

APPENDIX No. 6

Q. I gather that you have a lot of things to purchase, and to do so properly you think that the men who have the actual knowledge of what you require should have it in hand because they could do it as quickly and just as economically as through a central commission?—A. Quite so. I say, nevertheless, that the War Purchasing Commission has served a most useful purpose in connection with the purchase of staple articles required by all departments, but when it comes to the purchasing of special articles it would not be handled so satisfactorily. The way it has been handled has saved money to the country—and has not held us back in the work. They have been exceedingly co-operative with us.

By the Chairman:

Q. If you did not consult the War Commission at all would you require to enlarge your staff?—A. No.

By Mr. Boys:

Q. It is done as a check on the prices and on the standing of the various firms?—Yes, principally for the purpose of lumping together the requirements of the various government departments for staple articles.

Q. The idea being that in buying in quantities you get the goods much cheaper?—A. Quite so.

By the Chairman:

Q. You have an engineering branch?—A. Yes.

Q. Several other departments have engineering branches. Is there any overlapping so far as you know?—A. No, and I will tell you why. We have had to meet most unusual conditions. We are dealing with a problem that has never been dealt with in the world before, in the comprehensive way it is being dealt with in this country. We have had to develop a great deal in the way of hospital construction that never was conceived before. The development of this requires specialized investigation, a specialized knowledge and close association with those who are going to carry on the professional or technical services in the buildings which are going to be provided. Take for instance the treatment of tuberculosis. We have received a great many favourable comments on the cheapness of our construction and notability and admirableness of the design. Then again in connection with our vocational retraining work we have to equip shops. We have to lay them out. Therefore, special technical knowledge is required, not only regarding the requirements of an ordinary machine shop layout, but having special consideration of the fact that we are training disabled men. Our engineering branch is a very small part of the organization. They also look after the maintenance and upkeep of the hospitals and various vocational retraining schools and other premises that we have to operate in connection with the work of the Department.

By Mr. Boys:

Q. Standardized equipment and plant would not be suitable for your work?—A. No, not unless they are standardized as we have standardized them after experience and study.

Q. That would be special standards?—A. We have standardized them, as a matter of fact.

Q. I was referring to the public works?—A. They would not meet the case at all.

By the Chairman:

Q. In the Public Works Department in the past they have not been under the necessity of building hospitals and such institutions?—A. No.

[Mr. F. G. Robinson.]