programme should be laid down, not by any individual official or Minister, but by a Committee of the Parliament itself.

In connexion with five references made by Parliament to the Committee of Works connected with Naval Bases, the Committee has been instrumental in saving a sum of £113,954, while information gleaned in the course of its inquiries has convinced the Committee that much improvement would have resulted if some works carried out without reference to it had been the subject of investigation before being put in hand.

The Committee trusts, therefore, that in the interests of the public, of Parliament, and of the Department initiating the proposals, the whole question of those classes of works which have already been exempted should receive reconsideration, and that in the future the power of exemption given under the Act should be resorted to only in the rarest cases, while if the amendments of the Act suggested by the Committee in the Fourth General Report be adopted, which would permit of evidence being taken in secret, there should be no necessity for exemptions at all.

8. Appended to this Report is a return containing a record of the inquiries of the Committee from the date of its appointment to 31st December, 1919.

H. GREGORY,  
Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,  
31 Queen-street, Melbourne, 1st June, 1920.

Transmitted to the Prime Minister.

(Sgd) R. H. Ferguson.  
Governor-General.  
2nd July, 1920.

# PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

## RECORD OF INQUIRIES.

The following is a list of proposed public works inquired into by the Committee from the date of its appointment to 31st December, 1919, with the result of its inquiries:—

Date of Inquiry.	Proposed Work.	Expenditure proposed by the Government.	Expenditure recommended by the Committee.	Amount in Excess of that proposed.	Amount in Reduction of that proposed.	Remarks.
1915.		£	£	£	£	
25th Jan. to 24th Feb.	Construction of a main sewer for the city of Canberra	75,000	75,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
28th Jan. to 25th Feb.	Storage and regulating reservoir, Upper Quacanboyan River	100,000	..	..	100,000	Committee decided that there is no present necessity or urgency for this work
11th Mar. to 4th May	Erection of buildings at Flinders Naval Base	111,032	111,032	..	..	Recommended as proposed
19th Mar. to 5th May	Sewerage scheme for Flinders Naval Base	9,500	7,500	..	2,000	
6th May to 24th June	Lithgow Small Arms Factory Extension	60,000 (including power plant)	92,100	23,500	..	In lieu of making additions to the existing factory at Lithgow, the Committee recommended the erection of a factory at Canberra twice the size of the existing factory, the installation of new machinery therein, and the removal thereto of the existing machinery at a convenient date
6th May to 27th May	Increase of output, Small Arms Factory, Lithgow	..	..	..	..	Committee recommended establishment of a second shift
6th May to 17th June	Increase of plant, Small Arms Factory, Lithgow	38,727	38,727	..	..	Recommended as proposed
27th July to 29th Aug.	Small Arms Factory—location at Canberra	..	..	..	..	Site recommended
18th Sept. to 15th Oct.	Automatic Telephone Exchange, Sydney	93,008	..	..	..	Committee favorable to proposal subject to provision of additional means of ingress and egress
21st Sept. to 22nd Sept.	Barracks, quarters, gun park, &c., for R.A.F.A. Enoggera, Queensland	26,000	28,225	2,225	..	Recommended subject to improved lighting, water, and fire services
23rd Sept. to 24th Nov.	Cement Works for Commonwealth purposes	100,000	100,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
28th Sept. to 6th Oct.	Alterations and additions to the Customs House, Sydney	37,500	29,500	..	..	Recommended, but stipulation made that occupants be removed to temporary accommodation during alterations
12th Oct. to 15th Oct.	Automatic Telephone Exchange, Malvern, Victoria	46,933	46,933	..	..	Recommended as proposed
12th Oct. to 15th Oct.	Automatic Telephone Exchange, Collingwood, Victoria	49,752	49,752	..	..	Recommended as proposed
25th Oct. to 20th Oct.	Additional Office accommodation, Victoria, Barracks, Melbourne	35,000	35,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
1916.						
14th Feb. to 1st Mar.	Selection of site for arsenal within the Federal Territory	..	..	..	..	Confidential report issued to Prime Minister
24th May to 31st May	Alterations and additions to the Customs House, Sydney (further report)	61,481	41,000	..	10,481	
25th Feb. to 21st Aug. 1916	Water Supply scheme for Flinders Naval Base	61,000 and 9d. per 1,000 gallons for water consumed	Capital cost nil; 1s. per 1,000 gallons with minimum annual payment of £4,000 for first three years, £3,500 for second three years, £3,000 thereafter	..	61,000	The interest on the capital cost of £61,000 as originally proposed, plus the cost of water consumed at 9d. per 1,000 gallons, more than counterbalances the annual payment under the scheme recommended

## Record of Inquiries—List of proposed public works inquired into—continued.

Date of Inquiry.	Proposed Work.	Expenditure proposed by the Government.	Expenditure recommended by the Committee.	Amount in Excess of that proposed.	Amount in Reduction of that proposed.	Remarks.
1916.		£	£	£	£	
10th Nov. to 30th Aug. 1916	Extension of Pine Creek-Kathorino River Railway to Bitter (Mataranka) Springs	320,000	320,000	..	..	Recommended as proposed
13th July, 1915, to 24th Nov. 1916	City Railway, Canberra	378,072	280,000	..	98,072	The Committee recommended that requirements for some years be met by temporary surface lines at estimated cost of about £78,000
14th July, 1915, to 28th Nov. 1916	Dams for Ornamental Waters, Canberra	912,421	472,421	..	440,000	Most of the expenditure recommended, however, will be deferred for a period of years
1917.						
10th Jan. to 20th Feb.	Extension of Postal Stores, Harbour-street, Sydney	68,832	68,832	..	..	Recommended as proposed
31st Jan. to 10th Mar.	Power House, Flinders Naval Base	15,000	9,500	..	5,500	
27th Sept. to 8th Mar. 1918	Erection of workshops, hospital, detention barracks, quarters for married officers and warrant officers; water, sewerage, and storm-water reticulations; electric distribution system; and accessory works for that establishment	168,845	142,041	..	26,804	
27th Sept. to 1st May, 1918	Henderson Naval Base—Two breakwaters, excavations, reclamations, basins or quays, floating docks, administrative buildings, and permanent railways	4,529,109	2,908,859	..	1,620,250	The Committee recommended that work of the estimated cost of £1,601,000 be made the subject of further inquiry at a later date. A saving of £19,250 was effected in connexion with the transport of material from Wategong
1918.						
18th June to 1st Aug.	Housing of Commonwealth workmen at Lithgow, New South Wales	73,762	..	..	..	The Committee recommended the erection of 160 houses instead of 100 as proposed, but at a lower average cost
20th Sept. to 28th Oct.	Arsenal Railway	62,614	62,614	..	..	Recommended as proposed
23rd Dec. 1918, to 20th June, 1919	Ordnance Store, Leichhardt, N.S.W.	60,283	..	..	6,900	The Committee recommended the addition of another story to the building proposed, but saved the cost of same by concentration of Ordnance business at Leichhardt. A further saving of £6,900 was effected by the relocation of the railway siding
1919.						
19th June to 7th Oct.	Commonwealth Note Printing Offices	47,800	46,800	..	1,000	The Committee recommended a variation in the floor finish proposed which would result in a saving of £1,000