New departmental buildings
On April 5, 1956, the Minister for Agriculture (the Hon. E. K. Hoar, M.L.A.), laid the foundation stone of the new Department of Agriculture buildings at the corner of George Street and Jarrah Road, South Perth. The ceremony was attended by the Premier (the Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, M.L.A.) and members of the State Parliament, a number of prominent citizens and senior officers of the Department of Agriculture.

In an introductory address, the Director of Agriculture (Mr. G. K. Baron Hay), said that this was indeed a "red letter day" for his Department which, for many years had operated under tremendous difficulties in five different and widely separated buildings in the metropolitan area. The growth of the Department in recent years had further intensified the housing problems and it was encouraging to him and to his officers to see these tangible preparations for adequate and permanent accommodation.

The site was 25 acres in extent and should suffice for the needs of even an expanding Department for many years to come. It was ideally situated in an elevated position commanding excellent views of Perth, the Swan River and the Darling Range, and was convenient for farmers coming into the metropolitan area.

The present plan called for the construction of two blocks of two-storey brick buildings designed to house technical and administrative personnel. In addition, there would be glasshouses to facilitate plant research work, storage buildings and a depot for Argentine ant control equipment and personnel, with adequate garage and parking facilities.

Block A, would be 250ft. long and 40ft. wide said Mr. Baron Hay, and would house the administration and extension services, including the film unit, a photography section and library. The vermin research and botanical laboratories would also be situated in this building.

Block B, which would be the first of the major buildings to be erected would be even larger than Block A and would accommodate those technical staffs now working under unsatisfactory conditions in converted offices and other makeshift quarters.

Plant pathology, dairy laboratory, weed control and seed certification, plant research, soil conservation and saline soil
research, agrostology and cereal research would be among the activities conducted in this block.

It was hoped that the main blocks would be completed within two years, and two further blocks were “on paper” to meet future needs.

The Premier (the Hon. A. R. G. Hawke) said that he had not been Premier very long before the Minister for Agriculture (Mr. Hoar), and the Director (Mr. Baron Hay), had emphasised the seriousness of the department’s accommodation problems, and had taken him on a tour of inspection of the present quarters.

He was appalled by the unsatisfactory conditions under which many of the officers were working in the old buildings. The splendid results achieved, despite the difficult conditions, redounded to the Department’s credit, and he was pleased to have been able to inaugurate a building project which was so obviously necessary.

Mr. G. P. Wild, M.L.A., representing the Leader of the Opposition (Sir Ross McLarty), and Sir Charles Latham, M.L.C., representing the Leader of the Country Party (the Hon. A. F. Watts, C.M.G.), paid tribute to the work of the officers of the Department of Agriculture and emphasised the important role which primary production had played in the successful development of the State.

**LONG OVERDUE**

The Minister for Agriculture (the Hon. E. K. Hoar), said that if Western Australia hoped to keep abreast, or in advance, of other countries in developing her agricultural potential, these buildings were long overdue.

Our departmental officers had been responsible for some far-reaching discoveries in connection with animal and plant diseases and nutrition. In the development of our light lands they had rendered a magnificent service to the farming industry and the State as a whole.

The real value of the new buildings could not be measured by the amount of money spent on their erection as he felt sure that they would pay for themselves many times over.

Mr. Hoar paid a tribute to the Premier who had found about £300,000 for the building project, and had always been sympathetic towards the needs of the Department of Agriculture.

In declaring the foundation stone well and truly laid, the Minister said he hoped and trusted that the completed buildings would be a source of inspiration to all those who worked in them in the name of Agriculture.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Director presented the Minister with a memento of the occasion—an inscribed mallet made from local timbers.

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