CHAPTER 12

ACTING VICE CHANCELLOR
The April 1931 meeting of the Senate was informed by the Chancellor that the Vice Chancellor acting under powers which he Whitfeld considered the Vice Chancellor's Statute gave him, had appointed Professor Murdoch to be the Acting Vice Chancellor subject to the remarkable condition that he (Murdoch) be given as little work as possible.

The Chancellor held that Whitfeld's appointment of Murdoch could only be effective until the Academic Board had dealt with the matter or until an appointment had been made by the Senate.

In pursuance of this, Murdoch then presented the Vice Chancellor's report for the March April period. The report of the first meeting of the Academic Board included a recommendation that Somerville be appointed Acting Vice Chancellor. The Chancellor took the unusual course of postponing the consideration of this until the last item on the agenda. This course was probably taken to save Murdoch the embarrassment of moving the appointment of the man who had beaten him in a ballot.

A good deal of engineering had apparently been going on unknown to me with the object of outing Murdoch and putting me in. This was due, as I learned later, to growing anxiety in the minds of the Chancellor, Sir W. James and Sir John Northmore as to the University financial position and Whitfeld's handling of the financing of the Hackett Buildings then partly erected. The scheme apparently was to get Whitfeld out of the way, to put me in his place and Northmore in charge of the finances in place of Battye.

I was very fully employed in Arbitration Court work and had been absent, probably on the Goldfields when the first meeting of the Academic Board had been held (14th April, 1931). At this meeting Northmore who was Pro Chancellor was unanimously elected Chairman of the Finance Committee and Battye who had been Chairman of the Finance
Committee for years was thanked for his services and became Pro Chancellor.

At a special meeting held on March 23, 1931, Battle was not continued in office, as was usual as a matter of routine unless the occupant of any office desired to retire but was appointed for that March meeting only. The business for the special meeting in March was good and sufficient for the Chancellor (James) unreasonableness about the finances. It was held to consider a report by Brine & Son, the contractors, that the completed cost of the Hack- ett Buildings would be £191,467. This figure came as a shock, for the Senate had been relying upon an estimate by Allof given the previous December that the completed cost would be £199,000. So Northmore became Chairman of the Finance Committee.

At the first meeting of the Academic Board, (14th April 1931) when Professors Moricich and Somerville had been nominated to be Acting Vice Chancellor during the absence of the regular Vice Chancellor, Mr. J. P. P. Whitefield, a ballot was taken and Somerville was chosen. I had not been present at the ballot before the Senate meeting, which was held on or about the 15th April, 1931, nor was I aware of the result of the ballot before the meeting. I was of course, very pleased but regarded it as quite normal, for I had just previously at the final meeting of the General Purposes Committee before it became mired in the question of the Academic Board, the President, the G.C., and this the Senate in equally flustering terms endorsed. There could be no better training for Vice Chancellor than a long term as Chairman of G.P.C., so as I have said, I regarded my selection as quite normal, especially in view of Whitfield's remarkable condition.

As the Senate meeting (20th April) progressed I felt tension in the air and that condition was not eased by work as possible.
my effort to make the Bank of New South Wales pay the Senate's contribution to Shann's superannuation during his period of service with the Bank.

When the recommendation of the Academic Board, that I be Acting Vice Chancellor was reached, the teaching staff who were Senators stressed the desirability of supporting Whitfeld's nominee Murdoch. At one stage of the discussion Northmore asked me if I thought I could attend the Faculty meetings, I knew as a fact that Whitfeld attended very few and Northmore's question was intended to give me the opening to say this. However, I construed his question as opposition from a quarter from which I expected support. This caused me to become angry and lose my head. I spluttered a few incoherent remarks the only part I remember was -

"I had hoped to serve the term as Acting Vice Chancellor as a fitting crown to my period of service to the University, but I did not seek any favours or wish to force myself on them,"

and with that I left the room and went home.

The next morning early, I received a ring from James reproaching me for, in haste, misjudging my friends and leaving them in the lurch. However, he added, it ended as we desired in you being selected as Acting Vice Chancellor.

I also received the following undated letter -

Dear Somerville,

I was relieved to hear you this morning state that you will take up your work as Acting Vice Chancellor. Your appointment was approved by large majority and you were a little thin skinned in letting yourself be influenced two discordant votes. This is a general recognition of the need for pulling the "business end" of the University on a more methodical basis. Good luck to you and I am most grateful.

Yours sincerely,
Walter S. James.

THE UNIVERSITY - Acting Vice-Chancellor Appointed.

At a meeting of the University Senate on Monday evening, Mr. W. Somerville, a member of the Senate was appointed to act as Vice-Chancellor during the absence on leave of the permanent Vice-Chancellor (Professor Whitfeld)

The appointment was made on the recommendation of the Academic Board. As Chairman for many years of the general purposes committee of the Senate, now merged into
the Academic Board, Mr. Somerville has gained a very close insight into the administration of University affairs.

I took up my duties on 20th April 1931. I was on the Arbitration Court Bench at the time, a full time job so my work as Vice Chancellor was all overtime. My method was to proceed to Crawley by the first Tram after the Court adjourned at 4 p.m. and work on to 6 p.m. or whatever time was necessary.

I soon realised that instead of the Acting Vice Chancellor getting along "doing as little work as possible" the most hectic time in the University History was just ahead.

As things developed there were three main problems to solve (1) To get enough money to finish the Hackett Building, the building fund being much overdrawn. (2) To adapt the University expenditure to the requirements of the Financial Emergency Legislation which was passed to implement the premises Plan and which reduced the Government grant by 20% (1931). (3) To examine the staffing to see if it was possible to reduce it without impairing efficiency.

In further addition to the ordinary routine administrative work there developed during my term a storm in the Engineering Faculty over the Academic qualifications of one who had been engaged to deliver a series of lectures on Town Planning. Feeling ran high, large and angry meetings of the Faculty were held. This storm I had to manoeuvre to a peaceful end.

About the same time Professor Ross, acting on behalf of one of the girl students accused the Lecturer in French and German of improper conduct. After exacting a confession from him of having tampered with several, I had to bounce him into resigning forthwith with a months salary.

Then the Professor of Law and the Librarian got at issue on the control of Law books.

Then some of the students complained that they had not had any Botany lectures for about four months. On enquiry I found that the Lecturer in Botany had developed
mental trouble. His state was in my opinion in large measure due to long continued friction with the Professor of Biology. This trouble was being investigated when Whitfeld returned and under him it cost the University £200 to get rid of a man who had grossly neglected his duty and done little else for an unknown period but draw his salary.

Another job, long overdue, was drafting and passing through the Senate a code of working conditions for the administrative staff and the accountant relating to pay and increases in grade with length of service, overtime, holidays, long service leave etc. Whitfeld's desire for indefiniteness had resulted in the staff some of them with 17 years service being still without stated terms of employment.

Whitfeld's idea apparently was that all such matters as holidays and overtime and rise in grade should be subject to his discretion and favour. The staff might have called it caprice.

A few days after taking office, Mr. Parker the Accountant informed me that the Bank had refused to honour any more cheques until the overdraft had been reduced. An examination showed the position to be approximately as follows - The fixed overdraft on general account was £7000 this had been exceeded by £1678. £2000 was required immediately to pay salaries and another £2000 to pay Hackett Bursaries and Scholarships, a large sum at this time unknown but was afterwards ascertained to be £27,500 was required to finish the buildings which for some time had been financed by Battye as Chairman of the Finance Committee and Whitfeld in accordance with the former's remarkable resolution of November 1930 by which -

"When money for building is exhausted money from the Permanent Trust (Scholarship funds) should be paid into a new special account so that it will not be necessary to draw on the Permanent scholarship endowment to pay for the building etc."

This resolution was a pure gamble on the Government coming to the rescue which they did not do for four years,
nevertheless the £25,000 had been expended and £2364 had been overdrawn.

The Bank was not interested in what we did with the £200,000 scholarship Trust money, but they were concerned with their unsecured advances which were on current account £7000 plus £1678 = £8678 and on building account £2364 making a total of £11,042.

There was a pretty Kettle of fish.

The endowment lands could not be sold. Until authorized by the Court we could not legally use any of the Capital of the Hackett Bequests for Scholarships, Maintenance and for Vice Chancellor’s salary. Numerous meetings were held many in the Supreme Court chambers of the Chief Justice and anxious thought given as to how to get out of the jam. The staff were called into conference and after several meetings they through their mouthpiece the Professor of Law propounded an elaborate scheme by which the Bank of New South Wales was to be cajoled into our support. The two legal members of the Finance Committee, Sir W. James and Sir John Northmore dismissed this summarily as wholly impracticable, much to the chagrin of the Professor of Law. To me privately they expressed the opinion that the scheme showed that the Professor had had very little practicable experience with Banking.

I interviewed several of the Senators and others who were in a big way in Business seeking advice but drew blanks. All the best of them could do was to express concern that the Trust monies should be indangered.

The finance Committee considered the cessation of building but it was thought that if once stopped it might be many years before work was resumed, and again the Winthrop Hall and the Senate Chamber were at such a stage that winter rains without a finished roof would do a lot of damage. So it was decided to make heroic efforts to finish them.

Of the £25,000 promised by the Government £23,200
had been spent up to 20th April 1931 the day I took office.

An executive sub-committee consisting of the Chancellor James, Chairman of Finance Committee Northmore, Pro Chancellor J.S. Batty, Mr Keall, the Acting Vice Chancellor Somerville were appointed to handle the matter.

Professor Shann who was at the time in Sydney in the employ of the Bank of New South Wales was asked for advice and to use his influence with the Head Office to secure some arrangement which would obviate a heavy loss entailed by the sale of Commonwealth Stock on the then very depressed market. His remarkable advice was to the effect that selling Commonwealth Stock at £86 which meant a loss of 14% of every 100 sold was good selling. He also advised that the Bank be given a mortgage over the £150,000 Debentures of the West Australian and about £20,000 other Commonwealth Stock to secure an advance of about £25,000.

The Committee were indignant and inclined to rebel against these harsh and usurious terms, but we were in a jam and had finally to agree to them.

The Chairman of the Finance Committee reported that with odds and ends it would require £26,000 to finish the buildings so it was decided to apply to the Supreme Court for permission to raise this sum by a 10% levy on the Hackett Bequests. This would yield £5,000 from the Buildings Maintenance funds, £20,000 from the Scholarship and Bursary fund and £2,500 from the Vice Chancellor's salary fund. The Court granted permission for this to be done.

The clause relating to the £20,000 to be taken from the Bursary fund gave me much concern. I had come to be regarded as a sort of representative of the wage earners whose children constituted the bulk of those applying for Bursaries, also as Acting Vice Chancellor I was quite sure that if I had opposed the scheme it would be abandoned. To take £20,000 from the fund meant that until
it was restored many of those Hackett had intended would benefit would be deprived of the opportunity he had given and moreover it could only be restored also at the expense of those who should benefit. On the other hand the condition of the Building and the stage it had reached was critical. The heavy winter rains were near and if the work stopped much damage would be done. The Executive Committee were good enough to give me a day to think over it and on my agreement it was submitted to the Senate and approved. I stipulated that the Capital of £20,000 had to be replaced by a fixed charge upon the revenue of £2,000 per annum. As the average annual Bursary was at the time about £40 the repayment of £2,000 capital per annum meant that to complete the Buildings somewhere about 50 young people were each year for 10 years deprived of the help Hackett intended they should have. But a consideration of the beautiful buildings will lead to the conclusion that their sacrifice gave good returns.

Unfortunately no one was sufficiently interested in restoring the Capital of either the Maintenance fund or the Vice Chancellor's salary fund. The Court only directed in general terms that the Capital should be restored as soon as practicable. With the result that only a small portion of the Capital levied on the Maintenance fund Capital has been replaced to date (1946).

The Vice Chancellor's fund has been restored by using for a term of years part of the Hackett endowment for the Chair of Agriculture, while Dr. Currie was both Professor of Agriculture and Vice Chancellor.

Having secured the permission of the Court to the sale of Committee Stock, the Bank of New South Wales were again approached and it agreed to finance the completion of the buildings up to £27,500 on condition that we mortgaged to them £150,000 Debentures in the West Australian and some £20,000 Committee bonds with the further condition that we sold Committee stock whenever possible to
reduce their advance. A true money lenders terms for which perhaps it may be said in extenuation that the whole of Australian finance at the time was panicky.

The condition as to sale of stock involved the University in a loss of £5,000 Capital.

Extract from Senate Minutes of 20th April, 1931.

Hackett Buildings.

The Chairman stated that, following upon the compilation of a Bill of Quantities by Mr. Holmes of the work required to be done to complete the Hackett Buildings, Messrs. Brine and Sons estimated the ultimate cost of the Buildings at £193,727, as against the amount of £191,467 submitted to the special meeting of the Finance Committee held on 23rd March, 1931.

The position in regard to the Buildings would be as follows:-

Cost of Buildings.

| Buildings - Payments to Brine & Sons | £193,727 |
| Other Expenditure | 193,727 |
| ? extra Architects Fees claimed | 212,904 |
| Money available | 1,220 |
| Deficiency = | 214,124 |
| | 152,810 |
| | £243,314 |

To this deficiency must be added any expenditure to be incurred in roads and Court of Honour.

Financial position in regard to Payments for the Buildings.

of the sum of £25,000 promised by the Government £23,200 had been spent to 15th April, 1931, leaving £1,800 available for further expenditure. The following amounts were due for payment on the following days:-

| Wages | £450 |
| A/c's for materials | £2110 |
| | £2560 |

To pay these a/c's a debit of £760 would have to be incurred.

The Chairman stated that, taking into account the probable expenditure on roads and Court of Honour, he estimated that the amount of the deficiency would be about £26,000.

After discussion, the Senate decided as follows:-

(a) That an application be made to the Court for permission to take the sum of £27,500 (exclusive of the cost of realisation of securities) from the Endowment funds for (1) the provision of Bursaries, studentships and Students Loans, (2) Maintenance and (3) Vice Chancellor.

(b) That the sum of £27,500 so required should be secured by a percentage reduction of 10% upon the above endowments.
(c) That as under such scheme the Fund for Bursaries, Studentships and Students Loans would be reduced by £20,000, such amount should be recouped to that Fund by payments of at least £2,000 per annum over a period of about 10 years, commencing from 1st January 1933. To enable this to be done, the expenditure on that Fund would need to be reduced during those years to the extent necessary to provide the £2,000 per annum required.

(d) That any surplus interest accruing annually from the investment of the other funds be applied to recouping those funds and to pay the cost of realisation of securities.

(e) That meanwhile the Bank be approached with a view to securing financial accommodation for building operations pending the application to the Court.

In connection with item (c) above, regarding reduction of expenditure on the fund for Bursaries, Studentships, etc., to the extent necessary to provide the £2,000 per annum required to recoup the capital, the Senate expressed the opinion that the reduction of expenditure should be made on the amount allowed for Studentships in preference to reducing the amount allowed for Hackett Bursaries.

Completion of Hackett Buildings.

The Chairman stated that it was anticipated that the Senate Chamber would be ready by about the end of June or July, and that the Winthrop Hall would be completed by about the end of September or middle of October. The University would probably have to make a final payment on the Buildings about the end of October or November.

The following decisions were made by the Senate:

(1) That the Building should not be slowed down, but should be completed in the ordinary course.

(2) As about £25,000 has still to be spent on the Building, that a strict check should be kept on the expenditure on the following lines:

The Architect to be advised that no extras or variations for the buildings are to be made unless a statement is submitted to the Accountant, giving the estimated cost of the variation. The accountant to submit the particulars of the extra or variation to the Chairman of the Finance Committee for approval. Messrs. Brine and Sons, as well as the Architect, to be advised of this resolution, so that they will be jointly responsible for any increase in the cost of the buildings.

Extract from the MINUTES of the SPECIAL MEETING of the SENATE held on the 12th June, 1931.

BUSINESS. To consider University Finances.

The Chancellor announced that the meeting had been called to consider the question of finances, and the position arising from the fact that a very heavy loss would be made if it is necessary to sell Commonwealth Stock at the present time to pay for the Hackett Buildings.
While waiting for the approval of the Court to the scheme submitted by the Senate to realise £27,500 to pay for the completion of the Hackett Buildings, it was necessary to pay accounts for the Hackett Buildings amounting to £2,505 from the ordinary current a/c, with the result that the overdraft limit for this a/c has been exceeded. It had not yet been possible to recoup the Current a/c for the payments made for the Hackett Buildings, and until this expenditure has been recouped the Bank would only meet such expenditure on the Current a/c as was absolutely necessary, such as wages, etc.

Immediately the Court approved of the Scheme, arrangements were made to sell Commonwealth Stock, of which the University held Stock of the nominal value of £28,500 (£15,500 of 1933 Stock @ 5% and £20,000 of 1943 Stock at 5%), but owing to the low price of the Stock, no action was taken, and the Bank was asked if they could make advances to pay for the Buildings if the University lodged the Commonwealth Stock with the Bank as security pending the realisation of the Stock when prices became stabilised. The Bank agreed to pay urgent a/c's for the Hackett Buildings, pending a reply from their Head Office in Sydney, and accounts totalling £2,978 had been paid by overrawing on the Hackett Bequest a/c, in addition to the sum of £2,505 paid from the Current a/c.

There being some delay in obtaining an answer from the Bank and the Broker having advised that sales of Commonwealth Stock were difficult even at a discount of 17% and the sum of £2,000 having to be provided on the 9th June for bursaries a conference was held on the 4th and 5th June between the Pro-Chancellor, Acting Vice Chancellor, Chairman of the Finance Committee and himself, when it was decided to sell £3,000 of Commonwealth Stock to provide £2,000 for Bursaries, and to urge the Bank to give a prompt reply. The Chancellor on the 5th June wired Professor Shenn to interview the General Manager of the Bank in Sydney and reply was received suggesting that the Bank should be given security over the "West Australian" debentures.

The brokers sold Stock value £3050, which realised £2,527 and was used to pay the second term installments of Hackett Bursaries (about £2,000) due on 9th June.

A report was received from the Chairman of the Finance Committee as per copy attached, setting out his discussion with the Acting Inspector of the Bank of New South Wales regarding the question of advances to pay for the Hackett Buildings.

After discussion, the following resolutions were carried:

That the Bank of New South Wales be offered the £150,000 debentures of the Western Australian Newspapers Ltd., as a security against advances to be made by the Bank to pay for the Hackett Buildings.

That owing to the great difficulty and heavy loss involved in realising investments at the present time the Court be requested to authorise the University to borrow and raise £27,500 from its bankers on current account pending a realisation of investments and to secure such advance and interest, the University be authorised to give the Bank a mortgage in its usual and relevant form over the investments comprising the trust funds and that the University solicitors be instructed to apply to the Court accordingly.
That an Executive, consisting of the Chancellor Pro-Chancellor, Acting Vice Chancellor and the Chairman of the Finance Committee be given power to sell Commonwealth Stock from time to time as opportunity offered, and to use the proceeds in reduction of the amount advanced by the Bank, or to use the proceeds to meet pressing liabilities before the advance was made by the Bank.

REPORT BY CHAIRMAN OF FINANCE COMMITTEE REGARDING NEGOTIATIONS WITH BANK.

We have at the Bank of New South Wales the following A/C's:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account</th>
<th>Overdraft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current A/c</td>
<td>£7152.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resumed Properties A/c</td>
<td>£658.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackett Bequest A/c</td>
<td>£2804.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building A/c</td>
<td>£9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust A/C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£1729.17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The suggestion which I put up to the Bank is as follows:

Pending the realisation of securities, we will require to overdraw the Building Account to the extent of £27,500. Out of this, we will recoup:

1. To the Hackett Bequest Account £2978
2. To the Current Account 2505

leaving the amount required to finish the building as £22,017. The above mentioned amounts of £2978 and £2505 represent moneys paid out of those accounts in connection with the Winthrop Hall, pending the realisation of securities.

I pointed out that the money would be required from time to time, as the Building progressed, and if no securities were realised in the meantime, the peak of the overdraft would be reached about the end of November.

I also pointed out that as soon as we receive the half-yearly interest from the W.A. Newspaper Debentures, the sum of £2527/16/3 (being the net proceeds from the recent sale of £3050 of Commonwealth Stock) will be paid from the Hackett Bequest A/c to reduce the Building A/c overdraft.

The abovementioned Stock was sold in order that we might be in a position to meet the second term installments of the Hackett Bursaries.

In addition to the overdraft on the Building Account I pointed out that we would also require the present limit of £7,000 on the current account and Resumed Properties Account to be continued.

J.A. NORTHMORE
Chairman of Finance Committee.

Extract from the MINUTES of the SPECIAL MEETING of the FINANCE COMMITTEE held on 29th OCTOBER, 1931.

QUESTION OF SELLING COMMONWEALTH STOCK.

The question of selling Commonwealth Stock value £25,570 held by the University was considered.
The Vice Chancellor submitted a telegram received from Professor Shann, recommending that the stock should be sold, and stating that the stock at a price of £86 and over was good selling. The Vice Chancellor also pointed out that the Bank is charging interest on the overdraft at the rate of 6\%\%\%, and that the stock was only bringing in 4\%\%\%.

After discussion, it was decided that the stock be not sold at the present time, and that the matter could be considered again at the next meeting of the Committee.

The question of the rate of interest, 6\%\%\%, charged to the University by the Bank, was also considered, and it was decided that the Vice Chancellor should approach the Bank with a request for a reduction in the rate of interest charged.

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**VOLUNTARY OFFER BY STAFF TO ALLOW THEIR SALARIES TO BE REDUCED.**

All through 1930 and 1931, the Financial difficulties of the State and Federal Governments in their efforts to grapple with the great depression had been increasing.

On 1st May, 1931 the Leader of the Opposition in the Federal Senate, Pearce, had declared that -

"Bankruptcy and Insolvency stared the country in the face, there would be a deficit of 23 millions and expenditure should be cut by £4,000,000 per annum."

On May 2nd, 1931 it was decided by the Federal Senate to call Sir. R. Gibson, the Chairman of the Commonwealth Bank to the bar of that house to give his opinion on the proposals of M. Theodore, the Treasurer to the Federal Labour Government to export £12,000,000 of gold to support our London Credit and to issue Fiduciary Bank Notes, so the Political issues developed.

The previous month (April 26th) a Committee of experts of which Professor Shann was a leading figure had been appointed to examine Australia's Financial position.

All this and much more made it evident that some reduction in the University Grant was very probable. To forestall this and also as a gesture indication of a desire to help the State, a movement began within the Teaching Staff to make a voluntary reduction in salaries of 10%.

Professor Murdoch issued a circular calling a conference of the Teaching Staff to consider the matter and it was decided to ascertain the views of all the Teaching Staff.
Staff. With one exception the staff approved of the proposal. The exception was Professor Beasley, Dean of the Faculty of Law in the University of W.A. Much indignation was expressed at his action, it was felt and roundly asserted that he had done the University and the Staff a great disservice. As Acting Vice Chancellor, I was consulted by Professor Murdoch as to a public statement exposing his action, but I advised against this and the Senate concluded that as the offer was not unanimous nothing could be done.

However, it was deemed a pity that such a worthy move should be blocked by the churlishness of one man and at the May 1931 Senate meeting, Battye Pro Chancellor, gave notice to move -

(1) that the Government be requested to introduce a Bill to authorise the Senate to Tax salaries and to indemnify the Senate against any action.

(2) Provided that University Grant be not reduced, the amount of saving so affected be repaid to the Treasury.

(3) That the Chancellor, the Acting Vice Chancellor and the Chairman of the Finance Committee be appointed a deputation to interview the Premier.

Before anything could be done in respect to these resolutions the Premier Conference and its resulting Financial Emergency Legislation intervened and more drastic efforts at reducing expenditure were made imperative.

May 26th, 1931 - The Scullin Federal Government had summoned a Premier Conference to Melbourne to consider the Experts plan. The W.A. representatives were Sir J. Mitchell, Premier and Mr. Davey his Attorney General. They returned to the State pledged to introduce legislation to reduce all Government expenditure by 20%, to reduce interest by 15% and to increase Taxation.

The first of the necessary acts was introduced into Parliament June 26th, 1931 and the act was passed and on 13th August the complete Financial Emergency Legislation was assented to and became Law.

On 15th June 1931 - As Acting Vice Chancellor, I pointed out to the Senate that the Current Government
grant expired on 30th June. The practice in the past had been for the Government to continue the current grant until the estimates are considered by Parliament about September each year. It was probable that there would be a reduction in the Government grant for the financial year commencing 1st of July next and this would affect the estimates already approved by the Senate for (the remainder of) the year 1931 and for 1932 as the University estimates are based on a financial year running from 1st January to 31st December, whereas the Government financial year is from 1st July to 30th June.

It was decided that I should interview the Premier and ascertain definitely what will be the amount of the grant for the next State financial year and for the balance of the University financial year ending 31st December, 1931.

The case I put to the Premier and the consequences of his reply as recorded in the minutes of the time are attached.

I reported to a special meeting of the University Executive (Chancellor, Acting Vice Chancellor, Pro Chancellor and Finance Committee Chairman) held in the Supreme Court Chambers of Sir John Northmore.

The gist of my report is briefly - The 20% cut had to apply forthwith and would also apply to the 1932 estimate. The grant for that year would remain on 1931 basis less 20% unless Parliament otherwise decided.

The Executive directed me to inform the staff -

(1) That as from the 1st July 1931 all salaries would be reduced by 20%.

(2) That there must be no expenditure from Departmental grants except with the authority of the Acting Vice-Chancellor.

(3) That in the preparation of the 1932 estimates they must exercise the most rigid economy and (most alarming intimation of all) that it would probably be necessary for some reduction in staff.

On 18th July, I notified the staff of the reduction as per the attached letter. With one exception
the staff accepted the position as inevitable and indeed it was their obvious duty to abide by the same treatment as was being meted out to others. The exception was again Professor Beasley. He blustered somewhat about appealing to the Courts against an act which because it purported to break contracts was unconstitutional. But nothing came of it.

The next job was to apply the 20% reduction to the 1932 estimates and explore for other possible reductions.

**QUESTION OF GOVERNMENT GRANT TO UNIVERSITY.**

**Notes for the Hon. The Premier, 17th June, 1931.**

1. **GENERAL.** The estimates each year have been prepared for the Academic year, which runs from 1st January to 31st December. This has been necessary owing to the fact that the contracts with the Teaching Staff provide that if an appointment is not renewed, or any member of the staff resigns, the appointment shall be determined at 31st December, so that the University classes will not be disorganised by a member of the Staff leaving in the middle of the year. This is the practice throughout Australia.

As it was considered that the Government had assumed responsibility for the carrying on of the University by the decision of Parliament that no fees should be charged to Students, the University has assumed that the Government Grant for the ensuing year would always be sufficient to carry it on to the end of the Academic year on 31st December, and on each occasion upon which the Premier has been interviewed, estimates have been submitted covering the activities of the University to the 31st December of the following year.

2. **PRESENT FINANCIAL POSITION.** The overdraft at the end of 1930 was £8,000

The University estimates for the year 1931 have been rigidly cut down and economies made in the Staff so as to reduce the overdraft by the end of this year to about £6,500 to £7,000. For this year, the University Departments have only been allowed sufficient money for bare necessities in the way of books and apparatus.

The present deficiency on the Current Account amounts to £8,994 due to the fact that a large proportion of the University revenue, which is received for examination fees (apart from the Government Grant) is only received during October and November when the Annual Examinations take place. The overdraft limit of the Bank is £7,000.

It will be extremely difficult to carry on the services of the University if the Grant for the half year from 1st July to 31st December is reduced by anything more than the sum which may be deducted from the salaries of the Staff on similar lines to whatever may be deducted from the Civil Service.

The University would find itself unable to make reductions in Staff except as from 1st January, 1932.

It is suggested, therefore, that any re-
duction in the Grant (beyond a proportionate deduction for salaries on the Civil Service Scale), should only apply as from 1st January 1932. This will enable the University to carry on its services for the balance of the year, and enable it to make any necessary reductions in Staff as from 1st January, 1932.

Under the Order of the Court approving of the use of the Hackett Bequest Fund, the University has been allowed to credit a sum of about £1,400 to Current A/c to pay for part of the increased Staff, material, etc., due to the increased number of Students.

Permission to use this money expires at 31st December 1931, so that next year there will be a reduction in University receipts, of about £1,400, which will add considerably to the difficulties of the University in carrying on its services.

3. INCIDENCE OF SALARIES TAX. The present Government Grant amounts to £31,000 and the Salaries of the University amount to £28,742.

If deductions were made from the salaries on the present scale of the Civil Service Salaries Tax, the amount of the Tax refundable to the Government in reduction of the Grant would be £2,000.

(Sgd) W. SOMERVILLE.  
Acting Vice-Chancellor.

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MINUTES OF MEETING OF UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVE HELD IN THE PRIVATE ROOM OF MR. JUSTICE NORTHMORE - SUPREME COURT, PERTH. WEDNESDAY, 17TH JUNE, 1931.

PRESENT:— Mr. Justice Northmore (Chairman of the Finance Committee), in the Chair, the Chancellor (Sir Walter James) the Pro-Chancellor (Dr. J. S. Battye), and the Acting Vice Chancellor (Mr. W. Somerville).

1. INTERVIEW WITH PREMIER REGARDING THE UNIVERSITY GRANT.

The Acting Vice-Chancellor stated that he had interviewed the Premier that morning, and the Premier had advised him that the Government would finance the University on the basis of last year's grant until Parliament otherwise decided, less a reduction of 20%. This would hold until the estimates were submitted and passed by Parliament.

The Acting Vice-Chancellor stated that he had also asked the Premier to bring in a short Act of Parliament to indemnify the University against any action taken regarding the reduction of salaries of the Staff who had been appointed under definite contracts.

The matter was considered by the Committee, and it was decided as follows:—

(1) That the Acting Vice-Chancellor should notify the Staff that as from 1st July 1931, all payments for salaries will be at the present rate less a reduction of 20%, pending adjustment in accordance with the legislation to be passed by Parliament following upon the recent Premiers' Conference.

(2) That the Acting Vice-Chancellor should notify Head of Departments that there must be no expenditure from Departmental Grants except with the authority of the
Acting Vice-Chancellor in each case.

(3) In connection with the preparation of Estimates for the year 1932 that the Acting Vice-Chancellor should notify Heads of Departments of the necessity of rigid economy and should also intimate to them that a reduction of Staff will probably be necessary in view of our serious financial position, the necessity for reducing the University overdraft, and the decrease in the amount we can spend from the Hackett Bequest.

2. HACKETT BUILDINGS – NEGOTIATIONS WITH BANK.

A letter was received from the Bank of New South Wales, Perth, as follows:

"Referring to your letter of the 3rd inst., I have to advise that the Bank is willing to advance up to £25,000 on the Building Account in addition to the existing advance limit of £7,000 on the General and Resumed Properties Accounts, if secured by Commonwealth Government stock £22,500 and debentures of W.A. Newspaper Ltd., for £150,000.

It is understood that as favourable opportunities occur Commonwealth Government Stock will be sold to reduce the advance."

It was agreed to accept the conditions laid down by the Bank.

The Chancellor announced that the Court had approved of the application for permission to borrow money under the Order of the Court allowing the University to raise £27,500 to complete the Hackett Buildings, and that he would see the Bank in regard to the preparation of the necessary documents and completion of negotiations for the advance required to complete the Hackett Buildings.

Confirmed – Northmore.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA – CRAWLEY, 18th JUNE, 1931.

Dear Sir,

Acting under instructions from the Senate I have had an interview with the Premier to ascertain the intentions of the Government with regard to the University grant.

As the result of what I was informed, together with the decrease in the amount we can spend from the Hackett Bequest, and our serious financial position, it is my unpleasant duty to inform you:

From the 1st July next, 20% will be deducted from your salary. This will be held in reserve pending adjustment under Legislation to be passed by Parliament.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd) W. SOMERVILLE.

Acting Vice-Chancellor.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA – CRAWLEY, 18th JUNE, 1931.

Dear Sir,

Acting under instructions from the Senate, I have had an interview with the Premier to ascertain the intentions of the Government with regard to the University Grant.
As a result of what I was informed, together with the decrease in the amount we can spend from the Hackett Bequest and our serious financial position, it is my unpleasant duty to inform you:

(i) From the 1st July next 20% will be deducted from your salary. This will be held in reserve pending adjustment under legislation to be passed by Parliament.

(ii) The authority to spend under your Departmental Grant is suspended. Nothing is to be spent and no orders which would commit the University to expenditure are to be issued until requisitions have been endorsed by me or Mr. Parker.

Yours faithfully,

W. SOMERVILLE.

Acting Vice-Chancellor.

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The reduction in our Grant from the Government made by the Financial Emergency Legislation was £6,200.

The reduction in salaries provided in the legislation would amount to £5,900. In addition we anticipated a reduction of at least £500 from Endowment Lands and £180 in the income from The Hackett endowment of the Chair of Agriculture due to the fall in the rate of interest. This made a total reduction in income below 1931 level of £6,880 and in addition we needed about £2,000 to reduce our overdraft on various funds and this reduction the Banks were pressing for.

A special report by the Finance Committee reported to the Senate that a special effort should be made to reduce our expenditure by at least £4,000 in the belief that could be done without decreasing efficiency. But before proceeding to put it into effect it was decided to have a conference with all the Heads of Departments to see if they could make any helpful suggestions. Several such conferences were held and Professor Murdoch circularised the Departments the replies to this circular make a curious collection. Some were indignant, some fretful and one from Professor Beasley was truculent and impudent. A feature common to most was a refusal to face the inexorable facts and a desire to pass the buck on to someone else.

At one of the conferences the Chancellor James put the matter as follows.
A Conference was held on Thursday, 30th July, when the representatives of the Senate informed the Heads of Departments that the Senate requires savings in the 1932 estimates as submitted by Departments to the extent of £4,000, i.e., equivalent to the reductions recommended in the special report of the Finance Committee.

The Chancellor stated that it was the opinion of the representatives of the Senate that the University had been outrunning the constable and had increased its expenditure and created new departments in excess of the University's available means. The Finance Committee considered that it is necessary to make reductions in the estimates submitted by Departments to the extent of about £4,000. The Staff were asked to assist the Senate in making reductions, and representatives of the Senate wished to know if they could suggest any other means of making the necessary savings. It had also to be borne in mind that Parliament may impose a greater cut in the Government Grant than the 20% cut announced by the Premier. The financial stringency may also be worse in a year's time than it is at present, and for this reason it was desirable that the University should put its house in order.

The Senate representatives would be open to consider any alternative scheme provided that savings to the amount of £4,000 were effected.

After a discussion, the representatives of the Heads of Departments stated that they wished further time to consider the matter, and it was agreed that they should forward a report to the Acting Vice-Chancellor by 7th August.

The report of the Heads of Departments, recommending reductions amounting to £2,125 was received by the Acting Vice-Chancellor and considered by the representatives of the Senate, who referred it to the Finance Committee for a report to the Academic Board and Senate.

The Finance Committee, at a meeting held on 11th August, after considering the recommendations of the Heads of Departments, has slightly amended its previous special report, and now recommends reductions in the Estimates submitted by Departments amounting to £3,728 against £4,050 previously recommended.

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At another over which the Pro-Chancellor presided is as follows:

PRECIS OF DISCUSSIONS AT MEETING OF HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS RE 1932 ESTIMATES.

UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS, FRIDAY, 17th JULY, 1931, at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT: The Pro-Chancellor (Dr. J. S. Battye) in the Chair, Professors Beasley, Clarke, Murdoch, Nicholls, Patterson, Ross, Wilsmore and Weatherburn, Associate-Professors Fox, Fraenkel and Wood, Messrs. F. Alexander, B.F. Blakey, A.T. Bowden and S.E. Solomon, Dr. M.A. Clarke and Mrs. M. Johnston.

Dr. Battye opened the meeting with a statement of the financial position of the University, explaining the necessity of reducing expenditure in respect of five items which would decrease the income as compared with 1931. These items were (1) decrease the income Grant by 20 per cent, at least, (2) decrease of money receivable from
Hackett Funds, (£1,638), (3) reduced rent from endowment lands (£500), (4) reduced interest from Hackett Endowment for Agriculture (£150), (5) necessity of reducing the University overdraft. He read a statement which showed that the reductions recommended by the Finance Committee would decrease the deficiency from £7,200 at 31st December 1931 to £4,224 at 31st December 1932, after meeting the reductions in items (1) to (4).

Professor Murdoch - Is the bank pressing for a reduction in the overdraft?

Dr. Battye - Continually. In addition to this, there is the necessity of providing for immediate repayment of trust funds should they be demanded.

Professor Beasley - Is the Finance Committee aware that the penalty for manipulation of trust funds is two years' imprisonment? Is it apparently proposed to cripple the activities of the University to rectify past blunders?

Resolutions carried at Meeting.

After a full discussion of the report of the Finance Committee, the following resolutions were carried:

Resolution No. 1. "That this meeting of Heads of Departments is strongly opposed to any dismissals of members of the full time staff owing to the serious adverse effect upon the present and future efficiency of the University."

The meeting was of the opinion that if dismissals are made, it will be difficult to fill vacancies on the staff from persons in Great Britain or the Eastern States, owing to the feeling that they may be dispensed with at short notice, after giving up an assured position, in some cases with pension rights, to come to Western Australia.

Resolution No. 2. "That this meeting of Heads of Departments is of opinion that the Government should be informed that this Institution, as a free University, cannot be carried on efficiently owing to the reduced grant and the considerable shrinkage of revenue from other University funds."

The question of charging fees was considered, and the Pro-Chancellor stated that this was a matter of general policy for the Senate.

It was also urged that at least £500 should be quite improperly taken from the Hackett Trust Funds for the Maintenance of the Buildings.

Finally the Finance Committee had to do the job themselves.

I made searching inquiries into the actual Lecture hours by the members of the Teaching Staff to test if any Department was overstaffed and also to see if more of the revenue from the Public Examinations could not be diverted with University revenue instead of going in substantial cheques into the packets of certain members of the teaching staff. (Read my report and letter about Cameron.)

The sub-committee of the Finance Committee which had finally to get to grips with the financial problems were Dr. Battye, Graduate, Melbourne, Pro-Chancellor Sir John Northmore, Graduate of Adelaide, Chairman of Fin-
ance Committee, Mr. Keall of Bristol, Mr. Middleton of W.A. University and myself, Acting Vice Chancellor.

The first point to consider was how do our costs per student for Teaching and for Administration compare with those of other Universities? Secondly how do our present costs compare with former years?

A return prepared by Mr. Parker showed that in comparison with 1925 the Government Grant had increased by £12,000 and during the same period the Departments had increased by the following -

1. Chair of Law.
2. Chair of Education.
3. Chair of Mathematics.
4. Diploma of Education.
5. Department of Botany, formerly combined with Biology.
6. Department of Psychology formerly combined with Philosophy.
7. Adult Education.
8. Courses in Italian.
10. Diploma of Commerce.
11. Diploma of Journalism.
12. Library expansion from part time Librarian to a full time staff of four.

The result was that notwithstanding the increase of £12,000 in revenue the Financial troubles were as acute as before. This and similar comparisons led Sir Walter James in 1931 speaking as Chancellor and Dr. Wallace after his special investigation in 1941 to use almost identical words - "The University had spread its resources too thinly over too many Departments."

There does not appear to exist any generally accepted ideas as to how a growing University should expand, what order of preference should be given to any subject over another? What are established depends, not upon any orderly progress, but upon the fad or fancy of some energetic member of the Senate. For instance, the Chair of Law was the particular fancy of Professor Shann while a member of the Senate. The Senate agreed to its establishment on the understanding that £500 per year in addition to the £500 contributed by the practicing Lawyers would be the total charge. In a very short time the cost of the Department of Law was £2000 per year. The Department was
long before it was needed. For many years it would have
paid the University to grant liberal Bursaries to the
three or four students who took law to enable them to go
to some other University and for five years during the war
the teaching of Law was suspended altogether without much
loss.

Mathematics was quite adequately taught by a
Lecturer and the only reason for establishing a Chair at
greatly increased cost was that Professor Whitfeld pre-
erred a Chair to a Lecturer.

A separate Department of Botany merely increased
the cost of a Lecturer-in-charge over an ordinary lecturer
without altering the quality of the teaching one iota.

New course in Italian was established because one
of the Professors had a friend who was an Italian who
wanted a job. It was easy to say that a knowledge of Ital-
ian was of assistance to a knowledge of English and such a
general statement sounds impressive and is very difficult
to disprove but Professor Wallace one time Professor of
English in Melbourne saw no reason for the Continuance of
Italian and recommended its abolition, but friendship has
been so influential as to have it retained up to the present.

The Diploma’s of Commerce and Journalism were
both ideas’s of Professor Shann. He went to considerable
trouble collecting money from Business Heads and Journalists
but after a trial lasting some years they were both found
to be neither "fish fowl nor good red herring" and abolish-
ed.

If the W.A. University had abundant financial
resources there could be no objection to the establishment
of these and many others, but our resources have always
been restricted.

The examination here given to some of those
which have been established has not been out of any antag-
onism to them but to establish my point that the selection
of those to be established is hampazard and does not rest
upon any plan or reasoned progress, but to the fancy of
some energetic member of the Senate.

FOOTNOTE - At the time of writing 1946 the Medical School
proposal is another case in point for the possibility of
establishing it rests upon the fact that Dr. Ainslie is a
member of the Senate. This is not to find fault with Dr.
Ainslie for pushing what he thinks necessary.

The following are extracts from my report as
Acting Vice Chancellor to the Senate about June 1931 -

"I think it is strictly correct to say that
during the years our staff has been rapidly increasing,
there has been no informed criticism of the frequent re-
quests from the senior staff for more assistants. The
Senate without advice was powerless to check the growth.
We had a right to look to Professor Whitfield for that ad-
vice and criticism and it was never forthcoming. He was
always the advocate. The Senior staff have in effect been
allowed, in Trade Unionist's terms, "to write their own tick-
et" I have never heard of a man with full liberty to say
how much assistance he required who has not taken a very
liberal view of the amount ..........

A document which was prepared by Professor Whit-
feld himself, upon which influenced to a great degree my
opinion that we are overstaffed is his analysis of the ratio
of teaching staff to students, prepared with the help of a
technical work on the subject which had earned his admir-
ation.

I am not aware of anything written by Professor
Whitfield to indicate what conclusion he drew from this
analysis, but to me it is very plain that we have a higher
ratio of Teachers to Students than Oxford, Cambridge or
Yale. As these large and wealthy Universities have many
on their Professorial Staff who do no teaching our propor-
tion of Teachers to students would appear to be very liberal.
On the other hand comparison with larger University is
vibrated by the fact that we have had several Departments
in which for years there were less than four students.

In its present stage of development, W.A.,
cannot afford to keep highly paid men for research work
only, consequently when we find our ratio of teachers to
students in excess of what these great and wealthy Univer-
sities have, we are justified in concluding that there is
something wrong with our ratio. But even if all these
opinions are entirely wrong there still remains the fin-
cancial reasons which make it imperative that our costs
should be reduced.

In my opinion we should make a determined ef-
fort to reduce our expenditure by at least £4,000."

I then enumerated the reduction which I thought
could be made and concluded that portion of my report re-
lating to the teaching -

"In the time available it will be quite im-
possible for one man or a Committee to examine all the De-
partments and decide what must be done, so the only course
I can suggest is to first decide by what percentage the expenditure must be reduced, add to the resultant figure the savings affected by the activities it has been decided to stop, and then throw upon the head of each Department the task of adapting his Department to the reduced expenditure."

Considerable attention was also devoted to the Office and Administration and economics affected, with much else my report concluded.

Mr. Preshaw's position is a peculiar one. He was appointed to succeed Mr. Fletcher, and as a sort of understudy to the Vice Chancellor. His work is with the academic side of the Vice Chancellor's office. It is work which should be under a responsible head with University training. From the time I know it has taken me to deal with the work falling upon a Vice Chancellor, I see no reason why some of the work done by Mr. Preshaw cannot be done by the Vice Chancellor, leaving Mr. Preshaw to share Mr. Newton's work with Mr. Parker.

I have been devoting about 12 to 1½ hours per week to the duty of Acting Vice Chancellor, during a time which cannot be said to be normal - in fact, it has at times been rather hectic - and nothing has got into arrears; I have cleaned the slate every day.

A final decision in this matter must be left until the return of Professor Whitfield. Mr. Preshaw's work has to do with examinations of various kinds. That is work upon which the public credit of the University depends. Any blunder made might reflect seriously upon the University, so, although I am very definite that the rearrangement is easily possible, it is a responsibility which properly rests upon the permanent occupant of the Vice Chancellorship.

With some minor alterations my report was adopted. The special Finance Committee then considered the reduction possible and how they were to be allocated over the various Departments.

The Committee in their report to the Academic Board dated 14th July 1931 say inter alia -

In view of the present financial position of the University, the Finance Committee has given consideration to the Estimates of Expenditure for 1932 as submitted by Departments, with a view to seeing what reductions are possible.

The Committee has had the following matters in mind in the consideration of the Estimates:

1. Reduction of Government Grant by 20%  
2. Loss of revenue, £1,638, from the Hackett Bequest.  
3. The necessity for a reduction of the bank overdraft.

In the estimates submitted, the salaries have been reduced as set out in the Financial Emergency Bill, viz., 18% up to £250 p.a. and 20% over £250 up to £1,000. In addition no increments in salary have been allowed.
As a guide to make recommendations the Finance Committee considered the summary of lecture returns made by the Teaching Staff for the First Term 1931, showing the average number of hours per week devoted by each member of the Staff to University work for lectures and tutorials.

The recommendations of the Committee are submitted with a detailed explanation of the reasons for each recommendation and are given under the seal of confidence to the members of the Academic Board, as it is considered that the explanation of the reasons for the recommendations is a domestic matter, which should not be published outside the University.

**CLASSICS - Deletion of part time Assistant.**

**English** - Reduction of grant by £222, Professor Murdock to be asked to submit a recommendation as to how this should be effected 222

**Education** - Department to be abolished - saving to be effected. It was considered that the subject of Education might be included as a separate subject in the Department of Philosephy, as was done prior to the establishment of the Chair of Education. 429

**French and German** - Reduction of Grant by £250, the elementary courses to be eliminated and the Department re-arranged so that it can be carried on by the Lecturer-in-charge and one full-time Lecturer. 250

**Abolition of Courses in Spanish and Italian** 230

**History** - Delete correspondence tutor. 40

**Mathematics** - Dispensing with Lecturer, Dr. Moir 454

Reduction of books. 10

**Fine Art Course** - to be abolished. 101

**Geology** - Reduction of grant by £250, Professor Clarke to be asked to submit a recommendation as to how this should be affected. 250

**Physics Department** - Reduction of grant by £400 by dispensing with services of Dr. Nimmo. 400

**Veterinary Science** - Abolition of Department. 225

**Biology and Botany** - Recommended that Biology and Botany be continued as separate departments, and that upon the retirement of Miss Reed at the end of this year, that Mr. W. Bennett be appointed as Lecturer in Charge of Botany without any increase in his present salary.

It was further decided that a sum of £400 be taken off the total of the estimates for the separate departments of Biology and Botany and that the Acting Vice-Chancellor should consult with Professor Nicholls and Mr. Bennett as to how this deduction should be made. 400

**Engineering** -

(a) G.M. Nunn, Lecturer in Surveying - reduce salary from £160 to £100. 60

(b) Reduce grant for apparatus and maintenance. 350

(c) Delete one of two labourers set down on estimates at £203 each. 203
Library - delete junior Assistant

Faculty of Law - Grant to be reduced by £240. Professor Beasely to be asked to submit a recommendation as to how this should be effected.

Total deductions recommended £4.050

The wages of the Office Staff were also reduced by 750.
Two gardeners were also retrenched saving 700.

Of these decisions the most regrettable was that to abolish the Department of Education. The main reason for it was not that set out in the Committee report but a general feeling that the obligation on the University finance to find half the Professors salary was not equitable and that the Government should find the whole salary as part of the Training of School Teachers. The recommendation to abolish the Department was fortunately not given effect to as some arrangement was fixed up with the state Education Department.

With regard to the retrenchment of Dr. Nimmo. When the news that his retrenchment was contemplated became know, two members of the staff asked me to give them a confidential interview. They made to me such strong representations as to the serious effect his loss would have on the Physics Department. particularly with the supervision of students taking an Honours Course that I agreed to reconsider the matter and Dr. Nimmo was retained.

The Finance Committee also prepared a return showing in detail why the reductions were made and why no reductions were made in Philosophy, Psychology, Agriculture and Chemistry.

But these reasons are no longer of interest.

The Committee says in their report -

"As a guide to make recommendations the Finance Committee considered a summary of Lecture returns made by the Teaching Staff for the first term in 1931, showing the average number of hours per week devoted by each member of the staff to University work for Lectures and Tutorials," this had to be resorted to because of the persistent assertion that no reduction in staffing was
Some of the members of the Teaching Staff objected to these returns and argued that they did not take cognizance of the time for preparation. The Committee would have had no objection to the inclusion of these hours of preparation had it been possible to honestly and accurately assess them.

No mention was made of the fact that the total teaching terms of the year is about 36 weeks leaving a liberal balance of four months to do whatever the teacher thought necessary for his work or his pleasure.

The Committee thought that a Department in which the Professorial Head did on an average 4 hours lecturing per week plus general supervision and in which a second senior lecturer did 9 hours per week plus supervision, an average of 9 1/3 hours lecturing per week plus supervision the Committee thought could do without one of its Lecturers. The details of this department are given because though a large Department it was not very exceptional. The head of this Department, it may be mentioned in passing indignantly asserted that the mention of 4 hours lecturing per week did him an injustice, the correct figure should have been six.

Early in University history, Dr. Saw, than whom no one connected with the University of W.A. has had higher academic qualification, proposed that there should be provided for the Senate a periodical return showing the lecture hours of all members of the Teaching Staff.

The scheme reducing the 1932 estimates by £2,050 was submitted to the Head of Departments for their comments. A reply was received signed by Beasley, Clarke, Murdoch, and Wilsmore. Of these Wilsmore was not affected as no reduction in his Department was suggested.

A feature of the document, which had very plainly been drafted by Beasley, was an impudent suggestion (characteristic of Beasley) for the appointment of a committee on which the Heads of Departments would have had equal representation with the Senate and which would have taken the control of the University finances out of the hands of the
Another statement was that to take money from the Hackett Maintenance fund to - "complete structural requirements in the Building, furnishing the Winthrop Hall etc. was improper." This was quite true, but entirely irrelevant and outside the function of the Heads of Departments.

After reviewing all the suggested reductions made by the Finance Committee totalling £4,050 the Heads of Departments conclude that various reductions totalling £2,145 were the "Total possible reductions."

So the Finance Committee and the Senate had to go its own way without any assistance from the Head of Departments.

The next job I tackled in my efforts to improve the University's financial position was to direct more of the revenue from the Public Examinations in to the University revenue. For some years the size of the cheques some members of the staff were receiving every year was the subject of satirical comment, particularly when as during the financial crises it was noted that some who were loudest in their protests against any reduction in the number of their Assistants were among those who could find time to earn the largest cheques for setting and marking papers.

In this reform I relied on the valuable assistance of Preshaw and Professor Wilsmore. They both put in a lot of work, tabulating sheets of figures showing the present fees, the fees paid in other states and their own estimate of what they should be. Professor Wilsmore comments in a reply to questions put by me will be pertinent as long as examinations are held and are as follows -
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA - Department of Chemistry

PERTH.

3rd August, 1931.

The Acting Vice-Chancellor.

PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS - Fees for Setting and Marking Papers.

I have carefully considered the queries you put to me some time ago on this matter, and now beg to reply as follows:

In my opinion considerable savings could be made in the cost of the Public Examinations: and in view of the present depressed state of the University's finances these savings should be made. The fees paid hitherto for setting and marking papers at the Public Examinations seem to have been arrived at on the assumption that they must be made high enough to attract outside examiners, whereas in actual fact most of the examining is done by members of the University teaching staff, whose normal salaries are supposed to cover already full time work for the University. One result has been that the desire to earn this extra perquisite has in some cases been allowed to become detrimental to the interests of University students. As an instance of this, the time-table of the University Annual Examinations has in recent years been arranged to suit the convenience of certain members of the University teaching staff, who wanted to be free to get to work on the Public Examination papers at the earliest possible moment, rather than in the interests of the University students; and the resolution of the Senate requiring a reasonable interval to elapse between the close of lectures and the commencement of the Annual Examinations has been made a dead letter.

In Universities in Great Britain and Europe it is considered unseemly for University Professors to act as paid examiners at school public examinations, the marking of the papers being left almost invariably to the less highly paid members of the University teaching staffs.

In my own case I have consistently kept to this rule, and in consequence have received no share of the examiners' fees at the Public Examinations - but perhaps the number of students taking chemistry may have been insufficient to make the temptation adequate.

To come now to your specific questions:

1. I consider the existing scale of fees to examiners more than sufficient, and suggest that the following reduced scale be substituted in view of the present state of the University's finances:

(a) Setting Papers for Junior or Leaving Certificate Examinations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Fees</th>
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<tr>
<td>Subjects not otherwise specified</td>
<td>£1/10/- per subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>£1/10/- per paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double papers in a language</td>
<td>£2/-/- per subject</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative papers in Biology:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural History</td>
<td>£1/-/-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Botany</td>
<td>£1/-/-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geometrical Drawing and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanical Drawing</td>
<td>£1/10/- per paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>10/- per sectional paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woodwork and Metalwork - Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>£1/10/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(b) Correcting Papers:

Junior, (where not otherwise specified) 1/- per candidate.

- English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, (including oral examination and test in free composition) 1/6 per candidate
- Mathematics 1/- per candidate
- Woodwork and Metalwork (including examination of models and portfolios) 1/6 per candidate
- Laboratory Notebooks (See below) Nil

Leaving Three-Hour papers 1/6 per paper

- Double papers in languages 3/- per candidate
- Drawing (including examination of portfolios) 2/- per candidate
- Laboratory notebooks Nil

Note: The remuneration for marking papers at the London Matriculation Examination used to be 1/- per paper.

Laboratory Notebooks have completely failed to fulfil the purpose for which they were introduced into the examinations. They were intended to give the candidate a chance to show his knowledge and grasp of the laboratory work he had done, and to give evidence of originality of thought; but this intention has for the most part been completely nullified by the teachers. In the majority of cases all the notebooks coming from any one school are usually too much alike that they must have been dictated by the teacher, and therefore cannot be accepted as the candidate's own description of the work he is supposed to have done. Consequently in chemistry the examiners have ceased to give any weight to the laboratory notebooks as evidence of the capacity of the candidates. As the science teachers in general seem unable to play the game in this matter, the practice of requiring the candidates to produce their "laboratory notebooks" had better be given up.

2. The question of whether the fees paid to the examiners should vary with the subject is difficult to answer. From my own experience, confirmed by that of others whom I have asked, I find questions involving numerical calculations much the easiest to mark even when, as in marking papers in chemistry, one lays more stress on the method followed by the candidate than on the accuracy of the numerical result. On the other hand I find papers involving translation from one language to another the most difficult to mark, as one has to pay careful attention to every word written by the candidate. Probably the present system of a flat rate is the line of least resistance.

3. The fees charged to candidates seem to me to be fair. Anyway the University cannot afford to reduce them.

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In connection with examiners' fees, I consider the payment of fees to examiners for the Matriculation Examination in February wholly unjustified as this is a purely University examination, and the examining work in connection with it should therefore be deemed to be merely part of the work for which the University teaching staff receive their salaries. Formerly this examination was treated as merely supplementary to the November examination.
to enable weak candidates to complete the requisite number of passes for Matriculation. But when the Senate agreed to pay fees to the examiners at the February examination there was an immediate rush to get it made into a full Matriculation Examination. (An exception must, however, be made in favour of the February examination in Junior English which may be taken by candidates who require to pass in Junior English to complete their requirements for the Junior Certificate.)

Signed N.T.M. Wilsmore.

Mr. Preshaw approached the question from a different angle to that adopted by Professor Wilsmore as follows:-

The Acting-Vice-Chancellor,
University of W.A.,
Crawley.

6th July, 1931.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of 5th May I have to submit the following report on the payments made to examiners for the Junior and Leaving Examinations.

Fees Paid by Candidates.

These have been altered once, namely, in 1922. They were in that year increased as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Fee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>1915-1921</td>
<td>5/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>1922-1931</td>
<td>7/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving</td>
<td>1915-1921</td>
<td>10/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving</td>
<td>1922-1931</td>
<td>15/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Shorthand and Typewriting, since they were first included in 1920, fees in addition to the ordinary maximum have been charged.

Alteration of Fees Paid to Examiners.

As far as I can trace in the records, these have been substantially altered only once, in 1923, and then only at Junior Standard. In that year the following increases were made:

- From 1/- to 1/6 - History, Geography, Commercial Arithmetic, Commercial Methods, Shorthand, Typewriting.
- From 1/6 to 2/- - (including inspection of practical books) Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geology, Agricultural Science, Drawing B.
- From 2/- to 2/6 - Mathematics (two papers).
- Unaltered at 1/6 - English, Latin, Greek, Drawing A.
- Unaltered at 2/- - French, and German (including orals).

When Junior Mathematics became two separate subjects in 1928, papers in each section were paid for at 1/6. This resulted in an examiner being paid 3/- for one paper in each section as against 2/6 for two papers previously.

Whether the Fees are Fair Remuneration for Services Performed.

It will be seen that the rate per hour which examiners receive for marking papers is, on the average, about 5/- which is at the rate of about £10 per week to say, 40 hours. This is much less than the 17/- per hour
which is paid to examiners in the Practical Music Examinations conducted by the Australian Universities (which works out at from 10/- to 1½/- per hour if working time wasted in travelling is included); it is also low compared with charges by professional workers with similar specialised knowledge, such as accountants. These rates do not include time occupied by examiners in filling in mark sheets attending meetings, interviewing teachers and doing similar administrative work in connection with the individual subjects. The question of the adequacy of the payment for this work is complicated by the fact that 55 per cent, of the examiners are on the University Full Time Teaching Staff, and that for practically all examiners the receipts from this source are only a fraction of total income, the work being done in their spare time, often during Christmas and New Year vacations.

Approaching the matter as a question of whether the examiners are receiving more or less per hour than they should in view of the grade of work performed, I do not think that they are, on the whole, over paid.

Whether University Can Afford the Fees.

The next question is whether the University can afford the rates at present being paid.

The statement of receipts and Expenditure for 1930 shows that these examinations paid for themselves. The surplus of £450 is more than enough to cover the examination time occupied by myself and Mr. B. Newton, whose salaries for the year totalled £750 before the present reductions came into force. In addition to this surplus there was an excess of receipts over expenditure of £188 in the February Junior and Matriculation Examinations, mainly due to the decision not to pay examiners except for Junior English papers. Office time chargeable against this would not be more than £50.

Fees in Other States.

I attach a Schedule showing the fees paid for Public Examinations in other Australian Universities. It will be seen that our marking fees are about equal to the maximum paid in those Universities, although about 6d per paper above what is considered sufficient in the poorest paid State, Queensland. My contention that fees for setting the papers might equitably be increased in certain subjects, is borne out by the payment of £5/5/- and £4/4/- by Melbourne. It appears, however, that none of the other States have attempted to look into the comparative times taken by examiners in different subjects, except, to a very small extent, in Sydney and Adelaide.

Proposed Re-Adjustment.

The schedules showing the payment per hour in each subject naturally lead to the conclusion that a re-adjustment is necessary if justice is to be done. I have made an attempt to adjust the rates so as to bring the rates per hour nearer equality. In doing this I have not carried the adjustments to their logical conclusion and made all rates exactly equal. I have hesitated to do this in view of the fact that the schedules are based on estimates given by the examiners themselves, and that these estimates are probably only approximately correct. In view of the possibility of errors arising from misunderstanding or mis-statement of information received, I think that the proposed alterations should be submitted to the examiners before being adopted. I think this necessary particularly with regard to the increases in fees for setting papers, as
other subjects may have difficulties in this direction not know to me.

The net result of my recommendations will be a net decrease in fees paid of about £26. I have aimed simply at re-adjusting the rates per hour and have not attempted either to materially increase or decrease the totals which are payable.

Yours faithfully,
(Sgd) A.S. PRESHAW.
Clerk of Records.

Taking the fees paid and the total payments for 1930, namely, £1,573/5/- as a basis, Mr. Preshaw's suggestions would have reduced this figure by £26/15/- or 1.7% to £1,546/9/6. To achieve such a result it was not worth while disturbing the existing system. Professor Wilsmore on the other hand would have reduced the total payment by £540/5/- or 3.4%.

My decision was that after correcting some anomalies the same scale of reduction as had been applied under the Financial Emergency Legislation to salaries, namely 20% should be applied as near as was possible to the small fees of 1/6 and 2/-.

These alterations were not put into effect until after Professor Whitfeld's return. As was to be expected he seems to have dismissed Professor Wilsmore's suggestions for a substantial saving to the benefit of the University finances, as of no importance. Some correspondence passed between Whitfeld and myself but I had ceased to have any interest in the matter and what finally happened I do not know.

At one stage Whitfeld suggested that I should move at the Senate meeting that no Professor should be allowed to receive more than £50 for these exams. But I thought that was his job and nothing was done.

The case of Collot D'Herbois was a disagreeable one and also a somewhat sad experience. The first I knew about the matter was that the Chancellor on a complaint lodged by Professor Ross had suspended him. The case was then passed on to me to deal with. I had D'Herbois to my office to tell me his side of the case. He freely gave
a full confession of the incidents. He was somewhat
flippant and from his Gallic standpoint the affair seemed
to be of minor importance and he was surprised and indig-
nant at his suspension over such a trifle.

At first I was disposed not to be too harsh for I
had read Ellis and Gund on Psychology of Sex. I had fre-
quently wondered that incidents of a like character were
not more frequent, where an attractive young man is sur-
rrounded by a number of adolescent girl students he must
watch his steps very carefully.

Collet D'Herbois was a bright witty good looking
man in the early 20th century with an attractive personal-
ity, so the pit falls in his way would be more than met
a more common place individual.

I then inquired into the matter from the point of
view of the girls concerned. I found that from the stand-
point of conventional morality it was rather a bad case.
Probably he was as much sinned against as sinning, never-
theless he had shown himself to be one who could not be
tolerated on a University Staff.

He apparently requested Murdoch to intercede on
his behalf and the Professor came to me, when informed of
the facts I had asserted he quite properly withdrew
from the matter.

When I next saw D'Herbois he remarked on my change
of manner towards him, when I replied that I had heard the
other side he burst into a torrent of protest, the gist of
which was that he had been tempted, he was more sinned
against than sinning etc., but there was no challenge to
the accuracy of my facts. So I gave him the option to re-
sign and leave the University forthwith with a months salary
or immediate dismissal. After further emotional protest
very painful to listen to he accepted the months salary and

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It was necessary to get one to carry on the work
of the Department of French and German as soon as possible
so the vacancy was advertised in the West Australian. There was only one applicant and a most remarkable one. He was a small thin wiry man with a big Buffalo horn moustache. His name was Pierre De Chassel and he claimed to be a French Viscount by birth. He had been for many years Lecturer in French and German at the Tzar Imperial College for Officer Cadets for the Russian Army in St. Petersburg. He had been forced to fly, leaving behind all his possessions by the Revolution. At the time of applying he was trying to make a living on a small farm in the Darling Range. Could there be a greater contrast than between the conditions and style of living at the Tsars imperial Court and those on a small clearing in a Jarrah Forest.

He only remained with us until we appointed Dr. Margaret Clarke, and according to Murdoch afterwards kept a Café in Hay Street.

One of my last tasks as Acting Vice-Chancellor was to draft a code of wages and working conditions for the Staff and a special one for the Accountant. As in future years the conditions enjoyed from 1931 onward for a considerable period, may be of interest, a copy of the code for the Office Staff is included.

Unfortunately for reasons given later, I did not keep a copy of the Accountants agreement.

My attention was directed to the matter by a complaint from Parker to the effect that after 17 years in the employ of the University he had no idea of the terms upon which he was employed other than that he was a member of the Clerical Staff, the Gardiners and Cleaners were in the same position. Whitfeld preferred apparently, to keep them for holidays and pay etc. dependant upon his bounty. The staff might have called it Caprice. I am sure he meant well by the staff it was just his constitutional dislike for anything definite.

For the clerical staff I took as my basis the then current Civil Service agreement.
The code for the clerical staff was approved by the Senate at the August 1931 meeting and the Chancellor was directed to sign.

One of the features of the Accountant's argument which I thought important was that he as an officer of the Senate should be authorised, if and when he thought the occasion warranted it, to report direct to the Senate and not through the Vice-Chancellor which would be the normal procedure. The object of this is of course plain and one which no officer has any ground or right to take exception, it was to protect the Senate against any act of malfeasance by a Vice Chancellor the success of which would depend upon the Accountant being overruled by the Vice-Chancellor. The Chancellor was careful with the drafting and the September meeting of the Senate authorised him to sign it. During the remainder of Parker's life there did not arise any occasion to refer to it. But during the negotiations for a new accountant and after Mr. McDonald had been appointed I made mention on several occasions at Committee meetings of this clause. My astonishment was great when what purported to be this agreement was produced to show that there was no such clause in the agreement. Someone must have destroyed the original which James signed as Chancellor and substituted for it one with this important clause deleted. I had to secure confirmation of my own memory of this important clause so I called on James who by this time was getting very frail in body but mentally was as alert as ever. He was most definite and emphatic as to the presence of the clause in question in the document he had signed as Chancellor in 1931. When I informed him that the only copy of what purported to be the accountants agreement did not contain either the clause in question or his signature as Chancellor he became so angry and agitated that in consideration of his health I was glad to terminate the interview as soon as possible.
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA - OFFICE STAFF - CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT AND SERVICE.

Office Hours - shall be as under:

Monday to Friday - 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Saturday - 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

2. Officers will be required to work beyond the usual hours whenever it is necessary to bring up arrears of work, or to meet any temporary pressure of business. If required to work after 6.30 p.m., 1/6d tea money shall be allowed.

3. A record shall be kept of overtime worked, each hour being reckoned as 1½ hours in computing the compensating holidays hereafter referred to. Overtime worked shall not be paid for in money, but shall be compensated for by extra holidays (not, however, exceeding one week) when annual leave is taken.

4. Except as otherwise provided by agreement in writing, the service of all officers shall be terminable by one month's notice on either side.

5. Leave (other than sick leave) not exceeding two days may be given at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor. The total leave with pay to be 3 days per year.

6. The following holidays shall be allowed:

26th January (Foundation Day.)
Good Friday, Saturday and Monday.
Anzac Day.
May Day - about 5th May.
Foundation Day, 1st June
Wednesday of Show Week - from 1 p.m.
Public Service Holidays at Xmas and New Year.

7. Officers shall be allowed two weeks leave annually, and may under special circumstances allow holidays to accrue for two years. Annual leave shall be taken at a time agreed to with the Vice-Chancellor.

8. Long Service Leave may be allowed as follows:

(a) 7 years' service - 3 months on full pay or 6 months on half pay.
14 years' service - 6 months on full pay or 12 months on half pay.

(b) An officer who takes his leave at the expiration of seven years will not be entitled to the longer term prescribed for 14 years of service.

(c) Long service leave is permissive, and the commission of any offences, or the lack of good and diligent conduct, will be taken into consideration in deciding whether it shall be granted.

(d) Long service leave shall be considered as a special period of recuperation after a lengthy term of service, with a view of fitting an officer for a further term, and should be applied for as it becomes due after seven or fourteen years.

9. Applications for sick leave of for more than 2 days shall be supported by a medical certificate, and may be granted as under: - Under three years' service - one month on full pay and one month at half pay.
Over three years' service - 2 months on full pay and one month at half-pay.

10. The Vice-Chancellor may require a candidate for a position in the office to pass the Civil Service Examination or some other examination or test he thinks suitable prior to appointment.

11. Increments to salary shall be as follows, with a provision that the scale shall change with any change in the Public Service Scale:

**Female Clerks and Typists.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale of Salary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Juniors</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15 years of age</td>
<td>£55</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 years of age</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>110</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>130</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Seniors</strong></td>
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<td>140</td>
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<td>150</td>
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</tbody>
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**Male Clerks.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale of Salary</th>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Married</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Juniors</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15 years of age</td>
<td>£55</td>
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<td><strong>Seniors</strong></td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
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</table>

Increments are subject to a satisfactory report from the Vice-Chancellor in regard to conduct, diligence and efficiency.

Vacancies in positions with a salary of over £85 shall if possible be made from the juniors.

Future appointments shall (except in special circumstances endorsed by the Finance Committee) be made as juniors at a salary not exceeding £85.

Promotion from the Junior to the Senior Class of subject to passing the Class "F" Civil Service Promotional Examination in English, Handwriting, Shorthand (100 words a minute) and Typewriting, or an equivalent examination approved by the Vice-Chancellor.

12. Each officer (unless in any special case it is otherwise agreed) who is not under the Staff Superannuation Scheme, shall take out and maintain an Endowment Policy maturing at 65 for an amount equal to his or her annual salary for the time being.
When by length of service any such officer comes under the Staff Superannuation Scheme such Endowment Policy may, at the option of such Officer, be treated as having been taken out under the said scheme.

The staff under Professor Whitfield had become accustomed to a very easy going and indulgent Executive Head. Under me as Vice Chancellor the strict enforcement of the Financial Emergency reductions in pay, the inquiry into the number of Lecture hours during term time, the effort to reduce the substantial cheques some of them had been receiving for Public Examinations work, the reduction in the number of Gardeners, Cleaners, Typists, Lecturers and Assistant Lecturers; all this alarmed the Teaching staff and a distress signal was sent to Whitfield that he should return and save them from worse possibilities. So he curtailed his holiday by about a month.

The following is an extract from the Senate minutes for August 1931.

"The Chancellor expressed the appreciation of the Senate to Mr. Somerville for his work as Acting Vice Chancellor during Professor Whitfields absence - His remarks were supported by the Pro. Chancellor Dr. Batty and Mr. Justice Northmore, Chairman of Finance Committee.

At the instance of the Chancellor the following motion was carried unanimously - That the Senate -

(1) Expresses its sincere thanks to Mr. W. Somerville for undertaking in an Honorary capacity the duties of Vice Chancellor during the absence on leave of Professor Whitfeld and for carrying out those duties with such marked success and -

(2) Places on record its deep appreciation of the unselfish and most valuable service rendered by him to the University throughout a most trying and difficult administrative period."

I have no recollection of Whitfeld speaking to this motion.

In my reply to the Senate's resolution of thanks I said -

"When I was appointed I naturally anticipated a quiet time merely keeping things going during Professor Whitfeld's absence. But the reverse of that has happened. The University has been passing through a time of financial stress unequalled in its history. The difficulties had been developing for a long time and came to a head when £2000 became due to the Bursarie holders and there was no money immediately available with which to pay. The position required careful thought and drastic action if we were not to default and I will always regret the
loss of Capital made necessary in order that worse things might be avoided.

Many financial and other problems arising out of the Hackett Building operations have had to be solved as they arose.

Early in my term of office I received from Professors Wilmot and Tottersall some very scathing criticism of the plans for the new Science Buildings. The criticism seemed to be so well founded that much thought and effort was put forth to reach a design which would suit their wants. All this effort together with plans costing £1150 came to nothing.

To the Deans of the Faculties my best thanks are due for keeping me in touch with the business done at Faculty meetings I could not attend.

To Mrs. Parker and Preshaw my special thanks are due for their ready co-operation at all times. This involved a considerable amount of work not included in their ordinary duties which could only be done in overtime. Their knowledge of University accounts and procedure enabled them to put before me facts and information to enable me to come to prompt decisions on many matters of policy and detail. So a very great mass of work was got through and nothing has been delayed.

Having my own Arbitration Court work to attend to, the past 5 months have been for me very strenuous, so much so indeed that I am very pleased Professor Whitfield has cut his holiday by a month.

On the whole I have enjoyed the work and am proud to have your approval of what I have done. I will always look back with pleasure and pride on the time I was chief executive Officer of the University of W. A."

The Senate resolution was engrossed, signed by the Chancellor (James) and the University Seal affixed.

The document was framed and will be an heirloom.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, PERTH. 15th October, 1931
W. Somerville, Esq., 2 Albert Street, Cottesloe.

Dear Mr. Somerville,

The Senate at its meeting on the 22nd September last passed the following resolution:

That the Senate:

(1) Expresses its sincere thanks to Mr. William Somerville for undertaking in an honorary capacity the duties of Vice Chancellor during the absence on leave of Professor Whitfield and for carrying out those duties with such marked success and

(2) Places upon record its deep appreciation of the unselfish and most valuable services rendered by him to the University throughout a most trying and difficult administrative period.
I need hardly state in a letter what I have so constantly expressed to you verbally, that is my warm thanks for the good work you did and the great assistance you rendered.

May you long be on the Senate to help guide its destinies.

The enclosure may be of interest to you as a record of our appreciation.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd) WALTER S. JAMES.

On the termination of my period as Acting Vice Chancellor I received the following letter from the Chancellor, Sir Walter James.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA — PERTH. 21st September '31

Dear Somerville,

May I tell you in writing what I have frequently said in words?

That I am most grateful to you for accepting the position of acting Vice Chancellor and even more so for the way you "took off your coat" to the job and spent so many hours in your effort to first grasp the position and then to get things on to some solid basis.

I hesitate to think what would have happened had our administration been conducted during 1931 as it was during 1930 and earlier years.

The gratitude I feel is I know shared by all members of the Senate but I feel it the more deeply because I best know how unselfish and invaluable your work has been.

There are troubles and anxieties ahead of us. The world day by day extends the area of such troubles and so intensifies ours.

Only courage and faith in our Commonwealth and its people will carry us through — you possess both and so I shall continue to look for your help during the short balance of my term as Chancellor.

I send a couple of pipes. There is no mental rest so soothing or so tranquil as that which Our Lady Nicotine provides for her devotees. May that rest come to you in abundance as you smoke.

Yours sincerely, Walter S. James.

I value this letter highly, not only because of the thanks and appreciation expressed, but also because of the support and endorsement it expresses of the general policy pursued during my time as Acting Vice Chancellor.

It became my duty to criticise adversely many features of Professor Whitfield's policy and performance
particularly on the business side. It was a time of crises and many things had to be done which to those affected were very objectionable but Sir Walter's support and encouragement never faltered.

I give also a letter to and from Professor Murdoch at that time Chairman of the Professorial Board. They are unimportant in themselves, but give an impression of the "atmosphere" of the time.

University, Crawley.
2nd September, 1931.

Professor W.L.F. Murdoch,
University,
CRAWLEY.

Dear Professor,

This is not from the Acting Vice-Chancellor, but from W. Somerville. I want you to know that I strongly resent the extravagant and somewhat theatrical language of your letter to the Vice-Chancellor.

During five very strenuous months a number of us have been doing our best to keep the University from the shame of having to confess that it could not pay its Bursaries, that its Trust funds were spent; that even its Professors' salaries would have to be a month in arrears, etc. etc.

During these months the Professors have been concerned chiefly with their own affairs.

We have after much worry and trouble evolved a plan by which the University has a chance to reach solvency, and because that plan necessitates the retrenchment of some of your personal friends, you are pleased to call it a "crime against the University". Inferentially we are criminals and you are the only righteous bird who has the interests of the University at heart.

Yours truly,
Dear Somerville,

Your note to hand three minute ago. I reply in the same spirit, not to the Acting Vice-Chancellor, but to a decent chap I used to know named Somerville. To him I can say what I should of course never venture to say to the Acting Vice-Chancellor, namely - Go to Blazes.

If you think that expression is a bit too condensed, I might expand it into the statement that even God's humblest worm (that's me) may reach a point where he must turn; and that your letter is enough to make even a meek cockroach (another description of myself) rise in wrath.

When you say that during five strenuous months you wise and good men have been battling to save the University from shame, while the selfish Professors have been "concerned chiefly with their own affairs", thus declaring that you are on a far higher moral plane than we, you are guilty of self-righteousness to an extreme degree. He that putteth himself on a pedestal is in danger of toppling into Hell-fire. I should hate to see you toppling into Hell-fire; hence this friendly warning.

How do you know that "during these months the Professors have been concerned chiefly with their own affairs"? Of course our working time has been taken up with our Departments, just as yours has (I presume) been taken up with the work of the Arbitration Court. Our spare time has been devoted to the affairs of the University, prying into matters which nobody invited us to look at and making deductions from what we found out. We have even held meetings on Saturday afternoon, when normal people are working in their gardens or playing golf. (Did you, the Amalgamated Saints and Sages, meet on Saturday afternoons?) Therefore, I can't accept your implied estimate of our selfishness as contrasted with your altruistic endeavours. This is what I mean by saying - Go to Blazes.

Also, how do you know that our fighting has all been in the interests, not of the University, but of our "personal friends"? I don't think fighting for one's personal friends a bad sort of activity; I should be rather proud to think that on my Tombstone might be carved the words - "He fought for his personal friends." But in this case you have no reason, so far as I can see, for saying that any one of us fought for his personal friends rather than for the University as a whole.

Five of us were elected by the Staff to go into finances with representatives of the Senate. Our suggestions were treated as more or less imbecilities, and our plans as actuated by low motives - you yourself suggesting that we were prepared to sacrifice the interests of the students to our own interests. We were treated as the intellectual and moral inferiors of members of the Finance Committee. How such poor creatures ever came to be chosen as members of a teaching staff is a puzzle.
Seriously: I have always admired the way in which some men have given of their time and thought, without reward, to the University. I have never doubted for a moment that you, and those who have been working with you, have been doing your very best to steer the University through a very perilous passage. But the best men may be mistaken; nobody is infallible. I have a perfect right to the belief that in the present instance you have made some mistakes, and that those mistakes are so vital that to apply them would be a crime against the University. This doesn't in the least imply, as you in your extravagant and theatrical style say it does, that the men who made these mistakes are criminals. All this is summed up in my former phrase - Go to Blazes.

Having thus laid bare to you the inmost recesses of my mind, I shall now put on my armour, and whet my blade, and generally get ready to fight you still further. I recognise that you are fighting for something you believe in, and not for your personal interests; I wish you could manage to do me the honour of thinking the same of me.

I am sorry you should "strongly resent" what I wrote. Think of all the things you have said about me and those miscreants, my colleagues! But I suppose what you said about resentment was a joke. You couldn't mean it seriously,

Yours sincerely,

Walter Murdoch.