

22. But from the point of view of concentration and saving of money in the way of rental, and having the buildings in close proximity to one another, the inconvenience the lawyers might feel for the time as against going from their offices to the Government Insurance Buildings could only be saved by building in the locality of the Government Insurance Buildings?—That is so. The profession, of course, are largely to be considered in the matter. They have to go to the Stamp Office in the Departmental Buildings, and then they have to come to our office to register their deeds.

23. So that they have two trips to make—one to the Departmental Buildings, and the other to the Government Insurance Buildings?—Yes.

24. And by having the whole of the buildings put together that would be obviated in any case?—Yes.

25. *Hon. Mr. Guinness.*] You said you have only six rooms now in which you locate your twenty-eight officers: is it not a fact that a large number of the public are in those offices during the course of the day?—A very large number.

26. What would you say is the maximum number that you have in there sometimes?—I should say it frequently reaches two hundred to three hundred in a day. It is difficult at the present time for those of our staff who have to go through the register books to make entries to get access to them on account of the crowd of people in the strong-room.

27. What would be about the maximum number that would be there at one time?—I should think it is not an uncommon thing for there to be twenty-five persons at the counter seeking to register deeds, and in the main search-rooms perhaps there would be thirty to forty at the one time making searches.

28. *Hon. Mr. Carncross.*] You say there are sometimes as many as thirty people searching in the strong-room?—Yes.

29. Who are those people?—Solicitors' clerks, solicitors, and the public generally.

30. They conduct the searches themselves?—Yes.

31. They do not have access to the documents?—Yes, they can under supervision.

32. Then, there must be some difficulty in controlling it if there are as many as thirty people in this small place?—It is very inconvenient indeed.

33. Anybody with felonious intent might get away with some of the documents?—Yes.

GEORGE FREDERICK COLIN CAMPBELL examined. (No. 5.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position in the service?—Valuer-General.

2. *Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] You have made a valuation of the block on which the present Departmental Buildings stand?—Yes.

3. What is that valuation?—The total valuation made by the Department of the Government Buildings site, without the building itself, is £264,900. That is assuming, of course, that a certain time elapses in which to realise the block. Personally, I do not think the Government should sell any of the land. I think the best way of cutting up the block would be to run a street from Lambton Quay through to Featherston Street. The proposals which were put before the Committee by Mr. Blow correspond with the proposals of the Department for cutting up the block. The proposal according to plan No. 2, in my opinion, is the most suitable way of cutting it up. The total valuation of the block is assessed by the Department at £264,900, assuming it could be cut up in the way suggested with a 66 ft. street right through the centre of the block.

4. To make that clear, that is the total valuation of the Department in accordance with the suggested proposal on plan No. 2 submitted by Mr. Blow?—Yes.

5. With one street only from Lambton Quay to Featherston Street?—Yes. I have not confirmed the areas or values which he gave. The areas he has taken seem to be different from the areas I have taken. I have taken 90 ft. as the depth to each street, and I think he has taken different measurements, but the difference in area is not very marked.

6. It is a fact that I authorised you to make a special valuation of that property a short time ago?—Yes, in July last.

7. And that valuation you produce now is the outcome of your valuation made at that time?—Yes.

8. Were the valuations of the Department's officers utilised as well?—Yes.

9. So that this is a careful valuation?—Yes.

10. The valuation is not based on any prospective values?—There is taken into consideration the fact that the railway-station is to be built, and that Featherston Street will become an important street.

11. What I mean is that you are not making that valuation on the basis of what that property may be worth in a period of years?—It is to-day's value under those conditions.

12. That valuation has taken into account nothing for the present building on that site?—It omits the present Government Buildings.

13. *Hon. Mr. Guinness.*] In other words, that is the unimproved value?—Yes.

14. *Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] What would be a fair percentage for leasing purposes upon the value of that land?—It depends a good deal upon the conditions of the lease. If the conditions of the lease are favourable to the tenant, of course the rental may be a little bit higher than otherwise; but we generally take 5 per cent. on the unimproved value as a fair percentage. That is the amount fixed by law as the basis on which to make a valuation of leasehold interests.

15. *Hon. Mr. Guinness.*] Do you think that if the lease for those sections provides for the insertion of the clause known as the Glasgow lease, that that percentage is a fair rental?—Yes.

16. When would you have your revaluation—every twenty-one years, thirty years, or sixty-six years?—I should say every twenty-one years.