

partment in Wood's building, at a rental of £100 per annum, and the Labour Department has extensive offices in Customhouse Quay and Lambton Quay at a rental of £620 per annum. The Tourist Department rents rooms in Panama Street at £600 a year, rooms in Nathan's building at £80 a year, and rooms in the Star Chambers at £65 a year.

9. *Hon. Mr. Guinness.*] The Tourist Department had rooms in three different places?—Yes. The Health Department rents rooms in Brandon Street at a rental of £260 per annum, and the Marine Department rents offices on Customhouse Quay, for Captain Edwin and his staff, at a rental of £140 per annum; and, in addition to those, the Postal Department rents several suites of offices, but I have not taken those into consideration, because they are all temporary, and will be given up when the new General Post Office is erected.

10. *The Chairman.*] Is that the complete list?—Yes, that is the list as far as I know. It is quite complete as far as the rentals paid by the Public Works Department are concerned, but as regards the rentals paid by other Departments I cannot say for certain that the list is complete.

11. *Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] The total is £3,117?—Yes.

12. *The Chairman.*] Now, in the event of new Departmental Buildings being erected elsewhere, so as to relieve the possible future congestion of the buildings on Lambton Quay, have you formed any idea as to which Departments could be most conveniently moved first?—No, I have not gone into that question.

13. I wanted to arrive at what accommodation would be required. Supposing the Public Works Department were removed to a new building, what accommodation would that Department require?—The Public Works Department would require at least as much room as it at present possesses, and a little more.

14. That would mean, how many rooms?—Of course, how many rooms is a question which depends on the size of the rooms. We have now one room 42 ft. long and 33 ft. wide in the present buildings. If all the rooms were of that size we should not require many. I think we have about sixteen rooms at present in the Departmental Buildings.

15. Is that including the strong-room?—No, I am not counting the strong-rooms.

16. One would be necessary?—We use three at present. Our strong-room accommodation must be extensive. All our plans, which run up to many thousands now, must be taken care of. The plans are worth from £1 to £2 a sheet, and there are all our signed contracts, besides the books, for which we need extensive strong-room accommodation.

17. *Hon. Mr. Guinness.*] But those contracts become obsolete after six years?—They do not become obsolete for our purposes; they often have to be looked up, as members are continually calling for returns.

18. *The Chairman.*] It means that in the event of further accommodation being provided for the Public Works Department you would want sixteen rooms in addition to strong-room accommodation?—Yes.

19. You have three strong-rooms at present, but if it was large enough one would be sufficient?—Yes, of course.

20. *Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] Have you formed any opinion as to the desirability of extending the present wooden buildings on Lambton Quay towards the back?—Yes, I have formed a very decided opinion that there ought to be no further additions to that building. We are in a very precarious position. I believe there is no building in New Zealand that is taken more care of from the point of view of fire-prevention than that building is, but, at the same time, it is the unexpected that often happens, and if that building were to take fire and were to be destroyed, the whole machinery of government of this country would be paralysed.

21. Are you in favour of a continuous block of buildings as we have now in the Government Buildings even in the event of the erection of buildings elsewhere?—No, I do not think I am. I think even from a picturesque point of view separate blocks would be desirable, and also from the point of view of fire; but, of course, if the building were to be fireproof there would not be so much objection on that account. If the system were followed out of erecting a properly constructed fireproof building we should be fairly well protected from fire.

22. Is it or is it not a fact that many of the Departments in the Government Buildings, from the circumstances in which they are placed, are unable to be provided with strong-room accommodation for their documents overnight?—Yes, that is so.

23. So that in reality every Department should have its separate strong-room leading from its own office for storing its documents in overnight?—I should prefer a fireproof building, and then every room would be a strong-room. All we want is protection from fire. We do not fear burglars.

24. But if the building were intended to be fireproof there would also be strong-rooms provided?—Yes, for the more valuable documents.

25. Is it not a fact that many of the Departments have not got strong-room accommodation in the building now?—There is not sufficient strong-room accommodation. The Public Works Department has not got sufficient, and the bulk of our plans are not in the strong-rooms.

26. Have you considered at all the question of making provision by the way of extension for the future by erecting departmental buildings?—Well, if we were to be tied to the present site I should advocate the erection of a building that would serve for two or three Departments to start with, making that the nucleus of the new building. A complete new building, of course, could not be erected until the present one is moved out of the way.

27. Is there room on the present Departmental Buildings site to commence that?—There is not very much room, but still there is a fair area on the Featherston Street side by building up to the street-line.

28. That is where the Telephone Exchange is?—Yes. You would have to move the house of the Officer in Charge, and work back towards the present building.