

£100,000 GIFT TO STATE

Sir Langdon Bonython's Munificent Centenary Contribution

PARLIAMENT HOUSE TO BE COMPLETED

Largest Benefaction Ever Made In South Australia

GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE BALANCE OF £150,000

ASSEMBLY APPLAUDS PREMIER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Premier (Mr. Butler) announced, amid applause from the whole of the House, in the Assembly last night, that Sir Langdon Bonython had made a gift to the Government of £100,000—the largest single benefaction ever made in South Australia—towards the completion of Parliament House at a total cost of £250,000 in honor of South Australia's centenary.

Mr. Butler forthwith introduced a Bill to authorise the work and, without a dissentient voice, obtained the suspension of the Standing Orders to enable him to take the measure at once to the second reading stage.

Explaining that the Government believed that if it could obtain a large portion of the sum required for the completion of Parliament House from outside, it would have every justification in seeking approval for the work. Mr. Butler said that he had approached one of South Australia's most illustrious and public-spirited citizens—Sir Langdon Bonython—and he had that day received his cheque for £100,000.

This most munificent of all Sir Langdon Bonython's numerous gifts to the State and the people, brings the total of his benefactions to a huge figure, and will provide yet another memorial to the part he has played in the development and progress of South Australia.

The completion of Parliament House, which for 45 years has presented a ragged and unfinished flank to the public gaze, will provide much employment, as no less than 60 per cent. of the total cost will be absorbed by wages. The whole of the work will be thrown open for public tender, and 95 per cent. of the materials used will be obtained within Australia, mainly within South Australia. Work on the plans and specifications will begin at once, and it is hoped that the building will be finished in 1936.

The Bill introduced by the Premier sets out that "the completion of Parliament House is to be carried out as a commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the State." The Bill authorizes the Commissioner of Public Works to erect buildings on the vacant block at the corner of North terrace and King William street "in such a way as to complete the structure which is now occupied by the House of Assembly."

There is provision for the establishment of a trust fund in the Treasury into which Sir Langdon Bonython's gift and all other money available for building Parliament House are to be placed. The object of the trust fund is permanently to appropriate Sir Langdon Bonython's gift to the construction of Parliament House. This clause is included to ensure that the appropriation will not lapse at the end of each financial year.

It is specially provided that the gift of Sir Langdon Bonython shall in no circumstances be chargeable with succession duty under State law, and that if it should become chargeable with estate duty under Commonwealth law the Treasurer will indemnify the estate of Sir Langdon Bonython for any liability which may fall upon it.

The final clause stipulates that the completion of Parliament House shall not come within the terms of the Public Works Committee Act.

"The Government," said the Premier, "regards it as desirable that this matter should be settled as early as possible, and by Parliament itself. Sir Langdon Bonython has given the money to the State on the express understanding that it is to be used for the completion of Parliament House, and it is only fair to him that Parliament itself should decide as early as possible whether it accepts his gift on the terms on which it is offered."

Sir Langdon Bonython's Letter

The letter in which Sir Langdon Bonython yesterday sent his cheque

saving in the cost of unemployment relief will to a large extent offset the increase in the State's interest bill.

"With a small exception, the materials will be of Australian origin, and mainly South Australian. It is expected that probably 95 per cent. of the total material required will come under this heading. All concrete, marble, bricks, sand, joinery, hardware, plaster, lime and cement will be of South Australian manufacture, the steel and galvanized iron will come from New South Wales, the timber for internal woodwork from Queensland, and jarrah from Western Australia.

"Of a total estimated cost it is considered that approximately 60 per cent. will be represented by wages to workmen in the production of materials for the erection of the building.

"I have had sketches prepared showing the proposed elevations to North terrace and King William road, and these give a very clear idea of the design of these two facades.

"The scheme is that which was approved in 1913 by the joint committee of both Houses, with the dome omitted. The southern (or main) facade, to North terrace, is to have a colonnaded entrance. The eastern facade facing King William road, is to be generally in conformity with the existing southern facade to North terrace. The northern facade is to be simple in character, plainly treated to harmonise with the unfinished northern facade of the present building. Enquiries have been made, and I find that West Island granite and Kapunda marble are obtainable.

"Before a start is made by the Architect-in-Chief's Department to draw the final contract plans, the present-day sketches will be submitted to the proper Parliamentary authorities for discussion as to their suitability, and alteration if those authorities consider such to be necessary. The sketches have been prepared by the present Architect-in-Chief (Mr. A. E. Simpson) in his spare time. Nothing will give Mr. Simpson greater pleasure than to finish a long and valuable service to the State by completing the building in the designing of which he has taken so much interest.

"In two years' time we will be celebrating the Centenary of South Australia, and the Government desires that it shall be commemorated in a manner worthy of such an historic occasion," said the Premier. "We are of the opinion that this can best be achieved by some great work that will be not only of historic interest, but also what might be termed of national importance. The question has arisen as to what great national work can be undertaken that will be free from political consideration, free from sectional interests and yet at the same time be a worthy monument to all that has been accomplished in this great State of South Australia in the comparatively short space of one hundred years?"

"Surely there can be no finer memorial than the completion of the House of Parliament. Too long has the unfinished building been an architectural eyesore in a city that is noted for the beauty of its public buildings. The vacant block of land on the east, and the unfinished walls of the building, ever serve as an unhappy reminder that the people's representatives are carrying out their labors and great responsibilities under conditions that would not be tolerated in any private industry. Members are fully aware of the inconvenience of the present building, of the inadequate accommodation

and of the unsatisfactory ventilation. There is an urgent need that the existing conditions should be improved. The present Legislative Council building is in a deplorable state, and it is certain that the expenditure of a large sum of money on the building will be inevitable in the near future.

"It was always intended that some day Parliament House should be completed, but for various reasons the work has been postponed. The Government was informed that the cost of completing the building to harmonise with the existing structure would be approximately £250,000. While we did not think we would be justified in asking Parliament to agree to voting such a large sum of money, we did feel that if we could obtain at least a large portion of it, the Government would have every justification in seeking authority to proceed with the work.

"Great Public Benefactor"

"Accordingly, I approached one of South Australia's most illustrious and public spirited citizens, and explained to him the Government's desire fittingly to commemorate the Centenary by completing Parliament House," said the Premier.

"I refer to one of the State's greatest public benefactors—Sir Langdon Bonython—a man who has, over a long period of years, played a magnificent part in the successful development and great progress of South Australia, and in inculcating the highest ideals of citizenship and love of Empire in her people.



Langdon Bonython

MANY PREVIOUS BENEFACCTIONS

Sir Langdon Bonython's Gifts To Education

This latest and greatest of Sir Langdon Bonython's benefactions brings the total of his gifts for public purposes to a princely sum. Many of them have been for the advancement of education, which has ever been his special care. The University of Adelaide in particular owes much to him, and the Bonython Great Hall, now being built, will be an appropriate tribute. Toward the erection of that building Sir Langdon Bonython gave £50,000. In 1926 he gave the University £20,000 to endow the Chair of Law, while in 1929 he contributed £2,000 for the general purposes of the institution. The Students' Union building and the War Memorial owe much to his generosity, for he was one of the five who gave £1,000 each to those ends.

The School of Mines, which has been Sir Langdon Bonython's particular interest for the last half century, is indebted to him for munificent bequests and personal service. Among the former, his gift of £6,500 was an important factor in the building and equipping of its metallurgical laboratories, while his record of having been president of the school council since its origin in 1889 is probably without precedent in Australia. Many public and charitable bodies know of his bounty.

Remarkable Career

Sir Langdon Bonython's rise from junior reporter to knighthood and sole proprietorship of a daily newspaper with a circulation of more than 92,000 has few parallels in Australian journalism. It was accomplished by an unusual combination of attributes—unswerving ambition, rare power of application and capacity for strenuous and sustained work, and a quick and seldom erring perception of public requirement. With them were allied physical powers which have left him in his 86th year a much fitter man than many 20 years his junior.

The ambition and urge for hard work probably were gifts from his Cornish forebears. A predilection for literature led him to journalism, and he became a junior reporter on the staff of "The Advertiser." Even then the proprietorship was his object, and his achievement of that ambition, though superficially romantic, had as a prosaic basis an unusual capacity for taking pains, always with an eye to the ultimate object. That was attained 15 years after he joined the staff, while he was yet in his early thirties; and he retained sole proprietorship until control was taken over by Advertiser Newspapers Ltd.

Difficulties Surmounted

The early years of "The Advertiser" were difficult, for Adelaide's first three decades saw the wreck of many journalistic enterprises, but Sir Langdon's confidence in the eventual success of his own was abiding, and he progressed from strength to strength, his decision to reduce the price of "The Advertiser" being a stroke which deserved and ensured success.

His interest in education was manifest early, his first extra-journalistic undertaking being the chairmanship of the Adelaide School Board, which he held from 1883 to 1901. With it were combined the chairmanship of the Roseworthy Agricultural College Council from 1895 to 1902, and his