

50. Do you think it would be disadvantageous if we were to close up Sydney Street?—Yes, I do. The frontage along Molesworth Street is not one-sixth of that along Sydney Street.

51. But, supposing you closed Sydney Street to Charlotte Street just along the width of that ground, would there be sufficient frontage there with that portion thrown in?—There certainly would not.

52. *Hon. Dr. Findlay.*] Would it not facilitate the shape and position of your buildings if you had the Parliamentary Buildings site contiguous to the Government House site? Does not the severance of the two pieces of land by Sydney Street create difficulties in the shape and position in regard to the erection of the buildings?—I do not think it does. If Sydney Street were closed you would have to provide some other thoroughfare in its place, and very nearly in its position, otherwise you would not have sufficient access to your Departmental Buildings.

53. That is on the assumption that there is a severance, but on the assumption that there is no severance you would have Molesworth Street, Hill Street, Sydney Street, and Charlotte Street, and you could put your buildings where you like, and you could have several frontages to the other buildings?—But I think the possibility of that hardly exists. You would not, for example, care for any of the Departmental Buildings to encroach on the site of the Parliamentary Buildings, and if that is not done you have no more land available for Departmental Buildings.

54. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] You mentioned that you had three strong-rooms in the present Government Buildings for your Department: do you consider that in the event of a fire breaking out in that building the papers in the strong-rooms would be safe from fire?—The strong-rooms are quite safe from fire, I think, if the falling portions of the building did not damage them. The walls are very thick—between 2 ft. and 3 ft. thick, I think—and they are furnished with suitable fireproof doors. There are no ventilators, so that there is no means of fire or gas gaining an entrance to the strong-rooms. I think they are perfectly safe unless the falling members of the building damaged them. If the building fell in very large sections it is possible that the strong-rooms might topple over, and thus be destroyed.

55. You mentioned just now that the old Parliamentary Buildings site was a very unsuitable one for erecting a new Parliamentary Building on?—Yes.

56. Would the same conditions not exist in regard to erecting the Departmental Buildings there?—I do not think so. Possibly I may be wrong, but I have conceived the idea that a building in the nature of a Parliament Building should stand in its own grounds, and should not be built up to the street-line as you would do in the case of offices; but as for the Departmental Buildings I do not see why they should not be built up to the street-line. In fact, that is the course I should advocate.

57. Are you aware that the contract which was cancelled some time ago did provide for the building going up to the street-line in Sydney Street?—Yes.

58. Was there any objection to that?—It turned out that the foundations on the actual street-line just where these buildings were to be erected were much deeper than were anticipated, and it added to the expense considerably.

59. That is not the point. You said there was an objection to the Parliamentary Buildings going up to the street-line. Would not that objection exist under the old plan that was approved of?—I think it did occur to the designer of the building, but he had to do the best he could to utilise the then existing structure. I do not think they would have been brought up to the street-line if the entire site had been clear and available for building on.

60. If Sydney Street were closed, and without intrenching at all upon the grounds on which it is proposed to erect the new Parliamentary Buildings, would there not be access to another large building-area there? It might intrench upon Sydney Street, for instance, but you would have access to it from Charlotte Street?—That is the only point of advantage that occurs to me. If Sydney Street were closed you would have the end abutting on Charlotte Street available for building on.

61. And also provide an entrance?—Yes. You would have to lay off what would practically be streets on your own property.

62. There would be access there?—You would, of course, have to have access. I said that if you closed Sydney Street you would have to provide what would be tantamount to another thoroughfare. You would require access by conveyance, and Sydney Street is narrow enough now, and I do not think you would be likely to provide a thoroughfare much narrower. If you lost the whole of that Sydney Street access it would be a disadvantage, and you would have to provide something in its place.

63. In regard to the site where the present Departmental Buildings are, you are of opinion that, instead of building one large building there or anywhere else, it would be better to have three or four separate detached buildings, on account of the risk of fire?—I think so; but I do not attach much importance to that point if an entirely fireproof building is erected.

64. What do you call a "fireproof building"?—A building that is erected wholly of steel, stone, and other incombustible materials; floors of concrete and roof of concrete, with no timber in it. The roof of the new Post Office is to be in concrete.

65. Have you heard of other fireproof buildings being destroyed by fire?—So-called fireproof buildings.

66. Do you know the Polytechnic in London?—No, I do not.

67. Well, the whole building was supposed to be fireproof, and yet it was burned?—I would not call a building fireproof unless there was practically no timber in it at all.

68. You think the present site of the Departmental Buildings is a better site for Departmental Buildings than the old Parliamentary Buildings site?—I think it is; but, of course, if the thing is to be looked at from an economical point of view, no doubt a large sum could be derived from the sale or lease of the present Departmental Buildings site.