

1923.

(Second Session)



THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Laid on the Table by *Dr. G. H. Murray*  
by Senator Lynch

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Pursuant to Statute  
By Command  
In return to Order

*G. M. McMahon*

Clerk of the Senate.  
22 AUG 1923

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

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R E P O R T

Together with

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

relating to the proposed

ERECTION OF TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS,

SPENCER ST.,

MELBOURNE.

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MEMBERS OF THE

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

(Fourth Committee)

The Honorable Henry Gregory, M.P., Chairman.

Senate.

House of Representatives.

Senator John Barnes. †  
Senator Mattil Spencer Foll †  
Senator Patrick Joseph Lynch†  
Senator John Newland †  
Senator William Plain.x  
Senator Matthew Reid †

Arthur Blakeley, Esq., M.P.  
Robert Cook, Esq., M.P.  
David Sydney Jackson, Esq., M.P.  
George Hugh Mackay, Esq., M.P.  
James Mathews, Esq., M.P.

† Appointed 5th. July, 1923. ‡ Resigned 28th. June, 1923.  
x Ceased to be a Member of the Senate, 30th. June, 1923.

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I N D E X .

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COPY OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MINUTE NO. 17 , DATED  
2 May, 1923.

Department of Works & Railways,  
Melbourne, 2nd May, 1923.

Departmental  
No. 36.

MINUTE PAPER FOR THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

Executive  
Council No.17.

SUBJECT.  
Reference to Public Works Committee.

Approved in  
Council.

Recommended for the approval of His Excellency the Governor-General in Council that, in accordance with the Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913-1921, the following work be referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works for investigation and report thereon to the House of Representatives :-

(Sgd)  
L.L. Atkinson  
for Governor-  
General.

Melbourne.

Provision of Telephone Workshops, with access-  
ory services, at Spencer Street.

2nd. May, 1923.

(Sgd) P.G.Stewart  
Minister of State for Works and Railways.

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LIST OF WITNESSES.

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| Becher, Edgar, Supervising Engineer, Postmaster-General's<br>Department. . . . .             | . . . . . |
| Harry, Morgan Bruce, Inspector, Central Staff, Postmaster-<br>General's Department . . . . . | . . . . . |
| Hill, Thomas, Chief Engineer, Department of Works And Rail-<br>ways. . . . .                 | . . . . . |
| Lawsen, Robert, State Engineer, Postmaster-General's Depart-<br>ment, Victoria . . . . .     | . . . . . |
| Little, Andrew, Controller of Stores, Postmaster-General's<br>Department. . . . .            | . . . . . |
| Mason, James, Acting Deputy Postmaster-General for Victoria..                                |           |
| Murdoch, John Smith, Chief Architect, Department of Works<br>and Railways,.. . . .           | . . . . . |

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PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

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TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELBOURNE.

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R E P O R T  
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The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, to which His Excellency the Governor-General in Council referred, for investigation and report, the question of the provision of Telephone Workshops, with accessory services, at Spencer Street, Melbourne, has the honour to report as follows:-

INTRODUCTORY.

The functions of the General Post Office, Melbourne, which for many years were carried on in the building at the corner of Bourke and Elizabeth streets, Melbourne, were, during 1916 and 1917, gradually removed to a more modern building which had been erected at the corner of Bourke and Spencer streets, on portion of the area extending from Bourke-street to Little Bourke-street, which was acquired by the Commonwealth in 1913 and 1914.

PRESENT PROPOSAL.

The proposal now submitted to the Committee is to erect, as an extension of the General Post Office, a building to accommodate, for some years, the various sections of the Postal, Telegraph and Telephone Workshops.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED BUILDING.

The building proposed is designed to have a frontage of about 53 feet to Spencer-street, by a depth of about 134 feet, and to consist of 7 floors. The basement, to be used for stores, will be 10 feet 6 inches high from floor to ceiling; the ground floor, for carpenters, 13 feet 3 inches; the first floor, for light and power,

painters and polishers, 18 feet 9½ inches; the second floor, for the telegraph section, 18 feet 9½ inches; the third and fourth floors, for the Telephone Branch, 13 feet 3 inches; while the fifth floor, for use as offices, recreation and luncheon rooms, will be 13 feet 9½ inches in height. The structure is to be well ventilated, and of the latest and most up-to-date fire-resisting construction. The front will be of brick with cement finish, similar to the front of the adjacent building, with base-course of bluestone; the rest of the building will have walls and floors of reinforced concrete. The floors will be finished with 3½ inch by ½ inch T.&G. Jarrah, nailed to coke breeze concrete and bitumen, and designed to carry a load of 2 cwt. to the square foot. The walls will be colored, but not plastered while utilized as workshops.

The whole proposal will provide about 45,000 square feet of working floor space. Hot water radiators will be installed, to be served from the boiler in the existing building. Windows are to be steel framed and glazed, with wired rolled plate glass, fire-resisting. The building will have a flat roof of reinforced concrete with 3-ply malthoid waterproof covering.

#### ESTIMATED COST.

The estimated cost of the proposal is set down at £66,500 including engineering services, and the time fixed for completion about two years from receipt of approval.

#### COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS.

The Committee visited the site of the proposed building, inspected the General Post Office building at Spencer-street, and the premises in which the workshops are at present located. A careful scrutiny was made of the plans, which were explained by the Chief Architect, Department of Works and Railways, and in addition evidence was obtained from the Chief Engineer, Department of Works and Railways, and from the Acting Deputy Postmaster-General, and engineers and other officials of the Postal Department.

#### Present Location.

It was ascertained in evidence that the workshops now prop-  
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proposed to be provided for, are at present divided; the telephone and electric lighting and power sections, and the carpenters, painters, and polishers, are in an old building adjoining the General Post Office, while the telegraph section is in buildings in Little Bourke-street at the rear of the Elizabeth-street Post Office. It was stated that the telephone workshop, which was originally a hide and skin store, was first occupied about November 1915, and then only as a temporary measure. Now it is said to be too small and most uncomfortable, while in the carpenters' section, it is claimed, there is a lot of space that cannot be used because it is too dark.

#### Men Employed.

Evidence tendered went to show that the number of men employed in the various workshops now under consideration amounts to about 330, and it was represented that an additional 20 to 25 men are at present required to cope with the work in the telephone workshop, but that for lack of space they cannot be accommodated.

#### Work Performed.

The bulk of the work performed by the mechanics consists of repairs and renewals of telegraph and telephone apparatus. In addition the Department is at present manufacturing such items as it requires which cannot be obtained economically outside, or cannot be secured in sufficient time to cope with the service. Telephones are not being manufactured, but the Department is carrying out the cabinet work for switchboards, and after purchasing supplies for same, assembles the complete article.

#### Expansion of Postal Business.

As it had been mentioned that the new building had been designed so that the floor levels would correspond with the floor levels of the General Post Office, to permit of their being used for postal purposes when extension of business warranted, the Committee sought to ascertain when this might be expected to take place. Figures supplied to the Committee showed that the number of parcels handled per annum has increased from 910,030 in 1917-1918, to 2,563,035 in 1922-1923, and is still increasing at a very rapid rate, and it is claimed that further accommodation will be required for that section in 5 years <sup>with in</sup>. As this accommodation can most conveniently be obtained by extending into the proposed building now under consideration, it is apparent to

the Committee that the suggestion to house the workshops therein can only be regarded as a temporary expedient, and that if established there in two years' time, they may be expected to be moved again 3 years after that date, at least from the lower floors, to provide accommodation for the Parcels Section.

Consideration was given to the question of the feasibility of placing the workshops section in a position which might be regarded as their permanent location, and so avoid the expense of ~~the~~ <sup>a second</sup> removal of their machines, etc., at an early date.

Inquiries were made as to whether a less expensive site might not be more properly used for workshops purposes, but the fact that such a course would necessitate the taking of the workshops some distance away, where they would lack convenient association with the stores building, added to the fact that this land is already the property of the Commonwealth, weighed with the Committee in approving that the workshops be located on this site. The suggestion was then made that this proposed building might be erected on the Little Bourke-street corner instead of where now proposed, a position in which the workshops might be expected to remain undisturbed for ~~some~~ <sup>many</sup> years, but the evidence placed before the Committee convinced it that such a course would involve considerable disorganization of the workshops, and that the proper and natural method of developing this area is by an extension of the present building northwards.

From its own observations, and the statements in evidence, the Committee was satisfied that better accommodation should be provided for the workshops staff as early as possible, and representations were made that from an administrative point of view, and to permit of better supervision, it is essential to bring all the workshops under one control. With this effected, and comfortable and well-lighted working space provided, it is anticipated that the efficiency of the staff will be increased from 10% to 15%.

Under these circumstances, it is recommended that the building be proceeded with, and that the workshops section be accommodated therein as proposed. The Committee is, however, of opinion that in view of the inconvenience under which the men are at present working, a special effort should be made to reduce the time of erection of

this building as much as possible.

#### Adaptability of New Structure.

In view of these facts, the Committee endeavoured to ascertain whether care was being taken to ensure that when expansion of business demanded, the activities of the Postal Department could overflow easily and naturally into the space available alongside it. From inquiries made, however, it was apparent to the Committee that the proposed new building could not be economically used for mail purposes, unless connection from the present yard is made by means of a roadway to the yard of the new building, in order to permit of easy access to and from the new and old buildings, and thus allow of a free interchange of vehicles, etc., between the two places and Little Bourke-street. This aspect was brought under the notice of the Chief Architect, and as a result he submitted to the Committee an amended sketch of the ground floor, showing how the desired object could be achieved, by the removal of the Stairway and Lavatory Block from the S.E. to the N.E. corner of the building, and the provision of a roadway from the Bourke-street lane through to Little Bourke-street. With this amendment, the Superintendent of Mails considered all his requirements would be met, and the Committee recommends that such alterations in the plans be effected.

#### Fifth Floor.

When this reference was placed before the Committee, it was explained that it was the intention to allocate the fifth floor for the use of the Clerical Officers associated with the workshops, and in addition to provide therein a locker room, and a room in which those of the staff who brought their lunch could have it in comfort. Inquiries made by the Committee elicited the information that the accommodation required by the clerical staff amounted to only 945 sq. feet of the 6260 sq. feet available, but investigations made had shown that several of the branches in the adjoining General Post Office could do with more space than they are at present allotted: further, that the space of that building was encroached on to some extent by the clerical staff of the Stores Section, which might be



considered to be more properly accommodated elsewhere.

Under these circumstances, the Committee is of opinion that it is neither economical nor advisable to give up 5,315 feet of space on the fifth floor for locker and luncheon room purposes.

It is therefore recommended that the fifth floor be set aside for office and other purposes, and that the roof be utilized for locker and luncheon room purposes by the extension of the building in harmony with the existing General Post Office structure.

#### Development of Whole Block.

The Commonwealth has a magnificent block of land in this area, having frontages of 314 feet to Spencer-street, and 200 feet to Bourke-street and Little Bourke-street, and it is probable that with the growth of postal business it may at no very distant date be wholly required to accommodate the various activities connected with the General Post Office. That being so, it is patent that the present scheme cannot be regarded as providing a permanent home for the workshops; that can only be determined later when the whole block is developed to its utmost capacity.

It is the unanimous view of the Committee that to avoid errors in layout and lack of co-ordination between related sections, a complete plan for the future utilization of the whole of the Commonwealth property comprised in this area should be prepared before any future extension is proposed. It is also the opinion of the Committee that in planning this and future extensions, the fact should not be lost sight of that when the remodelling of Spencer-street Railway Station is completed, access thereto from the General Post Office should be provided by means of a subway.

Further, to place this General Post Office on a level with the most up-to-date offices in other parts of the world, it is thought that early consideration might well be given to the question of the mechanical handling of mails, in accordance with modern postal practice.

#### Lifts.

In the plans first submitted to the Committee, provision was included for one lift only for passenger and goods traffic, and this was located at the north-eastern corner of the building. During the

examination of the Chief Engineer, Department of Works and Railways, however, he suggested that in view of the fact that over 300 workmen will be employed in the building, an additional lift should be installed in the vicinity of the Spencer-street frontage, and access thereto given by means of a 7 ft. or 8 ft. footway through the old building adjoining on the north.

After carefully considering this proposal, and hearing the evidence of the Chief Architect in regard to the matter, the Committee came to the conclusion that any lift installed near the front of the building would have to be removed when any further extension of the building was undertaken. If, however, the lift were located some 40 feet further back, it would be in a position from which access could be obtained from the yard and light area which will be part of a permanent lay-out.

The Committee therefore recommends that a lift of sufficient capacity to cope with the anticipated traffic be located in this position rather than at the front of the building.

The provision of a footway through from Spencer-street would necessitate the partial demolition of the building on the north, a fairly substantial 2-storey structure with bluestone foundations. As this would involve some expense to provide a convenience which admittedly could be continued for 3 or 4 years only, and as other means of easy access to this lift are available, the Committee unanimously agreed to recommend that such footway be not provided.

#### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

Briefly summarized, the recommendations of the Committee are as follow :-

- (1) That the General Post Office be extended by the erection of an additional section as proposed.
- (2) That the plans submitted be remodelled with a view to the provision of a suitable roadway connecting the Bourke-street lane with Little Bourke-street.
- (3) That the fifth floor be set aside for office or other purposes, and that the roof be utilised for locker and luncheon room purposes by the extension of the building in harmony with the existing General Post Office structure.

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- (4) That the Workshops be only temporarily accommodated in the proposed building, - their permanent location to be determined later.
  - (5) That a complete plan for the future utilization of the whole of the Commonwealth property in this block be prepared before any future extension is proposed.
  - (6) That the planning of this and future extensions be carried out with the idea that on the remodelling of the Spencer-street Railway Station, access thereto from the General Post Office be provided by means of a subway.
  - (7) That early consideration be given to the question of the mechanical handling of mails in accordance with modern postal practice.
  - (8) That a lift be provided on the northern wall approximately in the centre of the building.
  - (9) That the proposal to provide a footway on the north of the proposed building from Spencer-street to the light area and yard be not agreed to.



Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,  
Federal Parliament House, Melbourne,  
16 August, 1923.

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB 1

(Taken at Melbourne.)

WEDNESDAY, 18TH JULY, 1923.

Present:

|                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Mr. GREGORY, Chairman; |              |
| Senator Lynch          | Mr. Cook     |
| Senator Reid           | Mr. Mackay   |
| Mr. Blakely            | Mr. Mathews. |

Thomas Hill, Chief Engineer, Department of Works and Railways, sworn and examined.

1. *To the Chairman.*—The proposal before the Committee is to erect as an extension of the existing General Post Office, a building to accommodate for some years the various branches of the postal, telegraph, and telephone workshops. The over-all dimensions of the proposed building will be 53 feet ~~x~~ 134 feet, and will consist of seven floors occupied as follows:—Basement, stores; ground floor, carpenters; first floor, light and power, painters and polishers; second floor, telegraph; third floor, telephones; fourth floor, telephones; fifth floor, office, recreation, and luncheon rooms. The flat roof can be used for luncheon rooms and recreation purposes at a later date if the expansion of the telegraph and telephone services so warrants. For some years the telegraph workshops have been situated in very congested quarters at the back of the Elizabeth-street Post Office, and some means had to be devised for better and more convenient accommodation. Also, the telephone, carpenters', painters', and polishers' workshops are housed in unsuitable old buildings adjoining the General Post Office, Spencer-street. A portion of these buildings will have to be demolished to make room for the new building. The new building will be of the latest and most up-to-date construction, and fire-resisting throughout. The greatest amount of light has been obtained by the architectural treatment. The front of the building will be in conformity with the existing building, which is from an adaptation of classical renaissance, simplicity, and breadth of effect being aimed at rather than costly detail. The new telephone workshops will have ready access to the existing postal stores, and thus effect economies in obtaining their material. This first section now being constructed will form part of a scheme for ultimate occupation by the various services of the Postmaster-General's Department of the whole of the site bounded by Bourke, Spencer, and Little Bourke streets. The extension now proposed will provide about 45,000 square feet of working floor space, and is estimated to cost, including engineering services, £66,500.

The front of building will be of brick with cement finish, similar to the front of adjacent building. The base course will be of bluestone. The rest of the building will have walls and floors of reinforced concrete. The floors will be finished with  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in. x  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. T. & M. jarrah, nailed to coke breeze concrete and bitumen. The walls are to be coloured, not plastered, until such time as the activities of the Postal Department require a better finish. The windows will be steel framed and glazed with wired rolled plate, fire resisting. The joinery will be of Queensland hoop pine, and of plain finish; the partitions will be of the simplest character and glazed from above; dado to ceiling where required. The stairway will be in concrete finished with Mason's treads. The lift-walls will be enclosed in concrete with fire-resisting doors. The floors will be designed to carry a load of 2 cwt. to the square foot. That will be the same as in the adjacent building, the General Post Office, and will be sufficient to carry any machinery that may be installed for postal purposes. The roof will be finished in reinforced concrete, and 3-ply malthoid waterproof covering. The lavatory and sanitary accommodation will be in

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB 2

accordance with the local health regulations. Although the proposal at present under consideration covers a frontage to Spencer-street of only 53 feet, the ultimate building will extend to Little Bourke-street, a total distance of 161 feet. The new structure will conform to the design and construction of the existing building, except that, for the time being, the flat roof will be omitted. That may be added later, if required, for dining-room, lavatories, or any other purpose. The plan before the Committee provides for only one goods and passenger lift at the rear of the building; but since it was drawn, we have decided to instal two lifts. About 300 workmen will be employed in the building, and it is desired that they should have access from Spencer-street, as well as from the right-of-way at the rear. It is proposed, therefore, to make an entrance lobby through the old building adjoining, and to instal a passenger lift for the workmen. The staircase will be at the rear of the building, as originally planned. Communication between the existing and new buildings will be provided by means of gangways connecting at the third and fourth floors. This will enable the employees in the workshops to utilize the existing dining accommodation on the flat roof, and will also permit of the direct access of the engineering staff from the General Post Office to the workshops for purposes of supervision. The floor levels of the two buildings will coincide, and each floor can be joined by means of a gangway whenever it is desired to bring the buildings into more intimate relationship. For fire escape purposes the one staircase at the rear, in addition to two lifts, will be sufficient. In addition, there will be on the third floor an emergency fire-proof sliding door giving access to the fourth floor of the existing ~~building~~ building, and similar means of escape will be provided from the first and third floors to the General Post Office building. Of course, when the building is extended in the future, additional stairways and lifts will be provided. It is assumed that when the activities of the General Post Office extend to the new building the workshops will be pushed back to the Little Bourke-street frontage. The building is designed to be utilized ultimately for postal and telegraph purposes. In the meantime, it will accommodate the workshops, and therefore the internal walls will not be plastered. In every other respect the design is identical with that of the existing building. I think that gangways at the third and fourth floors will be sufficient while the new building continues to be utilized as a workshop. I produce a plan showing the existing buildings on the site. At the corner of Spencer and Little Bourke streets is an old wool and skin store now occupied by the carpenters and telephone employees. It has a superficial area of 11,984 square feet. Adjacent to it is a property known as Corden's that will be displaced. The building is 50 feet wide, and occupies a superficial area of 6,700 square feet, which is practically the area that will be covered by the proposed new building. The land and structures thereon were purchased for £6,750. The wool and skin stores were purchased some years ago from the Australian Estates and Mortgage Company for £11,500, so that the cost of the site works out at £126 per running foot to Spencer-street, with a depth of 134 feet to the present postal stores. The area of the telephone workshops in the old General Post Office is 5,280 square feet, and of the workshops near the new General Post Office ~~4,400~~ 24,000 square feet, making a total of 29,280 square feet at present occupied by the Postal Department for the purposes for which the new building will be utilized. The ~~whole~~ area owned and occupied by the Postal Department in that vicinity will be 62,800 square feet, comprising:—General Post Office, 31,500 square feet; stores, 10,306 square feet; Berry's, 2,250 square feet;

Surface

24,000

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wool and skin stores, 11,984 square feet; and Corden's, 6,700 square feet. The frontage to Bourke-street is 200 feet; to Spencer-street, 314 ft. 4½ in.; and to Little Bourke-street, 200 feet. There is at present a right-of-way from Little Bourke-street, adjacent to the existing stores building. Ultimately, that will be built over, leaving a cartway under the first floor only. For the time being, the existing right-of-way will suffice.

Access between the existing stores building and the new workshops will be provided on the ground floor only, because the levels of the other floors do not coincide. Moreover, the workshops' officers think it is undesirable to provide too many connexions between the stores and the workshops; they prefer that all materials should pass from the stores to the workshops, or *vice versa*, via the one door. Further accommodation will be required for the workmen now employed in the post-office at the corner of Bourke and Elizabeth-street. It is desired to remove the workshops from that building in order that offices for the Taxation Department may be provided, ~~but no steps are being taken to that end pending the decision of the Government in regard to the future of the Taxation Department.~~

The basement will have a depth of 13 ft. 3 in., and the sub-basement 10 ft. 6 in. The walls on the ground and first floors will be 18 ft. 9 in. high, and on the second and third floors 13 ft. 3 in., and on the fourth floor 13 ft. 9½ in. The basement will be of value to the workshops for the storage of material. It is necessary that a certain quantity of material should be quickly available for manufacture. Bulk supplies, of course, will be kept in the store, but it is not desirable that the workmen should be required to ~~run to the store for their~~ supplies from day to day. With reinforced concrete construction, I do not apprehend any danger from the storage of material in the basement. In addition, the building will be adjacent to an excellent fire brigade and adequate street hydrants. Therefore, I cannot imagine that a fire can do very much damage there. The basement will be used principally for the storage of manufactured material before it is issued. It is not really necessary for the workshops, but is provided in order that this building may be in harmony with the existing building, of which it will ultimately become a portion. The sub-basement may be required one day for postal purposes, and not to provide it at this stage would be a mistake. It must be remembered that the use of this building for workshops is only temporary. We are providing accommodation that will be absorbed later by the extension of the General Post Office; but we think it economical to utilize it for workshops until it is required for other purposes. The basements of the existing and new buildings will be connected at a point about 25 feet in from Spencer-street. The existing basement is found very useful at Christmas, and during other rush periods, but the purpose for which the sub-basement was designed was the conveyance of mails from the General Post Office, under Spencer-street, to the mail vans at the railway platform, or for the conveyance of incoming mails from the trains to the sorting rooms. The lifts will run from the basement to the top floor. It is proposed that the goods lift shall be capable of carrying a load of 14 tons at a speed of 150 feet per minute. The cage will be 8 feet by 6 feet. Walls 18 feet in height may seem excessive for workshops, but they are designed in order to keep this building in conformity with the existing one. Walls 13 to 14 feet high would be adequate for workshops and overhead shafting and pulleys. The columns supporting the floors will be of steel, the beams of steel encased in concrete, and the floors of reinforced concrete. The columns will be carried down and their bases spread so that the load on the strata

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does not exceed 2 tons to the square foot. The foundations at this spot are rather wet, and for that reason a heavier load on the columns is not desirable. The shafting and pulleys for the planer and bazer on the first floor will be in the sub-basement, but elsewhere the shafting will be carried on the ceiling. The pulleys and belts will interfere very little with the sub-basement. It is preferable that the drives for that class of machinery should be kept below the floor level. If the machinery were on the ground floor of an ordinary workshop, I would place the drives in channels let into the ground. I shall let the Committee have an estimate of quantities in respect of the reinforced concrete for the walls and floors, and the cost per cubic yard in comparison with the cost of brickwork. Cement delivered in Melbourne in large quantities costs 18s. per cask. When the existing General Post Office was erected the cost was 11s. A cask contains 3½ cubic feet of cement, and six casks measure 1 ton. The cost of cement in Sydney is about the same as in Melbourne. There would be no advantage in using imported cement. Recent inquiries showed that cement could be put on the steamer in England for about 10s. per cask; freight would cost 4s., and duty 3s. 6d. Insurance and other small charges would bring the cost to about 18s. or 18s. 6d., ex ship's slings, duty paid. Prior to the war, American cement was quoted at one dollar per cask at the works. The Australian cement works are manufacturing to a Government standard, and their product is quite as good as the imported. When the present General Post Office was built the bricks cost 31s. per 1000, and the present price is about 66s. per thousand at the kilns. We estimate that the proposed buildings will be ready for occupation two years from the date of approval of the project. It is proposed to heat the building by hot water radiation, employing the ordinary wall radiators and forced circulation. The boilers that provide hot water for the General Post Office and stores will also serve the new building. The only cost of the heating system in the new building will be in respect of installation of pipes and radiators, which is estimated to cost £2,750. If men who are using lathes and other stationary tools are to do efficient work in cold weather the heating of the workshops is necessary. There will be no artificial ventilation, except that the drilling and planing machines will be equipped with exhaust fans and pipes to draw the dust out of the building, in accordance with Factory Act requirements. Wired rolled plate glass will be used in some of the windows. When the existing building was being constructed, Mr. Lee, the superintendent of the Melbourne Fire Brigades, was consulted, and he recommended the use of that glass as much as possible. I am certain that he will require it to be on all the side windows, and on some of the windows fronting Spencer-street; but for the remainder of the Spencer-street frontage he will be satisfied with ordinary glass. Wired rolled glass is not very expensive, and it tends to keep down the bill for repairs. It is not proposed to install hydrants, hoses, or sprinklers. The Fire Brigade is handy; there are plenty of water mains in the street, and with the usual fire alarms and the watchman's clock the building will be amply safeguarded. These plans have been designed after consultation with the postal authorities, and meet with their approval. The policy of the Department is to carry out this work by contract. It is estimated that, five years after this building is ready for occupation, it will be required to meet the expansion of the General Post Office. There is ample means of escape in the event of fire.

2. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I do not think that any economy would be effected by substituting brick for concrete in the walls. Brick walls would require to be thicker than concrete, and would therefore occupy more

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space. In regard to the dining accommodation, it is reckoned that of the 300 employees, 100 will go to the dining-room in the General Post Office for a sit-down meal, and the other 200 will bring their own lun-ches, and will require seating accommodation. The staff lift in the existing building is heavily loaded between noon and 1 p.m., and it is not desired that the employees from the workshops should go out into Spencer-street, and then into the General Post Office in order to utilize the already overloaded elevator. It is therefore proposed to give direct access to the dining-room by means of a gangway at the fourth floor.

3. *To Mr. Blakeley.*—I do not think that if the whole of the available area fronting Spencer and Little Bourke-street were built upon immediately in accordance with the ultimate design sufficient accommodation would be provided to house the various Commonwealth Departments that are now occupying rented offices. Already a large portion of that area is occupied, and the remaining area has a frontage of only about 100 feet by a depth of 130 feet. I will supply the Committee with further information upon that point. I do not think that the temporary omission of the flat roof will make the new building unsightly in comparison with the existing structure. To make the two harmonize in that particular would involve a further expenditure of some thousands of pounds. I will supply a considered estimate of the cost of that addition.

4. *To Senator Lynch.*—So far as I am aware, no defects in design or internal arrangements have been discovered in the General Post Office. I have heard general satisfaction expressed by the officers occupying the building. We have not experienced any trouble from electrolysis. A defect has been discovered in connexion with one small water service, but we are not sure that it is due to electrolysis. I do not think that the Morwell scheme will alter the electrical conditions near these buildings. The high tension mains will be miles away. They will supply in bulk to certain stations, and the current will be transformed to a much lower voltage before being brought to the city. We need not fear that the stability of these buildings will be affected. In comparison with the existing workshops accommodation the plant will be better spaced in the new building, the material will be handled more conveniently, and the men will work better, and I estimate that the output will be increased by fully 20 per cent. The transfer of the Seat of Government to Canberra will not affect the requirements of the General Post Office in Melbourne. The central administrative staff will accompany the Parliament to Canberra, but the other staffs in the State capitals will probably continue as they are. I think we may fairly estimate that the expansion of the General Post Office in Melbourne will render these new buildings necessary for postal purposes.

5. *To Mr. Mackay.*—Very little of the material in the old buildings that are to be dismantled will be utilized in the new building. The most that we could do with the old material would be to break up some of the stone for use in the concrete. The practice of the Department is to get a site cleared by calling for offers for the purchase and dismantling of the old buildings. Dealers can dispose of old material much better than can the Department, and that system of dismantling is quite an economical proposition from our point of view. We get a good return from the old material.

6. *To Senator Reid.*—The depth of the basement below the street level will vary from 11 feet to 13 ft. 3 in. The basement in the existing building has a maximum depth of 17 feet. Artificial lighting will be used. The present sub-basement is utilized at



Christmas time for the accommodation of extra staff, and at one time paper was stored there for the Government Printer. It was not the original intention that the sub-basement should be used for the accommodation of the staff. It was, as I have already explained, provided as a means of underground communication between Spencer-street railway station and the General Post Office. In extending the basement, I think it is wise to make the levels conform to those of the existing structure, although that class of accommodation may not be particularly suited to workshops. The foundation at that place consists of decomposed basalt and wet clay. The columns of the existing building are down 24 feet. That was done in order to enable the bottoms to be splayed sufficiently to give the necessary bearing strength. Water will not prove an insuperable difficulty there, and we shall assure the dryness of the basement by putting in an asphaltum damp course. High walls are advisable in a building of this class. A good height is always required in a workshop in order to provide space overhead for the shafting and pulleys. I do not think that a height of 18 feet is excessive for a mail room, but in any case it will be better to maintain uniformity with the floors of the existing buildings rather than reduce the height between floors.

7. *To the Chairman.*—A wooden floor on top of the concrete will be quite strong enough, and will give more comfort to the workmen than would plain concrete. Agents are constantly bringing under our attention different compositions for laying over concrete, but none of them have given satisfactory results. A wooden floor seems the best for the purpose. I shall let the Committee have a considered opinion regarding the practicability of substituting three floors 12 ft. 6 in. in height for the two proposed floors, each 18 ft. 9 in. in height. I understand that the postal authorities intend to utilize the top floor for luncheon and recreation rooms, lockers, and some office accommodation. That floor will have an area of 6,260 square feet. The net area of the corresponding floor in the General Post Office, including all passages, is about 26,000 square feet, the whole of which is utilized for retiring rooms, dining accommodation, and the institute and library. The staff in the existing building is amply, but not excessively, provided for in respect of dining and retiring rooms. Electrical power will be used in the workshops, an extension of the ~~wire~~ <sup>mains</sup> from the existing building being all that will be required. The lighting will be of a simple character.

*The witness retired.*

*The Committee adjourned.*

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB. 7

(Taken at Melbourne.)

THURSDAY, 19th JULY, 1923.

Present:

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

Senator Lynch,  
Senator Reid,  
Mr. Blakeley,  
Mr. Cook,

Mr. Jackson,  
Mr. Mackay,  
Mr. Mathews.

Edgar Becher, Supervising Engineer, Postmaster-General's Department, sworn and examined.

*Technical*

3. *To the Chairman.*—The workshops in Melbourne are under the control of the Chief Electrical Engineer, whom I advise on matters concerning the telephone and telegraph sections. The State Engineer of the Victorian Department, Mr. Lawson, is primarily responsible for the control of the whole of the workshops. The present workshops are divided. The telephone and the electric lighting and power sections, and the carpenters, painters, and polishers are in an old building adjoining the General Post Office, Spencer-street. The telegraph section is in buildings in Little Bourke-street, at the rear of the Elizabeth-street Post Office. These premises are unsuitable. The telephone workshops, which was originally a hide and skin store, was first occupied about November, 1915, and then only as a temporary measure. They are too small, and most uncomfortable, while in the carpenters' section there is quite a lot of space that cannot be utilized because it is too dark. The quarters of the electric light and power section are cramped and most unsuitable. I cannot say why the telegraph workshop was installed in Little Bourke-street; it was there before I came to Melbourne. It is convenient, but not essential, that these workshops should adjoin the central telegraph office. The stores are not near these premises. Up to within the last three or four years the Department kept the telephone and telegraph shops separate, but it was realized that economy could be effected by combining them, and hence the present proposal. If the new shops are provided they will be under the control of one workshop manager. I am absolutely satisfied that there is need for the erection of workshops. I cannot say what number of men were employed in the shops five years ago, but I can obtain the information. I have brought with me statistics showing the increase in the number of telephone lines and instruments in Victoria for ten years. With the increased demand for telephone communication there is greater need for repairing work. At the end of 1913 there were 30,640 lines and 38,737 instruments. Certain subscribers have extensions connected, and that is why there are more instruments than exchange lines. At the end of 1922 there were 58,380 exchange lines and 81,179 instruments, an increase of nearly 100 per cent. in ten years. At the present time the number of men employed in the telephone shop is 154, and the floor space is approximately 10,000 square feet. In the proposed new building we asked for, approximately 12,520 square feet. We ought to have twenty or twenty-five more men in the telephone shops to cope with the work, but for lack of space we cannot accommodate them. It is difficult to forecast with any degree of accuracy the number of years that will be served by the proposed extension, but I estimate that the accommodation asked for will serve for at least five to seven years for the telephone workshops. In the preparation of the plans, however, we saw that if we were overcrowded we could take the fifth floor, which has been allocated to the clerical force, and place the clerks elsewhere. This would ~~accommodate~~ provide for another five years' growth. In the telegraph workshop there are actually 74 men engaged, and the present useful floor area is approximately 3,600 square feet. On account of the reconstruction of the Elizabeth-street Post Office it has been necessary to temporarily remove men from

*approximate*

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB. 3

the telegraph workshops to the Repatriation Building in Jolimont, where there is approximately 6,000 square feet of floor space available. The staff is under two roofs at Jolimont, and the building is by no means suitable, but we had to go somewhere. The carpenters have at present floor space of 6,360 square feet, much of which is not useful, because of the absence of natural lighting. There are 36 men engaged in the carpenters' shops at present. These men are not included in the number of telephone men (that I gave. The telephone men are telephone mechanics, and the carpenters are not classed as such. There are 21 painters and polishers, and 22 mechanics in the electric light and power section. The 10,000 square feet of space in the telephone workshop is for the telephone men only. The painters and polishers have 2,200 square feet, and the electric light and power section 2,000 square feet. The space in the telephone workshop is to meet the requirements for five years ahead; but, as I said before, if the expansion is greater than anticipated, we propose to remove the electrical branch and lunch-room from the fifth floor and use that for telephone workshops. The roof of the building is to be so constructed that it can be utilized for ~~workshops~~ and other purposes. For the telegraph workshop we are asking for 6,745 square feet. The expansion in this workshop is by no means so great as in the telephone section, and that space will suffice for ten or fifteen years. For the telephone workshop we ask for 12,520 square feet, which will provide for five years ahead, and the same for the painters and polishers' shop. The mechanics engaged on the subscribers' installation staff call at the workshop morning and afternoon for instructions, and to pick up the material required for their work. They are not engaged in the workshop during the whole day, and we, therefore, propose to house them in the basement. Should it be necessary for them to wait half-an-hour or an hour for instructions, they will be given work to keep them occupied; but we do not anticipate that that will occur. There are roughly about 20 men engaged on that work ~~in the workshop~~. The material is prepared for the installation staff, and ~~is kept in what~~ <sup>is called the bin store,</sup> in such order that the mechanics can readily get it for use on the premises of subscribers. There must be some place to store this material. We also require some storage for the timber used by the carpenters day by day, and that will be found in the basement. Some 23 feet square will be required for this purpose, and the remainder of the space will be occupied with bulk supplies and dismantled telephone material for the Comptroller of Stores. Not any of the buildings will be used immediately for postal purposes, but merely as workshops. It is very desirable to have the workshops alongside the Stores Branch of the Postal Department in order to save transport; there is direct communication with the stores on the ground floor. The bulk material will be stored there as a matter of convenience, but not under our control. I know nothing of the "sub-basement" referred to by Mr. Hill; in his evidence yesterday. I would not like to ask men to work in the basement from 8 in the morning until 5 at night, because the best cannot be got from them under such circumstances. The plan shows that the basement is well lighted and ventilated, but I have never yet known a basement to be as comfortable ~~as~~ <sup>for</sup> a workshop. The Industrial Arbitrator passed severe strictures on the Department for having men in a basement at Brisbane, and they had to be removed. We made the place as comfortable as possible, but could not render it wholly suitable.

9. To Mr. Mathews.—There must always be artificial light in some portion of a basement.

To the Chairman.—With the cutaway of ground shown on the plan, there will probably be no sub-basement, the idea of which is news to me. What is actu-

lunch-room

in the basement  
will be

sent to what  
will be

Public Service

was subsequently

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS. MELB 9

ally a sub-basement at the Bourke-street end will be ground floor at the other. In the basement shown on the plan the only natural lighting will be from the foot-path; indeed, I do not think that natural light can be provided there. All the sections to which I have referred are entirely distinct. There is co-operation between them; the work and supervision are separate in the lower ranks, though all come under the State Engineer, to whom there is a manager responsible. The total area of the building is 44,785 square feet, and of that we ask for approximately 33,000 square feet for the workshops. The accommodation for the clerical staff is not included in that space. On the top floor we require approximately, 1,400 square feet for the manager and clerical staff, the remaining 4,856 square feet being assigned to luncheon and other accommodation for the staff. I cannot say whether there is now, or likely to be in the near future, any unoccupied space in the Elizabeth-street premises where any of our sections could be housed; I have not had an opportunity to see the plans of reconstruction. I should say, however, that there is no such space, because I have been in close contact with the officers of the Works and Railways Department during the preparation of the plans, and I think they would have advised me in the matter. I should not like to see the workshops divided by making the top floor of the Elizabeth-street extension into workshops for the telephone men, because, from an administrative point of view it is essential to bring all the works under one control. It is almost impossible to estimate the economy that will result from unified supervision. I have no idea in what way it is proposed to utilize the space at Elizabeth-street now occupied by the telegraph operators. I assume that there will be an increase in efficiency when the staff is all placed in one building, and that increase will easily mean 10 to 15 per cent. We manufacture anything that cannot be obtained economically outside, or anything that cannot be secured in sufficient time to cope with the service. We are not manufacturing telephones, and there has been no thought of doing so. We assemble small switchboards; that is, we do the cabinet work, purchase supplies for switchboards, and assemble them. I have no advice that we are going to extend our present manufacturing project on any scale. As a matter of fact, I am now considering whether it will not pay us better to purchase these switchboards outright, rather than manufacture and assemble them. If it should prove to be cheaper to go outside for supplies, I should have no hesitation in recommending that course. I should have to go into the economics of the question whether, if we did start to manufacture our own goods, it would not be advisable to remove into more distant and cheaper premises. The Department owns the land on which it is proposed that these workshops shall be erected, and if we desire to purchase a site in one of the suburbs and erect cheaper buildings, it might mean that the site in Melbourne might be lying idle. Then we should have to add to the annual charges the cost of supervision and of transport from the stores to the workshops. The height of the walls on two of the floors of the proposed building is 13 feet 9 inches, whereas 14 feet or 15 feet would be sufficient for workshops, but the design of the extension has to be in conformity with the existing structure; indeed, the Postal Department agreed to the proposed extension on the understanding that the conformity should extend to the internal arrangements. As the postal business expands these floors may be required, and must be on the same level in order to run it economically. There is one floor 13 feet 3 inches in height, and that is sufficiently high for workshops. I think it would be safe in a fire-proof building of this sort to put timber in the basement. I do not see any possibility of danger. I can give no idea of the quantity

in each section

(u)

make

Complete articles

Chief Inspector of the

floors would permit for occasion areas of an extension of the main lower section above without break of the floor levels

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB. 10

of timber that might be stored <sup>fire</sup> As a precaution I think there ought to be sufficient hydrants to meet any small outbreak. Of course, if a fire of any size broke out we should have to call the fire brigade, but that is a matter on which I would be guided by expert advice. I am satisfied that the means of ingress and egress are satisfactory. We require passenger connexion between the main building and the proposed workshops, and we want it on the equivalent of the existing third floor, so that the engineer may be able to get around for the purpose of supervision. The workshops manager will be in constant communication with the engineer in charge, and this communication is essential. On the next floor communication is required, because some of the men are in the habit of having a hot meal in the middle of the day; others make a practice of bringing their lunches with them, and having them in the accommodation provided. It will be seen that ~~the~~ <sup>there</sup> must be ~~free~~ <sup>ready</sup> access in the proposed building to the luncheon-room on the top floor. Our staff is permitted to use the Postal Department's dining-room.

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 three floor

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 ready

11. *To Senator Lynch.*—I have never been outside the Commonwealth, and I know nothing of the working of post-offices in other parts of the world. In Sydney the telephone workshop is just across the road from the Stores Branch, and is in a rented building. In Adelaide new workshops have been created close to the stores, on departmental land, but at some distance from the General Post-office. At Perth and Brisbane the workshops are in temporary buildings. In the case of Brisbane ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> proposal ~~will be laid before the~~ <sup>is under consideration</sup> Committee to bring the workshops and the stores under one roof. I think that necessary machinery ~~may~~ <sup>can</sup> be placed in the workshops without disturbance to the portion devoted to postal business.

is under consideration  
 can

12. *To Mr. Mackay.*—I think there will be some room for growth in each workshop section. The utilization of the additional space on the roof would carry us on for a further four or five years; but in the event of the expansion of the Postal Department rendering it necessary, we shall have to find other accommodation. I would not advise providing a larger building now, seeing that we have ample time to consider the matter. There is no fear of our having to shift every two or three years. The plans passed through the hands of the Chief Inspector for postal purposes, who definitely agreed to ~~occupying the building.~~ This would indicate that there is room for us at the present time.

the occupation of the proposed new building as workshops

13. *To Mr. Cook.*—In the present building, apart from the basement, there is not sufficient room for the mechanics, and I have already said that on that account we are working with twenty to twenty-five men short of the requisite number. Four or five years ago, I suggested that another story should be placed on the building, but was advised that the foundations were not sufficient to permit this. It was that fact that lead to the proposal now before the Committee. The only saving that could be effected in the height of the rooms would be on the first two floors, where the walls are 18 feet.

14. *To Senator Reid.*—We propose in the new workshops to keep all the sections separate, and we shall require all the space we ask for.

15. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I addressed a letter to the Deputy Postmaster-General stating that, as the proposed new workshops would be immediately adjacent to the existing post-office building, consideration should be given to the possibility of the utilization of the departmental luncheon-rooms by the workshops staff. The reply that I received was to the effect that the average number of men who, for want of accommodation, had luncheon at their benches, was approximately 142, and that about one-third of that number could be accommo-

harbour

dated at the luncheon room on the fifth floor of the General Post-office. That is to say, only about forty odd men could be so accommodated, but the Deputy Postmaster-General added that, in order to provide for this, it would be necessary to provide another lift in the main building, as the existing lift accommodation was insufficient to cope with the present traffic to the fifth floor between 12 noon and 1 p.m. We could, of course, have our own lift with a bridge across, but, all the same, only about forty men could be accommodated. I could not say whether any of the men use the dining-room at present, but they use the Institute. While we do not require the whole floor, we have to take it in order to get what is necessary. The correspondence was directed to the desirability of, if possible, saving one floor. If we require more space we shall have to put a structure overhead.

of the lift

make available accommodation for Clerks & luncheon room

16. *To Mr. Cook.*—I would not favour spending a penny more on the building than is proposed at the present time.

17. *To Mr. Mathews.*—We do not require 4,000 feet for a luncheon-room, but we cannot provide one elsewhere, so that we have to take the whole floor and divide it between the luncheon-room and the clerical section. I do not think that we require a luncheon-room as well as a dining-room, because men who wish to buy their meals could probably be accommodated in the postal dining-room. We could provide hot water and all facilities for the men who bring their own luncheons. If all the space is required by the expansion of the telephone section, the clerical branch and the luncheon-room will have to be removed to the roof. I can quite understand the attitude of the postal authorities in their desire to preserve the uniformity of the building, and if uniformity be preserved it will not inconvenience our workshops or make them less productive.

18. *To Mr. Jackson.*—It is only the dial of the automatic telephone that requires special attention, as compared with the ordinary telephone. We shall require a larger staff for repairs as the automatic system extends, and that is one of the reasons that prompted the proposal for new workshops. As I said before, I am at present considering the question of whether it will pay us to continue manufacturing parts, and possible difficulties in obtaining supplies from abroad, and all other factors, will be weighed before I make any recommendation.

19. *To the Chairman.*—In some cases there ~~is~~ be openings in the floor for the running of belts and so forth connected with the machinery. The floors, however, are concrete, and the holes would only require filling up should we move elsewhere. As the building proceeds we shall endeavour to have these holes made in their proper places. There is no serious objection to the proposed building being placed at the extreme end of Little Bourke-street, instead of adjoining the present premises, but we should have to find accommodation for the telephone workshops and the carpenters. On the question whether it would be wise to build the workshops at Little Bourke-street and be permanently located there, I should like to confer with the postal authorities. I would not like to say off-hand that no inconvenience would result to the Department. I do not know that that phase has been considered. When the proposal to establish workshops came up, we conferred with the Works and Railways officers, and the Secretary of that Department, on the 13th April, 1922, wrote a memorandum to us stating that they had plans for building on the whole of the block. All my concern is to get workshops; I do not worry about the architectural features. I do not know that I particularly suggested that there

may

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB. 12

should be hot water radiators throughout the building, but I should be glad to see some system of heating. In these workshops the men do not have to move about and handle heavy material; they sit at benches and work, much in the same way as watchmakers do. If they are not comfortable the best results are not obtained from them. I should not imagine that the carpenters, for instance, would require radiators. Our request is that the lavatory accommodation shall be in accordance with the regulations of the local health authorities.

20. *To Senator Lynch.*—If the clerks' section and the luncheon-room were removed, I should say that additional accommodation would be provided to meet requirements for a further five years; this means that if the workshops were ready for us in two-years time, we should have sufficient accommodation for twelve years from the present date. If the working of our machinery caused any disturbance or inconvenience to those engaged in the postal work, then we might be removed towards Little Bourke-street, or to some other site altogether; but our plant is comparatively small.

*The witness withdrew.*

(Taken at Melbourne.)

TUESDAY, 24TH JULY, 1923.

Present:

|                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Mr. GREGORY, Chairman; |              |
| Senator Lynch          | Mr. Jackson  |
| Senator Reid           | Mr. Mackay   |
| Mr. Cook               | Mr. Mathews. |

Robert Lawson, State Engineer, Postmaster-General's Department, Victoria, sworn and examined.

21. *To the Chairman.*—I am in charge of the telegraph and telephone engineering works in Victoria, and I am satisfied that the necessity has arisen to accommodate the postal workshops in a new building such as it is proposed to erect. It will be conducive to satisfactory control to have the telegraph and telephone workshops housed in one building, and it is essential that they be located close to the stores branch. The saving in time effected by having the shops near the stores will result in higher efficiency. Whether the stores branch should be located where it now is is another matter; but, the stores being established where they are, it is desirable and necessary that the workshops should be near them. I think that the stores are fairly favorably situated at present; they are, and should be, close to the railway. It is not within my knowledge that a suggestion was made that the stores branch should have been established close to both the water front and the railway. A large proportion of our stores comes by water. The Department does work for Tasmania, South Australia, and Western Australia; but the volume of stores sent by water is relatively small, water handling being practically confined to the south-west coast of Victoria. Most of the material for the workshops comes from overseas. If we were starting *de novo* it would be desirable to have both store and workshop accommodation convenient to the water-front and the railway yards, but the available sites adjacent to the railway are very few. We have been in correspondence with the Railway Department for over twelve months, endeavouring to obtain a pole yard close to the railway. We have asked the Department to suggest a space where we could have our own sidings, but it has been unable to allocate a convenient site. Although cartage from the water-front is an item to be considered, it is hardly possible to secure a site so close to the water that no cartage is involved.

22. *To Mr. Mathews.*—Once goods have to be placed on a vehicle it does not matter very much whether they have to be carted a few yards or half a mile.

23. *To the Chairman.*—The most valuable stores being received by the Department consist of cable, which is bulky, heavy and valuable. The drums weigh up to 3½ tons each, and I suppose that this year we have had up to 60 or 70 drums of cable in a single consignment. A total of, say, 210 tons on one ship is a large consignment for one purchaser. Arrangements have been made for the entrance of goods from the stores to the workshops at more than one floor. I do not think that there is any danger of goods filtering throughout without being registered, because on each floor different classes of material will be required. It is almost essential, for instance, that the telephone switchboard manufacture and repair shop should be on the same floor as where that equipment is handled, and there would be no danger of that material interfering with the work of the carpenters and joiners. The stores handled by the Comptroller of Stores must be kept to account, and I cannot imagine any leakage occurring between the stores and our shops. The height of 13 feet 9 inches between floor and ceiling, on the first and second floors, is not necessary for the purposes of workshops; it was fixed to preserve the general architectural appearance of the whole of the postal block fronting Spencer-street. The original height of the third and



#### TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB. 14

fourth floors was 11 feet, but it was pointed out that a height of at least 13 feet was necessary to allow sufficient head room for shafting. The 13 feet 3 inches now provided for gives us the right height. It is proposed to operate the plant in the carpenter's shop by having it connected by belt with machinery in the basement, because ~~belt~~ <sup>overhead</sup> in the carpenter's shop would be inconvenient. There is no doubt that the cost of the building is high, seeing that 5 per cent. interest and 1 per cent. depreciation on the estimated cost of £66,000 represents about £4,000 per annum. For workshop purposes a building with the elaborate frontage to be erected in this instance is not necessary, and no doubt that interest charge will affect our workshop prices. We did not consider the idea of the building facing Little Bourke-street, because our works Department is anxious to have facilities for the expansion of the mail branch. In considering the requirements of the workshops there is no special advantage to be gained by adopting the present site, but I take it that for general administrative purposes, and from an architectural point of view, it is preferable. In dealing with the position at the Elizabeth-street premises in conjunction with the present proposed extension, it is necessary to know precisely what is intended at Elizabeth-street. I understand that the Elizabeth-street building is to be simply a telegraph office, and it is not contemplated to shift the General Post Office activities from Spencer-street. If the present mail rooms at Spencer-street are of the correct dimensions, and if extension will be necessary a few years ahead, I assume that there is justification for retaining the height of 18 ft. 9 in. in the new building adjoining the present post-office in Spencer-street. If the proposed new building were erected at the Little Bourke-street end of the block, the present workshops would be completely disorganized. The accommodation proposed to be afforded is not more than adequate. In some respects the space allowed is possibly less than sufficient. The increased accommodation to be provided in some of the shops is not very great in actual measurement; but there are great advantages in having rooms of good height and with good natural lighting. The improved accessibility will add to the value of the accommodation. The space afforded by the five storeys and basement is what is considered desirable and necessary for present requirements. It is intended to accommodate in the basement the telephone mechanics engaged on installation work in the city and suburbs. There are 32 or 33 of these men at present employed, and their tools will be kept in the building. Most of their time, however, will be spent outside. The basement could also be utilized for stores of timber and dismantled telephone switchboards ready to be sent to the repair shop.

24. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The number of telephone mechanics on this particular floor will not be appreciably increased as a result of the extension of the automatic telephone system, but there will be an increase in the total number of mechanics engaged in the metropolitan area. At one time all this work was done at head-quarters. Now, however, we have fitters engaged at a number of suburban centres. I do not apprehend any special danger of fire on account of the storage of timber, but, personally, I should say that there should be a hydrant and hose on every floor. The precautions against fire should be similar, I take it, to those observed in the present building. I do not claim to have any expert knowledge of this subject, and before expressing a definite opinion I should prefer to consult the Fire Brigade people. On the ground floor of the new building there will be room for the carpenters for the next

## TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB. 15

ten years. If it should be decided to manufacture our own telephones—although I have very great doubt as to the wisdom of adopting that course—it would be advisable to do the work in a separate workshop. On the second floor we shall have the painters and polishers, as well as the electric light and power section. The increased space allowed for the painters is not very great, but much better lighting is given and a larger number of men may be conveniently accommodated. The carpenters, painters, and polishers are dependent, to some extent, on the policy adopted with regard to manufacture; and, if the Department does not manufacture extensively, there will be sufficient space on the second floor for ten or fifteen years. The third floor is to be used as the telephone workshop. The difference between the telegraph and telephone workshops is that at the former a higher grade of manufacturing, such as lathe work, is done; whereas in the telephone shop assembling and wiring are carried out. This floor will be fully occupied, and it should give sufficient space for about six or seven years. The work done here is not particularly dependent on policy. It is proposed to remove the zinc manufacturing plant from its present situation in Elizabeth-street to Power-street. On the next floor, we have the telephone repair shop, which will expand at about the same rate as telephone development throughout the country increases; that is, probably, at the rate of between 6 and 10 per cent. per annum. Here we have allowed the greatest room for development, and it is expected that the accommodation will be sufficient for about ten years. This shop will handle all telephones returned from the premises of subscribers, whether the instruments are in need of repair or not. Automatic telephones will be included. All the space allocated will be required for the repair of telephones and switchboards. In the case of small country repairs, such as broken cords, the instruments are attended to on the spot; but otherwise the telephones from the country will be dealt with in this branch. As a rule, a telephone needing repairs has to be dismantled and disinfected, and certain parts may require to be re-nickelled or re-enamelled. The cost of transmission by rail from the country to the city is not great. There may come a time when it will be found desirable to establish country repair shops; but at present it is more economical to have all overhauling done at head-quarters. About 70 per cent. of the telephones in Victoria are in the metropolitan districts, so that the number of country instruments requiring repair is relatively small. Then, again, the telephones in the metropolitan area are subjected to more use than those in the country. On the next floor switchboard manufacture and assembling will be conducted. The floor space has been increased from 6,200 square feet to only 6,500 square feet, because it is doubtful whether the manufacture of switchboards in Australia will be extended. We still must make our own switchboards for special requirements, because it is impossible to specify those requirements until a concrete case arises.

25. *To Senator Reid.*—It is not easy to make comparisons between the cost of the imported as against the locally manufactured article. The last time we purchased parts we were probably buying on a higher market than when we last purchased switchboards; but, with parts at the last prices quoted, it would not pay us to make the switchboards here. On the other hand, the article made in Australia is a superior one. Some of the imported material has been of decidedly poor quality. Personally, though not officially, I am satisfied that the Department should not make the ordinary line of switchboards.

26. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The question of whether the Department should manufacture them or not is under official consideration, and I do not wish to express an opinion which might be at variance with the official view.

27. *To Senator Reid.*—The operating conveniences and facilities for extension in connexion with the switchboards made in Australia are greater than in the case of the imported boards.

28. *To the Chairman.*—If necessary, consideration could be given to the matter of altering the distribution of the staffs between the different floors. The fifth floor will accommodate the mechanician and the clerks engaged in taking out the costs of the work. It will also contain the locker and luncheon rooms. Most of the men bring their own meals, and it is expected that the accommodation will be fully utilized at midday. The costing staff has been allocated 945 square feet. If the room on this floor were required for other purposes, it would probably be quite practicable to provide luncheon accommodation on the roof of the building; but it is desirable to have the luncheon and locker rooms in the same building. In addition to the goods lift, there should be a passenger lift giving access to all floors. One of the objections to the existing workshops is that the premises are cold in winter and hot in summer. The best work cannot be given by men who are cold, and it is therefore important to provide means of warming the building. I have not specially studied the ventilation of large structures of this nature. I have no recollection of the men complaining of a lack of proper ventilation. If means were provided for the circulation of air at the right temperature, it would dispense with the need for hot-water radiators. Pure air properly warmed is preferable to steam heating; but the question largely turns on the relative cost of the two systems. So far as my experience goes, if the air is heated by radiators in winter, and the premises are kept from being too hot in summer, the men work at a normal rate. The present workshop has a low roof and ~~no windows~~. Little fresh air is obtainable, and the conditions in summer are ~~abominable~~. I should prefer an air-conditioning plant to radiators if the cost of the installation were reasonable. The cost of fuel should not be more than with the radiator system. The expensive feature of an air-conditioning plant is the cost of the electrical energy with which to work it. It is not proposed to have a new boiler room. The hot water will not have to be pumped; it will circulate on the thermo-siphon system.

29. *To Mr. Mackay.*—It was not considered desirable to erect the workshops facing Little Bourke-street, because the lighting would not have been satisfactory, and I take it that the present arrangement will lead to the more advantageous utilization of the available land. Otherwise, the workshops would have been as convenient in one place as the other. If the proposed building is eventually required for other Post Office purposes, it will be necessary for the workshops to be accommodated elsewhere, and, whatever is done, temporary accommodation will be needed before the construction of the northern wing is undertaken. If the workshops have to be temporarily accommodated somewhere, we may as well be housed in the proposed building.

30. *To Mr. Cook.*—If I were spending my own money, I think I should erect the building on the proposed site, mainly because of its proximity to the stores. The Post Office has occupied the present site at Spencer-street for seven or eight years, and it has been only slightly extended during that time. The Mail Branch is the only one that occupies much space and is likely to greatly increase. Taking the building as a whole, the general expansion should not exceed from 2 to 3

*a relies on roof lights for its illumination*

*Most uncomfial*

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per cent. per annum. The present luncheon room is practically full at 12 and 1 o'clock. While I do not contend that there would not be room for a few more people, accommodation could not be found for the 300 men from the workshops. The intention of the Railway Department with regard to handling goods traffic generally would be a big factor to consider in conjunction with any proposal for an underground passage connecting the Post Office with the Spencer-street station.

31. *To Senator Reid.*—The number of inside men employed at the workshops has risen in the last four years from 200 to 330, and we could do with even more men at present if they could be accommodated. There will be room in the proposed new building for from five to seven years' development, and it would be unwise to cramp the various shops, because when extension takes place it should not be necessary to remove appliances. The men engaged on one class of work should be kept together as much as possible. Every chance a workman has of leaving his own floor presents an opportunity for wasting time. The telephone repair shop is the only one where a very great increase in accommodation has been provided, and that increase represents 75 per cent. The space for the carpenters' shop has been increased from 6,350 to 6,900 square feet; the painters' shop from 4,100 to 6,250; the telephone shop from 4,000 to 6,500 square feet; and the switchboard shop from 6,300 to 6,500 square feet. I hope that the old workshops will be pulled down; but if it should be decided to utilize those premises as a luncheon room, the only portion suitable for that purpose would be the north-west corner of the ground floor. The upper floor would be too hot in summer. Some employees have the strongest objection to windows being opened, but mechanics, as a rule, do not show as much disinclination to have windows opened as clerical employees do. It would probably be important to pay special attention to the ventilation problem, if the building were regarded as one to be occupied principally by a clerical staff. Our stores are fairly full, because at present we have a good deal of material belonging to the Government Printer; but even so, we are short of much material that ought to be in hand. For some years we have been under-stocked, and that is one of the reasons, probably, why we have been able to store paper for the Government Printer. I doubt whether the Post Office requirements will grow to such an extent that the whole of the Spencer-street block will be required in a short space of time for mail purposes.

32. *To Mr. Jackson.*—Telephone mechanics are now operating from suburban centres at Windsor, Hawthorn, and Brighton.

33. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I was State Engineer in the South Australian Postal Department for two and a half years, and previous to that I was in the Electrical Engineer's Office in Victoria. The official policy is, as far as possible, to use goods of Australian manufacture. A margin of 15 per cent. is allowed in favour of the locally-manufactured article. In the case of switchboards, after allowing for the duty on the imported goods and an additional 15 per cent. in favour of the Australian article, the local price is just about the same. The Australian-made article is better, because of the increased facilities it gives, and these are due to design rather than to workmanship. I have difficulty at present in recruiting sufficient expert mechanics to do necessary work apart from the connecting of switchboards. If manufacture in Australia is contemplated, it will be impossible to consider the making of parts. We can only think of competing in the assembling of parts. If the pressure under which the Department is now working relaxes about two years hence, we may be able

2100 to 2500

manufacturing

Chief

to determine whether it will be economical to manufacture switchboards in Australia. I should say that our manufacturing costs would be at least 15 per cent. higher than the case of the imported goods.

34. *To Mr. Mathews.*—If the official policy was to allow a margin of 25 per cent. in favour of goods of Australian manufacture, local manufacture would, from the official standpoint, be warranted. I do not imagine that in the next three or four years we can contemplate any increased activity in this direction, and therefore we have asked for practically no increase in space on that account. It is frequently contended that Government service is inefficient. If private manufacture under efficient conditions is more satisfactory, the manufacture of telephone appliances could be carried out quite well by Australians in private employment and the Department's requirements met at a price within reasonable competitive range of the cost of the imported article. If, as in the case of copper wire, private enterprise fails to deliver the material at a price within 33 per cent. of the cost of the British product, where are we? The institute connected with the Post Office has not been in operation for a great many years, but the junior artisans and mechanics, including carpenters, are required to attend during their period of training. I do not think that many of our telephone mechanics have been trained at the institute, because attendance there has not been compulsory for more than a year.

35. *To Senator Lynch.*—The workshops are to be given a central position, mainly because it is desirable that they should be situated close to the stores; otherwise, it would not matter much where the mechanical branch was housed. Accommodation which might have been ample twenty years ago has become hopelessly inadequate with the rapid extension of telephone services. It will cost the Department £ 1500 to move the workshops from their present site to the new building, and if we were obliged to move out in seven or eight years there would be a repetition of the cost of dismantling plant and machinery and installing it in a fresh position. My estimate of expenditure for 1923-24 is about £1,000,000, and of that sum the amount chargeable to telegraph work—not including country lines—would not be in excess of £30,000, showing that the bulk of the activities of the workshops relate to telephones. The subject of wireless telephony has been considered by the Department; but there is no possibility of the installation of wireless telephones in place of the existing facilities. That system may possibly be adopted for the provision of services not at present available. Wireless telephony has distinct possibilities in regard to overseas service, but it cannot be economically substituted for the present system. The United States of America is employing wireless for its over-water communication. The best known instance is that of the service to Santa Catalina, where it would be exceedingly expensive to lay a cable. This service is directly connected with the Bell trunking system. It may be found desirable to give Tasmania communication with the mainland by means of a wireless system.

*The witness withdrew.*

*The Committee adjourned.*

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB. 19

(Taken at Melbourne.)

WEDNESDAY, 25th JULY, 1923.

Present:

Mr. GREGORY (Chairman).

|               |   |              |
|---------------|---|--------------|
| Senator Lynch | } | Mr. Jackson  |
| Senator Reid  |   | Mr. Mackay   |
| Mr. Blakeley  |   | Mr. Mathews. |
| Mr. Cook      |   |              |

Morgan Bruce Harry, Inspector, Central Staff, Postmaster-General's Department, sworn and examined.

36. To the Chairman.—At present I am carrying out portion of the duties of Mr. ~~Woodrow~~ while he is absent from the city. I have worked at the General Post Office, Spencer-street, and have a personal knowledge of the requirements of the Postmaster-General's Department. It would be possible to obtain particulars of the increased business of that Department during the past eight or ten years, but the figures would be somewhat unreliable for comparative purposes on account of the effect of the war and the consequent depression in trade. I have a statement showing the increased business over one year. I have seen the plan of the proposed addition to the General Post Office building in Spencer-street. It is the desire of the Postmaster-General's Department that the levels of the floors of the new structure should conform with those of the existing building, so that the ultimate ~~extension~~ *expansion* from the present building will be accomplished at the least inconvenience. Owing to the development of the Post Office business, ~~with a reasonable period~~ *the Chief Inspector* ~~the present branch will need to be transferred to other quarters.~~ *Workshop premises* ~~It is estimated that approximately 16,250 square feet of additional space will be required in five years' time. Within ten years we shall have to find a considerable amount of additional accommodation for the sorting of ordinary mails. The 16,250 square feet previously mentioned includes 8,050 for the parcel sorting section. I have not heard of any suggestion to remove the ~~Spencer-street~~ General Post Office to the site in Elizabeth-street. Even if that were done, it would be a long time before the mail working section would be removed from Spencer-street, because of its present convenient proximity to the railway station, and the difficulty that would be experienced in providing suitable accommodation at Elizabeth-street. I do not think it possible that reasonable accommodation could be provided for the General Post Office at the Elizabeth-street site, unless the existing building were demolished and replaced by a more practical structure. Even then I doubt whether ~~it could be altered to~~ *make of* ~~provide a large open space for the mail working section.~~ *provision* ~~I am conversant with the work carried on in the Elizabeth-street building, but I do not know the conditions of the telegraphists. I understand that the Government propose to utilize the property on Little Bourke-street, near Elizabeth-street, for the Taxation and other Departments. I have not seen the plans of the proposed building. I understand that the Postal Department intend to make provision on that site for the Telegraph Department, but not for any other Branch. The present intention is to develop the Spencer-street site. I have not heard of any suggestion to remove the clerical staff to Elizabeth-street. The height of 18 ft. 9 in. of the first and second floors of the new structure would be quite suitable for mail purposes, but I would not say that such provision was necessary. If portion of the mail working Department were transferred to the new building, it would be desirable to maintain the same floor level. An extension on the present ground level would be ~~unavoidable~~ *inconvenient* for mail working purposes owing to the existence of a right-of-way between the two buildings. There is a defective gallery, ~~for the purpose of inspection,~~ overlooking the present mail-room, and this is considered~~~~

*the Chief Inspector*

*expansion*

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by the Department a very necessary adjunct. Any extension to the new building of the mail working section should be on the same floor level. The detective gallery from the ceiling to the bottom of it is about 8 ft. <sup>or</sup> 6 ft. clearance, at least, would be necessary. The increase in the number of postal articles which were posted at the General Post Office, and at the Postal Hall in Elizabeth-street, and cleared by the General Post Office staff from street receivers, city and suburbs, for the year 1921-22 over 1920-21 was 12½ per cent.; the increase in the number of articles received for delivery from the General Post Office was 18½ per cent.; and the increase in the number of parcels posted was 30½ per cent. The increase for ordinary postal articles would be slightly more than normal. I do not anticipate, in the future, a similar increase for ordinary postal articles, but the increase for parcels seems likely to be maintained for some considerable time.

37. *To Mr. Cook.*—I do not know whether the high railway freights would account for the increase, but there is no doubt that the Post Office is much availed of for the conveyance of parcels.

38. *To the Chairman.*—For the handling of parcels for the next five years our present quarters would be suitable, and then we will require <sup>about</sup> 8,000 additional feet of space. We might, with difficulty, be able to carry on for five years in the present building, providing that the best use was made of the available space and the work, to a certain extent, cramped. It would, no doubt, cost ~~some thousands of pounds~~ <sup>more than</sup> to install in the proposed building the engineers' workshops. The whole of the space in the new structure would not be required by the Postal Department. On account of the heavy weight of the mails it would be most inconvenient for mail working if the workers were situated in two buildings on different levels. The ground floor of the new building would comprise 6,200 ft.

39. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The level of the ground floor of the proposed building would correspond with that of the basement of the existing building. The <sup>ground</sup> ~~ground~~ floor of the new building would correspond with the level of the <sup>first</sup> ~~first~~ floor which we are now occupying. The buildings would be divided by a right-of-way. If connected by an overhead bridge, the first floor of the new building, corresponding with our ground floor, would be suitable for our purposes.

40. *To the Chairman.*—The estimate of 8,000 ft. of additional space required within the next five years was made by the Superintendent of Mails.

41. *To Mr. Mathews.*—There is a space of 16 or 17 ft. between the two buildings, which would allow of plenty of room for an overhead bridge. I believe the plan shows a bridge of 25 ft. in width from one building to the other. A wider bridge would interfere with the light area. This situation would be fairly convenient for the mail working section, providing that the floor levels were the same.

42. *To the Chairman.*—The ground floor of the new building would coincide with the basement of the present building, but, owing to the right-of-way, that situation would not be nearly so convenient as would the floor above.

43. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The ground floor of the present building and the first floor of the proposed building would be at the same level, and would not be interfered with by the traffic in the subway.

44. *To the Chairman.*—Provided there were no interference with the mail work, there would not be very much objection to the engineering staff in the proposed building working above and below the mail working section. I take it that we would have the whole of the floor for our purposes, and, providing there were means of communication to the mail room in the other building on the same floor level, it would be <sup>quite</sup> ~~quite~~ satisfactory. About 2,200 feet of space on the second floor of the present building, exclusive of corridors, would be

*within the gallery a*

*more than*

*a considerable sum*

*ground*

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allocated to the clerical staff of the Stores Branch. The space for the Accounts Branch, and the two smaller Branches, viz., the Telephone Contracts and the Metropolitan Inspection, is congested. ~~Although they do not occupy much space,~~ I have never heard of any complaint of insufficient ventilation. If there were any complaints they would be dealt with by the Deputy, *Postmaster General* and I probably would not hear of them. I regard the proposed building in the light of an extension of the present buildings, and it would therefore need to preserve, ~~at any cost,~~ the architectural features of the main structure. I admit that it is a matter of appearance. I could not say in what portion of the new building it is intended to permanently locate the Engineering Branch. I have considered this question from the aspect of ultimately utilizing the new building for the mail working section, and other branches of the General Post Office.

45. *To Mr. Matthews.*— I am not aware whether the Department has considered the allocation to the various Branches of space in the ~~proposed building.~~ *ultimate extension*

46. *To the Chairman.*— The Chief Inspector, who will be returning to Melbourne probably at the end of this week, may be able to supply information on the ~~proposed allocation of the new building.~~ *subject*

*the bulk of the space on* The third floor of the present building has a total space of 19,200 ft., including corridors. I obtained this figure from the Works and Railways Department. The engineers occupy the third floor. ~~The bulk of the space is~~ *in addition* occupied by the Telephone Contracts section, the Metropolitan Inspection section, and the drafting room. The second floor is occupied by the Postal Institute, the Comptroller of Stores Office, and the Departmental Inquiry Office. The office space of the Stores Branch is 2,900 ft. The Inquiry Office, which includes the ~~Recess,~~ absorbs about 4,200 ft., and the balance of the space is taken up by the Postal Institute. By scaling the plan I have worked out the actual floor area of the Postal Institute at 11,856 ft. On certain nights there is some difficulty in finding classroom accommodation in that Institute. The Institute admits to membership officers of the Postal Department and other Departments, but I do not know whether the latter have the right to attend the classes. I know that there are associate members. The outside public are not allowed to attend the classes. I believe that any member of the Commonwealth Public Service can become a member of the Institute, but I am not sure on that point. I am not quite certain whether associate members may attend the classes. The Institute is not wholly used for the purpose of instruction on matters appertaining to departmental work, but, generally speaking, is for the benefit of the officers of the Department. The social gatherings at the Institute are held for the pleasure of the officers. A gymnasium is provided, and all physical culture classes are held therein. I could not say whether any rental is charged against the Institute for the use of the rooms. ~~The class, "Tuition by Post,"~~ *Correspondence classes* ~~is for the purpose of enabling the postal officers in the outlying parts of Australia to reach the same standard of efficiency as can be attained by the officers in Melbourne.~~ *Country* The Library was instituted for a similar purpose, and country officers have the use of the books. I could not say whether the purchase of novels is defrayed departmentally or from Institute funds. There is a special correspondence class.

47. *To Mr. Cook.*— I could not say whether rent is paid for the use of rooms. I have not had a great deal to do with the Institute, being on the Central Staff and not the General Post Office Staff. In considering whether the proposed building should be constructed on a site next to the General Post Office or elsewhere, one must take into account the fact that full use is not being made of that site. The best use could be made



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of it by the erection of a new building to be occupied by the workshops, and ultimately used as an extension of the General Post Office. I could not say whether any other site would be as convenient. If another site were chosen, the one next to the General Post Office would be lying idle. In addition, there would be the increased cost of conveying the material from the stores to the workshops, and then conveying the manufactured article to the distributing centre. In five years' time additional accommodation will be required for the mail ~~room~~, but that does not, in any way, mean the absorption of the whole of the space in the new building.

48. To Mr. Jackson.—I could not say to what extent any reduction in the postage rates would affect the business of the letter section, but I suppose there would be a certain increase. *It depends on the trade.*

49. To Senator Lynch.—The space occupied by the accountancy staff is at present congested. The best arrangement for the Accounts Branch would be for it to take *some of* the space occupied by the Correspondence and Records section, ~~and that could be arranged elsewhere on the same floor.~~ *which is small* There is a margin of space on the fourth floor. The Correspondence and Records section could be confined in a smaller area so as to make additional space available. That would allow an extension of the Accounts Branch. Additional accommodation might also be found on the first and third floors. The first floor is devoted exclusively to mail business, but the racks could be placed closer together, and thus make more room in certain portions of the building. The first floor is devoted to oversea and Inter-State mails, the postmen's section, the Dead Letter section, and the Registration section. The parcel business is the most buoyant of all, as it has increased very rapidly during the last few years. It is practically impossible to ascertain whether that section is paying or not, because, for the conveyance of mails, we pay in bulk. No separate payment is made for parcels. The development of the parcel section is due to the increased mail orders despatched by business houses. The despatching of parcels by post is becoming very popular. I am not aware that there is any suggestion to increase the charges on parcels. I am in favour of utilizing the site next to the General Post Office for the erection of the proposed building so as to accommodate the workshops and ultimately to be used as an extension of the General Post Office. It is a costly site, and the best use should be made of it. It was a wise action to place the ~~stores~~ *Stores building* in its present position on account of its proximity to the railway station, thus ~~ensuring a limited~~ *reducing the cost of* conveyance of material.

50. To Mr. Mathews.—The rooms in the Postal Institute are put to considerable use, and on certain nights of the week there is difficulty in obtaining suitable classroom accommodation. On occasions the room set aside of the ladies' lounge is used for a classroom. The classes are becoming very popular. The membership of the Institute on the 31st May was 2,344, which meant that 312 new members were enrolled during the May quarter. The total enrolment of students at the end of May was 1,057. There were 86 new students enrolled in May. The average attendance at the classes was 21, the percentage attendance being 84 per cent. I could not say what proportion comprises female students.

51. To Senator Lynch.—I could obtain figures as to the number of female students learning *millinery* ~~cooking and~~ dressmaking. The attendance at the classes has not diminished. Speaking from memory, the number of members at 31st May was considerably greater than it was at the same period last year. The membership has increased from year to year. *who have discontinued membership during the period the best of has been established* ~~During that period I do not know whether there has been an increase or decrease in the number of postal employees.~~ I can safely say that the Postal Institute is very well

*Handwritten notes at the bottom left corner, including the phrase "The date of the..."*

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB. 23

patronized under voluntary conditions. The membership revenue is paid into the Institute account to meet expenses. The Institute has a governing body, and a ~~small~~ <sup>Department</sup> subsidy is obtained from the Government. The advantage of the Institute is that it improves the qualifications of the postal employees. The classes have had a very beneficial effect on the men employed by the Department. At present there are 1,000 students, and their studies must tend to make them better officers, and so enable them to return full value to the Department. The direct benefit to the Department is very material. The erection of the proposed building and the consequent increase in the number of officers would have no effect on the Institute, because the employees in the new building would already be included in the membership. I would not favour compulsory attendance at Institute classes. ~~The allocation of new officers in the proposed new building would not affect the membership of the Institute to any degree.~~ <sup>more than</sup> At one time I was a postal inspector, but now I am an inspector on the Central Staff. I have had experience in Victoria, South Australia, and New South Wales. The Senior Inspector is situated on the fourth floor of the present General Post Office building, and the Metropolitan Inspector <sup>are</sup> on the third floor. The building has revealed to me no defects; in fact, I regard it in every respect as a fine building. It is a suitable building for postal working.

52. *To Mr. Mackay.*—I could not say whether the Clerical Branch of the workshops, or any section of the workshop staff, is situated in the General Post Office building. Additional accommodation will later be required for the Parcels Branch. The maximum weight for a parcel is 11 lbs. I have not heard that the commercial houses despatch numerous small parcels through the post so as to take advantage of the low rate for a single parcel. The rate for postage is so much per pound, so no advantage would be gained in that way, except that quicker despatch would be obtained by post as against rail. The Post Office affords a safe method of transmission of goods, and practically insures delivery. There is very little risk of pillage. <sup>would</sup> On long distances it might ~~be cheaper~~ to send small parcels by post instead of by rail. From Melbourne to Mildura a parcel by post would be considerably cheaper than a parcel by rail; for short ~~er~~ distances it would be cheaper by rail. I cannot say whether the Parcels section is a paying proposition, as the accounts are not kept separate. We pay for mails in bulk, and they contain letters, newspapers, and parcels. It would need a separate system of payment for parcel mail to ascertain the cost of conveyance. I know the situation of the dining-room and the space allotted to it. I have taken meals there on occasion. The lunch hours are arranged to prevent overcrowding. One hatch will lunch between, say, 12 and 12.30, another between 12.30 and 1, and so on. The employees of the workshops do not have their lunch in the dining-room. One hundred and forty men from the workshops have their lunch in a room provided at the workshops, or at their benches. When the new building is constructed, the present dining and refreshment room would not accommodate the whole of the employees. Additional accommodation would need to be provided.

53. *To Senator Reid.*—During the luncheon hour I have visited the dining-room, and on those occasions it has been fully occupied. At that time, I took my luncheon hour at a quarter to one. It is some two or three years since I made use of the dining-room, so I am not conversant with present conditions. The lift accommodation is now fully taxed, and if the dining-room were to be used by the staff of the proposed new building, the lift could not possibly accommodate them all. The difficulty is that the present refreshment room would not accommodate <sup>many</sup> additional employees, and

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accommodation <sup>provided for the workshops staff</sup> provision would have to be made for, at least, some of them. If a dining-room were provided on the roof of the old building, there would be no necessity to make similar provision in the new building, and thus extra space would be given. I admit that the present dining-room does not make the best use of the available space, and I think it could be cut down by about one-third. In five years' time it will be necessary to take up some floor space in the new building, but not a great deal. This would apply more particularly to the Parcel section. In the sorting of ordinary mails we have sufficient accommodation for the next ten years. The Parcel section is at present situated in the basement, but I doubt whether it can be continued there. Some other arrangement will have to be made so as to have the Parcel section on the same floor level. Connexion could be made by an overhead bridge. In order to accomplish this it might be necessary to remove the Parcel section from the basement to another portion of the building. On the floor above the basement is the ordinary mail-sorting section, and over that are the Inter-State and oversea mails, the Dead Letter Office, the Registration section, and the Postmen. It might be advisable to remove them to the basement so as to place the Parcels section on the next floor.

Could accommodate about one-third of the work shops staff. The additional accommodation could be provided more conveniently on the roof of the new building than on that of the existing building.

For permanently between the two buildings

54. To Mr. Mathews.—If the proposed building is erected, the Postal section at some future date will require the basement, the ground floor, and the first floor. In five years' time one floor will be required, either the ground or the first floor.

55. To Senator Reid.—The first floor in the new structure would coincide with the ground floor in the present building, and the connexion would be made by an overhead bridge. This would prevent any interference by the right-of-way. There would not be the same difficulty in separating the Parcels section as there would be in separating the ordinary mail work.

Amended

56. To Mr. Mathews.—The first floor of the new building and the ground floor of the existing structure would be suitable for the Parcels section. The dining-room is conducted by a committee of officers, who see that it is successfully conducted. No trouble occurs, and the benefit conferred is widely appreciated. The present use of the dining-room and the Institute has been of very material benefit, both to the employees and to the Department.

The witness withdrew.

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB. 25

(Taken at Melbourne.)

THURSDAY, 26th JULY, 1923.

Present:

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| Senator Lynch, | Mr. Jackson, |
| Senator Reid,  | Mr. Mackay,  |
| Mr. Blakeley,  | Mr. Mathevs. |
| Mr. Cook,      |              |

James Mason, Acting Deputy Postmaster-General, Victoria, sworn and examined.

57. To the Chairman.—I am familiar with the scheme to erect telephone workshops on the Spencer-street frontage, alongside the existing General Post Office building, to increase the accommodation. The whole of the activities in connexion with the Postal Department are so expanding that I estimate that in five years' time there will be congestion in the parcel post, and inland mail room, as well as in the Accounts Branch and in the Engineering Section. I am advised that within the time mentioned the Engineering and Accounts Branches will require additional space to the extent of 1,500 square feet; that the Superintendent of Mails will need an increase of 50 per cent. on the space at present available, and that even at the present time the clerical staff of the Telephone Branch is crowded. The Deputy Postmaster-General (Mr. Bright) had under consideration, when illness overtook him recently, a request from the Telephone Branch for additional accommodation, and he was dealing with it. Additional space is urgently needed for records. To illustrate the expansion in parcel post mail work, I may state that in 1910-11, ~~we~~ handled 3,000,000 parcels, and in 1921-22 no less than 8,400,000 parcels. There was a substantial increase all through the war years; but since the war there has been a remarkable increase. For instance, in 1922 ~~we~~ handled 4,000,000 parcels, and in 1918 nearly 5,000,000 parcels, but since then the rate of increase has been very rapid indeed, due, in my opinion, to business people utilizing the service to insure the rapid transportation of parcels up to 11 lbs. in weight. Much of the increase in the inward parcel post mail from other countries may be due to the fact that business houses overseas recognise that while there may be some difficulty in getting reasonable freights on vessels, they are certain that the goods will be delivered through the Mail Branch. We receive an enormous number of parcels from overseas for some Melbourne firms. The business in Sydney is very much heavier than in Melbourne, and I understand the accommodation there is far from satisfactory. In Sydney the parcel post work is dealt with on one floor of the General Post Office, as well as in premises at the Railway Station. There, also the Postal Department makes special arrangements with certain firms that do heavy business in parcel post matters. They send officials down to the firms' business place to see that the parcels are put up in separate crates or boxes, and thus obviate handling them a second time, at the General Post Office. The accommodation at the Melbourne General Post Office for parcel post work is satisfactory, but it would be better if the transportation portion of it were so arranged as to allow waggons to back up to the platforms and receive the parcels direct, instead of being handled a second time. The loading and unloading involves a tremendous amount of handling. Much of this could be dispensed with. I think, if an arrangement such as I suggest were made. I am satisfied that in the course of a few years we shall need accommodation in the proposed new building, not only for our mail work but for our accounts and engineering staffs. Our postal work has increased enormously in recent years, and we must have substantial store room as we have to keep records for a certain time. We should not be able to utilize the accommodation now occupied by the ~~Accounts~~ Stores Branch, if room were found elsewhere for them, because their existing

*the department  
1914*

*the department (vide Graph  
page 46 of Postmaster-General's  
twelfth Annual Report 1921/22)*

*Postal Department as the  
mails must be carried*

*I believe*

*clerical staff*

accommodation is on the Institute floor, and it is wanted for Institute work. I am a firm believer in the training of all postal officials in their special branches. Perhaps some of the Institute classes are outside the sphere of the Institute, and no doubt they could be eliminated. But, in the main, instruction in these classes is designed to make the postal officials more efficient in their respective branches. Our motor-drivers, for instance, must pass an examination, and so we have classes for their instruction. Some people might consider that the Institute is on a High School basis, but, as I have just said, the object is to encourage the officials, and especially the lads, to become proficient in all branches of post-office work. The importance of this is recognised throughout the world. If my recommendations were adopted there would not be nearly enough room on the Institute floor for all the classes that would be formed. I would force every boy in the employ of the Department to become a member of the Institute and educate him along the lines necessary to make him thoroughly efficient. The present proposal is to utilize the proposed new building for telephone workshops. I do not think it would be wise, even in view of the possibility that at the end of five years we shall require certain of the accommodation there for postal work, to erect a permanent home on the Little Bourke-street frontage for the workshops now, because we have too much work in hand to permit of any dislocation which the adoption of that suggestion would involve. The parcel post work is done on the ground floor in the existing building. It is proposed to take the fitters and mechanics and put them in the new building when it is ready. I do not think this would cost very much, because it would not be necessary to shift a great deal of machinery. I approve of the proposal to erect the new building, and if the floors will be on the same level as the floors in the existing General Post Office, the extra accommodation, when required, should be readily available. Apart from the Telegraph Branch we have no outside workshops. At the Telephone Exchange there are a number of mechanics engaged in repair work. They must be located there. In the motor garage at South Melbourne there are about fifty motors and a number of employees, with a mechanic in charge. The garage is the property of the Postal Department, and is only about three-quarters of a mile distant from the General Post Office. I would like to have the garage nearer, if a suitable property could be obtained, because that would obviate the journey to and from each day, and result in some economy in petrol. There are no motor mechanics at the General Post Office, but while work is in progress the motor staff are in charge of an officer who is responsible for the despatch of mails. I would not advocate the conversion of the basement of the General Post Office into a motor garage. The site is too expensive to be utilized for such a purpose, and our motor service is sure to expand tremendously in the near future. The workshops ought to be close to the stores. The Institute is not in its proper place. I am satisfied that if the allotment of the accommodation at the General Post Office was under consideration again the arrangement would be on somewhat different lines. As a certain section of the employees consists of boys, it is natural that they should be up to boys' tricks. Therefore, I would be glad if the Institute could be accommodated on the top floor. It would be a better arrangement if the Deputy Postmaster-General were moved down one floor and the Institute put up ~~one~~. It would then be in its proper place. It would not be wise to house the Institute in a separate building, because, to be useful and effective, it must be convenient to the employees. I am aware that it has been suggested that a small portion of the top floor

to top floor

mechanics  
others

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in the new building should be utilized for the clerical staff, and the remainder for a dining room. If all the employees at the General Post Office had their meals at the same time there would not be nearly sufficient accommodation in the present dining room. I think the existing prejudice in connexion with the dining room will eventually disappear. At present many officers prefer to go elsewhere for their meals, for the reason that, as they are working in the post-office all day long, they want to get away from it at meal-times. If arrangements could be made to have the dining rooms on the roof of the ~~present building~~ <sup>new</sup> that would make available additional accommodation for post-office work, but it would curtail the open space available on top.

58. *To Senator Reid.*—When it becomes necessary to utilize the additional accommodation to be provided by the new building we ~~shall~~ <sup>would</sup> be able to arrange for all our Customs work to be done on the ground floor there. This will permit us to devote the whole of the existing accommodation to inland parcel business. At present the Customs work is all done within a certain enclosure, in order that the parcels may be under the care of the officials until they are delivered. I think the whole of the ground floor in the new building will eventually be required for Customs work. ~~At present officials in that branch are very much cramped for room.~~ If the work could be divided in this way we should have sufficient accommodation in the present building for parcel post work for about fifteen years. I should say we would want extra room in about five years. At certain times of the year, and especially in October, November, and December our parcel post work becomes very congested, parcels being stacked right up to the ceiling day after day. To deal with the accumulation of ~~parcels~~ <sup>mail matters</sup> we have to take on about 100 extra men. There would not be enough room for the Postal Institute on the top floor of the new building even if we confined its activities to strictly utility classes, because, as I have suggested, I am hoping that some day the Postmaster-General will insist on all the boys in the Department becoming members of the Institute and engaging in studies to fit them for the work in their respective branches. They are allowed a certain amount of time off from official duties to attend the classes. The lifts in the existing building are very unsatisfactory. There is considerable congestion at the luncheon hour. I cannot understand why better provision was not made, because in other parts of the world, and especially in London, lifts connecting with the tubes take as many as 100 people at a time without any difficulty. I think the dining rooms would be patronized to a greater extent if the lift service were better. Meals are served from 12 o'clock to 2 o'clock, because we have not enough room to seat all the diners if they came between 12 and 1 o'clock. Probably we could accommodate fifty more diners by a re-arrangement of the tables. I do not know of an intention to take the carpenters' shop out of the existing building at present, but if they were to go into the new building, the space now occupied by them would be available for postal purposes. If the dining room were put there the people would have to go downstairs instead of upstairs to meals.

59. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I was not consulted in any way about the allotment of space in the existing General Post Office, but any overcrowding would now come under my notice. Naturally, we look to the new building to give us the extra room when it will be required. The facilities provided at the General Post Office and the improved accommodation have had beneficial results, in that there is less sickness among employees, particularly female employees, than formerly. I am unable, however, to furnish statistics on this point. I rely upon my own observations. I know that when I was accountant there was always a fair number of the staff off on sick leave. It would be difficult to obtain

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figures to show definitely to what extent the situation has improved, but, personally, I think the standard of our employees is very much higher than in former years. For instance, we never have a drunk about the place now, and by giving employees an opportunity to use the billiard tables, the gymnasium, and the reading-rooms, we are able to keep them out of the hotels. They are nearly always on the premises. As officer in charge of various branches of the Postal Department since 1894, I am quite sure that the general standard of the staff has very much improved, because of the facilities provided. Referring again to the unsatisfactory lift service, I may say we have always been under the impression that if the Public Works Department would keep the lifts up to the mark they would be sufficient. Unfortunately, they do not hold enough people, and there is only one lift at the main entrance. The lifts in the new building should be closer together, and their accommodation should be 50 per cent. greater than that of the lifts in the present building.

60. *To Senator Lynch.*—During my visit to England I was on furlough, and, therefore, was not on business for the Department, but I took advantage of any opportunities that presented themselves to inspect post-offices and become acquainted with postal methods in Great Britain. Generally speaking, I do not think I saw anything that was an improvement on our own system. The plans for the existing General Post Office were approved by the Deputy Postmaster-General ~~and~~ *mail rooms* the heads of the various Departments concerned. From the point of view of postal work, the building has been well designed, and I have no fault to find with it, except that I think the dining room is in the wrong place, but that is a minor matter. The new building, if built on the same plan, with its floors on the same level, should be entirely satisfactory for postal work when we occupy it. I think that in five years' time extra accommodation will be urgently required for parcels post work. There will also be crowding in the Telephone Branch on the clerical side and on the accounts floor. We are hoping, however, that the extra accommodation will then be available for these branches in the new building, ~~and to prevent further trouble I take it that the Government will then consider an extension of the proposed new building up to Little Bourke-street.~~ *by the* It is almost impossible to estimate the rate of expansion in our work. We are performing duties that it was never contemplated would be expected of us a few years ago. Our cash turnover *appreciated* when I was accountant was £5,000,000 a year. It is now nearly £60,000,000, but from the working point of view very little extra staff is required. We are now handling accounts for the Treasury, and Public Works, old-age pensions, and maternity bonuses, so it is difficult to estimate what work we may be called upon to do in the future. The rate of increase has been very marked in recent years. For example, in 1918 we had, at the General Post Office, 1,031 employees, and to-day we have 1,261. Parcel post work involves a lot of handling, but, as I have suggested, some of it could be eliminated if we could devise means by which our trucks could be on the same floor level as the delivery waggons. The latter could then be backed in and be loaded without extra handling of parcels. Possibly the existing difficulty could be met by altering the level of the right-of-way. It was originally ~~intended~~ *proposed* that the stores building should be ~~opposite~~ *near* the wharf. I wanted it close to the shipping and close to the railway. It is not necessary to have it close to the central office, but it is essential that the workshops should be close to the stores. The stores building was erected to insure economy in handling, but property in that neighbourhood has since become very valuable. The place was built for a store, and could not now be very well used for clerical work. I will not advocate a change now.

61. *To Mr. Mackay.*—The privileges of the Postal Institute are not confined to officials of that Department. Commonwealth and State public servants are eligible for membership. No rent is paid for the use

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of the space set aside in the General Post Office for the Institute. The Government also provide a subsidy. I am fairly well acquainted with its activities, and I should say that tuition given in the classes is cheaper than can be obtained elsewhere. Whenever possible, we render assistance to firms that require us to handle a large quantity of postal matter. In the case of newspapers, we supply stamped wrappers in advance, and sort the addresses to suit our mail work. It has not been necessary, so far, to do this in connexion with parcel post work, but it is done in Sydney to expedite the work of the Mail Branch. I do not think that business firms take advantage of our parcel post system in the belief that it is cheaper than to send parcels by rail, but no doubt they realize that it is an advantage to send parcels by mail, as they are delivered, whereas when sent by rail the addressee has to call for them, or pay delivery charges.

to the town or village the person resides in from the Railway Station

in 1870

62. To Mr. Cook.—Members of the Institute pay nothing apart from the subscription fee for the privilege of membership; but, of course, those who use the billiard tables must pay for their games. The fees go towards the payment of instructors. We also have correspondence classes for the benefit of employees throughout the Commonwealth. Some men are educated by correspondence in Queensland, Western Australia, and South Australia. I think we have plenty of land alongside the General Post Office for building extensions to meet our requirements for at least thirty years, and that it will not be necessary or advisable to obtain a site elsewhere to accommodate our mechanics. I will remember our difficulties at the old General Post Office in Elizabeth-street. When it was built thirty-five years ago. It was too small when we got into it, and it was never used as designed. To do our mail work we were obliged to occupy space that had been intended for the general public, and we had to struggle on there for about thirty-five years. No good purpose would be served by calling for a report from experts as to the possibility of ~~providing~~ <sup>providing</sup> ~~an~~ <sup>additional</sup> ~~extension~~ <sup>workshop space</sup> at the General Post Office, as the present arrangements are satisfactory, only I think a mistake was made in placing the ~~Accounts Branch~~ <sup>the branches</sup> on the fourth instead of the second floor. I do not think there is sufficient accommodation in the basement for our fleet of motor cars. I would favour garaging the cars closer to the General Post Office, but I am afraid that would be too costly an undertaking. It is true that if we had the cars garaged on the premises there would probably be closer supervision. That would be a great advantage.

the staff

providing workshop space

the branches

and the draft-hut placed on fourth floor

63. To the Chairman.—The Controller of Stores is in charge of the motor-drivers, and is responsible for the proper maintenance of the cars. He could supply the Committee with information as to the number of employees at the garage. Apart from the recommendation of the Economics Commission, I know nothing of any suggestion that certain of the activities at Spencer-street are likely to be re-transferred to the Elizabeth-street office. Personally, I would not recommend that course, but I know that a large number of officers would disagree with me. My own view is that the work of the post-office should be developed on the present site. I am aware that ~~some~~ <sup>it</sup> ~~might~~ <sup>has been</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>thought</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> ~~necessary~~ <sup>necessary</sup> ~~some~~ <sup>some</sup> ~~day~~ <sup>day</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~give~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~consideration~~ <sup>give</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~establishment~~ <sup>establishment</sup> of postal centres in various parts of the metropolitan area. This is the policy of the Postal authorities in London, but from what I have been able to learn, it does not make for economy in management. I would be in favour of the installation of pneumatic tubes to insure quick transport of telegrams and mail matter to the General Post Office. When the proposal to erect the existing General Post Office was being discussed, the original idea was to ~~utilize it as a mail~~ <sup>provide</sup>.

it has been thought to give consideration to the establishment of



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<sup>possibly</sup> room and that there should be connexion with the General Post Office in Elizabeth-street by pneumatic carriers in 12-in. tubes. I would be surprised to know that one of the objections to that course was that it would take four minutes to deliver a carrier from the Elizabeth-street office to the General Post Office in Spencer-street. I did not think it would take so long as that. It is very important, of course, that there should be no delay in the transmission of telegrams and so, all over the world, telegraph offices are now established in the Exchanges or Bourses. We have a post and telegraph office at the Melbourne Stock Exchange. We have not established one at the Wool Exchange for the reason, presumably, that the business ~~there is not so urgent~~. Our revenue from telegrams sent from the Stock Exchange office in Melbourne amounts to nearly £4,000 a year. Concerning the ventilation of the existing building and its effects upon the health of the employees, I can only say that in the summer time the place gets tremendously hot, and attempts have been made to overcome the difficulty. There are plenty of openings in the windows for ventilation, but much of the trouble is due to the temperament of the officers themselves. Some will want windows open and some will demand that they be kept closed. There was in my time always a certain amount of quarrelling in the Accounts Branch over this matter. Up to the present nobody has been able to devise a ventilation system that will suit everybody.

*The witness withdrew.*

*The Committee adjourned.*

*does not justify such  
action*

TUESDAY, 31st JULY, 1923.

Present:

|                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Mr. GREGORY, Chairman; |              |
| Senator Lynch,         | Mr. Mackay,  |
| Senator Reid,          | Mr. Mathews, |
| Mr. Blakeley,          | Mr. Jackson. |
| Mr. Cook,              |              |

Ernest Pringle Ramsay, Superintendent of Mails, General Post Office, Melbourne, sworn and examined.

*64. To the Chairman.*—I have been Superintendent of Mails in Melbourne for eight years. Prior to that I held a similar position in Sydney, and I was also District Postal Inspector in New South Wales for about seven years prior to my appointment as Superintendent of Mails. I have had an interrupted experience of mail work for a number of years. I have never been abroad to investigate the methods adopted in handling mails in other countries. A few days ago, in company with an officer of the Commonwealth Works Department, I inspected the plans of the proposed new building in Spencer-street, but prior to that I had not been consulted in any way concerning the new structure. I understand the present proposal is, that when the work of our Department becomes congested, a portion of the proposed new building is to be utilized for ~~small room work~~ *small room work*. The Deputy Postmaster-General, our chief officer, was possibly consulted in connexion with the plan, but I was never approached in connexion with the matter. The present accommodation we have is satisfactory and the conditions for handling mail matter are very good. The number of parcels handled in 1917-18 was 810,030, whilst the number handled in 1922-23 was 2,563,035, showing an increase of over 180 per cent. since our removal to the present building in June, 1917. The Customs revenue collected on dutiable matter in 1917-18 was £78,437, and in 1922-23, £107,432. These figures give an indication of the constant and rapid growth of the parcels section work. The Post Office is regarded as a carrier within the meaning of the Customs Act, and parcels containing dutiable goods cannot be delivered until they have been examined and the duty assessed. There are eleven Customs officers engaged at the General Post Office. For our present requirements the space in the present building is adequate and the arrangements satisfactory. Mail matter is brought into the building on to a floor level with the road. Parcels are the heaviest postal articles handled and therefore it is necessary, if they are to be handled economically, for them to be deposited on the ground floor to obviate the necessity of lifting. In the parcels section a small ramp is provided which brings the floor on to the same level as the bottom of a vehicle. It would be an advantage to have the receiving floor in the parcels section, say 3 feet 6 inches above the level of the road, but with the use of the ramp, which is cart high, very little difficulty is experienced. Outward mail matter, however, has to be lifted into a vehicle. The risk of floods is very small, although four or five years ago the water entered the building and covered the floor to a depth of 6 or 7 inches. That was due to a defect in the drain, which has since been rectified by the Works Department, which has also constructed small flood gates 18 inches or 2 feet high to prevent the water entering the building. The risk of damage occurring in this way has been largely obviated, and there would have to be an exceptional downpour and a blockage in the drainage system before the building would become flooded. When the last flood occurred the trouble was soon discovered, and the parcels on the floor were immediately removed. I do not think there were more than two parcels damaged and those that were affected were only slightly injured. There is no

*The position of Assistant Superintendent of Mails*

serious danger of the building being flooded again as the carrying away drain has been enlarged and the railway drain, which was largely responsible, as it was choked, has received attention. The floor of the Parcels Post Office is about 2 feet lower than the street. In considering the requirements in the new building I do not think it necessary to pay too much attention to the necessity of having the floor cart high because it would affect the height of the other floors in the building. ~~the necessity of having the floor cart high, because it is to the ground floor.~~ At present the Inward Parcels slide down the ramp from the vehicle without any difficulty, ~~the heavy mail going out~~ to be wheeled ~~out to the lorry.~~ A mail bag must not exceed 80 lbs. in weight. If proper precaution is taken to prevent flooding—and the engineers assure me that a recurrence of flooding is very unlikely—the proposed height of the floor should be satisfactory. I believe our present building will meet our requirements for the next five years. The work of the Parcels Branch is likely to develop to a large extent, as this Branch has been greatly in demand since the outbreak of war. I have been informed by importers that they can obtain quicker delivery of small consignments through the parcels post than when despatched by any other means. Their packages are also more secure, because it is only in exceptional instances that pillaging occurs. I have prepared the following statement which sets out my views on the proposal under discussion:—

*and make them unsuitable for use as an adjunct to the present building*

*Section Section*

- (1) An examination of the plans for the proposed new building discloses that some modification is essential to permit of its being subsequently put to advantageous use for mail purposes.
- (2) This matter has been discussed with the Director-General of Works, Colonel Owen, who has assured me that arrangements, as indicated by me as necessary for mail purposes, can be provided.
- (3) Taking the plan for the completion of the building as a whole on the 157 feet frontage to Spencer-street, it is observed that the main entrance is to be in the centre of the new frontage, and the lifts, &c. are practically in the centre of the building. The approaches to the staircases, and lifts and the light area at the back practically divide the whole of the floor space into two rooms.
- (4) The main factor to be considered in providing Mail Branch accommodation is to obtain the greatest possible amount of uninterrupted space on the one floor.
- (5) The most pronounced expansion in Postal business in Melbourne in future will, in my opinion, occur in the Parcel Section and the Inland Section, from which latter place all mails for within Victoria are despatched and mails from all places are received and dealt with.
- (6) The Parcel Section at present occupies nearly the whole area of the basement, the total working space of which is approximately 16,000 superficial feet. The storage of parcels received from overseas which are held for examination by Customs officers and the delivery of such parcels to the public is provided for on the ground floor.
- (7) After the available accommodation of the present building has been fully absorbed, means for further expansion will require to be provided in another building, as the cart dock and roadway in the present building prevents any further expansion in a westerly direction.
- (8) Other activities, such as Bulk Postage Section and Transport Section, will also require additional accommodation on the basement floor as business increases, as these two latter classes of work must be retained in their present relative position to the Inland Section on the floor above.
- (9) The work of the Parcel Section is divided into two main sections—(a) Receipt and Customs examination of parcels from overseas and collection of duty and postal charges thereon. Printed matter received from overseas, which is also dutiable, and similar articles contained in registered mails, are also handled here. (This matter is constantly increasing, as is indicated by the Customs Revenue collected amounting to in 1917-18 to £73,437 and increasing in 1922-23 to £197,432). (b) Receipt of parcels within the Commonwealth and their despatch together with other articles locally posted to offices within and outside the Commonwealth. (Parcels handled in this way in 1917-18 amounted to 910,030 parcels, while the number in 1922-23 totalled 2,503,035—an increase of over 180 per cent. since the removal to the present building in June, 1917).

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(10) To permit of the expansion of the Inland Section on the same floor, it will be necessary to remove the work of handling inward overseas parcels from the counter on the ground floor to the area on the basement floor, and certain of the activities at present conducted in the basement dealt with elsewhere. It is for such activities that space would require to be allocated in the new building.

(11) I am of the opinion that this work could be best carried out on the ground floor of the proposed new building, as thereby it should be possible to provide for parcels being transferred to the posting counter from the carts in the street with as little use of the staircases as possible, and the parcels delivered in bulk in vehicles could be delivered from the east entrance from Little Bourke-street to the rear of the building.

(12) Keeping in view the ultimate use of the ground floor for parcel business, it would, I consider, be advisable to so construct the new building so as to permit of an uninterrupted space being made available without any obstruction by way of entrance halls, or staircases in the centre of the room.

(13) Increased business must, of necessity, more fully tax the capacity of the yard space in the present building, and, therefore, additional space will require to be provided from the area available in the new building. This yard space is, even under present conditions, greatly congested, and it is at times necessary to have a vehicle which is only partially loaded with mails temporarily removed in order to permit other vehicles to pass, and the former vehicle then has to be returned to its original position to complete its loading. This congestion is greatly added to by the location of the Bulk Postage Office—which, however, is in its proper relative position—as numbers of waggons and motor lorries are drawn up there in the course of the day conveying business catalogues, weekly and monthly papers, &c., which are delivered to the Bulk Postage Office in large quantities.

(14) Improved yard space could best be provided by utilizing the area at present occupied by the Canvas Workers and "Mails in transit" room and erecting a loading platform on the eastern side of the Bulk Postage Office so as to keep the main thoroughfare clear for postal vehicles employed in conveying mails to the General Post Office or in being loaded up for outward despatch from the General Post Office.

(15) The proposed new building could not, however, be economically used for mail purposes unless connection with the present yard is made by means of a roadway to the rear of the new building in order to permit easy access of vehicles to and from the new and old buildings and thus permitting a free interchange of vehicles, &c., between the two places.

(16) If it be decided to allocate the ground floor of the new building to meet the subsequent expansion of the Parcel Section as indicated by me, I consider that the floor immediately above should also be reserved for the further extension of the Parcel Section in years to come, as the present indications of this Branch of the Department show that its expansion will be both continuous and rapid.

(17) The needs of the members of the public who post single or three or four parcels at a time—as distinct from the parcels received in large quantities from mail order departments of business firms—will best be met by making provision in the north-west corner of the building for the main entrance to the Parcel Counter which will be provided for the receipt of such parcels. This counter should be as near as possible to the street entrance, provision to be made in the yard for vehicles to deliver large quantities of parcels at the rear of the building.

(18) Portion of the first floor in the new building may also be eventually required by the expansion of business in the Inland Section, although the needs of the future can be met for some years by means of the space which would be made available by the removal of the Customs examining business from the ground floor.

(19) To profitably utilize the space on the first floor for Inland work, it would be necessary to build a bridge from the present building to the new building so as to permit of easy access of trucks of mails being conveyed from one building to the other.

(20) I estimate that the existing provision on the first floor of the present building, which includes the Inter-State, British and Foreign Section, Registration Section, and City Section and Post Letter Office, to be sufficient for 19 years. But, nevertheless, it is advisable that the corresponding floor of the new building be designed in such a manner as to permit of its utilization for mail work, as the City and Registration Sections, which are at present located at the western and eastern extremities respectively of this floor, will expand and necessitate at least portion of the Inter-State, British and Foreign work being performed in portion of the new building. If a new building were to be erected at once to meet with our requirements, alterations such as those I have mentioned should be made. We would require a con-

necting roadway from the present cart yard to enable us to gain ready access to our existing building.

65. To Senator Reid.—The basement of the present building will be on the same level as the ground floor of the new building, the ground floor of the present building will be on the same level as the first floor in the new building, and the first floor in the ~~new~~ building on the same level as the second floor in the proposed building. Our largest motor lorry is 21 ft. 7 in. in length, and it can be ~~driven~~ in the road we now use; but we would require a roadway at least 20 feet in width to gain ready access to the proposed building. In the present structure we deal with letters, newspapers and packets, but in the new building, parcels, which comprise a different class of mail matter, ~~will~~ be handled. In loading up for the Great Southern, North-Eastern, ~~and~~ Adelaide Express ~~trains~~, our carts obtain the mail matter, and then go to the Parcels Office to obtain their quota of parcels. If parcels were being despatched from the new building, the vehicles, after loading up with mail matter, would have to go to Spencer-street, and proceed in a northerly direction to Little Bourke-street, and then turn down Little Bourke-street, and eventually out again into the main street. If there were a direct connexion between the present and the proposed building the mails and parcels matter could be picked up and taken out into the main street without the necessity of turning.

present

ordinary  
ordinary

66. To the Chairman.—I am assuming that a building will be constructed over the whole area, and that the ~~Parcels Branch~~ will be situated ~~in the building~~ and the Engineering Branches accommodated on the higher floors, where they will be out of the way. To enable our work to be expeditiously carried on, there should be a roadway between the present building and the light ~~shown~~ shown on the plan of the proposed building. That would enable our conveyances, when loaded with mail matter, to pass through the Parcels Branch without going into the main street.

ordinary

67. To Senator Reid.—That would mean minimizing the space on the ground floor only. Our longest lorry, which is 21 ft. 7 in. long, has a width of about 6 ft. 6 in. We would require a road 20 feet wide, because there is a rather sharp turn to be negotiated.

68. To Mr. Blakeley.—By a system of conveyors all the mail matter to be despatched could, I suppose, be brought to a point in Little Bourke-street where it could be loaded into vehicles, but a fair amount of headroom would be required for conveyors. Our ordinary mail-bags are 4 feet in length, although some are larger. There would, however, have to be a series of conveyors. We despatch mails simultaneously on a number of lines, and sufficient room would have to be provided in which to allow endless belts to operate. I understand that conveyors were tried in Chicago, and that after having been given a fair trial they have, on the advice of mail experts, been largely discarded. The amount of mail matter handled in any capital city in the Commonwealth cannot be compared with that handled in large American cities.

of the parcels bags

69. To the Chairman.—The ideal system, of course, would be to despatch the mails from the General Post Office to the Spencer-street station by means of a tunnel, but consideration of such a proposal has been held over pending the re-construction of the Spencer-street station. If such a means were provided, the mails could be carried by electric trucks direct from the General Post Office to the railway station, where they could be carried by lifts on to the despatching platforms and then despatched. Conveyors would not necessarily be needed to carry the mail matter to one despatching

Railway

point in the General Post Office, because that work could be done by lifts. When the new General Post Office was erected, a big plant was purchased in America for handling mail matter, but it has never been used. It is unsuitable for our work in many respects, and when in operation ~~was~~ so noisy that it ~~was~~ difficult to hear one speak.

*would be*

70. To Senator Reid.—The maximum height of a load on a big lorry would not be more than 10 feet, and in the proposed new building the same headroom as exists in Bourke-street ~~could~~ be provided. At present our vehicles have to pass under girders, and the same height ~~could~~ be preserved in the new building. I think the girders are 13 feet from the ground, and if we allow the depth of ~~the~~ inches for the girder, there would still be ~~12 inches~~ remaining, which would allow sufficient space overhead. The Mail Branch must be located at the General Post Office, but there does not appear to be any strong reason why the mechanics should be accommodated there. I understand the proposal is to accommodate mechanics in a portion of the building which will later be used by the Mail Branch. My *Branch Department* is not likely to require all the space that will be available. If the present plans are adhered to, it will be impossible to economically use the proposed building as an adjunct to the present building. We would be able to despatch parcels from the new building, and remove our Customs Examining Section from the main floor of the present building to the space now occupied in the basement by the Parcel Branch, which ~~could~~ be accommodated in the new structure. Similar provision for detective observation galleries as exists in the present building would have to be provided in the new building.

71. To Mr. Mathews.—Mr. Woodrow, who is the Chief Inspector, made investigations concerning the flooding of the building four or five years ago. The Director-General of Works deals with all engineering matters associated with buildings which we occupy. When the flooding of the buildings was reported, the Director of Works came to the Post Office at 1 o'clock in the morning. I think Mr. Hill was responsible for the carrying capacity of the drain being increased, and since that has been done no flood has occurred.

*(Works Engineer)*

72. To Mr. Blakeley.—I know that what has been termed an elaborate and costly plant was purchased for handling the mails in our Department, and that it is now in the sub-basement of the present building. I could not say when it was purchased, although I understand it consists of conveyors, &c. The question of whether it could be employed in the proposed building is one which will have to be dealt with by the Chief Inspector. I do not, however, think it could be used to advantage, because it is too large. We deal with mails on the first floor, the ground floor, and the basement. The mails handled on the first and ground floors are conveyed by vertical chutes to the carl dock. In the chutes baffles are placed 2 ft. 6 in. apart, and the bags roll backwards and forwards and the contents are not damaged in any way. They land on the loading platform, which is level with the floor of the vehicle. Mail matter from the basement is lifted to the level of the vehicles. Mails are discharged by gravitation into the sub-basement by means of a chute. Inward parcels mails are discharged on to a ramp which inclines to the floor.

73. To Senator Lynch.—We are utilizing most of the basement and a portion of the ground floor in the present building for our parcel delivery work. In five years' time we expect to ~~utilize~~ all the space at present available. At the expiration of that period, we will have

*require more than*

*space*

to take most of our <sup>parcels</sup> despatch work from the basement and provide room elsewhere. Our Customs Examining Section will have to be removed from the ground floor to the basement, where it could be dealt with very effectively. I do not think that we are likely to need any additional space within the next five years, but at the expiration of that period we would be up to the absolute limit of our accommodation. The conditions at present are very favorable, as the light and ventilation are good; the building is also very satisfactorily heated, and is practically ideal for mail purposes. I could not say the proportion of large and small parcels handled. The ~~Parcel~~ rate has not been altered during the period in which the business has increased to such an extent. The increase in the volume handled was due in the first place to the scarcity of space on overseas steamers, which was keenly in demand during the war period. Space was always made available for mail matter, when apparently it would not have been obtainable for ordinary goods. I do not think the business will increase to such an extent that the accommodation available will be inadequate during the next five years. The parcel rates from the country to the city are the same as those from the city to the country.

74. *To Senator Reid.*—I could not say whether the increase in the business handled for firms has been greater than in the case of that handled for private individuals. Some Melbourne firms take away van-loads of parcels received from overseas. It suits them to pay the parcel rate in order to obtain their packages more speedily. The losses from parcels despatched through the Post Office are infinitesimal, and I have been informed that this point is not overlooked by importers.

75. *To Senator Lynch.*—I understand that our Chief Accountant went into the figures and said that the rates showed a good profit. It would be very difficult to keep separate accounts of the particular classes of mail ~~matter~~, and calculate the amount of profit on each. I

am in favour of a roadway being provided through the centre of the proposed building for the more convenient handling of the mails. For convenient work in both buildings uninterrupted space is required. The proposal is to make a main entrance in the centre of the building facing Spencer-street, and provision has been made for stairways and lifts which will divide the whole structure. Such a building would be useless for <sup>other</sup> ~~other~~ purposes. A roadway such as I suggest would not in any way interfere with the provision of the necessary open spaces. It would reduce the floor space to a certain extent, but I understand that sufficient would be available for our purposes. The atmosphere in the lower portion of the present building is good, and the health of the men is not interfered with in the least. If an underground tunnel were constructed to the Spencer-street Railway Station, it would, to a large extent, dispense with the necessity of the roads required for vehicular traffic. The present General Post Office was constructed on its present site in the belief that a subway would be constructed. Even if that were done, there would still have to be a clearing house. We have a number of motor vehicles employed in carrying the mail matter from the letter receivers in the city and suburbs.

*Witness withdrew.  
Committee adjourned.*

(Taken at Melbourne.)  
 WEDNESDAY, 1ST AUGUST, 1923.

Present:

|                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Mr. GREGORY, Chairman; |              |
| Senator Lynch          | Mr. Jackson, |
| Senator Reid,          | Mr. Mackay,  |
| Mr. Blakeley,          | Mr. Mathews. |
| Mr. Cook,              |              |

Andrew Little, Controller of Stores, General Post Office, Melbourne, sworn and examined.

76. To the Chairman.—The whole of the postal stores are not concentrated at Little Bourke-street Melbourne. The cable yard is situated in Sturt-street and the pole yard in Power-street. The site in Little Bourke-street is quite satisfactory for a central store. A suggestion has been made that the stores should be located near the wharf and railways, and if such a site could be secured provided sufficient accommodation was available to carry the central stores, the cable yard, the pole yard and the workshops it would be a great advantage, but nothing is likely to arise in the near future to necessitate my asking for a different site. There will be no need to secure further storage accommodation for at least the next ten years. I have inspected the plans for the new building. I do not think it is necessary for me to ask that a portion of the area proposed to be utilized by the new building should be reserved for future enlargement of the stores. The accommodation already provided is not fully taxed. There will be sufficient area not utilized for buildings to meet any future storage requirements. It is wise to have the workshops close to the stores, because there is always a very heavy interchange of articles between the two departments. When goods arrive from overseas, they have first to be inspected and tested and the less handling they have, especially in the case of instruments, the better. By having the workshops and stores adjacent, we save not only time, but also losses through breakages. Parts sent down from country districts for repair pass to the workshops, and are then returned to stores, and re-issued. It tends to economy to have the engineering branch alongside the stores. I would not advocate that openings should be provided between the workshops and the stores at every floor level. If they were provided at every floor level, they might be available for casual use, but would mostly be locked. One opening is sufficient, and enables proper safeguards to be taken. The plans provide for one opening only. I understand that the floor levels of the new building will not correspond with the floor levels of the stores building. I have also heard that, in five years' time, the workshops will probably be required to go to a higher floor in the new building. My office accommodation is on the ~~second~~ <sup>second</sup> floor, which is on the same level as the ~~second~~ <sup>second</sup> floor of the ~~General Post Office~~ <sup>General Post Office</sup>. A bridge crosses from the main building to mine. I should say that, at present, there is about 900 super. feet occupied by the stores bookkeeping staff. If the workshops bookkeeping staff and the luncheon room were removed ~~from~~ <sup>from</sup> the top floor of the ~~store~~ <sup>store</sup> and the whole of that space made available for my staff, I should have 2,200 super. feet. That arrangement would suit very well, provided there was a passenger lift which would enable the public to get to my office. The Tender Board meets in the room of the State Engineer, who is the Chairman of the Board. On special occasions, it meets in the board room, on the second floor. In conjunction with the accountant, I have charge of the motor transport for the Postal Department. There are 35 men employed in the motor car workshops, and about 92 in the transport section. We have 41 motor vehicles, 6 auto-cars,

Second floor of  
 the GPO office of  
 new building

6



and four motor cycles. Of the 25 mechanics, 17 are motor mechanics. The whole 35 are mechanics, but they are not all absolutely employed on the care of the motor cars. The cars do not concentrate at the General Post Office before starting on their work. The seventeen vehicles which are employed on the night clearance leave straight from the garage. At one time a clearer accompanied each car, but the driver now does the clearing, and the car departs from the garage, and does not reach the General Post Office until it is loaded up. The heavy vehicles that do the carting do not go to the General Post Office unless they have to pick up a load there. Some cars proceed to the General Post Office daily to take away material. The shortest trip from the garage to the General Post Office is about 1½ miles. When the engineering mechanics are installed in the new building the old skin store towards Little Bourke-street will be vacated. I doubt if there will be sufficient accommodation in the basement of the new building to hold all the cars in use by the Department. There would be about 20,000 square feet in all without allowing for the large number of pillars that would be required. We have already made arrangements at Sturt-street for about 20,000 feet of space to hold the vehicles we already have. There is a decided objection to having petrol-driven vehicles stored in a basement. The fumes which arise from petrol are inflammable and dangerous. The old system of running the cars over pits so that they could be adjusted from underneath has been discontinued, and they are now hoisted to allow the mechanics to work underneath them. It was found that the pits were harboring fumes, and there was always the risk of fire. If we had forty cars stored in the basement the risk would be too great. If a fire occurred, it would be almost impossible to get any of the cars out. You might save the building, because Government buildings are supposed to be made fire-proof. It would be a mistake to have the motor cars in the basement of the proposed new building. It is better to have the mechanics working at the garage where the cars are ~~located~~. Undoubtedly it would be an advantage to have the cars, workshops, and stores concentrated if a suitable site were available. The new building will not interfere with the lighting of the stores.

77. *To Senator Reid.*—There is only one entrance to the stores, and that is from Little Bourke-street. If the design of the basement in the proposed new building were altered to allow sufficient space in the right-of-way between the stores and the new building for vehicles to turn, the accommodation so provided would not be of much use to the Stores Branch. The possibility of the postal section not having that area blocked up with carts would be exceedingly remote. My opportunity to make use of it would not be worth considering. I should be equally well off if I had access to the right-of-way running on the east side of the stores between Bourke-street and Little Bourke-street.

78. *To Mr. Mathews.*—One opening between the stores and proposed new building will be quite acceptable to me. If I want to deliver my goods right into the workshops, I shall take them up in the lift to my fourth floor, and deliver them through the opening across the right-of-way on to the third floor of the new building, from which spot they can be delivered to the floor occupied by the workshops. If the workshops go to a higher level, in about five years the opening provided between the fourth floor of the stores and the third floor of the workshops will be practically in the centre of them. The existing workshops building is only two stories high, and entrance to the stores is

*Howard*

secured by a bridge across the right-of-way on to my first floor. I shall probably have to re-arrange my present lay-out when the new building is erected. The stores staff have no dining-room provision. There are 30 men employed in the stores, but they have only half-an-hour for lunch. If the lunch period is extended to one hour, the men will have sufficient time to have their lunch at the top of the General Post Office. There would be no need to provide special dining-room accommodation for them.

79. *To the Chairman.*—The ventilation in the stores is excellent. Mine is the best office I have worked in from a ventilation point of view. We have radiators along the wall of each room. There is no gas in the stores. Fire risks have been reduced to a minimum.

80. *To Senator Lynch.*—I was not consulted about the lay-out of the proposed building, but from my inspection of the plans, it seems to me that it will meet all requirements in relation to the present stores building. The accommodation in the stores is not absolutely filled by the Department. In fact, we are at present storing paper for the Government Printer. We could always put a little more in, although the accommodation is fairly well taken up. Before the war it was fully taxed, but during the war we were buying stores in very limited quantities, and we gradually thinned down our own stock to such an extent that we were able to take in and store paper for the Government Printer. We have continued storing this paper; but within the last two years the postal stocks have begun to grow again so that, as I say, at present the storage accommodation is fairly well taken up. However, I am sure there will be ample accommodation for a very considerable extension of postal business in Victoria, and I should certainly say that there is no likelihood of additional accommodation being required within the next ten or fifteen years. The original intention was to duplicate the building on the block alongside if the stores business grew to such an extent as to warrant the provision of further accommodation. I cannot see the desirability of recommending that that provision be made at the present time. A portion of the area on which the future accommodation for the stores was intended to be provided is to be occupied by the new workshops building, but there will be ample space available for a big increase in the storage accommodation. I speak now of the land running along Little Bourke-street towards Spencer-street.

81. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The stores building was built for store purposes.

82. *To Senator Reid.*—The stores building has a 10-foot clearance between each floor. As the clearance between the floors in the adjoining buildings is greater it is quite possible that the only opportunity for providing an opening between the new workshops and the stores is at the fourth floor. The paper we are storing for the Government Printer occupies one floor. The ground floor of the old skin store, when vacated by the workshops, would possibly provide very fair accommodation for the paper we are storing for the Government Printer. I would not require any accommodation in the skin store for postal stores, but as the King's Warehouse is always wanting more room the paper which the Government Printer has stored in that warehouse could also be removed to the skin store.

83. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The Postal Department is paid £500 a year for storing the paper for the Government Printer.

*The witness withdrew.  
The Committee adjourned.*

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB. 40

(Taken at Melbourne.)

THURSDAY, 2ND AUGUST, 1923.

Present:

|                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Mr. GREGORY, Chairman; |              |
| Senator Lynch          | Mr. Jackson  |
| Mr. Blakeley           | Mr. Mackay   |
| Mr. Cook               | Mr. Mathews. |

John Smith Murdoch, Chief Architect, Department of Works and Railways, sworn and examined.

84. *To the Chairman.*—I am aware that the Committee are dealing with a proposal to erect additional quarters adjoining the present General Post Office building in Spencer-street. The plans of the proposed extension were prepared under my guidance, and were approved of by the Postal Department. It is usual in the preparation of plans for collaboration to take place between the Departments concerned. In some cases this is done by correspondence, and in other cases by conversation. In this particular case I conversed with, principally, ~~the officers of the Department, the Postal Engineering officers and the Works Branch.~~ *The suggestions were confined to these Departments, because the first extension of these premises is really for the accommodation of the Engineers' Branch. Whether the post-office officials consulted any of their branches likely to be affected, I am not sure. At any rate, the plans were returned from and approved of by the Costmaster-General's Department. Although the design provides for the erection of a building for the use of the engineers of the Postal Department, it still continues the ~~purpose~~ of the adjoining building. If the proposed building were to be utilized by the engineers alone, the height of 18 ft. 9 in. of two floors would certainly not be provided. The ideal ~~building~~ for engineering workshops or mechanics' workshops would be an ordinary factory building of one or two floors, and, probably, situated on a site which need not be so central as is that between the present General Post Office and Little Bourke-street. That site was acquired and held by the Government, and wisely so, for the future expansion of post-office activities in Melbourne. I personally thought that any building to be erected on that site would comprise an extension of the stores building, but when the problem, with which the Committee are now dealing, came up for consideration, it was apparent to the postal authorities, and to ourselves, that any extension on that site should follow the ~~outline~~ *levels* of the present post-office building. It was agreed that the floor levels of the post-office building should be continued in the proposed building, because the expansion of the mail work of the General Post Office would make that branch the biggest claimant in the future for space in any building erected on that site. At present the first work is to provide accommodation for the mechanics. It is contended that their workshops, at present located on that site, shall stay there and be contiguous to the stores building. It seemed that the best way to meet the problem was to erect the first section of the extended building on that site, following the ~~outline~~ *levels* of the main post-office, and to devote it for the temporary use of the workshops. That accommodation to be used by the workshops will eventually be used by other branches of the Post Office, particularly the mail branch. It will take quite eighteen months to erect the proposed building. I am aware that within five years the Parcels Post Branch, owing to the continual increase in their business, will need at least one floor of the proposed building. I discovered that fact this week. The figures produced by the manager of the parcels post were astounding. The increase in six years was 180 per cent., and if that continues the workshops can only expect to occupy, at any rate, the bottom floor of the proposed building for a comparatively short period, probably five years. It will be*

*levels*

*other*

*levels*

*levels*

North and South on the  
basement floor level of.

essential for the Parcels Post Branch to have a sub-way running ~~past and south~~ between the proposed building ~~and the present building~~, in order to join the two vehicular yards. It has always been known that the two yards would have to be joined up in the future. This connexion will have to go through the basement floor of the new building. The Superintendent of Mails states that if that branch of the Post Office is to be adequately worked, even at the present moment, he should have that through communication. Yesterday I consulted the Superintendent of Mails, the officer in charge of the parcels mails, and an officer representing the mechanics. I was very pleased to ascertain from the Engineers' Branch that, on that particular floor, there would be no great difficulty in sparing the room which this connecting passage would occupy. It is the one place in the whole building that could be conveniently spared. The Superintendent of Mails was delighted with this proposal, and said that if he obtained this means of communication he would be quite satisfied. I think there would be no difficulty in doing this. I have brought with me ~~this~~ <sup>a</sup> rough plan showing this communication. ~~Taking the~~ right-of-way between the present building and the proposed building, ~~which~~ is made 33 feet wide, it will be the same width as are Little Collins and Little Bourke streets.

In this

85. To Mr. Mathews.—I think a width of 33 feet is essential.

86. To the Chairman.—This will mean the provision of a subway. It will be above the sub-basement floor, running through the basement floor, that is, the second floor from the bottom. There will be head room of the full height of the floor, 2 feet off 13 feet. There is plenty of room. If too low, we could construct it of flat slabs of concrete so as to have no beams at all coming down from the ceiling. We are carrying out similar work at the Adelaide Post Office, and it is turning out a very good job. I have made two plans, but with more consideration I might devise additional conveniences. The staircase, the lavatories, and the lifts, are shown exactly as in the present plan. A central lift will have the greatest utility. It will have access from the yard for material and stores coming into and out of the workshops. The new proposal will give facilities to the Parcels Post Branch for vehicular communication from the Bourke-street right-of-way and between the proposed and original post-office buildings. An outlet into Little Bourke-street will be provided by an underway 33 feet wide, with a lift adjoining the walls of the Stores Branch, and a loading ramp adjacent thereto. It is suggested, also, that a lift should be provided at about the centre of the new building for the use of the Engineers' Department, and subsequently for the use of the Mail Branch. It is proposed to utilize the top floor of the new building for the small clerical staff of the Engineering Branch and a luncheon room for workmen. If it were proposed to substitute for that arrangement, the occupation of that floor by the Accountancy Branch of the Stores Department, it might be advisable to have a lift near the entrance of the building for the convenience of the public, and to facilitate the work. But, because an extension to the new building is expected in five years' time, the design provides for lift accommodation in the centre of the building which will be easy of access to every floor for the staff and the public. Taking the future building as a whole, it is very desirable that the lift should be in a central position facing Spencer-street. Until the time comes to build the portion of the building containing the lift and principal staircase, we must expect to put up with a little inconvenience in respect of the public gaining access to the upper rooms of the wing which it is now intended to build. I do not think it would be a serious makeshift. If a central lift were placed

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELB. 42

in the existing building it could quite conveniently be used by the public and the staff for access to the upper floors of the proposed building. The present workshop building, on the site under discussion, would have to be shortened by about 7 feet or 8 feet to allow of a passage from ~~the~~ street. ~~In fact, this passage must be provided in order to obtain sufficient light for the workshops.~~ <sup>position shown</sup> It would be a paved passage which the public and staff could traverse. If the lift were placed in the centre of the building it would be required for all time. I propose <sup>if that is considered necessary</sup> that there should be a passage way along the northern side of the building, which will give access to the stores branch, and the accountancy and clerical staffs on the top floor, giving reasonable facilities for access to those branches by the public. The passage would be a temporary ~~eight~~ way 8 feet wide. I have mapped out an alternative plan for connexion between the two vehicular yards. It transposes elsewhere the staircase and latrines which are in association. It is necessary that these should continue in association on account of the saving we hope to attain in cubic space by the use of Messanine lavatories. Every two flights of the stairs, consisting of sixteen stair-risers, will give access to a set of lavatories. If this were not so, the cubic waste would be enormous. It would be ridiculous to have lavatories more than about 8 feet high. By transposing those, exactly as planned, to the northern ~~side of the~~ corresponding corner facing the yard of the new building, it would give a better arrangement. It would give a more natural turn-out for vehicles entering the new vehicle way from the existing vehicle way. The workshops men are in favour of having their entrance to the staircase in a central position. That would be in the yard coming in from Bourke-street, and up the lane between the new building and the skin store. Coming up the lane from Spencer-street, the lift would be in such a position as to enable it to be eventually used for mail purposes; it would be of mail size, and would take <sup>about</sup> 30 ~~20~~ men at a time. By this means, men coming in to and leaving their work could easily be catered for. The mail lifts are about 11 feet by 9 feet, and they are able to handle large quantities of mail. The lavatories could easily be allocated for female use. That is the principle of planning which I prefer to adopt in large buildings, and you can see the advantage of it at the present Post Office. The stairs and lavatories are planned so that we can make the best use of the cubic space. There is no need to have them higher than 8 feet or 9 feet. I recommend the alternative proposal on account of the ample space provided for communication in the subways. There is not quite the amount of loading platform, but Mr. Ramsay prefers the proposal I am now recommending. The mechanics prefer this arrangement, and it seems to meet the views of the different branches. I presume the Committee have received a memorandum from Mr. Ramsay, giving his view of the whole proposal in a very lucid and complete way. It shows very conclusively that it is only a matter of, perhaps, 20 years when the whole of the future building will be occupied for the purposes of the Post Office. It would be very hard to say what particular branches would occupy the building, but the Mail Branch would certainly do so. In view of the rapid increase of business which will take place, it is an obligation on our part to create as much space as possible on the lower floors. I have a plan of the floor above the basement. Yesterday, when considering it, I wondered whether we should not divide its area. It is anticipated that the Parcels Branch will occupy that floor. To obtain more freedom of working and more space it might be a good thing to divide this area into two by placing a floor

Spencer

a little

30

a higher

across 27 feet wide. That is the width of one of the standard bays. It is a problem whether it would not be a good thing to divide this area into two in the manner shown in the sketch.

37. *To Mr. Mathews.*—It certainly would reduce the light to be given to the lower floor. But it must be considered that that new area I speak of is confined to only two floors, that is, the ground and first floors. Above the first floor level, the area would retain its original shape. With two floors across that area, it will not interfere very seriously with the light. If it were continued throughout the six stories of the building it would be a different matter, but as it affects only two stories, I do not think it will make much difference. It will, no doubt, have some effect on the light.

38. *To Senator Lynch.*—There will be ample light for the top floors, but when we come down to the level of the ground floor and the first floor, the light is affected by a bridge 27 feet wide. On the basement floor this bridge would provide protection from the weather for vehicles, because it would cross the vehicular area. Of course, the lighting under the alternative proposal would not be quite so good, but weighing the two suggestions, I am inclined to think that the alternative proposal should be adopted, as for working purposes it opens up the whole building in an excellent way. I am thinking of the future building, and the alternative I have suggested takes that into consideration. If it were adopted it would involve no alteration when the whole scheme is completed. Mr. Ramsay did not mention to me the inconvenience which would be caused by placing the lifts in the centre of the building.

*The witness withdrew.*

*The Committee adjourned.*

TELEPHONE WORKSHOPS, MELBOURNE.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

MONDAY, 6TH AUGUST, 1923.

Present:

|                        |              |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Mr. GREGORY, Chairman; |              |
| Senator Barnes         | Mr. Mackey   |
| Senator Lynch          | Mr. Mathews. |
| Senator Reid           |              |

John Smith Murdoch, Chief Architect, Department of Works and Railways, recalled, and further examined.

89. *To the Chairman.*—After ascertaining from the Mail Branch that they would like to have, from the beginning, a vehicular connexion between the present vehicular area and the vehicular area of the new building, I prepared two alternative schemes. I was informed by the mechanics branch that it would be able to spare the necessary room on the basement floor, which is to be occupied by carpenters. I have shown two methods of providing this passageway, one of which I favour. The Mail Branch officers and the mechanics agreed that one of these proposals would suit them very well indeed. It ~~has been~~ suggested that the staircase, and the lavatories associated with it, should be shifted to the north-east corner instead of being in the south-east corner of the new building.

90. *To Senator Reid.*—~~The right-of-way from Little Bourke street will enter the yard area in the centre of the block.~~

91. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The lane could not go right through, because it is desired to have the lift connected with the stores ~~on the eastern side of the building.~~

92. *To the Chairman.*—Under the plan I propose, the staircase and lavatories would be on the north-east corner, with the lift adjoining. That would be the better plan of the two. The mechanics desire to have entrance from the new yard instead of the old.

93. *To Senator Lynch.*—By having the staircase and lavatories attached there can be a separate lavatory on every second flight of steps. Cubic space is saved by this arrangement. ~~If provision were made for a straight run out into the street it would mean that the lift would have to be moved from its proposed location.~~ *Little Bourke*

94. *To Senator Reid.*—The proposed new building will be built right up against the store. There is a private right-of-way at the back of the store.

95. *To the Chairman.*—There will be a subway between the General Post Office and the Stores Branch, with access to Little Bourke-street.

96. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The width of the subway, where it opens off the present lane between the existing General Post Office building and the proposed new building will be 52 feet; and where it opens into the yard of the proposed new building it will be 33 feet.

97. *To the Chairman.*—There will be only one pillar in that width of 52 feet. I do not think that that will be a disadvantage. ~~The opening will be so wide that it will tend to divide the traffic.~~ The view of the Department is that this entrance should be as wide as possible. The width of the present right-of-way is about 17 feet, but the yard into which the vehicles go is about 46 feet wide. The projection of the loading platform from the store wall has a width of 18 feet.

98. *To Senator Reid.*—~~The way~~ *is to be used* for the loading of mails. The principal use for the lift will be to take mails to the first floor, the floor above

the ground floor, and the ground floor. The loading platform will be useful for the two mail floors above the basement. There is the sub-basement, the basement, the ground floor, and the first floor. Those four floors are given up to mail purposes in the present building. This lift will serve the whole of those floors. The loading platform is not connected with the basement, but the mails that come into and go out from the two floors above will use the lift.

*a working floor*

99. *To the Chairman.*—The basement will be served direct from the carts on the west side of the passage. The whole end of the new building facing the vehicular opening will be available for loading mails.

100. *To Senator Reid.*—The lift will be alongside the right-of-way. I understood that the Committee contemplated recommending that the new lift should be put in the bay next to Spencer-street. As the new building developed for mail purposes it would not be required at that particular place. I suggest that it be located two bays further back, where eventually it will be in the spot where it will be required for mail work, and it will be equally suitable for use by the mechanics going in and coming out. They are satisfied to have it there. The right-of-way alongside the new building will be only a temporary arrangement. Eventually the only entrance to the lift will be from the loading platform.

*n. if that is found*

101. *To the Chairman.*—I suggest that location for the lift, having in view the future permanent working of the whole building. The reinforced concrete wall on the north end of the building will be constructed in such a way that there will be no difficulty in having openings cut when future development is being carried out. The walls will be 8 inches thick. The Melbourne building regulations allow a 6-in. concrete wall between stanchions not more than 20 feet apart. The stanchions in this building will be 27 feet apart, and we are providing for walls 8 inches in thickness.

102. *To Mr. Mathews.*—Only one pillar will be left in the right-of-way. If that were knocked down that portion of the building, of course, would fall. The pillar will be of steel and concrete. I do not think there is any danger of the pillar being knocked down by any vehicle, on account of its strength.

103. *To the Chairman.*—I do not think that much danger is to be apprehended from electrolosis, which is more likely to be found in the damp portions of the city. There is plenty of electricity in the vicinity of this proposed new building, the municipal powerhouse being just across from it. The best type of construction is being adopted, if electrolosis is to be feared. I favour the flat slab concrete construction. In connexion with the Adelaide Post Office, in order to provide for a lower building, I went into the question of adopting that system, with the result that we were able to save 5 or 6 feet in height. I saw the building the other day, and it appears to be a satisfactory job.

104. *To Senator Lynch.*—We did not lower the foundations; we knocked out all the beams.

105. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I do not think the honorable member for Adelaide (Mr. Yates) could have been serious if he said it was a jerry-built building.

106. *To the Chairman.*—The front of the proposed new building is to be of double-pressed brick, in order to match the existing building. It is not extravagant construction by any means. The base course will be of bluestone. It is proposed to have walls and floors of reinforced concrete, with steel stanchions encased in concrete. It is proposed to finish the floors inside with  $3\frac{1}{2}$  in. x  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. jarrah nailed directly on to the concrete floor.



107. *To Senator Reid.*—When the steel is encased in concrete it does not buckle if attacked by fire. As a matter of fact, in all our construction, we are guided by the advice of Mr. Lee, chief officer of the Metropolitan Fire Brigades.

has an air fire resistance is concerned.

108. *To the Chairman.*—In parts other than the front the walls will be of cement, plastered outside and inside. It is proposed to omit the plastering as long as the building is occupied by the mechanics; that can be done when the Mail Branch shifts in. Steel windows are to be provided. When first occupied there will be hardly any joinery. The joinery of the present building has been carried out in Queensland maple, and the little joinery there may be in the new building will probably be done in the same timber. The roof will be of concrete, covered with malthoid, treated in the same way as is the case with the existing building. The staircase will be of concrete. The lifts will be worked electrically; they will be of the goods type, the dimensions being 9 ft. by 7 ft. 6 in. The estimated cost is £66,500, on a cube basis; the quantities have not yet been taken out. The rate per cubic foot is, approximately, 1s. 4d. Having a steel frame leads to greater expense than would be incurred if the building were wholly of reinforced concrete. The wooden floors which we lay down are more expensive than those usually laid down in buildings of this description. The warehouse, of which a photograph appears in the *Argus*, which is estimated to cost 1s. 2d. per cubic foot, probably will have merely concrete floors. I do not think that they would be acceptable to the post-office. I do not think any appreciable damage will be done to the floors while the mechanics are using the building as a workshop. Beyond a few dents caused by falling tools there will not be a great deal of damage. When it is occupied by the Mail Branch the treatment it will receive will be fairly rough, as trucks will be hauled over the floors and big hampers pushed along them. I remember visiting with the Committee a ~~telephone~~ factory in which a new type of floor was laid. I saw that floor the other day, and I believe the owner of the building proposes to have a wooden floor laid. The same conditions will obtain in this proposed new building as he has had to contend against. In his factory the malthoid has been worn through at the places where the men operate the machines. In this building the machines will be placed in certain positions, and the men who operate them will be ~~located~~ at those positions the whole of the time. The Melbourne building regulations would compel us to have wire glass windows on the south side of this building. On the north side we could use clear glass. For the sake of uniformity I favour having wired glass on both sides. It is not an expensive item; at the present time it is controlled by a ring, and the price is about 2s. a foot, less 10 per cent.

interior

109. *To Mr. Mackay.*—The wire glass is safer. In case of fire a pane of glass would not fall out if the window were reinforced with wire. Therefore, air would not get into the building and feed the flames.

110. *To the Chairman.*—I would have no mechanical ventilating plant whatever in this building. I favour the installation of hot-water radiators, worked from the present boilers. To supply hot-water radiators throughout the building would cost £2,750. It would not cost a very great deal to provide for a luncheon room, with locker accommodation for the workmen, on the top of the building, if it were desired to put the Stores Branch clerical staff on the top floor. It is proposed not to fill in the break in the brickwork between the two buildings.

111. *To Senator Reid.*—The Mechanics' Branch has said that it can spare portion of the floor space on the floor proposed to be used for carpenters, in order to provide a vehicular connexion.

112. *To the Chairman.*—To provide seating accommodation and lockers for about 320 people on the top of the building would cost about £3,200, including the erection of a 9-in. wall.

113. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I do not think there is likelihood of danger from flood in the future. We obtained permission to connect ~~with the basement floor~~ <sup>with the ~~passage~~</sup> from the Melbourne City Council power-house to the Yarra, in order to get rid of our drainage. There is no danger of the water being dammed up in flood time. That provision ended our trouble at Spencer-street, and there is no possible chance of flooding now.

114. *To Senator Lynch.*—I had a hand in designing the existing building. I believe there is an indication of a small subsidence at one of the angles. The foundations there are ~~very~~ <sup>unequal</sup> ~~poor~~. The crack in the wall is being watched, though it is not ~~so~~ <sup>so</sup> serious. If I had to draw up plans again I would not depart from those which were adopted. The idea in a big post-office is to have a floor free of obstruction. That can be obtained only with a building of one floor; if there are floors above there must be supports, which lead to obstruction. In the present case the obstructions are about 27 feet apart in two directions. Their presence is a necessity. It would, of course, be a better post-office if they were all removed. In a big city, where land is dear, you cannot get those conditions. It is not possible to have a floor more open than that which is provided. I have not discussed with the postal officials of later years the question whether this building has given them satisfaction. No complaints have been made. The Perth General Post Office was faced under rather different conditions, although subject to the same general lines. In that building the supporting stanchions are 24 feet apart; there it was a question of how many divisions the land ~~would stand~~. It is not anticipated that this <sup>would be convenient for</sup> building will be carried any higher. I think that by the time the operations of the General Post Office exhaust the possibilities of this site in regard to accommodation the building will have become obsolete. I think that this building will meet our requirements for fifty years. The New York General Post Office is only a two-story building, the idea being to have a free floor space. It was built on a site where land was most expensive. Three stories were <sup>I think</sup> provided in the portion used for offices. In fifty years' time the post-office that will supersede this building will probably be a three-story building, the top floor being a sorting room without obstruction. If there is any cretrosis this building will get its share of it.

115. *To the Chairman.*—Being constructed of steel, it will not be affected as greatly as it would if it were constructed of reinforced concrete. Where the sub-soil is dry the electricity is not conducted into a building to the same extent as is the case with wet material.

116. *To Senator Lynch.*—Fretting and wasting is less with brick than with any other material. The bricks used in the construction of the Perth Town Hall are not the same as those which will be used in this building. This is to be a modern double-pressed brick, which can be expected to last an indefinite length of time. The walls it is proposed to put in now will be removed when future connexions are to be made to the present building. They do not enter into the structure at all. In all modern buildings the filling in between the stanchions and the beams is sufficient only to keep the weather out; the pillars take the burden.

117. *To Mr. Mackay.*—The proposed entrance from Spencer-street along the northern wall will be used mostly by employees; a very small proportion of the public will require to use it. *is provided*

118. *To the Chairman.*—It would be quite convenient for use by the Accounts officers.

119. *To Mr. Mackay.*—It will be only a temporary right-of-way; when the building is extended it will be blocked up. The next addition that will be carried out to this proposed new building will include the central entrance from Spencer-street, with its lifts and permanent staircase. The lighting will begin at a point beyond the second bay going from Spencer-street. The light coming in from Spencer-street will meet that coming in from the area, so there is no necessity to have windows in the first two bays. Judging by the way parcels mails are growing it seems likely that the General Post Office will require portion of the new building inside five years, and the whole of it in ten years. The best plan to adopt is to build first that portion of the new building which is next to the existing building, and move outwards from the existing buildings. When the time comes to dislodge the mechanics from the new building the next action will be to remove the present two-story old building at the corner of Little Bourke and Spencer streets, and continue the new building along Spencer-street as far as Little Bourke-street. That probably will be found the best extension. Of course, in that new building as many mechanics as possible would be placed, making more room for the Mails Branch. One really cannot say what the General Post Office will require in five years' time. I do not think that the next proposal will be to build the whole of the block. I think the proposal will be to build the Spencer-street structure up to Little Bourke-street, covering an area of 100 by 56 feet. The Postmaster-General's Department want to keep the old two-story building in ~~common~~. *use* If we were to cease studying the economy of having to use that old building the whole of this problem would take on a new aspect. The two-story building, which it is proposed to keep in use, covers an area, roughly, 100 by 100 feet. It is hoped to continue to use that building for workshop purposes for a considerable period. To secure the same area in that position as we are proposing to secure under the present proposal we would have to utilize a space greater than 100 by 56 feet. That old building would have to be destroyed to enable us to build the portion of the new building facing Little Bourke-street, to be utilized for workshop purposes, leaving the southern side to be built later for Mail Branch purposes.

120. *To Senator Reid.*—The Mail Branch say they would like to have a vehicular connexion made at the commencement. Seeing that the mechanics' staff say that they can spare the room, I favour providing that connexion in the beginning, and thus save the expense of doing it in future. The right-of-way ~~is~~ *will* be for foot traffic only. It is claimed that a hardship will be imposed on the mechanics if they are asked to enter the building by way of Little Bourke-street. *It is considered* that they are entitled to have an independent entrance from Spencer-street. *It means* taking about 8 feet off the old building. The Committee has already passed a proposal to erect a building behind the Elizabeth-street Post Office to provide new accommodation for the telegraph operators. After satisfying the requirements of that particular work and other work carried on by the Postmaster-General's Department, 40,000 or 50,000 ~~square~~ feet of space will be available for other

*Suggestion from Spencer St. would be provided*

*Spencer*

purposes. It was expected that that would be used for the accommodation of Taxation officers. It looks now as though the Taxation officers will not need the accommodation. The new building that is to go up as soon as the land can be freed will probably relieve every rented office in Melbourne. So, for general office purposes, I think that it is unlikely that this building at Spencer-street will ever be utilized. It would have been a fine investment five or six years ago. We tried to have that proposition accepted, but nothing came of it. This building should be completed in about eighteen or twenty months after the contract has been let, or about two years from the present time. No window space will be taken away from the stores by reason of the erection of this new building. The stores were originally planned with a view to such a building as this going up. There will be cross ventilation in the new building. The Melbourne Board of Health regulations make compulsory the ventilation of buildings in the factory class. A system of hoppers which cannot be shut is introduced into the windows. We are not strictly bound by the regulations, but I think in this matter we should obey them ~~implicitly~~ <sup>factory</sup> and undertake to put in the hoppers. All modern buildings have steel sashes fixed with hoppers, which cannot be closed. The roof of the old building is very flat, and on a wet day the water does not drain off; but the roof does not leak. The minimum fall allowed is 2 inches in 12 feet. ~~If we go on with the proposal to construct the top story, I would suggest that provision be made different from that which exists in the old building.~~

121. *To Senator Lynch.*—The lift is not in the centre of the building; it is up against the wall. No matter what extensions are made in the future it will always be up against the outside wall.

*The witness withdrew.  
The Committee adjourned.*