

1923-24.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
PUBLIC WORKS.

REPORT

TOGETHER WITH

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

RELATING TO THE PROPOSED ERECTION OF

A SECRETARIAT BUILDING AT CANBERRA,

INCLUDING

PROVISION FOR AN AUTOMATIC TELEPHONE  
EXCHANGE AND POST OFFICE.

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# MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

(Fourth Committee.)

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

## Senate.

Senator John Barnes.†  
 Senator Hattil Spencer Foll.‡  
 Senator Patrick Joseph Lynch.†  
 Senator John Newland.‡  
 Senator William Plain.\*  
 Senator Matthew Reid.†

## House of Representatives.

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.

\* Ceased to be a Member of the Senate, 30th June, 1923.

† Appointed 5th July, 1923.

‡ Resigned 28th June, 1923.

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Mr. Stewart having laid on the Table plans, &c., in connexion with the proposed work—

Debate ensued.

Question—put and passed.

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# PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS.

## SECRETARIAT BUILDING, CANBERRA.

### REPORT.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, to which the House of Representatives referred, for investigation and report, the question of the erection of a Building at Canberra for Departmental Secretariats, including provision for an Automatic Telephone Exchange and Post Office, has the honour to report as follows :—

#### INTRODUCTORY.

1. On 9th March, 1923, the House of Representatives referred to this Committee for investigation and report a proposal to construct Provisional Administrative Offices at Canberra. In submitting its Report to Parliament on 21st June, 1923, the Committee expressed itself as opposed to the erection of offices of a temporary nature, such as those projected, and recommended that steps be taken to provide permanent buildings for the purposes required. It was further suggested that competitive designs be invited from the architects of Australia for such permanent buildings.

2. On 24th August, 1923, the House of Representatives after discussion adopted a motion by Mr. Stewart (Minister for Works and Railways), as follows :—

“That it is not expedient to carry out the construction of Provisional Administrative Offices with accessory engineering services at Canberra—a proposed work which has been investigated and reported on by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works in accordance with the provisions of the *Commonwealth Public Works Committee Act 1913–1921* ; but that it is expedient to invite competitive designs for Permanent Administrative Offices as recommended by the Parliamentary Standing Committee in its Report.”

#### PRESENT PROPOSAL.

3. As it is anticipated that Parliament House, Canberra, will be completed by June, 1926, and it is unlikely that the permanent Administrative Offices can be completed before June, 1929, it becomes necessary to make provision for those Commonwealth officials whose attendance at Canberra is considered essential at the date of the assembly of Parliament there. It is suggested that for the first three years the work at Canberra might be dealt with by a skeleton staff from each Department, and the proposal now submitted is designed to provide accommodation for those skeleton staffs or secretariats.

4. The building suggested is of simple design on straight square lines, with a flat roof, and will be built of brick, the walls to be covered with white plaster. It will be of two main floors, each 12 feet high, with an additional story 8 feet high in the centre of the building. The top story is designed for use as a lounge room while the building is used as a secretariat, and can be utilized as caretaker's quarters when the building is adapted for other purposes.

5. It is proposed that on the north end of the building shall be located the Post Office, and on the south end the Automatic Telephone Exchange.



6. The Departments expect to send about 160 officials to work in the proposed Secretariat, and the project submitted would provide 19,712 square feet of effective office space for the Secretariat, 2,518 square feet for the Post Office, and 5,530 square feet for the Automatic Telephone Exchange, or a total of 27,760 square feet exclusive of corridors, staircases, lavatories, &c.

#### ESTIMATED COST.

7. The estimated cost of the proposal as submitted to the Committee is set down at :—

Building .. .. .	£39,000
Engineering Services .. .. .	3,500
Automatic Telephone Exchange—	
Air-conditioning Plant ..	£3,400
Telephone Exchange Equipment	15,575
Subscribers' Equipment ..	5,332
Line Plant .. .. .	29,313
Cost of Cut-over .. .. .	20
	<hr/>
	53,640
Total .. .. .	£96,140

and the time fixed for completion fifteen to eighteen months from date of approval.

#### COMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS.

8. The Committee inspected the plans submitted, and took evidence from the Secretary, the Chief Architect, and the Chief Engineer, Department of Works and Railways, a representative of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee, the Supervising Engineer and the Acting Chief Inspector, Postmaster-General's Department, and the Chairman, Commonwealth Public Service Board of Commissioners.

9. From the information placed before it, the Committee was satisfied that some office accommodation would be necessary for officials at the date of assembly of Parliament at Canberra, but just what accommodation would be required would depend upon the policy of the Government in the matter. To ascertain what the Government had in mind, a communication was addressed by the Chairman to the Prime Minister on 16th June in the following terms :—

With reference to the request received from the House of Representatives that this Committee investigate and report on the proposal to erect a Secretariat Building at Canberra to provide office accommodation for those Commonwealth officials whose attendance at Canberra will be essential when Parliament meets there, I desire to inform you that it is represented that although it is expected that the Parliament House Building will be completed in 1926, it is improbable that the permanent Commonwealth Offices will be ready for occupation until 1929. The proposed building is suggested as a means of providing accommodation in the interim, but later to be used as rooms for Members of Parliament or for such other purpose as may be determined. To enable the Committee to properly consider the question, will you be good enough to inform me if the Government is in a position to state—

- (i) whether until the permanent Commonwealth Offices are erected it is the wish of the Government that Departmental business shall be carried on from Melbourne or from Canberra ;
- (ii) in the latter case, which Departments it is considered essential shall be represented at Canberra at the date of assembly of Parliament there ;
- (iii) how many officials of each Department will be required at Canberra within, say the first, second, and third years, and what office space of a temporary character should be provided for them ;
- (iv) whether the officials transferred to Canberra for the assembling of Parliament will be permanently located there or required to return to their Head Offices in Melbourne at the close of each Session of Parliament.

On 18th July a reply was received as follows :—

With reference to your memorandum of 16th June, on the subject of the transfer of part of the Public Service to Canberra on the opening of Parliament there, I desire to inform you that the questions asked were referred to a Sub-Committee of Cabinet, which has investigated the matter, and the following replies are appended hereunder, conveying the Government's opinion :—

- (1) Transmission of Departmental Administration from Melbourne to Canberra must, of necessity, be effected in stages, as follows :—
  - (a) During the first two and a half to three years that Parliament is sitting at the Federal Capital, Main Central Administration Staffs, pending the completion of the permanent offices, will remain at Melbourne ; each Minister and Permanent Head will need accommodation at Canberra for the Session ; and each Department will require a small Secretariat or nucleus of its Central Staff at Canberra throughout the year.
  - (b) As the Permanent Administrative Offices become available for occupation, the transfer of the Central Staffs will gradually be effected, those Departments whose work is most closely allied to Parliament being moved first.



- (2) It will be essential for all Departments to be represented at Canberra in the first stage, as set out in reply to question 1, sub-paragraph (a).
- (3) It is estimated that, during the first three years, the Staffs referred to in reply to question (1) will comprise about 160 officers, who will require about 17,000 square feet of office space, or 57 units of 294 square feet each, as shown on copy of attached schedule, prepared after ascertaining the requirements of Departments.
- (4) This is answered in the replies given to question 1. Certain additional officers would, of course, visit Canberra for short periods while Parliament was dealing with special legislation, Annual Estimates, or other matters specially affecting their particular Departments.

### SCHEDULE.

#### Offices for Secretariats, Canberra.

Probable provisional accommodation required by Departments pending completion of Permanent Office Building

(Note.—1 unit = 294 sq. feet.)

PRIME MINISTER.								Units.
Permanent Head	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Officer-in-charge	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Secret Records	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
5 Typists	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
2 Record Clerks	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
								— 5

TREASURY.								Units.
Private Secretary	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Secretary	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
2 Typists, 2 Clerks	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Accounts and Pay Office—5 Officers	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Spare	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
								— 5

ATTORNEY-GENERAL.								Units.
Solicitor-General	..	..	..	1	} Possibly portion of this staff will still be required in Melbourne			18
Australian Secretary and Permanent Officer	..	..	..	1				
6 Legal Assistants	..	..	..	3				
Clerical and General	..	..	..	5				
Library	..	..	..	1				
Crown Solicitor	..	..	..	15	say	..	..	

HOME AND TERRITORIES.								Units.
Officer-in-charge	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Record Clerk and 2 Typists	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2
Private Secretary	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	$\frac{1}{2}$
Permanent Head	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
								— $4\frac{1}{2}$

DEFENCE.								Units.
Secretary	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Senior Clerk	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Clerks and Typist	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	$1\frac{1}{2}$
Private Secretary	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	$\frac{1}{2}$
Visiting Senior Officers	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
								— 5

TRADE AND CUSTOMS.								Units.
Permanent Head	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Officer-in-charge	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
Tariff Officer, 1 Clerk, and Minister's Secretary	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
3 Record Clerks	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	$\frac{3}{5}$
3 Typists	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	$\frac{3}{5}$
2 Fifth Class Clerks	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	$\frac{2}{5}$
Say								— 5

POSTMASTER-GENERAL.								Units.
Officer-in-charge	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1
6 others	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	$1\frac{1}{2}$
								— $2\frac{1}{2}$

HEALTH	} say	..	..	..	..	..	..	12
WORKS AND RAILWAYS		..	..	..	..	..	..	
VISITING OFFICERS, ETC.		..	..	..	..	..	..	

Total .. .. . 57



10. In evidence given subsequently by the Chairman, Commonwealth Public Service Board of Commissioners, some of these statements were slightly modified. While agreeing with the number of officials to be transferred in the early stages, he expressed the opinion that it was improbable that the officials could be adequately employed at Canberra during the whole of the year, and that it would be more economical to return them to Melbourne when Parliament went into recess.

11. Investigations have shown that the average duration of the Parliamentary Session is about five months per annum; consequently, two important circumstances have to be taken into consideration. In the first place, of the officials transferred to Canberra for the Session, possibly the whole—or at any rate the majority—will have to be paid “away from home” allowance, estimated by the Chairman of the Public Service Board of Commissioners at about £550 per week, or say £11,550 for the Session, plus probably £1,500 to cover railway fares to and fro. In the second place, there will be a Secretariat Building at Canberra lying practically unoccupied for about seven months of the year.

12. The Committee deprecates this unremunerative expenditure, but is unable to suggest any way out of the difficulty. Like many other matters connected with the establishment of the Federal Capital, it must be regarded as an unavoidable expense associated with the great project contemplated.

13. To avoid the capital cost involved in providing a building of the nature proposed, consideration was given to a suggestion to erect a purely temporary building which could be removed when it had served the purpose now contemplated.

14. Several objections, however, suggest themselves to the adoption of such a proposal. To ensure a reasonable degree of comfort and provide necessary heating and other engineering services make the cost of the most temporary building high. Then, such a building is out of harmony with other structures with which it is associated; it is a potential fire risk with the possible loss of valuable records; there is a considerable loss in removing the building when it has still many years of life; while there is always the danger of a sense of false economy dictating the retention of an inharmonious structure longer than was ever anticipated. Added to this are the facts that the automatic telephone exchange building, which accounts for about £6,400 of the proposed expenditure, must to ensure an effective service be of a permanent character; and the post office portion of the building will also be permanently required in this locality.

15. After giving the matter careful attention, therefore, the Committee is unanimously of opinion that in order to provide office accommodation for those Commonwealth officials whose attendance at Canberra is essential by the time Parliament assembles there, a building be erected on the lines proposed by the Department.

#### *Post Office and Automatic Telephone Exchange.*

16. Interwoven with the project under review is a proposal to establish a Post Office on the northern end of the structure, and an Automatic Telephone Exchange on the southern end. At this stage, it is difficult to estimate the number of subscribers who would be served by such an Exchange, but the Committee is satisfied that the proposal to provide for an initial equipment of 1,300 subscribers' lines, gradually expanding to an ultimate capacity of 3,000 lines, is likely to meet normal development for some years.

17. A Post Office in this locality to serve the needs of Parliament House, the Administrative Offices, and the population in the vicinity, is also essential, and even when the development in the region of the Civic Centre necessitates the establishment of the General Post Office there, this office will still be retained.

18. Under these circumstances, the Committee is unanimous in approving of provision being included in the proposed Secretariat Building for postal and automatic telephone exchange purposes.

#### *Subsequent Use.*

19. Assuming that the necessity for these offices for the Departmental Secretariats will cease to exist about 1929, when the permanent Commonwealth Offices are completed, the Committee gave some thought to the purpose for which they might be utilized subsequent to that date.

20. In speaking to the motion in the House of Representatives on 29th May, 1924, that this matter be investigated by the Committee, the then Minister for Works and Railways (Mr. Stewart) stated that the building had been designed to afford, when vacated by the Departments, official rooms of convenient size for private Members of Parliament, anticipating the probability of such provision being found to be a necessity at Canberra. If such a course were followed, this building would provide 54 rooms of a general uniform size of 21 feet x 14 feet. In this event, he stated, a further building of similar size and design, but without Post Office and Telephone



Exchange, might possibly be erected at a site at the western side of the official area, to balance and correspond with the building now proposed. Such a building would form 72 unit rooms on the scale provided in the Secretariat Building.

21. In the course of evidence, other uses to which the building could be put were suggested, such as the head-quarters of the Federal Capital Commission, offices for the Commonwealth Public Service Board of Commissioners, or as additional office accommodation to that to be provided in the main Administrative building.

22. Some discussion took place as to whether the Committee should indicate its view in the matter, but it was finally agreed that as it is difficult at this date to forecast what requirements may be at the date of vacation of the Secretariat Building as such, the Committee should refrain from expressing any opinion as to the specific purpose for which the building might be utilized when the permanent Commonwealth Offices are available.

23. The decision arrived at in connexion with this matter is shown in the following extract from the Minutes of Proceedings :—

Mr. Mathews moved :—

That this Committee is of opinion that on its vacation as Commonwealth Offices, this building should be definitely set apart as one unit of the two buildings required to provide an official room for each private Member of Parliament.

Seconded by Senator Reid (*pro forma*).

Senator Lynch moved as an amendment :—

That this Committee is of opinion that in the event of the vacation of this building as Commonwealth Offices and when a reasonable opinion can be formed as to the adequacy or otherwise of Parliamentary accommodation, the use of this building should then be considered in relation to any further accommodation of the kind that may be required.

Seconded by Senator Barnes (*pro forma*).

The Committee divided on the amendment :—

Aye (1).  
Senator Lynch.

Noes (7).  
Senator Barnes.  
Senator Reid.  
Mr. Cook.  
Mr. Gregory.  
Mr. Jackson.  
Mr. Mackay.  
Mr. Mathews.

And so it passed in the negative.

The Committee then divided on Mr. Mathews' motion :—

Aye (1).  
Mr. Mathews.

Noes (7).  
Senator Barnes.  
Senator Lynch.  
Senator Reid.  
Mr. Cook.  
Mr. Gregory.  
Mr. Jackson.  
Mr. Mackay.

And so it passed in the negative.

#### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

24. Briefly summarized, the recommendations of the Committee are :—

1. That in order to provide office accommodation for those Commonwealth officials whose attendance at Canberra is essential by the time Parliament assembles there, a building be erected on the lines proposed by the Department.
2. That provision should be included in the proposed building for postal and automatic telephone exchange accommodation.
3. That as it is difficult to forecast what requirements may be at the date of vacation of this building as Commonwealth Offices, the Committee should refrain from expressing any opinion as to the specific purpose for which this building may be utilized when the permanent Commonwealth Offices are available.

H. GREGORY,  
Chairman.

Office of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works,  
Federal Parliament House, Melbourne,  
10th September, 1924.



# MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

TUESDAY, 10TH JUNE, 1924.

Present:

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

Senator Reid	Mr. Mackay
Mr. Jackson	Mr. Mathews.

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

1. *To the Chairman.*—At the time the Seat of Government is transferred to Canberra, in accordance with the scheme of construction now in progress, it will be necessary to provide accommodation for sections or secretariats of the various Departments whose representation will then be essential. This will occur prior to the completion of the permanent administrative office buildings recommended by the Public Works Committee, and for which Parliament has directed that an architectural competition be held. Plans of a proposed provisional secretariat building, to house these sections of Departments, have been prepared, and are now submitted for consideration by the Public Works Committee in accordance with Statute. They provide the accommodation stated by the several Departments to be necessary for their operations at the time Parliament will sit. A district post-office and automatic telephone exchange in the official area of Canberra will also be necessities when legislation commences, and to avoid the erection of comparatively small separate structures within this area, it is proposed to include this postal and telephone accommodation in the same building as the secretariats in the manner indicated by the plan submitted. The building has been designed to afford, when vacated by Departments, official rooms of convenient size for members of Parliament, anticipating the probability of such provision being found to be a necessity at Canberra. By a system of convenient inexpensive subdivision of the floors, as planned, 54 rooms of a general unit size of 21 feet x 14 feet would be obtained, and the plan is arranged for one bathroom to every four rooms to be added when required. The plan also provides for caretaker's quarters to be arranged. A further building of similar size and design, but without post-office and telephone exchange, might possibly be erected at a site at the western side of the official area, to balance and correspond with the building now proposed; such a building would afford 72 unit rooms with bathrooms on the scale mentioned above, and caretaker's quarters. Provided, therefore, that the policy becomes such that each senator and representative shall be provided with a room, a maximum of 126 rooms would be obtainable in two buildings of the design proposed. Exclusive of the essential corridors, staircases, lavatories, recreation accommodation—the latter to eventually become caretaker's quarters—heating chamber, and promenade roofs, the project now submitted would provide the following effective accommodation:—

Offices for secretariats ...	19,712 feet
Post-office ...	2,518 feet
Automatic telephone exchange ...	5,530 feet
<b>Total ...</b>	<b>27,760 feet</b>

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The probable cost of the building, not including equipment connected with the telephone installation, laying out of grounds, heating, and engineering services outside the building, would be £39,000. The plan submitted is merely a sketch plan, and can be amended without any inconvenience or loss to the Department, but it contains the nucleus of a good idea for a building of the nature required. The design has been primarily based on the possibility of subdividing it conveniently for the use of members of Parliament, giving to each member a room 21 feet by 14 feet, that is to say, an area of 296 square feet, which, I think, will be found a convenient size, especially if each room is to be fitted with a wardrobe and a hot and cold water service. If this building is used first of all for the advance sections of the Commonwealth Departments until the permanent offices are completed, they will probably occupy it for two years, after which it can be subdivided to suit members, and handed over to them. But if it is the policy of the Government to provide each member with an office—I think that it is essential to do so, because I do not see how members can possibly do without these rooms—simultaneously with proceeding with the secretariat building the Government will, I take it, proceed with another similar building, which would be ready by the time Parliament opens, and would provide straight away for 72 members. As about fifteen other members would have offices in Parliament itself, the number thus provided for would be 87 in all. There are some Sydney members who would probably not be at Canberra more than three days at a time, and I do not know that it will be a very great hardship for some of them to do without an office at Canberra for about two years. However, if two buildings are put up, one can be given over to the Departments, and the other can be used by members, so that at the commencement of Parliament about 87 members will have offices. The proposed building is laid out on very square and simple lines, and is of the same style of architecture as is being introduced into the design of the provisional Parliament House. But while being architecturally sympathetic with the provisional Parliament House, its size will be subordinated to the larger structure. If the Government approve of erecting two buildings, the two of them will maintain a symmetrical balance with the provisional Parliament House. The permanent administrative offices, for which competitive designs have been called, will be on either side of Parliament House, but some little distance in front of it; whereas the two buildings now suggested for ultimate use by members will be to the right and left of Parliament House, but slightly to the rear of it. The city plan provides for two streets junctioning with Federal-avenue and Commonwealth-avenue, and it is suggested that these two buildings shall face Commonwealth-avenue and Federal-avenue respectively at the axial line of the two streets to which I have referred. The buildings will be of the garden type, presenting good appearance from all sides. The permanent Parliament House, on Camp Hill, would lie between them. The post-office will front the street running at the back of the provisional Parliament House, and connecting Federal-avenue and Commonwealth-avenue. It will also face the site of the permanent Parliament House. The Government have accepted the recommendation of



the Public Works Committee, and have decided to call for designs for the permanent offices. As a matter of fact, the conditions of the competition were sent away last week. The competition will close on the 30th September next. Allowing a month to adjudicate upon the designs, and six or eight months to the architects who win the competition, tenders for the offices will not be received before May or June, 1925; I should say that it will be four years before they are erected. I do not think they can be completed before June, 1929, whereas it is anticipated that Parliament will meet at Canberra in May or June, 1926. To enable Parliament to meet there, a building of a temporary or semi-permanent nature should be erected to provide for the officers who will be essential, and, as a matter of fact, that is the only question before the Committee now; but the Minister for Works, in submitting this project to Parliament, mentioned the fact that the secretariat building had been designed to enable it to become suitable for members' offices, and as members cannot get that accommodation until the building is vacated by the Departments, a second building on exactly similar lines should perhaps be put up in order to meet the convenience of members. The secretariat building will be of a provisional nature, structurally and architecturally on the lines of the provisional Parliament House. If it is kept in good repair, its life should be at least 70 years. I do not think it will ever become an inharmonious member of the group of administrative buildings. Every year buildings become more and more simplified, and redundancy of detail passes out. The proposed building will certainly be alongside the site of the permanent Parliament House, but as the latter is allotted an area 900 feet long on the plan, and when built will probably be compressed into an area 500 feet long, the secretariat building will be at least 200 feet from the extreme edge of the allotted area of Parliament House, and a great deal more from the extremity of the actual building itself. In any case, Parliament House will be on the top of Camp Hill, and the other building will be down on the slope. If two buildings are erected, as suggested, on the western and eastern slopes of Camp Hill respectively, they will be nearly on the same level. Comparing the cost of the proposed building for a secretariat with the cost of the suggested building for members' offices, the former may be greater, because of the fact that the telephone exchange will require concrete flooring, but this may be set off by the fact that the members' building will require more subdividing. One might be built by contract, and the other by the day-labour organization already at Canberra, and if the two are erected simultaneously it should furnish the Government with a very good check upon the much-discussed question of which is the cheaper method to adopt. The provisional Parliament House is being built by day labour. Some contracts have been let, but the bulk of the heavy structural work is being done by day labour, because if it were done by contract too much time would be taken up in preliminary preparation, which delay has been eliminated by going ahead with the work by day labour. The general lines of the building are much in accord with those of the provisional Parliament House. Although the actual drawings are simple, they provide for a suitable and simple building, easy to construct. It will be on straight, square lines. There is certainly no extravagance about it. It will be restful and reposeful. It will be of white plaster on brick, as is the case with provisional Parliament House. The style is modern Renaissance, to which British and Americans are now working. It is a style which depends on proportions and lines rather than on details. The floors will rest on wood joists. There will be no concrete floors, except in the telephone exchange. The roof will be flat. In the assumption that the building will ultimately become members' offices, it has been designed to make it suitably divisible into members' rooms, the unit of subdivision being 21 feet by 14 feet.

A desirable feature in a building to be given up to members of Parliament is grouping the rooms into units of six. Members who are friendly to one another can arrange to take rooms in groups of six, and thus have for each group a separate bathroom and lavatory, and an office for a messenger who would look after one group of rooms. This building has been designed to become twelve units of six offices each. There are four units in the central building on each floor, and there are two units in each of the flanking wings at the end. There are thus 72 rooms in the whole building. The Public Works Department obtained from all the other Departments an idea of what their requirements might be in the initial stages at Canberra. That information has been set out in the following table:—

	Units.
Prime Minister—	
Permanent head	1
Officer in charge	1
Secret records	1
Five typists	1
Two record clerks	1
	<hr/> 5
Treasury—	
Private secretary	1
Secretary	1
Two typists, two clerks	1
Accounts and Pay Office—five officers	1
Spare	1
	<hr/> 5
Attorney-General—	
Solicitor-General	1
Assistant secretary and permanent officer	1
Six legal assistants	3
Clerical and general	5
Library	1
Crown Solicitor	15
	<hr/> 26
Possibly portion of this staff will be required in Melbourne, say	18
Home and Territories—	
Officer in charge	1
Record clerk and two typists	2
Private secretary	1
Permanent head	1
	<hr/> 4½
Defence—	
Secretary	1
Senior clerk	1
Clerks and typist	1½
Private secretary	1
Visiting senior officers	1
	<hr/> 5
Trade and Customs—	
Permanent head	1
Officer in charge	1
Tariff officer, one clerk, and Minister's secretary	1
Three record clerks	3-5
Three typists	3-5
Two Fifth Class clerks	2-5
	<hr/> say 5
Postmaster-General—	
Officer in charge	1
Six others	1½
	<hr/> 2½
Health, Works and Railways, visiting officers, &c., say	12
Total	<hr/> 57



That information was obtained from the Departments, and not through the Public Service Board. When the Departments communicated their requirements in writing, and we thought them excessive, we consulted the various departmental heads, and brought down the figures to the limits I have given in the table I have just submitted. This building will provide for 57 units. The other building I have suggested would give 74 units. The difference is brought about by our utilizing portion of the proposed building for a post-office and telephone exchange. If these were built separately they would be rather out of scale to the large buildings that will occupy the administrative area at Canberra. By being attached to the secretariat building, they will prove convenient, not only for the work to be done, but also for members, and yet they will appear to be part of a massed design. When the Civic Centre is developed there will be population on the north side of the river, but I take it that a post-office will always be required on the south side for all work connected with Parliament, and that it will, of course, be the district office for the settlement on the south-east, round Blandfordia, where the school is built, and near the power-house. Parliament cannot open at Canberra without a telephone exchange. It is true that my original proposal was to have the post-office near the hostel, but a site on Federal-avenue, to the south-east side of Parliament House, will be more convenient, because the settlement that is now in progress at Canberra is towards the south-east. The hostel postal work will no doubt be on the individual system. One of the hostel employees will clear the hostel box at regular intervals, and take the mail across to the post-office. There must be a post-office at the Civic Centre when it develops, and there must also be a post-office on the south side of the river. I do not think that one office near the hostel and the river would prove satisfactory to both sides. When I suggested that the office should be near the river, I was making it a unit of the suggested group of temporary offices, but that plan was set aside in favour of having a large permanent building in a different location. The site now selected for a telephone exchange has been chosen by the Postal Department. The post-office in Parliament House will be for the use of members only. When residences are built for private citizens and officials resident at Canberra, they will probably mostly group towards the south-east. The Postmaster-General sent an officer to Canberra to examine the whole scheme, and he said that, while a building for the future telephone centre would be on the north side of the river, the work should now be done with one telephone exchange located on the site selected on Federal-avenue. In the proposed building there will be two floors each 12 feet high. There will be a flat roof on which members can promenade. The provisional Parliament House will also have a flat roof. I would not mind having a tiled roof, and the additional cost would not be a great deal, but I would confine the tiling to the central portion, that will be, roughly, three, but actually two and two-thirds, stories high, leaving the greater portion of the roof flat for use as a promenade. The centre portion, which, as I say, will be two and two-thirds stories high, will provide accommodation for a luncheon room while the building is used as a secretariat, and may be used as caretakers' quarters when the building is used for members' offices. The departmental records will be kept in the rooms. Other accommodation will not be required for them, seeing that the Departments will vacate the building after a couple of years. It should not take longer than fifteen months to do this work. It is, of course, very difficult to procure labour at Canberra, and there are other buildings besides Parliament House to be put up, but the brick work at Parliament House will probably be almost completed by the end of the year. However, I trust that the secretariat build-

ing will be started before that time. The postal authorities have approved of the sizes of the post-office and telephone exchange as designed. I submit an enlarged plan of the telephone section, indicating where the Postal Department has marked out its requirements. The post-office will not provide quarters for the postal officials, and as the wing gives an area in excess of what will be the requirements of the Postal Department for a good many years, I count on getting three units out of it for the secretariats. I can ascertain what provision is made by the Dominion of Canada for rooms for members of Parliament. If Parliament does not deem it wise to erect a building which will ultimately be used for members' offices, I would consider for secretariat requirements a cheap wood and iron building, the material of which could subsequently be removed and used for other purposes. Approximately the same space and the same engineering services would be required in a purely temporary structure as are provided for in the building proposed. It would need to be heated, lighted, and sewered, and the cost of providing the engineering services would be approximately the same in both cases. The estimate of cost for the building submitted to the Committee includes all engineering services except heating. The probable cost of a fully-equipped air-conditioning plant for the telephone exchange would be £3,400, but it is still doubtful, until experiments are made, that a full plant will be necessary. The engineers are inclined to think they may omit the cooling system belonging to the air-conditioning plant. For heating the building with hot water boilers and pipes and radiators, the cost would be £2,500, and it would cost £950 or, say, £1,000, to provide a hot water supply for baths and for a hot water service in each office when the building is used by members. It has not yet been decided how the heating shall be run—whether it should be in association with the air-conditioning plant belonging to the telephone exchange, or whether it should be a separate plant. The engineers of the Works Department and of the Postal Department will have to confer on that point. I know that the Postal Department declares that no extra staff is required to supervise their air-conditioning plants, and as it will be essential to have some one employed for the purpose of heating the whole of the building, I think the heating and the hot water should be attended to by a separate man, apart from the telephone exchange. It would be a more satisfactory arrangement, because it would enable a heating chamber to be placed in the basement at a more central point in the building. My estimate of the cost of the building has not been taken out in detail, but I can supply an estimate in detail to show how much work is costing at Canberra as compared with similar work in Melbourne or in Sydney. I can always get a list of what standard things such as plastering and painting are costing at Canberra. The estimate of this building is based on sketches, and has had to be cubed. The rates we apply to the cubic capacity of the various sections of the building are simply obtained from our experience of what similar buildings have cost. The rate for the telephone exchange is at 1s. 4d. per cubic foot, that for the central offices is 1s. 2d., and that for the post office is 1s. 1d., because the post office is an open building without any partitions. For the vestibules and tea-rooms the rate is 9d. The main units on the second floor are 12 feet high, but the central vestibule and the corridors are only 8 feet high. We thus make use of 4 feet of the walls surrounding the central vestibule and the corridors for the lower portion of the walls of the tea-rooms, and that enables us to bring down the cubic rate of the latter to 9d. The various cubical contents of the different sections of the building at the rates I have specified give an estimated cost of £38,906, which estimate does not include heating or the laying-out of the grounds. The degree of elaboration for laying out the grounds, as



suggested in the sketch plan, need not be taken in hand until later.

2. *To Mr. Jackson.*—By the time Parliament is opened at Canberra, the Government will have built a good many private houses. Land is to be leased at the beginning of next October with the object of stimulating the investment of private capital in providing houses. There will also be a couple of hostels or boarding-houses capable of accommodating 80 people each. The work on one of these hostels has been commenced, and tenders are about to be called for the other. One of them will be built in ten months, and the other should be built about the time Parliament is expected to open at Canberra. The existing hostel will accommodate 200 persons. The Departments expect to send about 160 people to work in the proposed secretariat. I think that number should be sufficient for the immediate needs of Parliament in 1926. Private enterprise will, no doubt, provide houses at Canberra, but when it will do so I do not know. Australia is a business-like country, and, if there is business to be done at Canberra, business men will get there with their premises. When population gets there it must be fed and provided with commodities of all sorts, so that business people cannot afford to stand out. The secretariat should be completed before May or June, 1926. The three hostels should be completed by that time, and also 60 or 70 houses built by the Government. To what extent private enterprise will meet the situation I do not know. I do not think that it will meet it extensively before June, 1926, but, no doubt, it will do so in time. I have noticed that plasterers in Melbourne are refusing to work at under 30s. a day. I have always said that the Government could not have chosen a more inconvenient time to build Canberra, but in actual practice that opinion is not found to be very accurate. It has been considerably discounted by actual experience. We have not undergone a great deal of difficulty in getting suitable men for Canberra. I would not say that they are not as good as the best available. They are fair average men, or they would not be employed. If they do not give the present-day fair output of work, they are not kept employed. The number of men who want to go to Canberra has surprised me. We shall use local hardwood for flooring and joists in the proposed building. We use imported timber in special cases only. We may use oregon where we want very long lengths. The erection of this building will not impair the city plan to any greater degree than the provisional Parliament House will. It will not take long to alter the secretariat and make it of use to members. The rooms will be divided by two 1-inch thicknesses of Tasmanian oak, with felt in between, giving the effect of oak lining to each member's room. In one corner will be a cupboard for members' clothes, and another containing a wash-basin out of sight of visitors. There will not be a fire-place in the building. It is far more satisfactory to have a heating system which will heat a room in a minute. The whole building will be based on the possibility of its being subdivided for the use of members, so that the hot-water service can easily be installed when the alterations are made. All the hardwood supports will be provided where the partitions will occur.

3. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The postal authorities declare that this building will be about the centre of the telephone district. I know that the Advisory Committee reported that the post-office should be near the Civic Centre, with a branch near the administrative group, but, when they submitted that report, I do not think they had any information from the Postal Department. They thought to the very last that the telephone exchange should be on the north side of the river, but the Postal Department pointed out that for some years the largest section of the telephone work will be done in the administrative area, and, therefore, the exchange

should be where provided on the plan now submitted. There is a post office at Acton, and there is an allowance office on the Yass-road at the back of Duntroon. There must be several post-offices in the Territory. As the distance between the administrative centre and the Civic Centre is a couple of miles, it will be necessary to have a post-office in each centre. In the meantime, the proposed post-office in the secretariat building and the Acton office should manage all the business of Canberra for some years. The Acton office should suit the Civic Centre. A height of 8 feet in the corridors on the first floor of the building should be sufficient.

4. *To Mr. Mackay.*—I think the Minister for Works would approve of making provision for rooms for the use of members at Canberra, provided the Public Works Committee thinks it should be done. The idea has emanated from myself. It is true that provision has been made in the party rooms in Parliament House for the use of members, but I would not describe it as liberal accommodation. It is certainly more liberal than the provision existing in Melbourne, but a member will not have his own room. It has been found necessary at Washington to allow each member to have his own room. I am responsible for the suggestion that a room should be provided for each member at Canberra. I have made the suggestion to the Minister for Works. In fact, the matter has been discussed for years, and ten years ago, when I told the Minister in control of Commonwealth Works what I had seen in America, he made a minute on the file that similar accommodation should be provided for members at Canberra. I do not say that it is a matter of extreme urgency, but I still think that members should be given ordinary facilities for doing their work. If approval is not given for the erection of a permanent building for a secretariat, a temporary structure of wood and iron would suit the requirements of the Department. Such a building would save 25 per cent. in the cost, and, of course, the material would be usable again to the extent of another 20 per cent. of its value. The proposed post-office would be about 850 feet away from the post-office in Parliament House. The latter could be made use of by the public, but it would be a great inconvenience to the public to be going into Parliament House to post their letters, send telegrams, or get money orders. It would also necessitate keeping the Parliament House office open for the usual post-office hours, and I take it that, when Parliament is not sitting, the building will be closed to every one but members. The proposed office may suit the convenience of the Departments rather than the convenience of the public, but it should convenience both sections, and I do not think that a post-office inside Parliament House would perform all the functions of the Postal Department. For instance, I do not suppose there would be a Savings Bank branch or a money-order branch there. In time the general public will have a post-office on the north side of the river, but I do not think there will be much settlement on that side just yet awhile.

5. *To Senator Reid.*—It is necessarily left to competitors to suggest what materials should be used in the buildings for which they are submitting designs. The conditions of the competition explain the nature of the material that can be obtained locally, and the cost of local material as compared with the cost of similar material at Sydney. They also explain the difference in the cost of labour between Sydney and Canberra. Thus competitors are enabled to recommend the class of material they think should be used, and, according to the soundness or otherwise of their proposals, a selection is made. It is not altogether a question of design; it is also a question of what a design is likely to cost. The building now proposed to be erected should harmonize with the provisional Parliament House. It will not last for centuries, such as the monumental buildings of Canberra should do, and there will be no great capital loss through the removal of a building



that is supposed to last for about 60 or 70 years. The administrative offices will be the first permanent building erected. If the ants are kept out of a building and it is painted and repaired regularly, it should last easily 100 years, but the trouble with all buildings is not so much their structural duration as it is the possibility of their becoming obsolete. Who can say what conditions will prevail in the way of living in 100 years? Altogether different ideas may prevail. The materials used in a permanent structure will not be almost the same as those used in a provisional structure. The proposed secretariat will be white plaster over brick. In some places the exterior walls of the provisional Parliament House will be only 9 inches thick, and some of the inside walls will be only 4½ inches thick. All the walls of Parliament House will be plastered white. There will be no incongruity about the provisional buildings as compared with permanent structures, but they will not be built of the permanent materials that will be used in the latter, which should last for a thousand years. In regard to the rooms to be devoted to the use of members, I would give each room to a member, and leave it to him to make whatever use of it he liked. No member could make a boarding-house of the building. There will be no food in it when it is vacated by the Departments. It is necessary to have the walls 12 feet high, because at first the floors will not be subdivided, and where rooms are large their walls must be proportionately high. Each member's office will have a window.

6. *To the Chairman.*—I shall be able to study the roofing problem better when we have the larger-scaled drawings. I was speaking to Mr. Sulman upon the matter, and he reminded me that there were to be no tiles on Parliament House. I have come to the conclusion that it will be better to have a flat roof such as Parliament House will have.

7. *To Senator Reid.*—The roof will be made of boards, felt, and bitumen. Factories and warehouses in Melbourne are roofed in that way. If, every two years, this roofing is washed over with a bituminous paint, the result is quite satisfactory. It is a class of roof that has been tried all over the world, in all climates. I think it is better than lead or iron. There will be three layers of bitumen.

8. *To the Chairman.*—I am guided in my estimate that the building should be put up in about fifteen months by our experience of the time occupied in putting up a £40,000 building. I expect to commence the work upon this secretariat building about August or September. In fact, we shall have to push on with the telephone exchange, so that the Postal Department can get ahead with installing the equipment, which work may probably occupy eight or ten months.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

WEDNESDAY, 11TH JUNE, 1924.

Present:

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

Senator Reid

Mr. Blakeley

Mr. Cook

Mr. Jackson

Mr. Mackay.

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

9. *To the Chairman.*—I visited Canberra in September, 1923, and, after conferring with Colonel Owen, suggested that the telephone exchange should be established in the administrative block on the spot indicated in the plans before the Committee. I had also discussed the matter with Mr. Murdoch and Mr.

Daley, and I think the site chosen is the most suitable. I am aware of Mr. Griffin's plan for the creation of a civic centre on the northern side of the Molonglo River. For the time being, the population on the north side will receive service from the exchange in the administrative block. We have no definite data regarding the rate at which the population of the Federal Capital will increase, but Mr. Wickens, of the Government Statistician's Office, gave me these estimates: In 1925, a population of 5,655; in 1930, 7,200; and in 1945, 15,000. Our plans for the telephone exchange are based upon those estimates; but, if the population increases at a greater rate, it will be quite easy to establish another exchange in the theoretical centre of the district in which the increase has taken place. The blue prints showing the building for the exchange building are before the Committee. I have allocated the space which we think will be necessary for the automatic exchange and a manual exchange to accommodate trunk-line communications and information. The automatic exchange will accommodate 1,300 to 3,000 subscribers' lines and 20 trunk lines; the service will be similar to that now given in the Collingwood and Malvern exchanges. Of course, in estimating future telephone requirement, I am entirely dependent upon the Statistician's estimate of the probable increase of population. Future extensions will be governed by local conditions. Settlement in the Federal Capital area will be widely distributed, and usually, where there are long distances to be covered by subscribers' lines, the outside construction costs become so heavy that it is preferable to incur the capital cost and maintenance of a second exchange in order to reduce the cost of external lines. Therefore, if development should occur later on the north side, it may be better to provide a telephone service for the population there by creating a second exchange rather than to make provision for it in the first exchange. At the present time most of the settlement is on the southern side of the Molonglo, and the choice of the site of the exchange was governed mainly by the number of services that will require to be given in the administrative block. It will not be necessary to have an exchange on the northern side immediately. Colonel Owen told me that he understood that it was the desire of the present Government that the last session of the present Parliament should be held in the new parliamentary building at Canberra, and I have worked out my plans accordingly. I understand that the final session will be held towards the latter end of 1925 or early in 1926, and I have assumed the date of the cut-over as the 1st January, 1926. We estimate that there will then be 500 Government lines and 200 commercial and private lines. The majority of the 500 Government lines will require telephone connexions mainly in the administrative block, and that fact has an important bearing on the theoretical centre of the area to be served. We propose to have a combined public exchange and private automatic branch exchange in the one building; that is to say, all the lines from Parliament House will be connected to a private automatic branch exchange in the public exchange building. That is a very economical arrangement, and will give members of Parliament an infinitely better service than they get now. They will have the practical equivalent of a direct-exchange line. It is difficult to estimate when a second exchange will be required on the northern side; that will depend largely upon the development. The building now proposed will take only 3,000 lines, but the exchange will be so designed that any other exchanges that may be established in the Capital area will be able to interconnect with it. Initially, the first exchange will have accommodation for 1,300 subscribers' lines. The development of the city may be such as to warrant the creation of another exchange; but, if the densest population is still about the administrative block, it may be more profitable to



extend the original exchange. The total cost of the exchange will be £60,040, the details being—Building, £6,400; air-conditioning plant, £3,400; telephone exchange equipment, £15,575; subscribers' equipment, £5,332; line plant, £29,313; cost of cut-over, £20. That estimate covers plant sufficient to meet the development of subscribers' lines during a period of five years from the opening of the exchange. I have included provision for an air-conditioning plant, but we are not yet in possession of sufficient data to enable us to judge whether or not such a plant will be necessary. Assuming that our usual procedure is followed, the proposed exchange could be in operation within eighteen months or two years of parliamentary approval being given for the work. We usually allow six months for the receipt of tenders, but if we adopt short-cut methods, such as calling for quotations instead of tenders, the work could be done much quicker. So long as we know the plan of the building, we can proceed with our plans for the exchange equipment, call for tenders for plant, and be ready to commence installation on the day on which the building is completed. I shall let the Committee have an estimate of the revenue which will be earned by the exchange. The Parliament pays the Postal Department for all telephone services. The Department recently decided to standardize "step-by-step" systems, and two manufacturers have written to us recently to say that their systems will work in with the systems produced by other manufacturers. We are now able to get competitive tenders for the same equipment from three different firms, whereas formerly we could get a tender from only one firm. The specifications have never been so drafted that only one firm could tender. Of course, patents are beyond our control, but our specification is so broad that any manufacturer of "step-by-step" automatic equipment may tender. Our difficulty, however, has been that different systems would not work in with each other. When tenders were called recently, at least two firms offered almost identical material. The Department is absolutely safeguarded by the general condition in the contracts that the contractor must protect the Department against any action at law in regard to patents rights.

10. *To Senator Reid.*—Tender prices are watched very keenly, and we know from experience what the quotations should be. If we suspected collusion between tenderers, we would cable to England and America for prices, as we have done on previous occasions.

11. *To the Chairman.*—Provision has been made for a direct telegraph line between Canberra and Sydney.

12. *To Mr. Blakeley.*—Humidity at low temperature does not appear to affect detrimentally automatic telephone plant, and I do not think we need expect, at Canberra, humidity at high temperatures. An air-conditioning plant may be necessary, however, to guard against trouble from dust. I doubt the possibility of conditioning the air in the telephone exchange by the plant to be installed at Parliament House; I do not think that air is ever conditioned from a plant housed at any distance from the point at which treatment is required. It would be a costly method, and there would be loss in efficiency in operating the plant. If it be necessary to condition the air in the exchange, a separate plant will probably be more economical. In the administrative block most of the lines will be laid underground, but in the outlying districts we shall have recourse to aerial construction.

13. *To Mr. Cook.*—When we call for tenders for exchange plant, specifications are sent to England and America. The three firms which I have previously mentioned have branch offices in Australia. One of them is an American firm with a branch factory in England. If it should be found necessary to expedite the establishment of the exchange, its cost would not necessarily be increased.

14. *To Senator Reid.*—The plans of the telephone exchange building were prepared by Mr. Murdoch after

full consultation with me. So long as we are given a fire-proof building, we do not care what material is used. About a dozen persons will be employed in the exchange; but, so far as I know, the Postal Department has not yet considered the provision of housing accommodation for them. I do not think the Department would send officers to Canberra until housing accommodation was available; it would first negotiate with the proper authority for the provision of such accommodation. Sometimes the American tenders are lower than the British, and vice versa. The 10 per cent. preference given to British goods often turns the scale in favour of the British tenderer.

15. *To Mr. Jackson.*—A telephone development equal to 10 per cent. of the population is usually considered very reasonable. In country areas the development is about 4 to 7 per cent. After studying the statistics of the capital cities of the world, I decided to estimate on the basis of a 10 per cent. development at Canberra. I think that accommodation for 1,300 lines will be ample for the first five years of operating; but if, during that period, the development is more rapid than we have estimated, we shall take steps to cater for it. In the design of the equipment allowance will be made for the fact that, on account of the scattered settlements, more use of the telephone will be made at Canberra than in an ordinary town. I think I can promise that, if Parliament meets at Canberra next year, some sort of telephone service will be available. If the contractors delay in delivering the proper equipment, we shall give some sort of make-shift service. There will be no difficulty in making trunk-line calls through the automatic exchange.

16. *To the Chairman.*—The cost of the plant, exclusive of the building and air-conditioning apparatus, is £50,240. That is equal to almost £40 per subscriber, but it must be remembered that it covers a plant to cater for 3,000 subscribers, whereas at the outset only 1,300 will be receiving service. Costs of telephone equipment are falling. In recent tenders we paid £17 10s. per line for automatic equipment. Remember, however, that that is for exchange equipment only, and does not include subscribers' equipment and line plant. In Great Britain manual exchanges are more in use than are the automatic, but rapidly the automatic is replacing the manual. I have not any data regarding the cost of exchange equipment per subscriber in Britain, but, in any case, that cost is misleading. Traffic is the basis upon which a telephone exchange is designed. The cost per line in an exchange which has a high rate of calling is heavier than in an exchange where the calling rate is low. The City North exchange in Sydney has the abnormally high rate of eleven to twelve calls per day per line, which is considerably heavier than the rate in many American exchanges. We have to pay more for a plant capable of handling traffic like that than for a plant that has to cope with an average of only two calls per day per line. If 100 subscribers' lines are connected to a unit, ten trunks outgoing from that unit may carry the traffic while the calling rate is, say, six per day, but if that calling rate doubled it would probably be necessary to have twenty outgoing trunks, each one of which would require switches and relays.

17. *To the Chairman.*—The policy of the Department is to install only automatic telephone exchanges in multi-exchange networks where justified. About twelve months ago I was inquiring into the advisability of substituting automatic for manual in the Central exchange, Brisbane, and my investigation showed that if we could have automatic equipment, estimated at a cost of £20 per line, we would save £15,000 per annum, after charging interest, depreciation, and all working expenses. The cost of an up-to-date manual exchange is about £16 per line. The tendency is for telephone equipment prices to decrease, and that means, of course,



reduced annual charges. Telephone companies are now installing the automatic systems, because subscribers will have nothing else, and manufacturers are laying down plants to produce automatic apparatus, and are not extending the plants for the production of manual apparatus. I have estimated the equipment at Canberra to cost £10 per line. I have never asked for an air-conditioning plant in connexion with a telephone exchange until I was satisfied that it was absolutely necessary. I believe it will be necessary to continue to provide such plants at the exchanges in Melbourne and Sydney, and, on account of the dust trouble, air-conditioning may be essential at Canberra.

18. *To Mr. Cook.*—Humidity and dust are the only factors that prove troublesome in connexion with automatic telephone exchanges; within limits, extremes of temperature have no effect. The impression I gained from my visit to Canberra was that we should not have much trouble from humidity, but for a few years it may be necessary to guard the delicate mechanism against dust.

THURSDAY, 12TH JUNE, 1924.

*Present:*

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

Senator Reid

Mr. Jackson

Mr. Blakeley

Mr. Mackay.

Mr. Cook

Mr. Mathews.

Percy Thomas Owen, Director-General of Works, Canberra, and Member of the Federal Capital Advisory Committee, sworn and examined.

19. *To the Chairman.*—The proposed secretariat buildings, to which a post-office and telephone exchange will be attached, being of a semi-permanent nature, should last for 100 years, but very few public buildings in Australia are retained for that length of time. I should say that the proposed buildings would have a life of, say, 50 years. The original proposal was to house administrative officials essential to the carrying on of governmental activities at Canberra in a temporary building. That scheme was turned down by the Public Works Committee with the object of erecting a permanent building, for which competitive designs would be invited. It was immediately foreseen that the time involved in the preliminary arrangements for the competition, and the preparation of drawings for the foundation work, would preclude the possibility of making the administrative buildings available by the time that Parliament would be meeting at Canberra. Some consideration was then given by the Advisory Committee to a proposal to erect temporary buildings, but this scheme was open to the objection that temporary buildings would be placed in what is known as the governmental area. I then proposed that we should consider the erection of buildings of a character that would fit in with the general scheme for the development of Canberra, and, when the permanent offices were available for the full staffs, be available for some purposes other than administration. I suggested that there should be two buildings—one on each flank of the provisional Parliament House, and so designed that eventually they could be made available for the accommodation of members of Parliament. As it would be impossible to house the complete staff in such buildings, I then proposed that we should make provision for the staffs more closely associated with Ministers and Parliament, as, for instance, the senior officers in the Departments of the Prime Minister, the Attorney-General, Treasury, Works and Railways, and other Departments, who would be, as it were, the connecting link between Ministers at the Seat of Government and the general administration, which would remain in Melbourne. In furtherance of this proposal, in my capacity as a member of the Advisory Committee, I had a

chat with Sir Brudenell White, Chairman of the Public Service Board, with the object of ascertaining his estimate of the probable requirements. He took the stand, however, that it was not the function of the Public Service Board to organize the Departments, but said he would be very glad, if an opportunity arose, to assist me. I saw his point at once. In a memorandum which I prepared I indicated the Departments which I thought should be provided for. I also made a suggestion that there should be a combination of all records branches for the various secretariats in one branch, so that in the initial stages of our parliamentary work there, instead of having, say, five correspondence branches, we should have only one at Canberra. Sir Brudenell White said that the proposal appeared reasonable, but that it would be a matter for the Departments themselves to decide. I put this proposal before the various Departments in a memorandum, and asked for information as to the numbers of officers that would be essential to the effective working of each secretariat. The idea was that when the permanent administrative buildings had been erected, these secretariat buildings would be allowed to remain for the use of members. The designs were, therefore, prepared with this object in view. One secretariat building, as designed, would not be sufficient to give members the necessary accommodation, so that the proposal submitted by the Advisory Committee to the Government was to have two buildings—one on each flank of the permanent Parliament House in order to balance the general scheme. Subsequently the Departments sent in a statement of their probable requirements. This shows that apparently 160 officers will be required. The size of the rooms will be determined when it is known how the staffs will be distributed. It was also proposed that, in addition to the offices essential to the effective working of the Departments, there should be certain general secretariat rooms for the use of Departments that would not need to be represented at Canberra all the time. The Advisory Committee approved of the design. The Committee considered that for the purpose of uniformity, and in order to balance the governmental group, the two buildings should be erected. The proposal does not interfere in any way with Mr. Griffin's plan. The buildings will be an addition of something which is not shown in his scheme. Mr. Griffin's plan makes provision for the erection of official residences for the Prime Minister and the Governor-General, one on each side of the Capitol, whereas the buildings now proposed will be one on each flank of Camp Hill. The Advisory Committee thinks that for the sake of uniformity both buildings should be erected. One matter which weighed with the Committee in coming to this decision was that there had been some general talk of providing each member of Parliament with a room in which he could do his parliamentary work. I do not think that this suggestion emanated from the Government, but I believe it was discussed by Ministers. I think that many years ago Mr. King O'Malley said it ought to be done. The Advisory Committee has placed many proposals before the Government for consideration. This was one. I think it came before the Government within the last six months, and before the plans were prepared. The idea is to secure more effective co-ordination of the various administrative Departments. If it should be decided to drop this scheme, and go ahead with the erection of the permanent buildings, I do not think that they will be ready in less than four years' time. One of the two proposed buildings will provide ample accommodation for the officers essential to the working of the Public Service in the Capital City until the permanent buildings are erected, but this may result in Ministers dealing more exclusively with the main problems of policy than with general administrative work. I should say that, in the limited accommodation provided by one building, with the permanent heads of Departments and some senior officers, the Ministers would not be able to do much more than direct general policy.



If, however, Ministers wished the attendance of "sectional officers," these could be accommodated temporarily in one of the common secretariat rooms. The Advisory Committee has no administrative functions. I discussed the question of accommodation with Sir Brudenell White, but he thought it would be far better if I conferred with the heads of Departments, in order to ensure co-ordination. I am afraid that, if we had submitted this question to a committee of the Public Service, we would never have reached finality as to the accommodation necessary. What we have done is quite an innovation, but I saw no alternative if we are to have the secretariats provided for by the time appointed for the meeting of Parliament at Canberra. I may add that in South Africa, and in India also, the Seat of Government is far removed from the administration. The proposed buildings would not provide sufficient accommodation for the whole of the Departments, but they will be sufficient until the permanent buildings are erected. The style of architecture is in sympathy with the design of the provisional Parliament House. The general idea is to avoid the domestic and to favour the official style so far as may be compatible with reasonable expenditure. The proposal is to have a flat roof. A red-tiled roof for an official building would be regarded as "fussy," although it would be quite correct for hostels and residences. We know what Mr. Weston can do with flowers and shrubs. I believe the flat roofs of the secretariat buildings can be made very beautiful in this way. The walls will be of cement, coloured white. As a temporary proposition, the location for the post-office is satisfactory, but I apprehend that in the course of time it may be regarded as an intrusion on the scheme, in view of the fact that the general public will have to make use of the post-office. Although it has never been definitely decided what the probable postal developments may be, my opinion is that with the growth of the city on the southern side, and the establishment of a small community centre there, it will be necessary eventually to erect a post-office somewhere near Manuka Circle. The general postal work will then be done there, and this temporary postal building could be absorbed in the accommodation for members. As for the telephone exchange, although I do not like the idea of having any activity other than that directly associated with Parliament within the parliamentary zone, it has to be remembered that a telephone exchange will not employ many men, and will not be visited freely by the general public, so there should not be the same objection to the exchange remaining in its proposed location. Of course, my apprehension about members' objection to the post-office may be unfounded, but if they do object, then the post-office could be removed to Manuka Circle. I think that as Canberra develops, an additional post-office will be necessary for the Civic Centre, but this is really a matter for the Department of the Postmaster-General to decide. There will be provision in Parliament House for a post-office for members. I do not know of any purpose to which the proposed secretariat buildings could be put other than as bedrooms for members when the permanent administrative buildings are available. They might be retained as administrative offices, but I would not conceive of their use for outside purposes, because they will be within the parliamentary zone. Perhaps they could be used for a museum, but that proposal, again, would be open to the objection that the general public would have access, and I do not know whether members would object. The idea is that all the buildings in that location should be entirely governmental.

20. *To Mr. Mackay.*—The proposal submitted by the Advisory Committee to the Government was that for the present only one group of secretariat buildings should be erected, and that it would be used for about two years until the permanent administrative buildings were ready. It was also suggested to the Government

that the secretariat buildings could then be utilized as accommodation for members. So far as I am aware, no decision has been come to in this matter. I think the general idea was that, as members had a large amount of public business to transact, they should be provided with private rooms, where they might keep their papers and do this business, or at all events have some corner or sanctum to be used at their discretion. Possibly, as is done at Washington, a folding camp bed could be placed in the room, and, if necessary, a member could sleep there. It was never contemplated, of course, that a member should take his wife there. But for the fact that these secretariat buildings might later be used by the members themselves, I do not think an expenditure of £40,000 for temporary administrative offices would be warranted. Purely temporary offices could be constructed of timber and iron, and be removed when finished with. The provisional Parliament House will give members more accommodation than is available to them in Melbourne, but it must not be forgotten that in this city a member can get accommodation outside. Canberra is going to be quite different in that respect. Therefore, I think it reasonable to suppose that members will require certain accommodation there. I may add that at the next meeting of the Advisory Committee I propose to raise the question of erecting both secretariat buildings straight away.

21. *To the Chairman.*—A proposal such as I have just indicated may quite properly be made by the Advisory Committee to the Government for approval. It is competent for the Committee to put any such scheme before the Government. I do not suppose that the Government will approve until the matter has been fully investigated.

22. *To Mr. Mackay.*—If Parliament does not approve of the proposed secretariat building, the only alternative, in my opinion, is to go ahead with a scheme for the erection of temporary accommodation which will be removed as soon as the permanent buildings are ready. Temporary buildings, as such, would, of course, cost considerably less. No doubt, some of the material could subsequently be utilized in other buildings. It is doubtful if the post-office and telephone exchange would then be in the same group of buildings, but this would be a matter for the Department of the Postmaster-General to decide. I think it probable that the post-office would be in Manuka Circle.

23. *To Senator Reid.*—If members of Parliament did not require the rooms, I do not know of any other use to which they could be put, for the reason that I think it undesirable in the development of the general scheme to locate public servants in the same buildings as members. The employment of a cleaning staff need not be a serious matter. Provision is made for caretakers. I think it probable that the furnishing of the rooms would have to be done by the Government. It has never been suggested to the Committee that the parliamentary staff should be housed in the proposed buildings. The natural ground level of the secretariat buildings is about 25 feet higher than the ground level for the administrative block, and a little higher than the level for provisional Parliament House. They will be two-story structures, and of the same type as provisional Parliament House.

24. *To Mr. Jackson.*—Parliament has expressed the wish that the provisional Parliament House and the other necessary buildings shall be ready in 1926. I have been sent to Canberra to push on with the work, and I am doing my best. Up to the present the progress has been satisfactory. What may happen between now and 1926 I cannot say, but I think we can get Parliament House finished in the time specified. The erection of the proposed secretariat buildings could proceed concurrently. Personally, I would favour letting this work by contract, with the condition that the first to be finished should be the telephone exchange. I do not think that the speeding up of the work would necessarily mean an increase in the cost of buildings. At



present we are paying bricklayers less than they are getting in Sydney. We are employing 47 bricklayers on Parliament House alone, and we could get more if we wanted them. We have had no trouble in any of the trades, except that we want a few more high-class joiners. This absence of difficulty is, I think, due to the fact that there is a lull in the building trade. Later we may have some trouble in securing a sufficient number of plasterers, for the reason that the plastering trade has never been overmanned. I have not gone into the details of the estimate of cost of the proposed buildings with Mr. Murdoch, but I would be quite prepared to accept his estimate of £39,000 as reasonable. The fact that the cost of some of the last cottages erected is slightly less indicates an easing in the building trade. We intend to call tenders for the erection of more cottages shortly, and I anticipate that the prices will be lower. The Ministerial announcement that the first sale of leaseholds would be held in October has resulted in many people coming to Canberra to have a look around, so I think we may safely anticipate that private enterprise will help in the development of the city. No. 2 hostel has been built, and No. 3 started. We intend to proceed with the erection of 40 more cottages, and in addition I have approval for twelve more, so I think there will be sufficient to meet the demands for the next twelve months. With the progressive programme I have outlined, we should be able to cater for the accommodation required by the Government. Of the ten pavilions, one of which is to be reserved for hotel purposes, it might be possible to utilize one for married members. The members could still get their meals at Parliament House. They would have to pay a fair rental for the rooms. Perhaps they could get the accommodation on the bed-and-breakfast plan. However, this is a matter which will have to be discussed by the Advisory Committee.

25. *To Mr. Jackson.*—We are expecting private enterprise to provide some of the accommodation at Canberra. We anticipate that a certain number of members will live at the hostel.

26. *To Mr. Mathews.*—We have improved the accommodation for the workers. We have converted the soldiers' mess at the old German concentration camp into cubicles for tradesmen living single. We have also erected close to Parliament House 41 portable cottages—there will be 52 in all—and there is no doubt in my mind that an additional location will be necessary somewhere near Jerrabomberra-lane for another fifteen or twenty cottages. As Director-General of Works, I propose to establish another general location for contractors' workmen north of Ainslee post-office, where allotments will be available. Under this progressive scheme we are meeting the demands of married and single men for accommodation. In the main, they are now satisfied. One or two have made application for electric plugs for electric irons, for which they will be charged a flat rate. We are going to give them materials such as bricks originally used for the kilns for the paving of their back verandahs, if they want them, or for the lining of galvanized iron fireplaces. In the camp for the labourers there are now fine mess-rooms, kitchen, and recreation rooms. We have put down floors with kerbs around them, to which the tents may be fastened, and have put up the framing for the tents, which are supplied by the men. Altogether it is a very nice camp, and, generally speaking, the men are satisfied.

27. *To the Chairman.*—I would have been obliged in any event to recommend the erection of a secretariat building in order to provide the necessary accommodation by the time Parliament meets at Canberra, because the permanent administrative buildings will not be ready in time. In an earlier report the Advisory Committee recommended the erection of temporary buildings to cost £135,500, but that proposal was turned down by the Public Works Committee. The decision to remove the Seat of Parliament to Canberra in 1926,

and to provide accommodation for only essential Departments, will affect the estimates of the initial population to the extent of one-half or two-thirds. I notice that Mr. Becher, in his evidence yesterday, quoted the Government Statistician's estimate of population in 1926 at 5,000, in 1936, at 7,000; and in 1946, at 15,000. I think it is a pity that Mr. Wickens did not discuss the matter with me. It is probable that he has overlooked certain factors that would have a bearing on the population problem. His estimate, in my opinion, is low. If temporary buildings were erected, there would be certain expenditure on engineering services, though perhaps on a smaller scale. The buildings would have to be heated, because the cold in midwinter is too severe for persons following a sedentary occupation.

28. *To Mr. Mackay.*—I have not given consideration to the possibility of utilizing the proposed secretariat building when vacated for any other purpose than as members' private rooms, but I shall do so.

29. *To Senator Reid.*—It is possible that, as the administrative work of the Commonwealth increases, leading no doubt to the creation of new Departments, those new Departments could be housed in these buildings. It is essential, however, that all administrative offices should be as close together as possible. I shall bring this matter before the Advisory Committee, and let this Committee know.

WEDNESDAY, 18TH JUNE, 1924.

*Present:*

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

Senator Barnes

Mr. Jackson

Senator Reid

Mr. Mackay.

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

30. *To the Chairman.*—I am aware that the Committee has had referred to it the question of the erection of a secretariat building at Canberra, and in accordance with your request I shall submit particulars of the engineering services involved in connexion with the proposed building. Some of the figures, I think, have been supplied by the Chief Architect (Mr. Murdoch), but I understand that the information you require from me is more in the nature of particulars of the installation. For instance, the heating of the secretariat building, post-office, and telephone exchange is to be carried out by a hot water service with "Ideal" boilers and radiators, with forced circulation by means of pumps. The estimated cost of the installation for a building with brick walls and timber floors and joists is £2,500. I understand that it has been suggested that a temporary structure of wood might possibly be erected, in which case the figures would have to be modified. The installation proposed would provide heating in every room and in the corridors. The building has been treated as a whole. There would be a radiator in each room and in each corridor. The total cost of £2,500 includes the boiler, piping, and radiators for a system to meet the requirements of the secretariat building, the post-office, and the telephone exchange. Even if the proposed building should be required for only three years, the hot water service could be used in the building when utilized for other purposes. In addition to the heating service, provision has been made for the supply of hot water to the baths and lavatory basins. The cost of this, in round figures, would be £1,000. A separate boiler and additional copper piping would be required for this purpose. If it should be decided to increase the number of baths in the building the capacity of the boiler would be sufficient for an extra number. It is also proposed to install a vacuum cleaning plant, which would cost approximately £1,000. The plant would be on the pipe system, with exhaust fans at the end, and with connecting plugs in each of



the rooms, and also in the corridors, so that cleaners can attach the rubber hose and the dust can be taken away to the receivers in the heating room, passed through the furnaces, or into a small washer, and then into the sewer. This installation is in contradistinction to the usual electric vacuum cleaner. In a building such as this the pipe system is preferable, as it has the advantage of removing anything from the rooms right away from the building. Flexible hose 30 feet in length can be attached to the plugs, and when the various attachments are fitted any portion of the rooms, including the ceiling, can be cleansed. An amount of £3,400 is also provided for an air-conditioning plant for the telephone exchange, but that amount includes the cost of an ammonia compressor, which we do not think will be required. It may be taken that the cost would be about £2,000. The proposition is to install ordinary heaters in the building for warmth, and a ventilating and air-washing machine, but not a refrigerating plant for cooling in the summer time. As it is a mountain climate, we are of the opinion that a refrigerating plant will not be necessary. As the number of days on which the percentage of humidity is over 70 are very few, and occur in the winter, humidity could easily be dealt with. There are undoubtedly days when dust which is carried from the surrounding country by westerly winds is somewhat troublesome. I have seen dust in the air for three days during drought periods. Mr. Becher, of the Postmaster-General's Department and I have conferred on this matter, and he informs me that if severe dust storms occurred in the first year of the installation of the automatic exchange a number of troubles would be experienced, some of which would be felt for all time. It is, therefore, desirable to have an air-washing machine, and the cost of that is included in the £3,400 mentioned. In the event of the electrical engineers in the Postmaster-General's Department requiring an ammonia plant for dealing with humidity, the proposed installation has been so designed as to enable it to be conveniently and economically installed. Ample provision has been made for water and sewerage connexions. At present the 12-in. main is in Commonwealth-avenue, at the juncture of the road passing in front of the Parliament House site. The 12-in. main breaks down to 9 inches. A 6-in. main would be taken along Commonwealth-avenue, pass the secretariat building, return down Federal-avenue, joining the 9-in. main, and passing across in front of Parliament House. There will be pillar hydrants every 100 yards, approved by Mr. Lee. It is in accord with the general lay-out of Canberra under his advice. The 6-in. main will give an ample supply of water for fire fighting purposes. The pressure will be sufficient without using fire engines. House connexions, plumbing, and drains will be included in the estimates for the building, but not the main sewer in the streets. In the matter of fire fighting, everything has been done in consultation with Mr. Lee. The problem offers no particular difficulty, and the necessary provision is made with the ordinary reticulation. The sewerage is the ordinary street reticulation, serving not only the secretariat, but also other properties. The water and sewerage services for the building are included in the £39,000, but the air-conditioning plant, the heating service, and the hot water supply are not included. The total cost will be about £45,900, including those services. The expenditure on the water main will not be part of the expenditure for the suggested second building. The cost of the water main has not been worked out. It is merged in other costs, and is part of the city services. Apart from the erection of the secretariat, it would not be necessary to run the main through Commonwealth-avenue to Federal-avenue. The main will go from Commonwealth-avenue across the front of Parliament House to Federal-avenue. The secretariat involves the extension of a 6-in. main for about 1,500 feet, at a cost of about £700, which will be charged, not against the cost of the building, but as part of the cost of the

city mains. The difference the erection of the secretariat would make would be that £700 would be spent now instead of several years hence. There would be a similar expenditure on sewerage for the secretariat. The hot water and heating services would have to be maintained day and night. There will be no need for electrical radiators. The system should be kept going constantly for several months of the year in that climate. The services would still be adequate if the building was converted to another use. I cannot conceive at the moment that the buildings could be used for any other purpose than offices or rooms. The water supply system is complete to the point I have shown, and the further necessary short extension could be put in in a fortnight or three weeks. The building can be seweraged and watered by the time it is ready to be occupied. It could be provided with a water service now, and the provision of the sewerage system is proceeding rapidly. There is no doubt that both services will be ready by the time the building is required. The sewerage could be available, if necessary, earlier than the end of 1925. I include in that statement provision for the treatment of the sewage. If a temporary building were erected at least the same services would be required. If the temporary building were of wood 15 per cent. would have to be added to the cost of the heating system, because it would be necessary to install more radiators. A brick building gives a better result than a wooden one for heating purposes. The cost of fuel would be increased from £120 to £150 a year. Chimneys and fireplaces would cost as much as the proposed heating system. The chimneys would have to be of brick. A single-story building in wood, with iron chimneys, does not appeal to me, because of the heavy fire risk, and in such a case Mr. Lee would probably require the installation of sprinklers. The figures I have given refer to the substitution of two-story wood for two-story brick structures. In the event of a temporary building being erected and afterwards taken down, we would be able to recover nearly the whole of the hot-water plant, less the cost of labour. We could recover £2,000 out of £2,500 worth. The cost of heating a single-story building would not be much greater than the cost of heating a two-story building, but the cost of the building itself would be increased.

31. *To Senator Reid.*—For the boiler we have made arrangements with the architect to give us a basement or a room opening off the central vestibule, near the centre of the building. We have no objection to a basement or a semi-basement for that purpose. In fact, the basement is an advantage for getting in coal. On the ground floor the pipes will be carried under the floor and lagged. The uprights to the rooms above will be exposed. I do not like the idea of burying hot-water pipes in recesses; if anything goes wrong it is not discovered until injury has been done to the woodwork or the walls. The vertical pipes could be enclosed in a removable casing, but beyond that I do not advise burying them. All that would be seen would be a vertical pipe at intervals. If a pipe was run round the second floor it would probably be placed at the top of the skirting board, but there would probably be no horizontal pipes upstairs. The vertical pipes would probably be only  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch or 1 inch in diameter. The circulation will be forced. This will obviate the disfigurement of thick pipes, and the water will reach the radiators quicker. The size of the radiators is calculated on the cubical contents of the rooms and the nature of the walls. The post-office will probably have eight radiators, and the telephone exchange twelve. The buildings look like an eighteen-months' job, but they could probably be made habitable in twelve months. It would no doubt be possible to finish them in twelve months. We are obtaining sufficient bricklayers at present, and they are giving every satisfaction. There are three or four factors conducing to this end. The workmen's homes induce the married



men to go there. Payments are made for wet weather, and the men get certain holidays in the year if they stick to their work. Also, the work is steady, and that is a big factor. They earn 23s. per day for five and a half days a week. They are good tradesmen, are quite satisfied, and work will last for a long time. I do not think the slump in the building trade has been an important factor, for we had the men there before the slump occurred. The steady rate of wages, and the continuity of work are the main considerations. A bricklayer in a city is on a job for a month, and is then probably in another suburb for his next job. He has broken time, and there are difficulties in getting to and from his work. At Canberra he is within half a mile of his work, and lives in a nice, four-roomed wooden cottage with his wife and family. There is work enough for many years ahead.

32. *To Mr. Mackay.*—The greatest number of wet days we have ever had is 3 per cent. In the event of the buildings being subsequently used as members' rooms the expense of heating will not be increased. The subdivision of the rooms would make no difference, for the heat is being put into the building. The heating of the corridors is a large factor. That is one of the advantages of a heating system over fireplaces, for fireplaces, while they heat the rooms, leave the corridors cold.

33. *To Senator Reid.*—We prefer small radiators, in greater number, rather than large radiators with big spaces between. Four radiators 15 feet apart are better than two radiators twice as big 30 feet apart.

34. *To the Chairman.*—For fuel for small boilers we prefer coke. The small coal we use at the power-house costs 14s. at the pit mouth, and 23s. for freight. We use small coal and some coke. The small coal delivered would cost £2. The tendency for household purposes is to use wood. There are enormous quantities of it within 20 miles by rail of Canberra. It is not practical to supply electric heat from a hydro-electric source cheaper than the heating system proposed. Even if current was delivered at ½d. per unit, it would not be able to compete with the heating system. By the time the heat reaches an electric radiator only about 1 per cent. of the heat originally in the coal remains, the balance being lost in transmission. By the proposed method we obtain 30 per cent. of the heat in the coal. Crude oil has been considered both for the power-house and for the heating system, but it is too high in price. It would have to drop to about half its present price before we could even consider it. Its present cost is about £8 or £9 per ton, and to that freight would have to be added. Crude oil fluctuates a good deal in price. Speaking from memory the price of 4-in., 5-in., and 9-in. pipes is about £17 10s. per ton free on rails, Sydney, to which has to be added £3 for freight, making the cost delivered at Canberra about £21 10s. per ton. The pre-war price was £8 15s. per ton plus 30s. freight. The bulk of the pipes in use in the Federal Territory were manufactured by Hoskins Limited, and cost about £8 15s. per ton. They are equal to any produced in the world.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

THURSDAY, 19TH JUNE, 1924.

Present:

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

Senator Reid

Mr. Mackay

Mr. Cook

Mr. Mathews.

Mr. Jackson

Morgan Bruce Harry, Acting Chief Inspector, Postmaster-General's Department, sworn and examined.

35. *To the Chairman.*—The matter now being considered by the Committee was discussed some time ago between our Chief Inspector and officers of the Works

and Railways Department. The site met with the approval of our Department. I consider it suitable, but I do not know whether other sites were considered. I am not aware that only a little while ago the Advisory Board submitted a proposal to the Committee showing a post-office near the hostel. I have studied Mr. Griffin's plan of the city, but, not having visited Canberra, I am not personally familiar with the local conditions. I am acquainted with the fact that the Government has decided generally to carry out the original scheme, under which the Civic Centre and the general trading population will be situated on the north side of the river. Assuming that that development takes place, it will eventually be necessary to have another post-office on the southern side. The main post-office of the city should be established at the Civic Centre when the population in that vicinity warrants it. That seems to be the proper position for the main distributing post-office, but it will not be required for many years. At present there is a small office on the north side, known as Ainslie. It is located at the side of the Civic Centre, slightly to the north-east, and there is another post-office, an official one, to the south-west of the Civic Centre. When the proposed office is established at the secretariat building, probably a very large percentage of the business transacted at the official office will be transferred to the new premises, and it may be found unnecessary to continue that official office on that side. It is known departmentally as the Canberra office. If an office were erected near the bridge, and close to the hostel, it would not serve both sides of the river with any degree of convenience. I estimate that at least 80 per cent. of the business transacted will for many years be departmental. When the proposal was first considered, the examination was conducted by the Chief Inspector, Mr. Woodrow. So far as I am aware, he did not personally visit Canberra. I base the opinion I have expressed as to the suitability of the site upon information obtained concerning the settlement in the neighbourhood. I have discussed the matter with Mr. Murdoch and Mr. Daley, of the Works and Railways Department, who are familiar with the present conditions there. You ask me whether, seeing that it is estimated that there will be a big growth of population, a special examination should not have been made by my Department before committing itself to a site. I understand it is estimated that the population in 1926 will be 5,000, and in 1936, 7,000, an increase of only 2,000. Therefore, for at least ten years, so far as I can see, the proposed office will be in the most central position. While the settlement in the city area is so scattered, I think we can hardly establish a central office with any convenience to the general public. I, therefore, consider that it would be wise to defer for some years the question of the site for a central office. In the meantime the proposed building will act as the central office. It will also give reasonable facilities for settlement that may take place on the southern side of the river. The building now under consideration, if approved, will be used for all postal, telegraphic, and trunk line business. It will be an official post-office. I have seen the plan of the building, and it is large enough, and suitable in every way, for our requirements. It probably gives a little more accommodation than we shall require for the first few years. The total working space available is 1,792 square feet, whereas we could manage at the outset with 1,200 square feet. Ultimately, however, we may require the full area allotted. If development takes place as is anticipated, the building will not be too large. Both in design and accommodation it is very much on the lines of the post-offices now being erected by the Department. These offices are built after collaboration with our Department, and in every instance the designs are approved by us. The Works and Railways Department does not insist on its plans being adopted. So far as the accommodation is concerned, post-offices are built according to the wishes



of our Department, and not according to the ideas of the Works and Railways Department, although slight architectural alterations may be made by the Works and Railways Department. I understand that the present official office, known as Canberra, is in the present administrative building, but I am not able to say what amount of accommodation is provided. Two permanent officers are stationed there at present. Recently a continuous telephone exchange was established, and there are also some messengers who attend to the telephones at night. The office at Ainslie is an allowance office—that is, a non-official office conducted in a private building. The secretariat building is to be established adjacent to the post-office. When, within three or four years, the officials to be accommodated in the secretariat building are removed to the permanent Commonwealth offices, the proposed position of the post-office will still be reasonably convenient. I understand that the permanent offices will be only about a quarter of a mile distant from the present post-office site.

36. *To Mr. Mackay.*—The proposed post and telegraph office is intended for the convenience, not only of the Department, but also of the public resident in and around that area. I am aware that there will also be a post-office at Parliament House, but it is not the practice to make such an office available for public use. You ask me whether it is wise to erect a permanent post-office in connexion with buildings that will be used by the Department only for two or three years, when the principal business done will be departmental. I think it will be found advisable to retain this post-office portion of the building for many years for public convenience. The distance from the Civic Centre is about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles, and that is a much greater distance than we ask people in cities to go for postal facilities. It would not be practicable to depend on a central office to provide the whole of the facilities of the city. When the permanent buildings are erected, I think we shall need to provide a bigger post-office altogether, and something in the nature of a general post-office will be required, because it will need to be a central distributing office for the whole of the city area. I am satisfied that the site of the proposed office will be convenient for the permanent administrative offices when they are erected.

37. *To Senator Reid.*—We require for post-office purposes a building on square lines, with an open space, plenty of ventilation, and ample light. We have found that an open, square room, providing sufficient light and ventilation, is the most suitable for postal work. The division of a building into rooms for different classes of work is a mistake. Such an arrangement hampers supervision, and involves the double handling of postal matter. The proposed building at Canberra is laid out on the same lines as the new post-offices being erected to-day throughout the Commonwealth. There are double porches, and an entrance from those porches to the public area within. The position of the counter and the lay-out of the working space in the proposed building are very similar to that of the other post-offices. At present the business of the administrative officials is conducted at the public counter in the same way as that of the ordinary public. An office of the size contemplated would accommodate easily the business of a population of from 7,000 to 10,000 people.

38. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I am not aware that the Advisory Committee suggested a post-office in another position, about half a mile away from the proposed buildings, but I understand that at one time it was considered that the proper place for an office would be at the Civic Centre. I concur in the opinion of the Advisory Committee that the main post-office should be near the Civic Centre. It would be a distributing office. The time for such a building has not yet arrived. This is the first I have heard of a building to the south of the river, near Commonwealth-avenue. I understand that the people in the vicinity of the Civic Centre now do their postal business at the official

post-office at Canberra. Ainslie, being near the main road, would be used by people travelling along that road, and by those living in the vicinity. I can obtain for the Committee particulars of the volume of business transacted at Ainslie. The volume of business there is small compared with that transacted at Canberra. The revenue of the Canberra office for 1920-21 was £304, for 1921-22 it was £703, and for 1922-23 it amounted to £693. For the same years the expenditure was £104, £153, and £389 respectively. The increase for the last year was due to the establishment of an official post-office there. The reduction in postal rates caused the falling off in revenue during 1922-23. I think that the people living in the vicinity of the power-house would transact most of their postal business at Canberra. That office is a little nearer the power-house than the one at Ainslie, but the latter, being almost on the direct road, might obtain a share of the business.

39. *To Mr. Mackay.*—If the secretariat buildings were not erected where proposed, the selection of a site for a post-office would depend on how far away they were erected. Those offices would provide 80 per cent. of the business. That is one of the reasons for selecting this site, as the post-office should be in a position to take the bulk of the business. When permanent administrative buildings are erected, they will then be only a quarter of a mile away from the site of the proposed post-office, and, although the post-office would derive the greater portion of its business from the administrative offices, an office in the vicinity would still be useful for the business of those living in the locality. If the proposal to build permanent secretariat buildings was turned down in favour of temporary buildings, the erection of a permanent post-office on the proposed site would depend on the ultimate location of the permanent buildings for the secretariat. If those buildings were erected around the Civic Centre, I would not advocate the building of a permanent post-office in the position now proposed; but a post-office will be needed in the locality, even when there is a main distributing office at the Civic Centre. The distance of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles between this site and the Civic Centre is too far for the public to travel to obtain postal facilities. I do not think that the construction of this office should be delayed for, say, two years. As soon as the secretariat buildings are occupied, the Government Departments transferred to Canberra will need a post-office near by. The present office at Canberra would be over a mile away from the secretariat buildings, and would, therefore, not be convenient. I think it would be inadvisable and inconvenient to permit the office at Parliament House to be used as a public post-office, even as a temporary convenience. Until the area is thickly populated, the percentage of business from the general public at this office would be comparatively small. If the post-office were erected nearer the site of the permanent administrative offices, it would be more convenient for the departmental officials, but correspondingly inconvenient to the general public.

40. *To the Chairman.*—Assuming that the Committee turns down the proposal for permanent secretariat buildings, and recommends the erection of temporary offices, the maximum distance of the post-office from those offices should be about 500 or 600 yards. The present Commonwealth offices in Melbourne are able to do their postal business at the Bourke-street east public office. In addition, there is an office in the public buildings facing the Treasury Gardens, where money order and telegraphic business is dealt with. Mail matter is posted in a pillar outside. There is no necessity to have an automatic telephone exchange, and a post-office in the same building, but it would not be objectionable, provided there was no connexion between them.

41. *To Senator Reid.*—A telephone exchange should not be erected in a temporary building. The proposed post-office would never be the main post-office at Canberra. That should be at the Civic Centre. I have



studied the plan of Canberra, and my views are based largely on the information I obtained from it. I do not know whether Mr. Woodrow visited Canberra, but I do not think he did. The question of the cost and convenience of an ordinary telephone exchange as a temporary arrangement, instead of an automatic exchange, is one for the technical officers of the Department. So far as ordinary post-office business is concerned, any building would meet the requirements, so long as the room was large enough and was well lighted and ventilated. The business transacted at Canberra at present is very small.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

TUESDAY, 1st JULY, 1924.

Present:

Mr. GREGORY, Chairman;

Senator Barnes

Senator Reid

Mr. Cook

Mr. Jackson

Mr. Mackay

Mr. Mathews.

Major General Sir Cyril Brudenell Bingham White, K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., C.B., D.S.O., Chairman, Commonwealth Public Service Board of Commissioners, sworn and examined.

42. *To the Chairman.*—I am aware that the committee has had submitted to it a reference relating to the provision of accommodation for a Secretariat at Canberra. Semi-officially, Colonel Owen, in November last, mentioned the matter to me, but officially the board has not been asked to inquire into the needs of the departments and the staff they will require to have transferred from Melbourne to Canberra. Colonel Owen's question to me was whether the numbers should be ascertained by the Public Service Board, or whether he should obtain them from the departments. I replied that up till then no reference had been made to us, and that we could not take any action in the matter. The board has not considered the number of officers that will require to be transferred to Canberra when the Parliament meets there, and does not possess any data relating thereto. The Government has not forwarded to the board a copy of the letter addressed by the chairman of this committee to the Prime Minister on the 16th June, 1924. When arrangements are being made for the transfer of officers it will be the duty of the board to scrutinize the proposals of the departments, and to satisfy itself that those proposals are efficient and economical. It seems to me to be essential to know approximately the number of officers who will be transferred to Canberra when the Parliament opens there, to enable sufficient accommodation to be provided. I cannot say whether, in the early stages, executive officers will be located at Canberra, or whether the staff will be mainly utilized for transmitting matters to Melbourne. Before any transfers are made it will be necessary for the Public Service Board to consider the matter. The heads of departments must, however, take the initiative. The list which has been drawn up, and which sets out the requirements of the departments, at one glance is open to very considerable criticism, in that every section has provided for typists and record clerks. That would not be the point of view of the Public Service Board. If only a small number of officers is transferred to Canberra, the view of the board would be that a general typist and correspondence section should be set up for all departments. On the data that is already in my possession, my view is that a small general secretariat could be most economically and efficiently conducted. I am bound to point out that it depends on the character and personality of Ministers whether or not that would be possible. That is the most effective organization in the initial stages. The personnel ought to be transferred there permanently at the outset, and

permanent accommodation should be provided. I think it would be economical to have one large room, in which all the clerks could be properly superintended, and to have small facilities for the permanent heads. I should think the committee must have a thorough knowledge of what the Government proposes to do, and the staff it is intended to take to Canberra, before submitting any recommendation as to the type of buildings that will be required. It will be necessary to make some provision for the housing of the staff that is transferred. If officers are transferred permanently, and they are compelled to live apart from their families, a certain allowance will need to be provided because of that separation. I think it is very desirable that provision should be made to accommodate the officers who are transferred permanently. If the secretariat is not too elaborate, its services could be utilized in connexion with Canberra when not required in connexion with Parliament. I cannot see that there is any insuperable difficulty in the way of drawing up a definite scheme. During the initial stages it ought to be quite possible to lay down a definite plan. It ought to be possible, also, to make a definite plan for the beginning of the second stage, although it would not be possible to say when that second stage will actually begin. I am averse to any records being taken to Canberra until they can be housed permanently. The temporary location of minor records would not matter very greatly, but they should be returned to Melbourne when they are not required.

43. *To Mr. Jackson.*—I have expressed the hope that it will be possible to provide officers with living quarters for themselves and families before they are transferred. If that is not possible, we must transfer them permanently without their families, and make them an allowance. That would entail additional cost. As to whether it would be better to wait a little longer before moving to Canberra, I can only say that no action of any importance, whether in war or in peace, should be taken without due consideration and plans beforehand.

44. *To Mr. Mathews.*—The Public Service Board has the power to veto proposals by heads of departments. If we did not approve we would have to point out to the chief officer that it was a bad piece of organization, or that it was objectionable in other ways. If he refused to accept our view, and said he intended to carry out his original plan, the board would have the power to make representations to the Minister. If the Minister refused to listen to those representations, the board would be bound to report the matter to Parliament in its annual report. I cannot conceive either a permanent head or a Minister being so unreasonable, or our point of view being so erratic, that we would not be able to arrive at an understanding without having to report the matter to Parliament. If our plan were adopted, and found to be not workable, we would have to bear the responsibility that would be involved in any break-down in the department. Offhand I can say that we could effect economy on the present proposal by a system of grouping. In all probability we could reduce the number by at least 60 per cent. I think the matter should be referred to the board.

45. *To Senator Barnes.*—In the absence of living accommodation, allowances would have to be paid to officers who are compelled to live away from home. There is not, at present, any provision which enables officers so situated to visit their homes frequently. Such visits can be made only during their annual leave. So far that aspect of the matter has not been considered by me, but if particularly hard circumstances were placed around these men, we would have to give them special consideration. My opinion is that provision should be made for their families.

46. *To Mr. Mackay.*—I have not had an opportunity to examine the plans of the proposed building. When we know what is intended, it will be our duty to inquire into the accommodation that is proposed. Quite



possibly Colonel Owen considered that he brought the matter before me officially. I did not regard it as an official application, because he was not seeing me officially on that subject. He asked a question rather than placed before us a definite point. He wanted to know whether he should ascertain from the Public Service Board or from the departments what the proposals were regarding the staff. The board does not at any time, by any means, attempt to manage departments; that is the business of the departments concerned. We act on behalf of the Government, as its employment bureau. We procure its labour, and as far as arbitration admits we fix the rates of pay and other conditions of work. We promote officers, dismiss them, grant them leave, and all that sort of thing. We are bound, also, to make due inquiry to see that the departments are organized properly and manned efficiently, and that everything is done with due regard to economy. For that reason we periodically make inquiry into every department, and the various branches of those departments, to satisfy ourselves that too many officers are not being employed, or that the class of officer is suitable to the particular employment in which he is engaged. Every transfer has to have the concurrence of the board, which fixes the conditions under which the transfer is made. The Public Service Board, therefore, is concerned with this projected removal to Canberra. It must satisfy itself whether it is essential, according to the policy of the Government, to take a handful of officers out of the departments here and place them at Canberra. It must also decide whether the particular handful taken out is suitable for the purpose, and that the conditions of their removal are economical; that is to say, that those men are not being paid travelling allowances when cottages might be built for them. Then we are bound to consider the effect on the efficiency of the staff that remains. If you transfer portion of the staff to Canberra, and tell the remainder here that they have to carry on, if too many are taken I anticipate we will have a demand by the departments to replace those who have been sent to Canberra because difficulty is being experienced in carrying on. We will have to look into the matter from that angle, because we do not want to have the staff duplicated. Then we are more or less forced to go into the question of buildings. For instance, if we find that in a particular department two typists work in one room, two in another, and two in another, with no supervision, we suggest to the department that one big room in which all six could be properly supervised is a better piece of organization. For that reason we shall have to look into the proposals regarding the buildings at Canberra. I certainly think that the board should have been consulted before the plans were submitted to the committee, and that we should have had the data to enable us to give an opinion. As far as the Public Service Board is under any department, we deal with the Prime Minister's Department. If the arrangements have been made by a combination of Ministers they ought to have been passed on to us through the Prime Minister's Department for review, and the expression of any opinion we found necessary.

47. *To Mr. Cook.*—I have no official information, as Chairman of the Public Service Board, as to when the Parliament is to meet at Canberra. The transfer of a well organized secretariat probably could be carried out in time to be ready for the next Parliament if a suitable building can be provided. Then you are beset by the question of whether or not homes will be available for these people. Our view is that no transfer should take place until it can be made a permanent transfer; otherwise it would be unsatisfactory from every point of view, and uneconomical. I cannot estimate the number of officers that will be required, because I have not had the opportunity to examine the proposals that have been put forward. Before we could form an opinion we would have to be advised

by the Government of its intentions. We could then review the departmental proposals for meeting that policy, and make our suggestions for betterment.

48. *To the Chairman.*—I should not think there would be any insuperable difficulties in the way of carrying on the business of the departments with temporary offices in Canberra and the head offices in Melbourne, but one has to make due allowance for the personality and characteristics of the Ministers concerned. The telephone and telegraph would offset any inconvenience caused by the absence of records from the head office. I do not think confusion would be caused by taking the records to Canberra when they were required for the use of the Parliament. According to our records the Home and Territories Department at present has at Canberra 14 permanent officials and 157 temporary and exempt employees.

49. *To Senator Reid.*—The 157, I fancy, includes men engaged in surveying work. A certain number may be manual labourers, such as chainmen.

50. *To Senator Barnes.*—There are three major classes of employment under the Public Service Act. There is the permanent officer. There is the temporary employee who can be taken on at any time. For instance, when there is stress at the General Post Office they apply to us to take on twelve postmen or twelve sorters in the mail branch. They have to apply to the Public Service Board in every case, because we found that the engagement of temporary employees was rather abused, and that a good deal could be avoided. Then there are certain classes of men whom we cannot make permanent officers, and whom it is inconvenient to employ temporarily, in that temporary employment has to be renewed every three months. The class of person that we could take on as an exempt employee would be a man like an office cleaner. We could not make him a permanent public servant. A lot of women do that work. Supposing we had to employ a chainman for a surveyor in an out of the way place; it would not do to take him on as a permanent public servant, because it would be very inconvenient, although he may be employed for twelve months or more. So we employ him under an exemption. Every year we publish in the *Gazette* a list of the various trades and technical appointments which shall be exempt from the provisions of the Public Service Act. That means that they do not become public servants; we merely fix their rates of pay. In the Works and Railways Department there are, at Canberra, 22 permanent officers. I cannot state the number of temporary and exempt employees, but it is very considerable.

51. *To the Chairman.*—I do not know what space is at present provided for the officers at Canberra, or whether they could make room for a little general secretariat. In this temporary accommodation it would be unwise to incur any great expense in providing elaborate luncheon rooms. The officers could be provided with a place such as we have in our office, where they can have their meals.

52. *To Mr. Cook.*—Not all of the permanent officers at present at Canberra have their families with them. Those that have not are being made an allowance. I do not know what is the total sum involved. I cannot say offhand whether it would be cheaper to make such an allowance until the necessary accommodation could be provided without hurrying forward the building, or to rush forward its construction.

53. *To Mr. Mackay.*—Before making any recommendation the board would need to know the policy of the Government. It could then analyse the proposals of the departments and suggest what is the best thing to do. It will be necessary to go into every factor, including the buildings that are already at Canberra and the programme in contemplation. Before anything was done the Public Service Board might conveniently and properly have been asked for its views, in order to safeguard the Government from uneconomical or bad organization.



54. *To the Chairman.*—If we at once had furnished to us a statement of government policy, and the plans of the departments, we would need to send to Canberra one of our inspectors to acquire certain data. If the matter were made urgent we would take steps to submit recommendations as soon as possible, and I do not anticipate that it would take us much longer than a month.

55. *To Senator Reid.*—Speaking at a venture, I should say that in all probability the Public Service Board could be one of the last departments to be moved to Canberra. We are not only concerned with the central offices of departments; we are dealing with the whole of the states. The central offices comprise only a fraction of the work we do. It would not, therefore, be essential for the board to go to Canberra in the very early stages; but whenever Parliament so wishes it will go there quite cheerfully. I cannot say in what way the change would be likely to work, or whether our business can be conducted as well from Canberra as from Melbourne.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

WEDNESDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER, 1924.

*Present:*

Senator LYNCH, in the chair;	
Senator Barnes	Mr. Jackson
Senator Reid	Mr. Mackay
Mr. Cook	Mr. Mathews.

Major-General Sir Cyril Brudenell Bingham White, K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., C.B., D.S.O., Chairman, Commonwealth Public Service Board of Commissioners, recalled and further examined.

56. *To Senator Lynch.*—The proposal for the erection of the secretariat buildings at Canberra has been brought before me officially. I have made an examination of the plans, and I am conversant with the details. The principles laid down in the communication of the Prime Minister's Department to the board are, from the point of view of administration, the most suitable in the circumstances. The Prime Minister's letter estimates that the presence at Canberra of 160 officers will be necessary in the initial stages of parliamentary work there. I have examined those figures. It is not possible, at the present moment, to give the precise numbers. Much will depend upon the Government and the personnel of the Ministry at the time; but for all practical purposes it may be taken that the estimate of 160 officers is approximately correct under any system of staff organization. The Prime Minister's letter sets forth certain details of staff requirements. In practice this will probably be found to need some variation, but this variation will not, however, affect the number required, which may be set down as between 120 and 160 officers. Looking through the list it would appear that each department is making provision for typists and records and that class of officer. My view is that typists, correspondence, and records might very well, in the initial stages, be pooled. I have looked at the matter from that point of view, and in due course will make suggestions to the Prime Minister as to what pooling may be possible, but even then it will only be possible to effect a slight reduction on the figures. It might be possible to bring the number down to 120, but I should say that it will be somewhere between 120 and 160. When last I was before the committee I expressed an opinion in favour of the permanent transfer of Commonwealth officers to Canberra, believing that in the interests of economy, as well as the settlement of the officers concerned, this was very desirable. I have since made an investigation into the normal sessions of Parliament, and I find that, over a period of six years, the average number of sittings each year

has been 74, and the average length of session five months. It is not reasonable to suppose that Parliament will sit for a more prolonged period than five months in Canberra. Therefore, it would be necessary to find some other employment for officers who would be at Canberra for the other seven months of the year. I have looked into the matter from that aspect, and as far as I can foresee at the present time it will not be possible to find suitable employment for all of the officers transferred, consequently the major portion of them will have to be returned to head-quarters in Melbourne. This places out of the realm of possibility my desire to transfer officers permanently to Canberra from the outset, and suggests the wisdom of temporary transfers in order that the officers may be profitably employed for the whole of the year. The transfer immediately of the whole staff permanently to Canberra would not, I think, be in the best interests of the public. It seems very probable, looking at it from this period, that 100 or so will be temporarily transferred. It might be possible to find permanent employment at Canberra for the remainder, but travelling allowances will have to be paid during the time they are there to those who are temporarily transferred. For 100 officers the amount has been set down as approximately £550 per week. That figure is based on the assumption that Parliament will be sitting for at least five months in the year, and the amount will also vary according to the class of officers temporarily transferred. It is possible that it may be less than £500. The amount I have stated includes everything but railway fares to and from Canberra, and that expenditure will be considerable, as permanent heads of departments will have to go to and fro each week when Parliament is sitting. If Parliament is sitting for, say, three or four days each week those officers must return to Melbourne, and we shall also have to consider whether a portion of the 160 mentioned will have to return to Melbourne every week. If they do not there will be an inevitable demand on the central office for temporary assistance during the period the officers are working at Canberra. So far, we have not made any calculation as to the full number that will eventually be transferred to Canberra. We have dealt merely with the initial stage. I have been to Canberra, but not recently. I am acquainted with the accommodation that it is proposed to provide only from a perusal of the plans and from consultations with officers of the Works and Railways Department. I have made inquiries to ascertain whether there is any margin of existing space in which 160 officers could be accommodated, but the information supplied makes that appear impossible. I have superficially looked into the question of temporary structures being erected in preference to the proposal already before the committee, but this is a matter for the Minister for Works and Railways, not for the Public Service Board. I have given some thought to the question whether temporary cottages or something of that nature would not serve the purpose. After asking the Department of Works and Railways for an opinion on the point, it seems that architecturally, and from a works point of view, there would be as many disadvantages as advantages. I have discussed with the department the use to which this secretariat building can be put when it is vacated, and the officers have pointed out that in all probability the quarters which it is proposed to erect could be made available for a variety of other purposes, such as the separation of the Public Service Board from the ordinary public offices, and for the accommodation of other similar boards. One knows from experience that there is always a continual demand for additional space. I can give only a non-expert opinion that when this building is vacated there is every probability of it being profitably utilized. I do not consider it essential that the Public Service Board should be separated from other departments. I understand it has been suggested that the building, when vacated, could be used for the



accommodation of members of Parliament, but as that is outside my province I have not seriously considered the matter. I have given attention to the disadvantage it will be to the Service if a number of officers are temporarily transferred, and I believe that it would undoubtedly involve inconvenience and expense. I do not think it will mean an addition to the permanent staff, but it will undoubtedly necessitate additional temporary assistance during the time the central office staffs are depleted. I cannot claim to have made a close study of the internal arrangements of the building, but from a perusal of the plan, and by ascertaining the unit spaces allotted, it would appear a suitable building for the purpose contemplated. A little caution may be necessary in connexion with the provision made for postal and telegraphic facilities. I do not claim to be an expert, but it seems to me that greater space than is contemplated will, in practice, be required for both purposes. One can anticipate that the demand on these offices will rapidly increase, and I can visualize the employment of a considerable number of telegraphists as Parliament becomes accustomed to the system, and to the procedure to be adopted. In these circumstances there is just some doubt whether the accommodation provided is adequate. These offices may need to be enlarged, otherwise the building is a suitable one for temporary accommodation. It appears to me to be a convenience to have the Post Office and Telegraph Exchange in the main building. I understand that they will be used for public purposes, and I have no reason to urge why they should be in a separate structure. The Public Service Board does not contemplate moving to Canberra for some time, but eventually, of course, it will be established there.

57. *To Mr. Cook.*—The figures from the Prime Minister's Department show that 160 officers will have to be transferred. Much, of course, depends on the system adopted. The number might be reduced to 100, but I am allowing a margin of 60 to meet the varying requirements of different Ministers. I have not been able to estimate the approximate cost involved by the employment of additional temporary officers whilst transferred officers are working at Canberra, as so much will depend upon the manner in which the administration is conducted and the class of officer sent. Some departments may not need temporary assistance, while others will. Departments may find it necessary to bring back the major portion of their officers to work in Melbourne on the days when Parliament is not sitting. If the sitting days of Parliament were extended it would mean a reduction in cost because the officers would not then have to remain in Canberra for five months in each year. Accommodation is provided for 160 officers in the proposed building. At least 100 officers will have to be transferred. All the transferred officers will come from the central offices in Melbourne. I do not anticipate any Sydney officers being sent to Canberra. I understand that the proposed building will be in readiness by the time Parliament meets at Canberra, and I understand there will be no difficulty in the departments making the necessary staff arrangements in that time.

58. *To Mr. Mackay.*—The meeting of Parliament at Canberra will undoubtedly add to the administrative costs. The central offices will be in Melbourne until such time as a permanent transfer is made, which will, in my opinion, be impossible for some years. There will be a gradual removal of the principal administrative officers as accommodation is provided.

59. *To Senator Barnes.*—When the officers mentioned are transferred I am anticipating that we shall inevitably receive a demand from some departments for temporary replacements to make up for those who have been transferred. The demand will vary according to the particular department. I cannot give an estimate of the number likely to be required. One hundred

additional officers may not be needed; the number may vary from 20 to 50.

60. *To Mr. Mathews.*—In gauging the number of officials necessary to carry on departmental work either in Melbourne or in Canberra, we do not use any particular formula. The number is conjectural at its best, but is based on the probable demand that will be made at Canberra. We have a formula for certain branches in well established offices where data is available, but we could not apply a formula to this class of work. I have thought of the desirability of utilizing cottages for officers, but from an administrative point of view there are disadvantages in having units separated. It is easier to have the officers in a central building.

61. *To Mr. Jackson.*—I anticipate that there may be some difficulty in getting officers permanently to transfer to Canberra after the first novel part of the procedure has passed. I believe that the departments will send only efficient officers. If that is done, members should be assured of having the assistance of a capable staff.

62. *To Senator Reid.*—The minimum allowance paid to officers is 12s. per day, and the maximum 25s. per day. If this is not sufficient the Public Service Board will have to see that they get an allowance that is adequate. If the charge at the hostel is £1 per day we shall have to pay officers that amount. We have power under the regulations to increase allowances if we are satisfied that it is not sufficient. I am continually increasing allowances in cases where evidence discloses that an officer cannot live reasonably upon the amount provided, so that apart from the inconvenience of officers being away from their homes, the actual increase in the cost of living will, in the main, be met by the Commonwealth. As for the housing of the staff, I am given to understand by the Department of Works and Railways that, at the outset, there will be sufficient accommodation in the hostel for unmarried officers, and for a certain proportion of married officers. It would appear that the sooner the departments are transferred permanently to Canberra the better it will be for the Commonwealth from the point of view of economy, but this problem has to be looked at from other angles. We should have to set off against the saving that would be effected in travelling allowances the capital expenditure for the housing of the officers with their wives and families. We contemplate sending permanent officers to Canberra, and, if necessary, filling their places in Melbourne with temporary officers. We may assume that the departments concerned will exercise reasonable discretion in the class of officers sent to the Federal Capital. That is to say, that the officers are of the right class and capable of doing the work. Probably unmarried officers, if qualified, will be given preference over married officers.

63. *To Mr. Cook.*—My estimate of the weekly amount that will have to be paid to officers in travelling allowances does not include train fares. The amount required under this heading will depend largely on how often the officers are sent to and fro. A certain number may choose to take their wives and families to Canberra if accommodation is available. I am not prepared to say that the figure which I have given will be increased to £1,100 per week; the figure is largely conjectural.

64. *To Mr. Jackson.*—I have not considered whether, instead of contemplating an expenditure of £550 per week in travelling allowances, it would be more economical for the Government to pay board and lodging for the whole of its officers transferred to Canberra; nor have I considered the probable advantages of employing temporary hands at the Federal Capital. Obviously we could not send inexperienced men. I do not see how the employment of temporary hands would represent any saving, because we should still have to pay the allowances, even if officers were taken from Sydney, unless they were prepared to take up residence in Canberra, we should probably have to provide them with an allowance.



65. *To Senator Lynch.*—The Public Service Board has been furnished with a list of the probable staff requirements at Canberra. It is safe to say that this list will be subject to certain revision when Parliament is actually sitting there. It will be the duty of the board to see that the right class of officer is chosen for the positions available at the Seat of Government. As parliamentary activities increase there so must the estimate of the allowances necessary be added to unless, during the process, we can increase gradually the permanent transfer of a certain number of officers. The probable expenditure would, of course, be added to very considerably if the whole of the officers were brought back to Melbourne for three or four days each week. If Parliament sat on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and the officers were brought back to Melbourne by 9 o'clock on Saturday morning, the departments in which they were employed might be very glad of their services for Saturday morning, Monday, and Tuesday, and send them back by special train on Tuesday night. I do not assume, of course, that they would all be returned in that way, but if a large proportion of them were, the added expenditure on account of railway fares would, in all probability, double the amount I have given as being necessary for travelling allowances. I estimate that the travelling allowances paid to 100 officers for four days a week would be £300, and that if the whole of them were returned to Melbourne the railway fares would be £900, but if half the staff were retained at Canberra, and paid travelling allowances, there would be a saving of £400 in railway fares, but an addition of £120 to the amount to be provided for travelling allowances.

(Taken at Melbourne.)

FRIDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER, 1924.

Present:

Mr. GREGORY (Chairman);

Senator Barnes	Mr. Jackson
Senator Lynch	Mr. Mackay
Senator Reid	Mr. Mathews.
Mr. Cook	

Walter David Bingle, Secretary, Department of Works and Railways, sworn and examined.

66. *To the Chairman.*—I am aware that Parliament has asked this committee to investigate and report on a proposal to provide accommodation for departmental secretariats at Canberra, and that the motion submitted by the ex-Minister for Works and Railways (Mr. Stewart) was for "the erection of a building at Canberra for departmental secretariats, including provision for an automatic telephone exchange and post-office." About a year ago, when it was decided to expedite construction at the Federal Capital, arrangements were made to largely decentralize the work, and place it under the charge of the Director-General of Works, Colonel Owen, at Canberra, to whom I transferred my powers as permanent head. Since then Colonel Owen has acted more or less independently, so that I am not so much in personal touch with the matter as I was previously. You draw my attention to the fact that in explaining the motion in the House of Representatives, Mr. Stewart stated (*Hansard*, 29th May, 1924, page 1003)—

The building has been designed to afford, when vacated by the departments, official rooms of convenient size for members of Parliament, anticipating the probability of such provision being found to be a necessity at Canberra.

and again later—

A further building of similar size and design, but without post-office and telephone exchange, might possibly be erected at a site at the western side of the official area, to balance and correspond with the building now proposed.

I point out that I was not closely associated with the matter. I consulted with the officers who dealt with the proposal with the Minister, and I gathered that the primary object was to accommodate the secretariat staffs pending the completion of the permanent administrative offices, and at the same time to provide a building which would be useful for other purposes. One of the purposes mentioned was the provision of offices for members of Parliament. Since a previous Minister had directed that an office be provided for each member, this building was designed to allow of easy adaptation for that purpose, if desired, at a later date. It was thought that if not required for members there were other purposes for which the building could be used, such as offices for the Federal Capital Commission or the Public Service Board. It might be found useful for officers who could not be accommodated in the first administrative building. The committee is aware, of course, that it is proposed to vest the administration of the Federal Capital in a commission, and it is rather difficult at the present time to say definitely for what purpose the secretariat building will ultimately be used. I do not think anybody can say definitely at present that approval has been given to the provision in this building of offices for members of Parliament after it has been vacated by the officials. I understood that the committee desired to know whether this reference could in any way be treated as having regard to two buildings. I consulted the Acting Minister, and I am authorized by him to say that the Government intends to treat the present reference as applying to one building. The question of the erection of any additional building that may be required for the same purpose as that to which the secretariat building may ultimately be devoted, and which involves an expenditure of not less than £25,000, will be referred to the committee. All I know is that a building is required for secretariat purposes, and that its future use is a matter to be decided later as the circumstances demand when it is vacated. I have not been consulted in regard to the building of temporary offices until the new buildings are erected. I understand that it will be approximately four years before the permanent buildings are constructed and ready for use. The erection of temporary buildings to serve in the interim would not be an economic proposition if provisional buildings can be provided which can afterwards be used for other purposes. I think that there will always be a demand for official accommodation at Canberra, and I think it was indicated by the Minister in his speech that an office for each member of Parliament might be provided as was done at Washington, or, as I have already suggested, the administrative staff of the Territory might take the building for its head-quarters.

67. *To Senator Lynch.*—I should not say that there was any likelihood of the Government erecting the second building in instalments in order to avoid referring the proposal to this committee. The Acting Minister said that it was the intention of the Government to treat the present reference as referring only to the secretariat building. I have not given much consideration to the subject of providing either temporary or permanent accommodation at Canberra for Commonwealth officials. The matter has been out of my hands. If allowances and railway fares for officers who would be stationed at Canberra for about twenty weeks in the year would mean an expenditure of about £20,000 a year, I think it would be preferable to arrange permanent location at Canberra for them as soon as possible. I should think that arrangements could be made to accommodate them during the whole session, and that there would be no need for the majority of them to return to their homes at week-ends, but I have not given the matter much consideration.

68. *To Mr. Mackay.*—I am aware that the proposed secretariat building will cost £39,000. The proposal, as far as I understand it, is for the accommodation for



officials only until the permanent administrative buildings are ready. You ask me whether the department has not looked ahead and considered what is to become of this building after two or three years' occupancy. I think you will have to direct that question to Mr. Murdoch. I cannot answer it definitely, and I do not think anybody else can at the present time. The commission, when appointed, will make recommendations on such matters to the Ministry. The previous Minister who left the instruction concerning rooms for members was Mr. King O'Malley.

69. *To Mr. Cook.*—I prefer the proposed building to temporary accommodation, provided that full use of it will be made afterwards. From what I can gather from inquiries of the officers, I imagine that the ex-Minister (Mr. Stewart) rather hoped that the committee would express some opinion on the matter of providing an office for each member. So far as I know he favoured the idea, but I do not absolutely know his mind on the subject.

70. *To Senator Reid.*—Whether or not rooms will have to be found for members is for the Government to decide, but the department understands that such provision may have to be made. Until the instruction left by Mr. King O'Malley is countermanded, the department brings it under the notice of his successors. You ask me whether the provision of these rooms is the definite policy of the department. My reply is that each Minister will have to consider the question for himself. As far as I know the ex-Minister thought it was worthy of some consideration or he would not have mentioned it in so marked a manner in bringing forward the motion for this reference, but at the same time I think he would have been glad to have an ex-

pression of opinion from the committee. It is not within the province of a departmental officer to dictate to members of Parliament as to what they should have. It may be taken that one of the matters at the back of the mind of the department is the provision of offices for members.

71. *To Mr. Mathews.*—I think that it has been generally understood from the inception that members would be provided with offices.

72. *To Senator Lynch.*—If the proposed building is not erected some other accommodation will have to be provided for the secretariat. Until such time as it is decided to remove the officials from the secretariat building to the permanent building, the provision of other accommodation for, say, 160 officers would be avoided.

73. *To Mr. Mackay.*—When the proposed building is completed I should say that the erection of the permanent offices would still be a matter of urgency, otherwise we should be unable to move the departments to Canberra. The secretariat building is, after all, a temporary expedient to enable official business to be opened up at Canberra. Until we have the permanent offices there will not be sufficient room for the Central Administration. It is intended to move the Central Administration to Canberra immediately the permanent offices are ready. I take it that the secretariat building is required to tide us over the period that must elapse before the permanent offices are provided. My opinion is that when the secretariat building is vacated by the departments it will be used for offices for members, unless required for more urgent purposes.

*The Committee adjourned.*