

The Regista in March 5046 ⁷³⁶

Public Library President's Views.

Members of the North Terrace Reserves and Railway Centres Commission met at Parliament House on Tuesday morning. There were present:—Messrs. Smeaton (Chairman), Laffer, Gump, Green, M.P.'s, and the Hon. J. H. Cooke and J. Carr. The President of the Public Library Board (Mr. W. J. Sowden), the General Secretary (Mr. J. R. G. Adams), and the Secretary of the South Australian Football League (Mr. F. Marlow) gave evidence.

The Chairman, in opening, said he was pleased that a recent impression, derived by the Public Library Board from an inaccurate report of evidence, had been removed with regard to the allotment of land for that institution. The commission had every desire to assist it in allotting such lands as would be required for its future expansion.

Mr. Sowden—I should like to withdraw from the commission a letter which was sent under the misapprehension indicated. We felt at the time in the position of Naboth when his vineyard was threatened. (Laughter.)

The Chairman—There is an allotment of land on which the Public Library buildings stand. That land consists of 3½ acres, and the idea is that we should give an equal area at the rear of these buildings, or about another three acres. Do you think that would meet the views of the Public Library? Witness—I should think it ought fairly to cover the needs, all things considered. The completed design for buildings on the land now available was for a quadrangle, with a three-story building to occupy the front facing North terrace. In my calculations regard is paid to the fact that in a museum—whether of natural history or art—the specimens must be arranged so that they can be seen all round. Further, it would be wrong in a climate like ours to occupy all the land with buildings, and have no breathing and planting spaces. One fact which made us so apprehensive when we thought our scope for extension was threatened was that although only last December His Excellency opened the new wing, which cost approximately £40,000, yet to-day we have not enough room to put in it anything like all the museum specimens available. I would like to say that while in a public library books deteriorate, specimens in the Museum constantly appreciate; and so with the Art Gallery. Fifty years hence the Museum may be worth 50 per cent. more than it is now. Our Public Library, too, in my judgment, receives a great deal more of solid, practical value for its money than the average public library, because it does not spend it on literary curios. A first-folio Shakespeare, for instance, might cost £5,000, but for the purpose of the reader and the student a 5/ edition would have the same worth.

Do you get many gifts of rare books?—No, the gifts in this direction are not very lavish, probably because of the very rarity of them. We are now arranging with the Government for the storage of archives, so that we can have a complete set of the documents dealing with the history of South Australia, and that will require more space. We have the most valuable ethnological collection in the world, from a South Australian, if not an Australian point of view, and to medical and other students at the University it is of great importance.

—Duplication Avoided.—

The Hon. J. H. Cooke—Have you considered the question of co-ordination with the University?—We have. We gave a valuable set of 3,000 medical works to that body on the ground that it would be more convenient to the students to have them in the University library than in our own. We have established a free juvenile library—the first connected with such an institution in Australia—and the success of the experiment is beyond all expectations. In winter we have a series of free lectures in the Art Gallery, and they are greatly attended. In connection with the University we aim to avoid duplication.

Can you give us any idea of your spending power?—The contents of the buildings are insured for £124,000. The total cost of the paintings in the Art Gallery is £50,000—about half the price of one old-country masterpiece. The buildings and contents represent a total expenditure of nearly a quarter of a million, to which must be added the value of the land. We have received about that amount amounting to £24,000.

and also a number of valuable works of art and other collections. Our annual vote is £9,817. Of that, £7,500 is spent on salaries—an important item, in view of the specialists engaged—and contingencies absorb the remainder. The Zoological Society gives us valuable assistance. When the animals die the Museum receives them. As an illustration of the value of this concession, I may say that if the figure of Miss Siam, an elephant formerly at the Zoo, had had to be purchased, it would have cost at least £500. We got it for nothing, except the preparation.

By Mr. O'Connor—My impression is that there is waste on account of duplication, in the somewhat kindred institutions on North terrace. I do not think that the School of Mines should have a museum in any way duplicating the National one, or vice versa. The former should be limited to specimens which would be useful to students in their practical work; and the latter to those possessing distinctive features.

You would not like to see the University removed from North terrace?—No, and in this connection we have claimed nothing like the area of land that the University has rightly stated that it requires for its expansion.

In reply to a member, regarding the possibility of railway development to the east. Mr. Sowden said he thought it might be possible to construct an underground railway in the vicinity, which would not interfere with the present sites. The land could be elevated, if necessary, and the site made a two-story one, so to speak. Personally, he saw no reason why a residential college should not be apart from the University, as the facile conditions of traffic were vastly different from what they were 20 years ago. On the other hand, the land space problem was not so serious now as it was before the introduction of lifts.

Mr. Green—What is there in connection with the School of Mines museum, which you consider ought to be attached to the Library?—I am not reflecting upon the School of Mines at all, but just casually I may say, for example, that that museum has a remarkable acrolite, which ought to be in the National Museum, and a model substituted for students, and the National Museum could give a quid pro quo in exchange.

—Aid to Students.—

Mr. J. R. G. Adams (General Secretary of the Public Library Board) explained, with regard to the relationship of the University, that the board had endeavoured to meet the requirements of the latter by providing a special students' room. They had shaped their policy for many years, in order not to overlap. Arrangements had been made between the two bodies, whereby a certificate from the Librarian would be recognised by the University Library, so that a person might go to the University, and peruse a medical book, for instance.

Mr. Sowden subsequently invited the members of the commission to inspect the buildings under the control of the Public Library Board, and judge for themselves the need for expansion.

—A Fine Sports Ground.—

Mr. F. Marlow (Secretary of the South Australian Football League) said that during the past 24 years he had been associated with sports, and considered the Jubilee Oval was essential as a sports ground. In the matter of eastern railway extension, he was of opinion that there was ample room for a line without interfering with the oval, which would be one of the finest playing grounds in South Australia if it were enlarged.

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NORTH-TERRACE RESERVES.

MEETING OF THE COMMISSION.

The North-terrace Reserves and Railway Centres Commission sat at Parliament House on Tuesday. There were present:—Messrs. Stinson (chairman), Cooke, Carr, Laffer, Gunn, and Green. The first witness was the president of the Public Library Board (Mr. W. J. Sowden).

The Chairman said he was pleased that the recent impression the Public Library Board had arrived at had been removed with regard to the allotment of land for that institution. The Commission had every desire to assist it in allotting such lands as would be required for its future expansion.

The witness said he would like to withdraw a letter that was sent under a misapprehension.

The Chairman—There is an allotment of land on which the Public Library, including the reading-room and the Art Gallery, stands. That land consists of 2½ acres, and all these institutions are on that block. Rather more than half of it (about 1½ acres) is occupied by the Library and Museum proper, and the idea is that we should give an equal area at the rear of these buildings, or another three acres. Do you think that would meet the views of the Public Library?

The Witness—I should think it ought to cover the ground. (He handed in a plan of the additions which the board hoped to make under the present scheme.)

You propose to put a second art gallery between the museum and the present library?—The original design was for a quadrangle. Unfortunately, through financial stress, the present museum was constructed of terra cotta. If a building were erected on that quadrangle the museum would be obscured from public view. The area suggested—a further 2½ acres—would probably be sufficient for the future. Although only last December the new wing, which cost between £25,000 and £40,000, was opened, to-day they had not enough room for all the museum specimens available. The Public Library got a great deal more value for its money than the average public library, because it did not spend it on curies. Gifts of rare books were not very frequent. They were arranging with the Government for the storage of archives, so that they could have a complete set of the documents dealing with the history of South Australia. They had the most valuable ethnological collection in the world.

To Mr. Cooke—They had considered the question of amalgamating with the University. They gave a valuable set of 3,000 medical works to that body on the ground that it would be more convenient to the students. They had established a juvenile library, and the success of the experiment was beyond all expectations. In winter they had a series of lectures in the Art Gallery, which were well attended. The land controlled by the board was valued at £35,000, and the buildings cost £123,000. The contents of the buildings were valued for £124,000. The total cost of the paintings in the Art Gallery was £50,000. The buildings and contents represented a total expenditure of £210,000. The board had received bequests amounting to £33,000, and also a number of valuable works of arts and other collections. The total Government vote was £9,817. Of that £7,500 was spent on salaries, and contingencies absorbed the remainder. The Zoological Society gave valuable assistance. When the animals died the museum received them. If the specimen of Miss Sham, an elephant, formerly at the Zoo, had had to be purchased it would have cost at least £500.

To Mr. O'Connor—There was much waste, on account of duplication. He did not think the School of Mines should have a museum in any way duplicating the national one. It should be limited to specimens useful to students in their work. He would not like to see the University removed from North-terrace, but the board had claimed nothing like the land the University had. He thought it might be possible to construct an underground railway, which would not interfere with the present sites. The land could be elevated, if necessary. He saw no reason why a residential college should not be apart from the University.

Mr. Green—What is there in connection with the School of Mines Museum which you consider ought to be attached to the library?—I am not reflecting upon the School of Mines at all. That museum has a remarkable aerolite. I think that ought to be in the national museum, and a model substituted for students.

Mr. J. R. G. Adams, general secretary of the Public Library Board, explained with regard to the relationship with the University, that the board had provided a special students' room. Arrangements were made between the two bodies whereby a certificate from the librarian would be recognised by the University library, so that a person could go to the University and peruse a medical book.

Mr. P. Markov, secretary of the South Australian Football League, said during the past 21 years he had been associated with sports. The Jubilee Oval was essential as a sports ground. In the matter of eastern railway extension, there was ample room for a line without interfering with the oval, which would be one of the finest playing grounds in South Australia if it were enlarged.

The Register
March 18th. 16

Mr. W. Howchin, F.G.S., reported at a meeting of the Public Library Board on Friday afternoon that Dr. H. Basedow had applied for a subsidy of £50 from the board toward the cost of his proposed expedition to the north-west of Western Australia. It was resolved that the board could not conform to the request, but that it would consider the purchase of specimens submitted to it on Dr. Basedow's re-

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NORTH TERRACE INSTITUTIONS

THEIR FUTURE DISCUSSED

QUESTION OF CO-ORDINATION

"We are taking a long look ahead," was the remark addressed by the chairman of the North Terrace Reserves and Railway Centres Commission (Mr. T. H. Smeaton, M.P.) to Mr. W. J. Sowden (president of the Public Library Board), who tendered evidence before the commission yesterday morning. That just sums up the aim of the body. Mr. Sowden was examined regarding the position, particularly of the Public Library Board, in the future allocation of land. There were present the chairman (Mr. Smeaton), the Hons. J. Carr and J. H. Cooke, M.L.C., and Messrs. Thompson Green, J. Gunn, G. Laffer, and E. A. O'Connor, M.S.P.

Mr. Sowden, replying to the chairman, said he thought it would meet the wishes of the Public Library Board if the area now allotted to the Public Library buildings—3½ acres—were doubled. That would probably meet future requirements. It was not proposed, of course, to occupy the whole of the area with buildings, as walking and breathing spaces were necessary. He would like to emphasise the urgency for additional space. Although the new wing of the Museum had been opened so recently the board was still short of space for museum specimens. The Public Library Board of South Australia got a great deal more value for its money because it did not purchase costly literary curios, but devoted its funds to the purchasing of educational books. For many years the skeletons of whales had had to be exhibited in the sheds because of the lack of room.

Replying to a question addressed to him by the Hon. J. H. Cooke regarding some scheme of co-ordination between the Public and University Libraries, the witness said that the Public Library Board had given the University Library 3000 medical works. The juvenile public library, recently established, was suffering through lack of room, and the lecture hall was far too small. He would not be fair to his trust if he said the board did not require the whole of the land. The capacity of the lecture hall should be 1000, not 310, as at present. A free lending library was recommended some years ago on the advice of the Adelaide circulating library, and in his (the witness') opinion, it was only a question of time when accommodation would have to be provided for such a library for the benefit particularly of the poorer class of students, who would be enabled to study after the Public Library had closed.

In answer to another question the witness said the land under the control of the board had a frontage of 681 ft. to North terrace, and was valued at £35,000. The buildings were worth £123,000, and the contents over £124,000. The total expenditure had been over £240,000. The board had received in bequests £91,000, and a number of works of art, coins, and other collections. The total vote received was £9817 annually, of which amount £7500 was expended on salaries—largely to specialists.

The witness informed Mr. Gunn that he considered the accommodation of the public reading room could be increased.

Replying to questions addressed to him by Mr. O'Connor witness gave it as his opinion that there should be co-ordination, as far as possible, between the public institutions on North terrace. For instance, the School of Mines Museum should not encroach upon the national museum, in respect to specimens. He would not like to see the University removed from North terrace.

As a layman he told Mr. Laffer he considered the railway system should be extended eastward from the Adelaide Railway Station, without encroaching upon the education block. There did not seem much doubt that eventually such extension would be necessary.

In answer to questions put by Mr. Thompson Green, Mr. Sowden said that in regarding the allocation of lands to the University, they had to take into consideration the fact that the University possessed a large area in the parklands. The area of land at the rear of the present University buildings, towards the Terrace, might be set aside for residential colleges, and the railway, if the system was extended in that direction, could be placed underground. Such a scheme would not be very costly. The area, in short, would be converted into a two-storied one.