

41. When you were asked just now whether it would be better to have a separate building for this Department or whether it would be better to have a wing of the proposed Civil Service building, you said that you should not be too far away. What did you mean by that?—Well, other Departments are continually referring to us, and if we were a long way off it would mean messengers continually going from one to the other.

42. What other Departments?—The Lands Department a great deal, the Public Works Department and Public Health Department very often, and the Old-age Pensions Department are continually coming in for searches, for documents, and continually referring to us.

43. *Hon. Mr. Hall-Jones.*] I should like to know whether the Native Department has any strong-room accommodation in the departmental wooden building at all?—None whatever.

TUESDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1908.

HORATIO JOHN HOOPER BLOW examined. (No. 3.)

1. *The Chairman.*] You are Under-Secretary for Public Works?—Yes.

2. You have been asked to attend here this morning, I understand, with a view of stating what accommodation your Department requires, how you are situated at present with regard to accommodation, and what further accommodation is wanted. The Committee would also like you to state generally the position of the several public departments in relation to the present offices—whether there is sufficient accommodation, and, generally, what further accommodation, if any, is required?—Well, considering the present Departmental Buildings were erected thirty years ago for the accommodation of the Government staff as it existed then, it is manifestly too small for the staff that exists to-day. Since the Departmental Buildings were erected separate accommodation has been provided in the new Customhouse for the Customs, Marine, and other Departments; the Railway Offices have been erected, providing accommodation for that Department, and the Post and Telegraph officers have been removed from the Departmental Building and accommodated in the Post Office. Notwithstanding that, we are renting buildings at the present time.

3. There are also new buildings being erected for the Public Trust Department?—But that is an outside trading Department, and is hardly regarded as part of the Government service. It is on the same footing as the Government Insurance Department, which has to provide buildings for itself or pay rent. The Public Trust people are paying rent where they are. The Government Insurance Department in some places is paying rent, and in other places is letting offices. The number of officers accommodated in the Government Buildings is 670. Only comparatively recently the accommodation was extremely congested, but the addition of the new wing at the north end has relieved the pressure, and I do not think there is now congestion in any Department. Nevertheless, no single Department has any more space than it needs, and to provide for the annual growth of the Government service it is obvious that further accommodation must be provided again at no distant date. Furthermore, the accommodation that we have is not really sufficient for the staff as now employed, as the Government is paying in rents something over £3,000 for office accommodation in Wellington.

4. Then you consider that in the very near future extended accommodation will necessarily have to be provided for the public service?—As a measure of economy, I think it would be wise to erect further buildings at once. The interest on the cost of a new building would probably be less than the amount we are now paying for rent.

5. Have you formed any opinion as to the expediency of making further additions to the old wooden building, also in wood?—Yes, I have a very strong opinion on that point. I hope we have made the last addition to that building. At present we have the majority of our eggs in one basket, and the calamity that would happen to the public service if that building were to be destroyed by fire is too awful to contemplate: it would paralyse the whole machinery of Government.

6. Is it possible to extend that building so as to provide sufficient light to the rooms, and so on? It has been extended twice already, but is it possible to further extend it?—Yes, it is possible; the wings have already been lengthened, and could be lengthened further.

7. And would still give sufficient light and air?—The circumstances would be exactly similar. We could prolong the wings to the boundary of the land if necessary, and there would be just as good light as there is to the existing portion.

8. You mentioned that some Government Departments were paying rent up to the amount of £3,000: what are those buildings, and where are they situated?—There are offices in Menteath and Beere's building, Ballance Street, rented for the Old-age Pensions Department at a rental of £70 per annum; offices in Routh's building, in Featherston Street, rented for the Electoral Department at a rental of £340 per annum; offices in the Wellington Investment Company's building, on Lambton Quay, rented for the Friendly Societies' Department at a rental of £200 per annum; a house rented at No. 1 Hill Street for the Public Works Department at a rental of £192 per annum, which includes furnishing, fuel, light, &c.; offices in Butler Bros.' building, rented for the Land and Income Tax Department at a rental of £250 per annum; offices in St. George's building, in Panama Street, rented for the Inspector of Weights and Measures at a rental of £65 per annum; offices for the Registrar of Births in the Government Insurance building, £135 per annum—but perhaps as that is paid to another branch of the Government it should not be included. There are also offices rented for the Agricultural De-