

22. *Hon. Mr. Carncross.*] Is the present Museum built entirely of wood?—Yes, entirely of wood. The greater part of it has been built since 1867, and the timber is a good deal affected by the beetle.

23. Then, if it took fire would there be any chance of saving it?—There would be no chance of saving any of it. What would not be destroyed by fire would be destroyed by water.

24. Have you any protective measures provided?—Yes; during the last few months the Government has placed a night-watchman on the premises, which was never done before, and the fire-alarms have been connected direct with the Fire-brigade Station.

25. And you say if there was a fire the loss would be irreparable?—Yes.

26. *The Chairman.*] You have mentioned that a large-enough building could be built on an area of 200 ft. by 100 ft.?—I should not like to bind myself down to that—that is a rough estimate.

27. You do not, in giving that estimate, contemplate a single-story building?—No; that would be providing for a three-story building, as against the old plans, which were for a two-story building.

28. A building covering that area would require to be three stories?—Yes.

29. Are you aware whether any inquiry has been made or any rough estimate formed as to what cost would be involved in putting up a building of that description?—No, I am not.

30. *Hon. Mr. Bowen.*] You have looked at the site where the lawn-tennis court is?—Yes.

31. Do you think it is far-enough away from the banks, and sunlit enough, for a building?—Well, of course it is not an ideal site, but it is a good site. The position is such that the small disadvantage would be outweighed by the position. It would have to be arranged so that that would not be of material importance.

32. *Right Hon. Sir J. G. Ward.*] Outside of those two, there are no sites that you know of in Wellington?—No.

33. It is a fact that a number of curios and valuable articles in the Museum are stowed away because you cannot exhibit them?—A large quantity. It would be difficult to give an idea. I said fifty per cent., and I do not think that is an unreasonable estimate of what are not exhibited.

34. What effect is the building having upon the exhibits?—It is deteriorating them. With regard to the Maori work, some of the older specimens are wood, and they are being affected by the beetle in the building.

35. You are aware that that has been recognised by the Government, and that we were just about to accept a tender to get over the difficulty?—Yes.

PETER HEYES examined. (No. 7.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—Commissioner of Taxes, and Government Advances to Settlers Office Superintendent.

2. Will you inform the Committee whether you have at present sufficient accommodation for those Departments?—We have not; no.

3. Where are you at present located?—Partly in the Government Buildings and partly in Butler's building.

4. Then, the Department occupies separate premises?—Yes.

5. In different places?—Yes; there is an overflow.

6. So far as the accommodation in the Government Buildings is concerned, is it satisfactory?—No, it is very much overcrowded at present. The present building is very unsuitable for large offices; it was only intended for a number of small offices.

7. And, being a wooden building, I presume it is subject to fire?—Yes, decidedly so, and very hazardous.

8. Do you think it would be advantageous that your books, documents, and papers should be kept in a building not open to that risk?—We have about sixteen million securities in the Advances to Settlers, and about fifteen thousand mortgages and records; and the Land-tax and Income-tax records and files are most valuable, which, if destroyed, would be most disastrous and irreparable.

9. How are you provided with strong-rooms?—We have a good strong-room there at present; but, of course, only the actual deeds are put into the strong-room. All the files containing all the particulars and details have to be left in the wooden cupboards, also the records of the Land and Income Tax Department.

10. Is it desirable to have strong-rooms so as to place all the documents in?—Yes, or in fire-proof offices.

11. Have you given any consideration to the question as to a suitable site for new offices supposing new offices were to be built?—No. Some years ago the Government was strongly urged to build suitable fireproof offices for those Departments on the vacant land at the rear of the present Government Buildings.

12. How do you think it would suit the public convenience if you had offices placed on the old Parliamentary Buildings site?—I think it would be a most convenient site.

13. And if other public offices were placed on the same ground in separate buildings adjacent thereto, that would also answer your purposes, would it?—Yes, that is so.

14. Can you give the Committee any idea of the number of rooms you would require in the new building—the amount of space?—I have no idea as to the measurement of the space we should require, but with the development that is going on in the Department we should require at least double the space we have now.

15. How many rooms have you?—We have two large rooms and seven small rooms, and this is what we should require at least in any new building, only of increased dimensions and more suitably arranged.