

T. B. Clinic site

19-9-33

to

The Advertiser

ADELAIDE: THURSDAY,
SEPTEMBER 21, 1933.

TUBERCULOSIS CLINIC

Defending the Government in the matter of the proposed tuberculosis clinic at the Adelaide Hospital, the Premier says that Dr. Cowan's protest against the officially selected site is "extraordinary". In a sense, Mr. Butler is right. The medical fraternity is notoriously shy of publicity; and it is certainly "extraordinary" that a man of Dr. Cowan's standing should so far depart from the established practice of the profession, as to write to the press in an effort to arouse public feeling against a proposal which he sincerely believes to be wrong. That fact alone should arrest attention, and convince the layman, who knows himself to be incompetent to form an opinion, that there must at least be grounds here for hesitation and thought. The treatment of tuberculosis is a matter about which the public has special reason to be sympathetically concerned. There was therefore, a feeling of gratification at the announcement that the clinic was at last to be erected, for the disease in its early stages; and a corresponding degree of uneasiness has undoubtedly been aroused by Dr. Cowan's disclosures. The Government has two courses open to it. It can ignore these disclosures, and the public disputes they have produced, and can proceed with the present proposal; or it can ask the British Medical Association for a further report. If it adopts the former alternative, and Dr. Cowan's fears are eventually proved to be well founded, it will have to accept the heavy responsibility involved. If it pursues the other course, the delay consequent upon a further investigation cannot be serious; and whatever the result of the enquiry, the minds of all concerned will be set at rest. If a review of the whole affair merely justifies the Inspector-General of Hospitals in opposition to Dr. Cowan, it will at least have the effect of allaying the present uneasiness; and Dr. Cowan himself, of course, must be prepared to accept the decision of his colleagues, so long as their freedom of judgment is unrestricted by any preliminary official decision. It can be assumed that the B.M.A. would willingly undertake the enquiry desired, and would carefully consider all that can be said for or against the possible sites for this important clinic; the Association exerts a very considerable influence in all matters relating to public health, and must necessarily accept corresponding responsibilities. The powers conferred upon it are primarily intended to be used for the protection of the public; and the matter under discussion is one in which with the public, it has the liveliest concern.

SITE FOR T.B. CLINIC TO REMAIN

"Government Will Not Alter Decision"

The Premier (Mr. Butler) said in the Assembly yesterday that the Government would not alter its decision to erect the new building for a T.B. clinic on the selected site near Frone road.

Mr. Stephens (A.L.P.) asked if the Premier knew that the British Medical Association was opposed to the site, and if the Government would delay the work to permit of a conference with the B.M.A. so that the best site could be chosen.

The Commonwealth Government made available a certain sum for building the clinic; the Premier replied, "If we wait until we get unanimity among the medical profession, we will wait until Doomsday, and the money may never be used." The Government is acting on the definite recommendations of the committee of the B.M.A., and is going on with the work, despite the fact that one or two doctors have changed their minds. The Government does not change its mind every day or two."

"Does the Premier know that medical men would not build on any other site available, and that was the only reason the committee agreed to it?"

The Premier replied that in the first place the subject was referred to a committee of the B.M.A., and was that body which recommended the site chosen. It gave strong reasons for deciding on that site, and the only site available to the tubercular ward at the Adelaide Hospital. The Government would not alter its decision.

GOVERNMENT FIRM ON T.B. CLINIC SITE

Board of Health Supports Tenders Called

Stating last night that he had been requested by the British Medical Association to hold his hand in connection with the site chosen by the Government for the T.B. clinic near Frone road, Adelaide, the Chief Secretary (Mr. Ritchie) announced that he had no intention of altering his decision. Tenders had been called for the erection of the building, he added.

The B.M.A. had written to him on Monday night when, among other matters, the reply of the Chief Secretary to its request for a reconsideration of the whole question would be dealt with.

"There is no possibility whatever of any change being made in the Government's plan," said Mr. Ritchie yesterday. "I received a letter from the B.M.A. asking me not to proceed with the clinic site until the matter had been further considered. In my letter in reply, I have reviewed all the circumstances and stated that I have now had a communication from the Central Board of Health strongly recommending the Government to build the clinic on the site already chosen. That we intend to do and I still believe that to good purpose can be served by waiting."

He has pointed out to the B.M.A. that it was really responsible for the circumstances which led to the choice of the present site. "I have given the matter close and serious attention, and my recommendation of the site has the full support of Cabinet."

The Advertiser

ADELAIDE: FRIDAY,

OCTOBER 13, 1933

T.B. CLINIC SITE

The resolute tone in which the Premier and the Chief Secretary have both announced the unalterable determination of the Government in the matter of the site of the proposed tuberculosis clinic, would be eminently fitting, if Cabinet had been asked to depart from some political principle fundamental to Liberalism, and had found it necessary to insist upon its loyalty to the very basis of its own policy. "The Government does not change its mind every day or two," says the Premier, as though he were in danger of being accused of some grave inconsistency on a question vital to his party platform. Raised to this plane of high contention, the reasonable discussion of the site for a hospital clinic becomes virtually impossible. The fact cannot be too strongly insisted on, that the Government is not being asked to abrogate a principle to which it has subscribed, or to which anyone else is committed, but merely to make it possible for the proposed clinic to be erected in the best available situation. Nothing of any importance is involved, except the welfare of the patients for whom the clinic is intended, and the consequent success of the institution itself, for which the members of the honorary staff, who will be responsible for its conduct, are necessarily concerned. The medical men who are thus directly involved in the discussion, are not satisfied with the site selected. They believe, in spite of the contrary view held by the Inspector-General of Hospitals, that a better site could be found; and all they ask is that the Government should hold its hand for the few days necessary to appoint an expert enquiry. The British Medical Association, which assented to the present site while under the impression that no other could, or would be made available, has written to the Chief Secretary to ask for time to reconsider the matter, and has called a meeting for Monday night. The Premier says rhetorically that his Government cannot "wait until Doomsday" in order to obtain unanimity among the members of the medical profession. But it might at least be desirable to wait until Monday, before embarking irretrievably upon the construction of a clinic which may be unsatisfactory to everyone concerned. The honorary medical men attending the hospital have no personal axe to grind, and their views are entitled to some better reception than cur dismissal by the Premier and Chief Secretary.

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Site For T.B. Clinic

From "An Experienced Hospital Visitor," Semaphore.—If a T.B. clinic must be in the city, what better position for it than the site of the old consumptive home, with a nice new building, well-kept gardens and the shady pine trees. There are no steps to climb, and the old wall could remain; it acted as a shelter from stormy winds, and a protection from the public gaze.

DISCUSSION OF T.B. CLINIC SITE

Adjournment of Assembly To Be Moved

Leave to move the adjournment of the Assembly to discuss the site of the proposed T.B. clinic will be sought by Mr. Stephens (A.L.P.) today.

He said last night that the Government was using its position to build the clinic immediately, and it would be unfortunate if it chose the wrong site. Since the decision for the present site had been made, it was found that others were available, and these should be considered. He would suggest that a small committee should be appointed to examine "medical authorities, departmental officers, representatives of the boards of health, and the Architect-in-Chief." The resultant brief delay would be insignificant in the context of the possible better results.

Mr. Stephens will be supported by the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Lacey), who will contend that there are better sites available for a T.B. clinic, which should not be in the back of the city. The debate will probably occupy some time, as many members are keenly interested in the question.

B.M.A. Protest

The president of the British Medical Association (Dr. E. Britten Jones), on behalf of the council, yesterday wrote to the Chief Secretary (Mr. Ritchie), stating that when the site for a T.B. clinic was considered by a sub-committee of the association in 1931, it was

T.B. Clinic Site

From "Vera," Blackwood.—Mr. Butler cannot say that the present site is the right or the best one, but that he will not change his mind; and this when it is not a matter of some petty prejudice or other, but the well-being of the community. The prevention of such needless suffering from smoke fumes, and assisting the fight for life of the T.B. patient, are surely good reasons for any Government to change its mind. The Government cannot say there is no other site available in view of the Chief Secretary's decision to build the clinic. Why does not the Premier take the opinion of T.B. specialists as to the best site?

DR. COWAN AND T.B. CLINIC SITE

"Playing Lone Hand," Premier Says

"In spite of Dr. Cowan's latest letter in opposition to the site for the T.B. clinic, with which he rushed into the press against the Government, the Government in its decision is backed with the work of the selected site. Deciding to accept the site, the Premier had an overwhelming number of members of the medical profession attending the hospital. The Premier (Mr. Butler) yesterday said: 'If the truth were known, it would be revealed that Dr. Cowan is playing a lone hand, for reasons best known to himself.'"

Site For T.B. Clinic
From "A Sufferer"—The thanks of not only T.B. patients, but perhaps the whole community, are due to Dr. D. R. W. Cowan for his very open and frank criticism of the proposed site for the T.B. clinic at the Adelaide Hospital. From all that has so far appeared in "The Advertiser" it seems that the proposed site has been more or less forced on the B.M.A. by the department concerned. Your sub-leader sums up the position very fairly, and indicates the fair way out of the present impasse. As a layman and one who has had to fight this disease, I concur most fully in all that Dr. Cowan says regarding the psychological effect that anything but the very best surroundings would have upon patients. I was surprised that Mr. Ritchie should infer that because Melbourne had a fairly modern clinic situated in Little Lonsdale street, we should be satisfied with anything but the best site. As the establishment of a T.B. clinic is long overdue, and considering South Australia's splendid climate, nothing but the strongest efforts should be made to combat the all-too-great prevalence of pulmonary tuberculosis.

"T.B." Clinic
From "An Citizen"—The thanks of the community are due to Dr. Cowan and "The Advertiser" for the keen interest they are taking in this important matter. The disease is dreadful enough, without having life patient-made worse. Large and lofty buildings, together with gloomy out-buildings, such as a mortuary, are not desirable adjuncts to a consumptives' clinic. Sir Henry Newland at the opening of the new District Hospital at Victor Harbour, said:—"We should not forget that the hospital stood as a reminder that medical science had so far failed to prevent the incidence of many of the little ailments that quite wrongly the flesh was believed to be heir to. It was the prevention of disease, and not the treatment and cure of sick people in hospitals, that has greatly increased the average span of life." Personally, I contend that we should get at the root of the evil by treating the subject as one of national emergency, and demolish dwellings that are unfit for human occupation. The unit houses could be bought from the owners, and replaced by properly constructed homes.

Dairy Farm At Enfield
Mr. Shannon (L.C.L.) moved that the crease of 1380 for the Northfield Mental Hospital should not be allowed. He said that the increase was due to establishment by the department of a dairy farm at the hospital. It would mean that dairy production from the hospital would be in competition with the regular metropolitan supplies. "I am satisfied," Mr. Richards (P.L.P.) said, "that the greed and selfishness of vested interests know no bounds. The member has revealed just how cruel, cold and callous vested interests can be in the search for a little more business."
Mr. Morphett (L.C.L.) said that the motives of Mr. Shannon, in moving the reduction, had been misunderstood. The supply from Northfield would not effect the metropolitan supply to any great extent. It was feared that the Government was setting up a department that would grow into a big one.
Mr. Shannon's motion was defeated on the voices.

SITE FOR T.B. CLINIC

Architect-In-Chief Ready To Seek Tenders

The controversy regarding the site of the proposed tuberculosis clinic was the subject of several questions in the Legislative Council yesterday. Mr. Tassie (L.C.L.) wanted to know if the approval of the British Medical Association was given independently altogether of the whole scheme. The Chief Secretary (Mr. Ritchie) said that the matter was fully considered by the association, and by Dr. Cowan, who had taken a live interest in the matter. He was one of the representatives of the B.M.A. and a signatory to the report on the site chosen. Mr. Tassie—Did that include not only the site, but the whole building? The Chief Secretary—No. The site was under consideration at that time. I believe. Mr. Cowan (L.C.L.)—Was any other site available? The Chief Secretary—No, and I am not aware that any other site is available at present, either. The honorary hospital staff was also in favor of the site chosen. The Architect-in-Chief said that the site was suitable, and that is where the matter stands now. I am obtaining information from other Government institutions on the subject, and may have it next week. Mr. Homburg enquired if the Chief Secretary would inform members of the amount involved in the construction of the clinic. Were members to understand, even if Dr. Cowan did sign the report, that he stood by it, or had he revised his opinion, and now said that the site was not suitable? He took it that the object of the Government was to see that there was no loss of public money, and that taxpayers were protected. The Chief Secretary said that taxpayers would be protected to the extent that the matter had been decided and the site chosen. A previous Government had allocated a certain amount for the work. The matter had been thoroughly threshed out, and he understood that the Architect-in-Chief had plans and specifications ready, and was waiting to call for tenders.

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T.B. CLINIC SITE Opposed By Honorary Staff Of Hospital

The honorary staff of the Adelaide Hospital, of which Sir Henry Newland is acting chairman, at a meeting on Wednesday, passed a resolution that in its opinion the site as selected by the Adelaide Hospital Board for the establishment of the Tuberculosis Clinic was unsuitable. The meeting recommended that the building of the clinic should not be started until every alternative site had been fully investigated. When informed of the resolution last night, the Chief Secretary (Mr. Ritchie) said that the site chosen was the best one available, and he could not see how the decision could be altered.

T.B. CLINIC SITE Dr. Cowan's Attitude Criticised

Reference to a letter published that day in "The Advertiser" by Dr. D. R. W. Cowan was made by Mr. Stephens (A.L.P.) in the Assembly yesterday. He said Dr. Cowan had stated in the letter that it was a curious fact that all of the men most interested in the treatment of tuberculosis and the men who would most likely staff the proposed tuberculosis clinic in an honorary capacity and be responsible for its success, condemned the present site. The site had been forced on the British Medical Association and it had been given no alternative. Mr. Stephens asked whether the Premier would have the question of the proposed site referred to the British Medical Association for recommendation. The Premier (Mr. Butler) said that the question had already been referred to a committee representing the B.M.A. and had agreed upon the site now decided upon. Every member had agreed to it. "The most extraordinary feature is Dr. Cowan's present attitude," remarked Mr. Butler.

To the Editor
Sir—It was with disappointment and regret I read in Monday's paper that the Government held out little hope of the site for the proposed tuberculosis clinic being altered. My only concern in the matter is that the money about to be spent should be spent to the best advantage, and that the clinic, which is to be the headquarters for the campaign against tuberculosis in this State, should be given the best site possible. If the present site is adhered to, the scheme is foredoomed to failure, and more money will be needlessly wasted. It is a curious fact that all of the men most interested in the treatment of this disease, and the men who will most likely staff the clinic in an honorary capacity and be responsible for its success, condemn the present site. It is again, that so far as the British Medical Association is concerned, the site was forced upon them; they were given no alternative. I feel a considerable personal responsibility in the matter. It was I who pressed the British Medical Association to appoint a committee to enquire and report, with a view to obtaining better control of tuberculosis in this State. It was I who was mainly responsible for the fact that money was made available and plans approved for the clinic. I fought strenuously against this site from the beginning. In common with the others, I signed the report approving it, because I was assured that no other site was available. And now, I say in all sincerity, that I would rather not have the clinic at all than have it in the position it is proposed to put it, because the scheme will be a failure and the money wasted.

There has been a proposal for some time to transfer the lands previously occupied by the old Consumptive Home and the Infectious Diseases Block to the Botanical Gardens Board, in return for a piece of land in the gardens near to the hospital, which is obviously a sound proposal. I do not know if there is any insuperable difficulty in arranging this. When I mentioned to the Inspector-General of Hospitals the possibility of this coming about, and expressed the view that then there would be a splendid site for the clinic, he said to me, "Ah, now you are talking; but you will have to wait ten years for that." Why should it take ten years to arrange this transfer of land, which would be obviously to the advantage of both parties concerned? It is important that the Hospital Board should know just what land it has available, so as to make considered plans for future developments. In the meantime, while the matter is held up, hospital buildings are being erected in unsuitable places. The new out-patient department is a striking example of this; it has a bad concession of buildings at the Frome road corner, and spoils the beauty of that part of North terrace. Must another error be committed in the erection of the tuberculosis clinic? Far from it being advantageous for the clinic to be close to the tuberculosis

HOSPITAL COSTS NEED FOR ENQUIRY

To the Editor
Sir—Your issue of September 29 contains a timely letter from Dr. D. R. W. Cowan, commenting on my attack, during the Budget debate, on the extension of farm activities at the Northfield Mental and Consumptive Hospitals. Dr. Cowan's letter contains two very interesting points for thoughtful readers. Firstly, that it costs twice as much per patient to treat tuberculosis at the Government institution at Bedford Park, as it does at the privately managed Kalzra Home. Secondly, that the Inspector-General of Hospitals is fostering a policy of agricultural extension at Northfield, and this at a time when money for legitimate hospital work is not available. The reply of the Minister to my attack on this line in the Estimates, that these unfortunate should not be denied what the medical profession calls "occupational therapy," and further, that the Government should be permitted to make the utmost use of its land at Northfield, ostensibly to reduce the costs of these expensive hospitals, leads me to the conclusion that our hospital department is developing a malignant growth which requires immediate surgical treatment. If the taxpayers are to be saved from still another Government enterprise, which produces annual additions to our pay roll, increasing status for the chiefs of these expanding departments, and increased taxation to make up for the losses of our "farmer" doctor—I am, Sir, &c.,
H. H. SHANNON.
Parliament House.