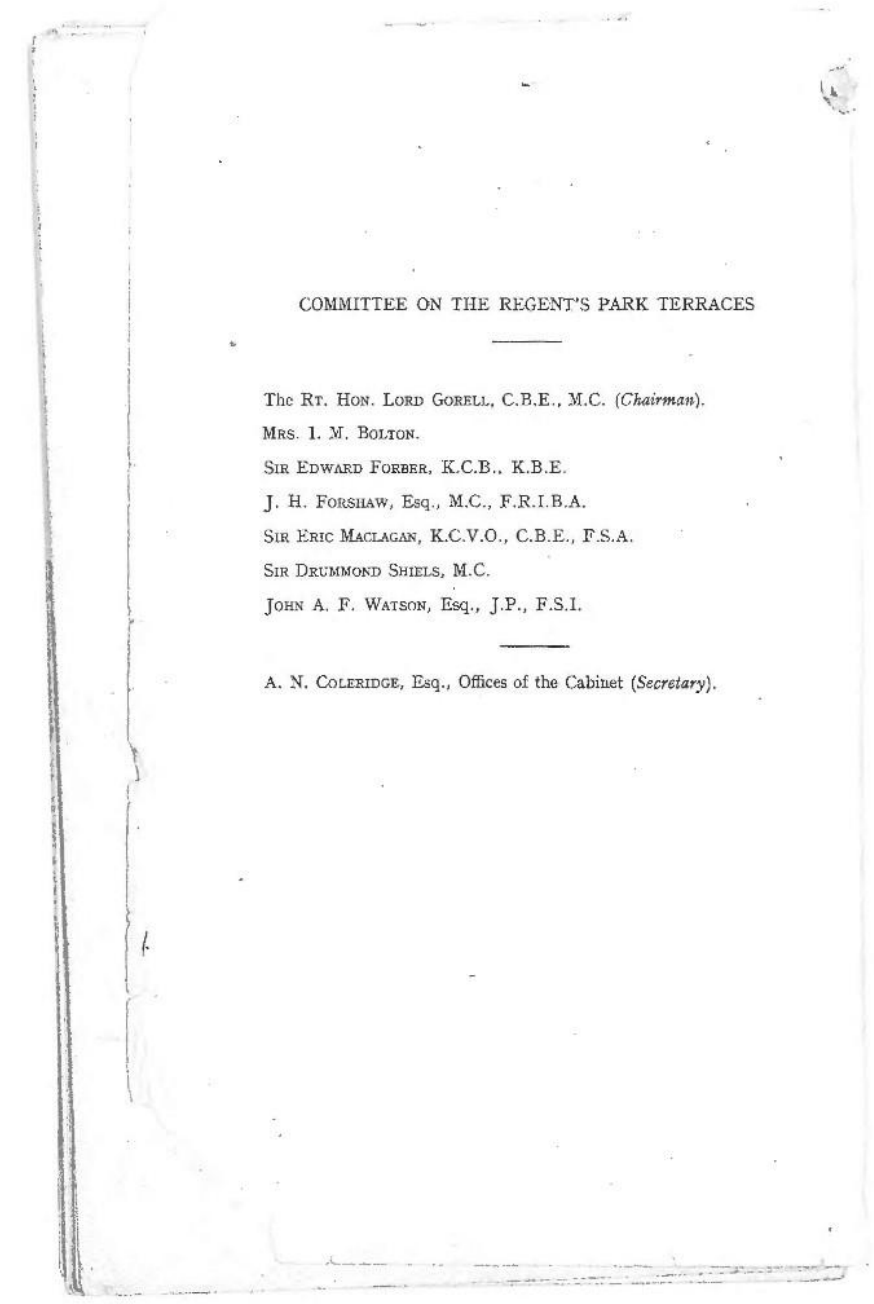
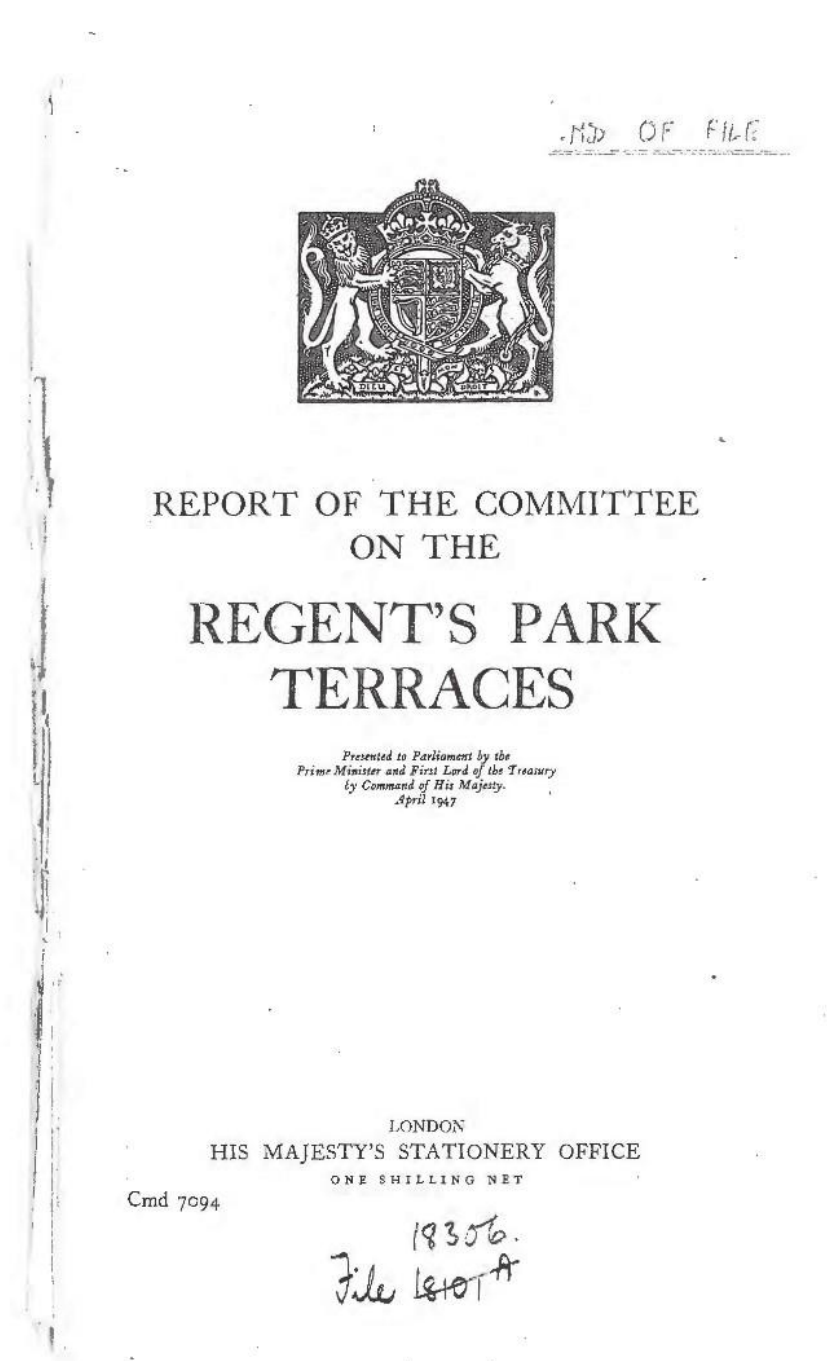
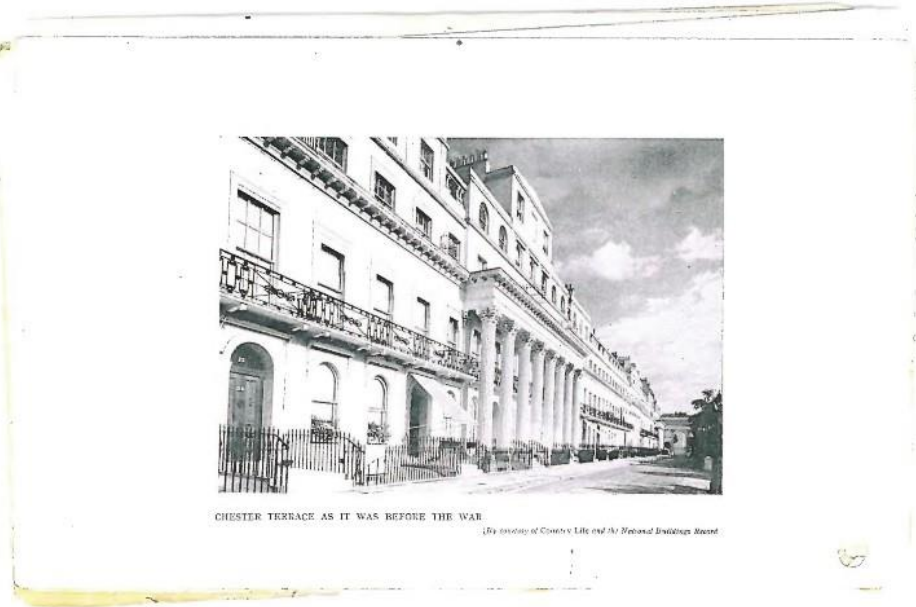
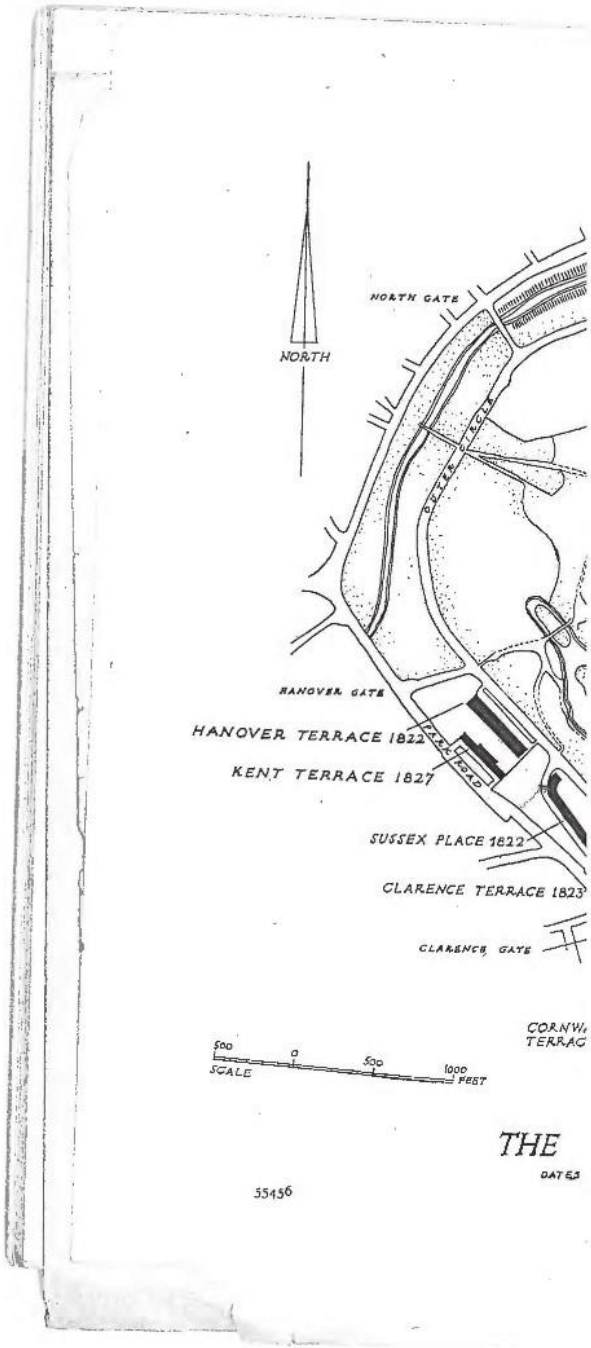


APPENDIX 5.6 – THE GORELL REPORT

Report of the Committee on the Regent's Park Terraces, April 1947; Crown Estate Archives





3

STATEMENT BY HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT.

Preservation.

1. The main conclusion of the Report (paragraph 60) is that the Nash Terraces are of national interest and importance, and that, subject to certain reservations, they should be preserved, so far as that is practicable. With this conclusion the Government are in sympathy. The Government also agree that the long-term use of these buildings should be for residences and not for offices (paragraphs 65-67); they will give consideration to the proposals for new building made in paragraphs 68-70; and they are in general agreement with most of the detailed recommendations made in paragraph 71 (b) to (j).

Timing.

2. The restoration for long-term preservation of even the minimum number of Terraces referred to in paragraph 61 would involve a major diversion of labour and materials, which could not be justifiably considered for some years. Further, as the Committee point out, a high proportion of the buildings are in the hands of the Ministry of Works, for adaptation and occupation as Government Offices. It is essential, in the present shortage of office accommodation, that these houses should be so used, but it was always intended that this user should be a temporary one, and it will be terminated as soon as the supply of normal office premises permits.

Finance.

3. Since the Committee recommend that the preservation should be carried out "without strict regard to the economics of 'prudent' estate management" (paragraph 60) and that "due regard should be paid, in fixing any rents, to the desirability that occupation of these magnificent sites should not be the privilege of any particular income group" (paragraph 65), they clearly contemplate that the capital expenditure—which, on any scheme, would amount to several million pounds—should fall, in the main, on the taxpayer, and that the tenants should occupy on a subsidised basis. The careful and detailed examination which the Committee have made will be of great value to the Government in reaching a decision on these questions when the supply of labour and materials permits.

Other Matters.

4. The Committee suggest (paragraphs 73-74) that it would have been better if the Commissioners had, in the past, pursued the policy of themselves undertaking repairs, rather than that of letting these houses on repairing leases. But, as the Committee recognise (paragraph 38), the Commissioners could not, under their existing statutory powers, carry out the policy of "uneconomic" preservation which the Committee advocate. Any impression, which may be created by paragraph 72 of the Report, that the existing organisation of the Commissioners' office reflects adversely on those responsible, would not, in the Government's view, be justified.

5. Finally, the Government cannot agree that blame rests on the Commissioners or on the Ministry of Works in respect of the action taken during and since the war years to preserve and repair the Terraces. The repair of these houses, important though they are from the aesthetic point of view, is expensive in labour and materials, in relation to the accommodation rendered habitable, and, at a time of severe shortage and widespread damage, when much building work was urgently necessary, for many purposes essential to the life of the community, it would have been wholly unjustifiable to accord to the Terraces a high priority.

4

Copy of a letter from Lord Gorell to the Prime Minister,
submitting the Committee's Report.

37, Kensington Square, W.8.
21st January, 1947.

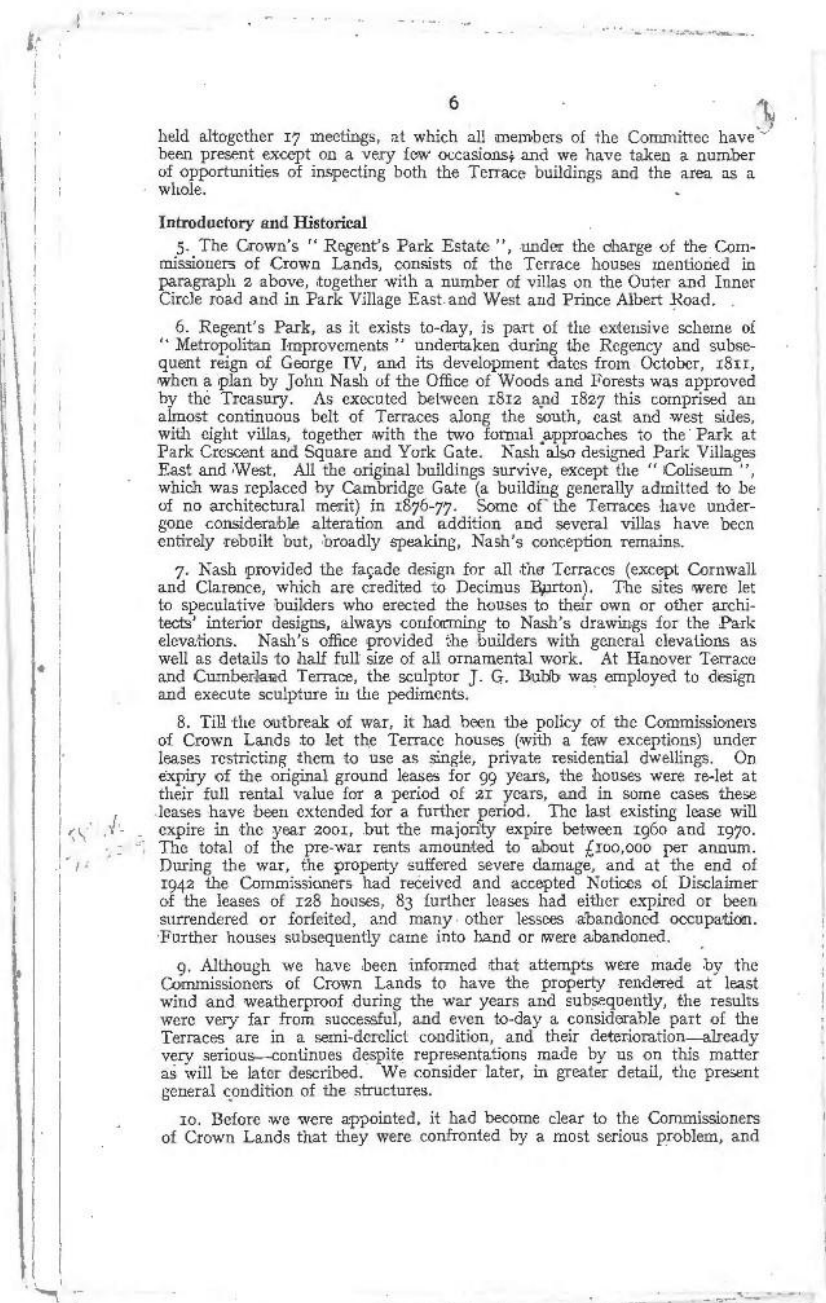
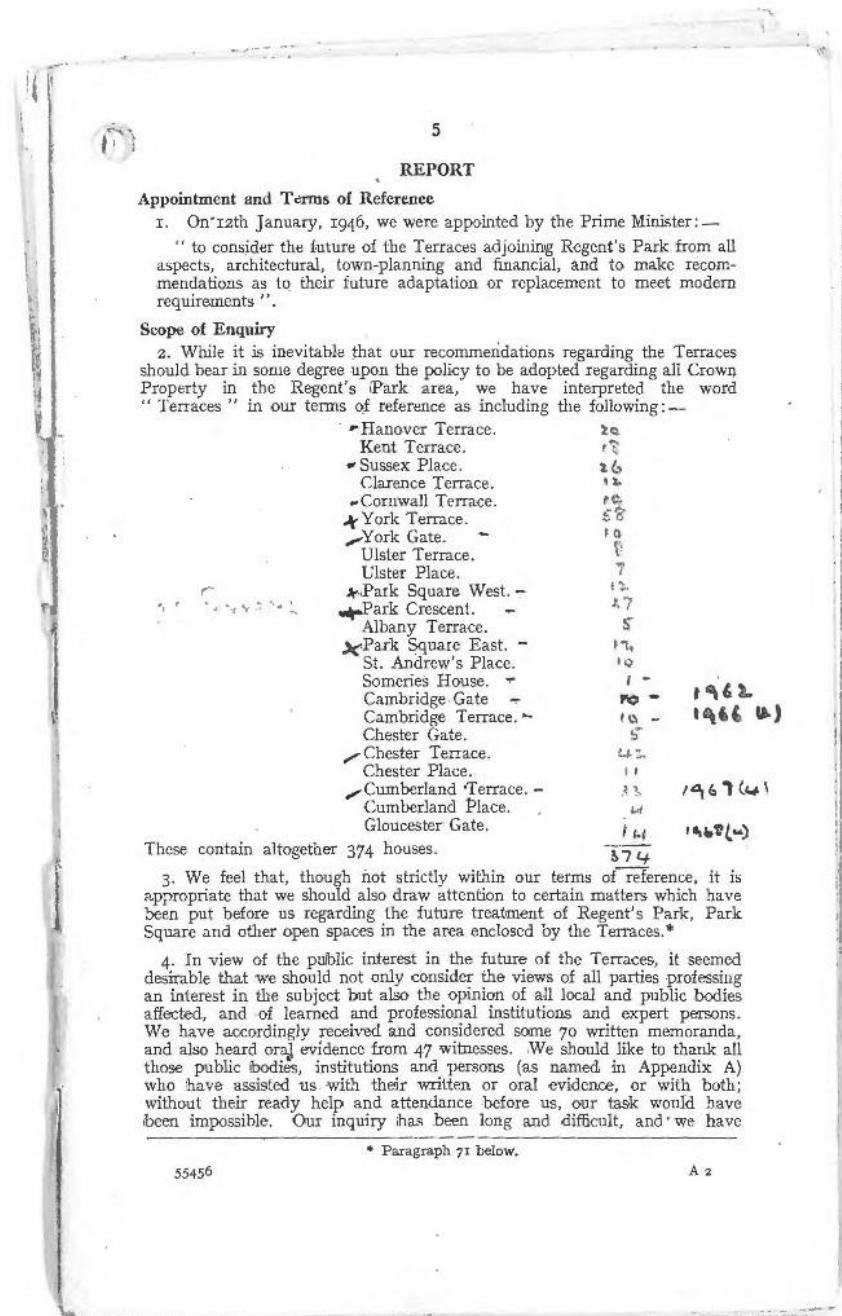
My Dear PRIME MINISTER,

We have now completed the task you entrusted to us in January, 1946, and I enclose herewith our Report on the future of the Nash Terraces round Regent's Park. The inquiry has been prolonged and of some complexity, but I am happy to be able to state that our Report is unanimous. I am, however, sorry that we were never free to consider the problem solely on its merits, but have had to make our recommendations conditioned by the decision, taken without our knowledge before we were appointed, to hand over to the Ministry of Works for conversion into Government offices for an indefinite period no fewer than 212 of the 374 houses on which we had to report. We have done our best within the limitations thus imposed upon us.

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed) GORELL.

The RT. HON. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P.,
10, Downing Street,
S.W.1.



7

they took the view, at that stage, that three main courses were open to them:—

- (a) to resume the pre-war policy—i.e. to recondition and let as single houses;
- (b) to reconstruct, in line with modern requirements, behind the existing façades, as flats, maisonettes, or modernised single dwellings;
- (c) to demolish and redevelop, letting the whole property on building leases subject to unified architectural and planning control.

Still prior to our appointment, three steps were taken:—

- (i) The Commissioners instructed Mr. Louis de Soissons, A.R.A., F.R.I.B.A., to prepare plans, together with estimates of cost, for converting a typical terrace block into flats and maisonettes, preserving the original façades.
- (ii) They then consulted the Royal Fine Art Commission, who made certain recommendations.
- (iii) They agreed that the Ministry of Works should take over more than half the Terrace houses, and convert them for temporary use as Government offices.

11. In preparing a plan for converting Nos. 6 to 23 York Terrace (chosen as a good example) Mr. de Soissons had the assistance of Mr. R. T. James, M.Inst.C.E., etc., Structural Engineer, and of Mr. Sydney A. Paine, F.S.I., Chartered Quantity Surveyor. We have examined Mr. de Soissons's plans in detail, and have had the advantage of his attendance before us together with the other two gentlemen concerned. (Paragraphs 18 to 22 below.)

12. On 30th April, 1945, the Royal Fine Art Commission, after taking evidence from Mr. de Soissons, Mr. James, Sir George Burt and representatives of the Commissioners of Crown Lands, recommended:—

- (i) That the general lay-out of the main Terraces should be retained, and the front and end elevations preserved or restored with a view to reconstructing the houses behind the façades in the most advantageous and economical way, having regard to post-war requirements.
- (ii) That the following house and Terraces, built at a later date or of less consequence, could without detriment to the whole be demolished, and be replaced by buildings which would form part of a long term plan in harmony and scale with the rest of the Terraces:
 - Scudamore House (i.e. Someries House).
 - Cambridge Gate.
 - Cambridge Terrace.
 - Gloucester Terrace.
- (iii) That, as indicated on Plan No. 9 signed by Mr. de Soissons, full advantage should be taken of the back land."

Ministry of Works Tenure

13. We feel that we should set out the position with regard to the tenure by the Ministry of Works in some detail, since in our view it materially affects both the nature of the problem and the scope of our enquiry, and we thought it necessary to take certain steps to clarify our position. At the time of our appointment we were not aware that any arrangement with the Ministry had been made. The fact is, however, that the Crown Commissioners had agreed in February, 1944 that, with the exception of certain Terraces which were to be reserved for residential use, all the houses at

55456

A 3

8

their disposal would be made available to the Ministry for conversion and for use as Government offices for the period during which accommodation could be held under emergency powers, which period was later defined by statute as ending on 10th December, 1952.* The Ministry had subsequently taken over 16 houses from the Commissioners, and requisitioned (by agreement with the lessees) 51 further houses which, though empty, were let on lease. Thus, before we were appointed, the future of 212 out of the 374 Terrace houses had already been settled for a minimum period of seven years from 10th December, 1945.

14. Although immediately on our appointment the Crown Commissioners drew our attention to the fact that the Ministry were taking over a considerable number of the houses, it was not made clear to us—in our view regrettable—till a later stage, either that the tenure would be for so long as seven years, or that quite substantial conversion work was to be undertaken. When this position was brought fully to our notice, we felt that it was necessary to clarify our position, inasmuch as this action, in fact, limited our freedom to make other than long-term recommendations in respect of more than half of the Terraces; and also since it might be thought that the arrangements for office use had had our approval, whereas we were definitely of the opinion that use of any buildings on this site as offices was prejudicing one of the main issues before us. The Chairman was accordingly authorised to raise the matter with the Prime Minister, and on the 23rd March, 1946, wrote to him as follows:—

31, Kensington Square, W.S.
23rd March, 1946.

" My dear PRIME MINISTER,

I am sorry to trouble you at the present time when you have such exceptionally heavy burdens upon you, but I am obliged to submit to you information as to the Nash Terraces adjoining Regent's Park.

You were good enough at the end of November last to ask me to be Chairman of the Committee you had decided to set up to inquire into and report upon the future of these Terraces; and this Committee was duly appointed in January. Neither I nor any of my colleagues knew until we had begun our investigation that, for a period which may last for several years at least, over 200 of the houses in these Terraces had already been earmarked for use as Government offices by agreement between the Commissioners of Crown Lands and the Ministry of Works. When we did learn this, we felt that we were confronted with a rather unusual situation, one which cannot have been brought fully to your attention when we were appointed.

We have held, to date, a number of meetings and heard evidence tendered to us on behalf of the Commissioners of Crown Lands and the Ministry of Works and also from representatives of the Metropolitan Borough of St. Pancras, from architects and others; and much further evidence is being actively prepared both by institutions and by individuals; in many cases this has already been submitted in writing, but not yet considered. It is clear that our inquiry is held to be one of wide public interest and importance and should be proceeded with; but it seems essential that I should acquaint you with the changed position since that makes it inevitable that the terms of reference should be interpreted as relating not to the years that lie immediately ahead but to the ultimate future of the Terraces.

We recognise, of course, that a length of time must inevitably elapse, in any case, before any report that we may make can be implemented; and we are glad to say that we have received assurances from the representatives of the Ministry of Works that during their tenure the façades of the buildings will not be altered and that such conversion as is to be undertaken to their interiors will not be of such a character or extent as to prejudice the giving effect to the recommendations we may make regarding their ultimate use. These assurances are naturally essential; but, as no precise term has been fixed for this tenure, I should add that we feel we must be free to make, in due time when we report, any recommendation regarding the length of the tenure by the Ministry of Works which may seem to be appropriate.

* Requisitioned Land and War Works Act, 1945, Sections 28 (2) and 30 (1). Supplies and Services (Transitional Powers) Act, 1945. Section 8 (1).

We feel that it is only right that we should make it clear that we cannot accept responsibility for a decision which may have been necessary but was reached before we were appointed; and we ask that, in view of the attention already aroused by our inquiry, this should be made public in whatever way you may decide.

It is possible that this temporary use of so many of the houses in these Terraces as Government offices was decided upon as not only desirable in view of the acute shortage in London of office accommodation but also in the interests of their preservation during the next few years; as to that, since it was a matter already agreed before we came into existence, we express no opinion. But we are considerably perturbed by the present state of many of the houses; we have, for instance, found on our visits some still standing open to the ravages of wind and weather and to all the risks of pilfering and damage. We feel that it is urgent that, pending the outcome of our inquiry, the necessary amount of labour and materials should be allocated to the prevention of further deterioration of all these houses, whether in the hands of the Ministry of Works or of the Commissioners of Crown Lands or of private lessees. Otherwise, it is obvious that, in a few years' time, the problem will not be whether the Terraces are to be retained, but only what should replace them.

I hope that the foregoing statement, which I submit to you after full discussion with, and at the request of, my colleagues (though I alone am responsible for the actual wording of this letter), clarifies a position of some difficulty and complexity and will meet with your approval.

* If, as we hope, it does, we will of course continue our inquiry on the lines already planned and will, in due course, present our report to you for your consideration.

I have the honour, my dear Prime Minister, to be

Yours very sincerely,
(Signed) GORELL."

The Rt. Hon. C. R. ATTLEE, M.P.,
10, Downing Street,
Westminster, S.W.1.

15. On the 5th April, 1946, the Prime Minister replied as follows (and the Press Notice was subsequently issued):—

" My dear GORELL,

I have now been able to consult my colleagues about your letter of 23rd March concerning the work of the Committee under your Chairmanship on the Nash Terraces adjoining Regent's Park. In your letter you asked two things:—

(a) That it should be made clear by a Press announcement that your Committee were not responsible for the decision as to the temporary use of some of these houses as offices;

(b) That immediate action should be taken to repair the other houses.

I am sorry that there has been this difficulty but I hope that the position will be satisfactorily rectified by the issue of the attached Press notice which is to appear in the Sunday morning papers, and in particular that the last sentence thereof clarifies the position.

As regards your second point, namely repair of the other houses, this is being actively considered and I hope to communicate with you further in a short time.

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) C. R. ATTLEE."

PRESS NOTICE
REGENT'S PARK TERRACES

Statements have recently appeared in the Press regarding the use of a number of houses in the Regent's Park Terraces as Government offices. It was decided to put about 200 of the houses to this use as a temporary measure, partly in order to release other requisitioned accommodation in London, and partly so that these houses might be kept in repair pending a decision as to their ultimate future, which will not be prejudiced by the interior conversion, while the façades are to remain unaltered. Their use as Government offices was decided upon before (as announced on 12th January) the Prime Minister appointed the Committee, under the Chairmanship of Lord Gorell, which is considering the future of the Terraces, and is without prejudice to the Committee's final recommendations. The Prime Minister has, however, made it clear that the Committee's main task is to make recommendations regarding the ultimate future of the Terraces as a whole and has invited the Committee to proceed on those lines.

10, Downing Street,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

First-aid Repairs

16. It will be seen from the exchange of letters quoted above that we viewed with grave concern the daily deterioration of the property in all parts—whether or not " earmarked " for occupation by the Ministry of Works—through lack of the most elementary protective repairs. The very serious condition of the houses to-day (as described in greater detail later in this Report) is in our view attributable in a large degree to failure of the responsible authorities to insist with sufficient energy upon labour and material being allocated for this purpose. It seems to us astonishing that property considered to be of sufficient national importance to warrant a reference to the Royal Fine Art Commission and subsequently our own appointment, should have been allowed to deteriorate even under war conditions till it reached its present state. The Prime Minister later sent to us a further reply on this question, dated the 6th May, 1946, which ran as follows:—

" My Dear GORELL,

When I wrote to you on the 5th April about the Nash Terraces adjoining Regent's Park I told you that the question of the repair of the non-requisitioned houses was being actively considered and that I hoped to be able to give you some further information in due course.

I am now glad to be able to tell you that the Ministry of Works are extending their contract for the repair of the requisitioned houses to cover all the non-requisitioned houses which are in need of repair, whether occupied or unoccupied, so as to make them weatherproof.

I think I should let you know that this liability is, strictly speaking, one for the tenants, and the cost is likely to be considerable. We are, however, prepared to take the view that, owing to the great difficulty and delay which there would probably be in getting the tenants to do the repairs, it is worth the while of the Crown Lands to spend the money in order to keep the houses habitable.

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) C. R. ATTLEE."

17. We feel impelled to state that even to-day the repair of the non-requisitioned houses is a hope and a promise, but not a performance: a number of these houses are still subject to the same progressive deterioration. It is not too much to say that, after an unusually wet summer and autumn and now with winter actually upon us, there is—apart from those houses which are now being scaffolded without and busily repaired and altered within by the Ministry of Works for subsequent use as Government offices—not a single Terrace, with the partial exception of Hanover Terrace (where a number of houses have recently been re-let to private owners who are effecting what repairs and renovations they can) which does not give the impression of hopeless dereliction: there are, in fact, few more lugubrious experiences in London than that to be obtained from a general survey of the Nash Terraces in Regent's Park. Elsewhere in London there is reconstruction, there is activity, energy, and planning for the future; at the least there is clearance and order; here there is nothing at all—with occasional exceptions—but the process of conversion of blocks of emptied, tattered houses into Government offices; and even that is a process which has a very considerable journey to run before it will reach completion. It is in the light, or rather the dimness, of these circumstances that we have to make our Report.

The de Soissons adaptation plan

18. We turn from the melancholy record of the past years to possible plans for the future. At an early stage we examined in detail the plans which (as mentioned above) Mr. Louis de Soissons had prepared in 1943, at the

request of the Commissioners of Crown Lands, for converting 18 houses (Nos. 6 to 23) in York Terrace into 24 units of modernised accommodation behind the existing facades, namely:—

- 8 single houses;
- 8 two-bedroom flats; and
- 8 three-bedroom flats.

The main features of the design are:—

- (a) Basements used for cleaning and storage only.
- (b) A common heating and hot-water service.
- (c) Lifts.
- (d) Improved services added (with lifts) in new structures on the south frontage of the existing building.
- (e) Complete renewal of all services in the existing building.
- (f) New flat, light roofs.
- (g) Complete repairs of floors, walling and architectural features.
- (h) Restoration of the skyline to its original appearance, by removal of "excrescences" in the shape of odd extra storeys, unsightly chimney-stacks, etc.
- (i) Preservation, so far as possible, of the original spaciousness and general air of the Regency rooms.

19. York Terrace was chosen as an example and because it presents difficulties which do not occur to the same extent in other Terraces. In this case the site is narrow, whereas with many of the other Terraces there would be a greater scope for adaptation behind the facades if use were made of the sites of obsolete and worthless buildings in mewsways, etc., in the rear.

20. We were much impressed by the skill with which Mr. de Soissons carried out his task, limited as he was by the delicate condition of the existing structure as defined by his consulting engineer, Mr. R. T. James; and we doubt if a more suitable arrangement can be devised for converting the Terraces into modern houses and flats of the character proposed. As with all conversion schemes, it would be idle to pretend that the modernised flats and houses would appeal to people demanding absolutely modern accommodation; but they offer very fine rooms and proximity to the Park, and we have ample evidence from residents in the existing houses that these are for them at least—outstanding attractions.

21. There are three main difficulties—though not necessarily final obstacles—in the way of accepting the de Soissons scheme, namely

- (i) Its cost (on figures provided by Mr. Sydney Paine, which we accept) would be heavy: i.e. for 18 houses at present-day costs, £202,542, and therefore, for 374 houses, approximately £4,200,000. As a matter of interest, Mr. Paine also gave figures showing that if the whole building were pulled down and rebuilt to Mr. de Soissons's designs, incorporating modern principles of planning and services, the cost for 18 houses would be £238,854 (or for 374 houses £5,000,000), and if faced in Portland Stone £293,974 (£6,000,000).
- (ii) Its life might be short. Mr. de Soissons would not undertake—though pressed on the point—that the converted buildings would last more than a further 50 years and though, from evidence given by other witnesses, we

think that he may have been too pessimistic, this obviously affects the total return which may be expected from the large expenditure.

(iii) There would be difficult estate-management problems with which the Crown Commissioners have not hitherto been confronted, such as the need for porters or custodians of some kind for many separate entrances, lift-maintenance staff, etc.; and the fact that, if it is necessary to obtain a reasonable return on the capital, the requisite rents would put the property out of reach of all except the well-to-do.

22. Despite these drawbacks, we nevertheless feel that expenditure on this scale to produce modern converted dwellings in some at least of the Terraces would be preferable to a lesser—though still heavy—expenditure to maintain an older type of accommodation for a further period.

Evidence

23. From the very great quantity of evidence which we have received, it is possible to extract certain main issues on which views were expressed by nearly every witness.

(a) Merits of the Terraces

24. It is essential to arrive at a valuation of the Terraces as a part of the Nation's architectural and artistic heritage, and to decide, regardless of other factors, whether they are worthy to be preserved. With one or two exceptions, witnesses were unanimous that Nash's *general conception* for Regent's Park was a unique example of early town planning, both attractive to the eye and valuable to the student, and that for this reason the main lines of the layout should be preserved at all costs. On the merits of the individual buildings, and on the question whether, if some were demolished and rebuilt, the essential features of Nash's conception could in fact be preserved, it is clear from the evidence given that there is considerable difference of opinion. With some important exceptions, the witnesses (other than the few in favour of total demolition and rebuilding) considered that the whole of the existing Terrace facades must be preserved, and that any piecemeal introduction of new architecture should be avoided; and it was generally agreed that in this case all gaps in the Terraces caused by bombing should be made good by new buildings with replicas of the original façades, but with modern interiors. From two authoritative sources, namely, the R.I.B.A. and Mr. John Summerson, however, we received the view that provided any new buildings were erected under careful control there need be no objection to a scheme of partial rebuilding, and that the disappearance of certain Terraces need not be regretted. This opinion was also endorsed by representatives of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning, whose evidence on this point well summarises what may be described as the middle point of view:—

"The Ministry," so its evidence ran, "believed it to be more important to preserve the scenic background to the Park rather than particular buildings. It was, however, possible to suggest that some buildings were better than others, and provided that some of the best on each side of the Park were kept, and that the total kept was enough to count in the Park setting and to preserve something of the original character of the lay-out, the Ministry would not quibble if it were found that one particular Terrace was far more difficult to preserve than another. The Ministry suggested Park Crescent, Cumberland Terrace, Chester Terrace, Cornwall Terrace and Hanover Terrace as a first estimate of what would maintain a real setting to the Park if preserved. If, however, it was found that, e.g., Cumberland Terrace required literally pulling down in order to

13

rebuild it and create something of the same feeling or architectural character, but that Chester Terrace could be preserved and also Sussex Place (not mentioned in the first category), then the exchange would be worth making. In other words, if one of the better Terraces on each side of the Park could be preserved, and if in total enough was preserved to act as a direction post to the designers of any future buildings in the Park, the Ministry would feel that the Committee had achieved as much as it was reasonable to ask. As a second choice, as well as Sussex Place, the Ministry would add York Gate.

"There were a number of buildings on the perimeter of the Park which could not possibly justify strong endeavours to preserve them on grounds of architectural or aesthetic value. If, however, it were possible to retain all the Terraces, including those less important architecturally, and even if restoration was thereby made somewhat more difficult, this would of course make a bigger and better scheme.

"The Ministry felt that some of the Terraces should be preserved almost as ancient monuments, and that within reason every possible step to that end should be taken. While the Terraces could not be defended on points of construction, or detail, or "architectural accuracy", there was something in them from which generations of architects had learned, and from which they should be enabled to continue to learn. Even if the buildings could only be preserved for a further 50 years (and it seemed that this was unduly pessimistic) it would still be worth while because the spirit of this type of urban planning would be preserved. It was important that old clothes should not be thrown off before new ones were put on. If the Terraces—or even a few of them—could be preserved for 50 or even 100 years, there would be a sufficient link between the old tradition and one which could be built up in the near future."

25. Such witnesses as concluded that the Terraces should be entirely demolished (and they were few) usually did so with expressions of regret, and reached this conclusion because of their assessment of economic and social factors rather than through any low valuation of the aesthetic qualities of the existing buildings. Nevertheless, all witnesses to whom the question was put were agreed that the opportunity for a new design on this site would be magnificent: in the words of Mr. Louis de Soissons, "it would be an historic loss, but would open up immense possibilities."

26. In considering the possibility of partial, or total, replacement, the view was put before us (to which, however, the representatives of the R.I.B.A. did not subscribe) that British architecture was at present in a fluid or "diagrammatic" stage, and that if it were practicable to postpone demolition and rebuilding for a further hundred or even—at worst—a further fifty years, it might be that a new architecture would by then be in full flower, and that the new buildings would be more worthy of what was finest in our architectural tradition than if erected to-day. This may be the case with regard to Regent's Park. We should hesitate, however, to endorse a view which might be thought to imply that there are no living architects of merit, and that in consequence no new large-scale work on important sites should at present be contemplated.

27. In the course of our proceedings, it soon became clear that—apart from the question of taste—the views given to us regarding preservation or otherwise of the terraces were supported by a very varying degree of consideration of certain practical questions which are clearly of the highest importance. It

55456

A 4

14

is one matter to declare that the Terraces—for aesthetic or national reasons—ought to be preserved, but quite another to arrive at a considered recommendation of policy in the light of knowledge of:—

- (i) the condition of the existing buildings;
- (ii) the probable cost of any building work—whether renovation, adaptation or rebuilding;
- (iii) the probable length of life of any renovated or reconstructed buildings;
- (iv) the expected future demand for different types of accommodation and the financial return to be expected therefrom and
- (v) the degree to which the Commissioners of Crown Lands have power to carry out a policy yielding less than an economic return.

(b) Condition of the Buildings

28. As our enquiry proceeded, we found that evidence on the condition of the buildings was very conflicting.

29. Probably the most detailed investigation of the structure which had been carried out was that by Mr. R. T. James when advising Mr. Louis de Soissons on his conversion plan for York Terrace; and we had the advantage of seeing Mr. James's very full report on this (dated 28th October, 1943, before the second phase of London's bombing began in June, 1944) and of hearing oral evidence from him. Mr. James took a very adverse view of the structure of this Terrace, both as regards the poor original construction and the state of deterioration into which it had fallen at that time, and concluded that any conversion work, though perfectly possible, would have to be carried out with extreme delicacy, "as with an ancient monument." The main points to which he drew attention were:—

- (1) Very bad dry rot.
- (2) No damp-proof courses.
- (3) Very poor brickwork throughout.
- (4) Lack of proper bonding between main and party walls.
- (5) Floors carried mainly by internal partitions of poor timber frame structure.
- (6) Treacherous subsoil (yellow clay).
- (7) General deterioration through neglect.

This evidence applied only to York Terrace; but there were grounds for supposing that, since 1943, further deterioration would have taken place because of the failure to carry out protective repairs to the buildings—a fact apparent from the most casual inspection.

30. Mr. James's views were confirmed in general by the evidence of Mr. Baxter Greig, F.R.I.B.A., M.I.Struct.E., and of the late Mr. P. J. Black, P.P.I.Struct.E., L.R.I.B.A., both of whom had known the property for a number of years, but who had not made any recent detailed inspection.

31. Other witnesses, however, took a different view. The four residents whom we heard (Miss Elizabeth Bowen, Mrs. Lindsay-Fynn, Mr. G. Langley-Taylor, F.R.I.B.A., and Mr. Michael Browne) said that they were conscious of no serious structural faults in their houses and, indeed, that they were comfortable to live in and gave a certain feeling of solidity. The Georgian Group went so far as to declare that statements casting doubt upon the structural stability of the buildings were "irresponsible", and that any suggestion that the houses were badly constructed was "based less on facts than on a

desire to pre-judge adversely the issue of preservation". They stated that "there are scarcely any traces of subsidence or settlement, bulged walls or inherently weak floors", and that defects now apparent were not structural but superficial. Regarding dry rot, they maintained that "what would be a serious defect in a single house becomes negligible when the house affected is only one out of many sound ones". The Group based their views on an inspection of the houses carried out in March, 1946; but only about 10 per cent. were inspected, and no opening-up to allow of a detailed structural inspection had been possible. The point was also made that, while no one would deny that the Terrace buildings failed to conform to modern standards of building construction, they were by no means unique among London buildings still standing to-day in the disregard of "sound" constructional principles. Mr. A. N. Dove (of Messrs. Dove Brothers Ltd.) gave it as his opinion that "the houses generally are in sound constructional condition".

32. Evidence from other witnesses regarding the structure could not be accounted as of great weight, because in most cases not even a superficial inspection had been carried out.

33. In view of the conflicting nature of the evidence on this vital question, and indeed the lack of any competent evidence based on a really thorough survey of the whole range of the Terraces, we came to the conclusion that no views of an authoritative character on this aspect of the matter could be reached without further skilled professional advice. It was therefore agreed that Treasury approval should be sought for the commissioning of an eminent structural engineer to carry out a thorough examination of the bulk of the Terrace houses—to include houses in each Terrace—to report to us in detail upon their structural state, and to put forward any other material arising therefrom which he considered would be likely to assist us in our enquiry. We were greatly helped by the quick agreement of the Treasury to this course, and accordingly, in July, 1946, Dr. Oscar Faber, O.B.E., D.C.L., D.Sc., M.Inst.C.E., M.I. Struct.E. was commissioned to carry out this work; and subsequently put before us (on 19th August, 1946) a report which we accept as the most authoritative statement available regarding the condition of the Terraces as a whole. It also contains useful evidence on the financial implications of various alternative solutions to the problem before us, and we think it necessary to append the document in full (Appendix B) together with a record of the evidence given by Dr. Faber (Appendix C). It is, in particular, worth noting that this Report is in direct conflict, particularly as regards the extent of dry rot, with much of the evidence given to us, notably that of the Georgian Group.

(c) Cost

34. We have been able, with the assistance of Mr. Sydney A. Paine, in respect of Mr. de Soissons's scheme, and of Dr. Faber as regards other alternatives, to arrive at estimates of cost, at present-day building prices, for carrying out the work which might be required. Mr. Paine is a chartered quantity surveyor of repute, and checked his estimates with Messrs. Mowlems, building contractors; while Dr. Faber's figures were ascertained on his own quantitative valuation following his inspections, and further checked in relation to Mr. Paine's figures for the de Soissons proposal, and the actual cost incurred to date by the Ministry of Works for the fairly substantial repair and conversion work which they are undertaking. These figures are recapitulated at the end of Dr. Faber's Report (page 43), but a briefer statement of the more important of them is as follows, in each case allowing for the residual value of work now being carried out by the Ministry of Works:—

55456

A 5

For 374 houses

	£
A. General structural rehabilitation as single houses to existing plan, but with no modernisation	1,350,000
B. As A, but with modernisation of present antiquated internal services and fittings	2,100,000
C. As B, but also with lifts	2,600,000
D. As C, but also with concrete floors and frame	3,800,000
E. De Soissons conversion plan (partly flats, partly modernised houses)	4,200,000
F. De Soissons conversion plan (if all to be houses and no flats)	4,250,000
G. If buildings were completely demolished and rebuilt with interiors to de Soissons's design	5,000,000
H. As G, but faced in Portland Stone	6,000,000

35. Some witnesses, especially the representatives of the Georgian Group, when figures comparable to the above were suggested to them, maintained that these would be too pessimistic. The Group favoured conversion on lines set out in the Report of the Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee on "Conversion of Existing Houses", and declared that "a total estimate of £2,500,000 would be unduly pessimistic and unreliable". Nevertheless, in view of the circumstances attending the preparation of the estimates in the above table, and the checking of those figures wherever possible with the actual cost of the work carried out by the Ministry of Works, we accept the figures in the table as substantially accurate at the prices prevailing in July, 1946, and as based upon the best available data, and we must attach to them much greater weight than to any estimates given without detailed investigation.

(d) Length of Life of Buildings

36. Once again, we have been confronted with a divergence of opinion on the question of the life of any renovated or converted buildings, and it is indeed a question on which it is impossible to be precise. Mr. de Soissons took the view that the buildings converted according to his plans could not be guaranteed a life of more than 50 years: other witnesses, without knowledge of Mr. de Soissons's designs, said in general terms that renovated or converted buildings might be expected to have a life of up to about 100 years. Clearly, much depends upon the thoroughness with which structural alterations are carried out so as to eliminate the "residual risk" of dry rot to which Dr. Faber refers. The probable life of new buildings, if erected now, is even more speculative, and we have been given no definite opinion on this point.

Powers of Commissioners of Crown Lands

37. We have been provided with estimates of the financial return to be expected from the property under a number of alternatives. Such figures are necessarily speculative, and we do not therefore propose to quote them. It is sufficient to say that the evidence shows conclusively that retention of the Terrace buildings (or any substantial part of them) is a course which no expert in estate management would recommend to a prudent Trustee, while total demolition and rebuilding could certainly be regarded as a satisfactory investment if carried out on purely commercial lines.

38. We do not believe, however, that this problem can be regarded from such a viewpoint; and many witnesses urged that the national importance of the site, or the property, or both was such that "uneconomic" expenditure was warrantable and desirable. Under existing enactments, however, the Commissioners of Crown Lands are not empowered to incur expenditure which would not commend itself to an ordinary prudent Trustee, and it is therefore obvious that, if this property—and indeed any other property in the hands of the Commissioners—is to be treated on lines in keeping with its significance as a part of the heritage of the entire nation, then special provision to meet "uneconomic" expenditure for such purposes will be justifiable. In our view, such special provision is more than justifiable: it is essential.

Recommendations by Witnesses

39. We have had many views of a conflicting character laid before us regarding the lines on which this problem should be answered, both as regards the fate of the existing buildings and the use to which either they or their site should be put. This evidence ranged from authoritative statements based on a more than cursory enquiry to somewhat nebulous opinions advanced evidently without much detailed consideration of the issues, or prompted mainly by a praiseworthy idealism. We have, therefore, inevitably attached more weight to some views than to others.

41. *The London County Council* considered that "The Regent's Park Terraces both individually and collectively are of such architectural importance" that all, save Cambridge Gate, should be preserved: and that "nothing less than the restoration of the buildings to their former state can be contemplated." We ascertained that, by this, the Council envisaged mainly adaptation of the interiors as flats or maisonnettes, though it would not rule out some single houses. Its representative said that "neither he nor the L.C.C. experts had gone very fully into the question of the cost of the recommended policy, and the Council was not prepared to put forward evidence on this aspect." It was the Council's view that this policy "should be undertaken no matter what the cost and even if at a quite uneconomic cost" but it was nevertheless made clear that the Council was not itself prepared to meet any part of the cost, and that this recommendation was accordingly made on the presumption that the funds would come out of the national and not the County Council's exchequer. The Council wished to insist on preservation of the Terraces as a whole but, as a second-best, was prepared reluctantly to advise treating each of the three sides of the area as a whole, and it particularly urged that at least the whole of one side should be kept. Use, in the Council's view, should be residential, and University hostels would fall within that category.

42. *The St. Marylebone Borough Council* reached with some reluctance the conclusion that the buildings should be demolished, and that as a long-term policy (i.e. to be brought into effect at the end of the Government Office tenure) there should be erected "blocks of multi-storey flats of a mixed character, with a proportion of hotels, and some houses for single family occupation." Other uses, including educational use, would not be considered suitable.

43. *The St. Marylebone Labour Party* took the view that the Nash architecture was not worth preserving, and even less so in the light of the housing needs of working-class people in the area who, because they were more tied to London, had a better right than others to continuous access to the Park from new flats which should be erected (with suitably low rentals) on the Terrace sites, so as to accommodate more people.

44. *The St. Pancras Borough Council* laid before us a scheme for preserving the Terraces on the Eastern side of the Park as a part of an ambitious and necessary programme of rebuilding and improvements in the area behind. They proposed—though admittedly without a close study of many of the structural and administrative problems involved—that these Terraces should be converted into a centre of national hospitality to conference delegations, etc., and be used for "national, social and cultural purposes," and as headquarters of suitable national institutions, including Trade Unions, and as hostels. (This scheme was endorsed by the *St. Pancras Borough Labour Party* and we also received the view that the *Workers' Educational Association* would welcome the introduction of "cultural organisations.")

45. The above conflict of opinion among local authorities was no less than that displayed by a variety of learned institutions and expert persons.

46. *The Royal Institute of British Architects*, while properly reluctant to make firm recommendations without carrying out an extensive survey, considered that "at least a proportion" of the existing buildings should be preserved; but gave it as their view that "in order to maintain the architectural and historical value of the Park as a whole it is not essential to preserve every existing Terrace." They declared that "a judicious selection might enable the Commissioners of Crown Lands to redevelop substantial areas, while retaining and restoring the best architectural examples." They were good enough to provide us with a selection on these lines, while stressing that any disorderly development should be avoided, and that in this sense the problem must be considered as a whole. Two secondary, though important, points emphasised by the Royal Institute were:—

(i) that Park Square had been allowed to become overgrown with trees and shrubs, totally obscuring the vista down Park Crescent and Portland Place, and

(ii) that "the additions which had been made to the tops of certain Terraces were terrible, and should never have been allowed on Crown property or any other property, and should be removed."

47. *Mr. John Summerson*, the well-known authority on Georgian architecture, put forward substantially the same views, and did not wish to insist that every Terrace should be preserved, since "the Park is not by any means an indivisible artistic unity, but merely a loose scenic grouping, making it possible to rebuild extensively without destroying the total effect." He thought, however, that the artistic problem was one of "great delicacy," and suggested that, if Terraces were to be destroyed, it would be desirable to do it at a time when English architecture had reached a peak which, on the whole, was not so at the present day. It might also be undesirable to destroy the Terraces, at least for a generation or two, because of the new and growing interest in Town Planning, of which they were an important early example.

48. More extreme views were propounded by the *Georgian Group*, to which some reference has already been made (paragraph 31 above). In brief, the Group maintained that all the Terraces must be preserved at all costs, while disagreeing that the cost need be wholly uneconomic. They favoured conversion into flats and maisonnettes. *The National Trust*, too (though without a detailed inspection of the buildings), said that they should be "preserved at whatever economic sacrifice."

49. *The Town Planning Institute* (alone among witnesses) favoured office use, and said that "it would appear that adaptation of the existing Terraces

to the use of Government Departments, professional bodies, or some similar use is the only practical solution."

50. *The Institute of Landscape Architects* regarded "the whole, Park and Terraces, as a national monument that should, if practicable, be preserved, even at a cost somewhat exceeding the strictly economic," and urged that, if this were not possible, it was vitally important that "the principle of unity between landscape and architectural design should be followed in any scheme of replacement;" and that the Terraces should be "maintained or redesigned as a single scheme."

51. *The Chartered Surveyors' Institution** concluded that adaptation of the existing buildings must be "an expensive and unsatisfactory compromise," and that it would be advisable in the circumstances to demolish them and erect new blocks of flats, with a few single houses, for residential occupation; though possibly retaining two or three of the existing Terraces "suitably modernised."

52. *Mr. Albert Stacey, F.A.I.*, principal in a firm of estate agents with a long experience in this area, did not favour restoration of the houses to their original form, nor their conversion into flats or maisonettes. He was satisfied that on estate management grounds the right solution would be to clear the site and erect new flats, for which there would be no difficulty in obtaining tenants. *The Auctioneers' and Estate Agents' Institute* took the same view, and emphasised that "it is unlikely that all the present houses, even if in good repair, will be required again for occupation by single families."

53. Letters received from Sir Thomas Moore, M.P., on behalf of the *Regent's Park Protection Society*, and from *Professor Sir Charles Reilly* urged that all the facades should in any case be preserved.

54. From another point of view, several residents made it clear that the problem of domestic management was not so difficult as might be supposed; and this was confirmed by visits paid to a number of the houses by members of the Committee.

55. In addition to the main flow of argument as revealed in the foregoing necessarily brief summary of some of the opinions given to us, we received evidence from the *London Society* urging that provision should be made for erecting a new "Music Centre" for London on the centre of Park Square, and from representatives of the *University of London* asking that we should recommend that hostel accommodation should be provided for some of their students in the Terraces area, whether by conversion of some of the existing houses or by erection of new and specially-designed buildings. We consider these representations in our conclusions at paragraphs 67 to 70 below.

CONCLUSIONS

I. General

56. The two basic inescapable facts before us are:

- (a) the condition of the buildings and, in particular, the degree to which they are infested with dry rot, and
- (b) the tenure by the Ministry of Works of 212 out of the 374 houses, and its effect, together with the effect of the work which the Ministry is now undertaking to adapt the buildings for "temporary" use as Government Offices.

* Now the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

Regarding dry rot, we do not feel that there is any escape from Dr. Faber's evidence as to its extent and severity. "Nearly all the buildings," he has stated, "are affected by dry rot." "I think it is clear [from cases and figures quoted] that exceptions to dry rot infestations are few and uncertain and those where it has not been found may easily contain it, though it has not yet been discovered for lack of stripping." "In a few cases it is confined to a few places in relatively unimportant positions such as cellars, cupboards, etc. In others it extends over many walls and floors and partitions, and must be regarded as extremely serious. Between the two there is every intermediate condition." "The impression indelibly left in my mind is that nearly every house is suffering from dry rot in greater or less extent, some extremely badly and some as yet comparatively little, but that spores must be presumed to have alighted on most of the timbers and the houses are therefore susceptible to an outbreak as soon as conditions of damp and temperature become suitable."†

57. As to the measures needed to prevent risk of recurrence of dry rot, or fresh outbreaks, we again turn to Dr. Faber and the two dry rot experts, Dr. Ramsbottom and Dr. Findlay. They are unanimous that there can be no guarantee against further outbreaks in any of the buildings unless the whole of the timber is impregnated with sodium fluoride *under pressure* and ingress of moisture wholly prevented. Dr. Faber goes further in declaring that, in order to dispose so far as humanly possible of this risk, all timber lintels should be replaced by concrete, and concrete floors substituted for timber floors.

58. It is thus of the first importance to observe that the steps taken by the Ministry of Works regarding dry rot (namely, cutting out evidently infected timber and replacing with new, *painted* with Cuprinol, and treating brickwork in the area with a blow-lamp), while very likely quite adequate for their expected tenure, do not remove the likelihood of further serious outbreaks at some more remote date; and that therefore, on a long-term view, this work is dangerously inadequate.*

59. The Ministry are of necessity confined by their financial vote to a restriction of expenditure to the repairs and reconditioning required for the purposes for which they have taken over so many of the houses. They have not undertaken, and cannot justifiably be held to have accepted, responsibility for repairs which go beyond that, in what might be termed the national interest. But it is a matter for very serious concern that their repairs and reconditioning have made complete restoration only possible if such work were to be started all over again. We are, in fact, confronted with the paradox that, though the taking over of these houses by the Ministry of Works and the consequent reconditioning for use as Government Offices in the immediate future has had the effect of checking the very recent and extensive deterioration and so of prolonging, on a short-term policy, the life of these houses, it has at the same time prevented the eradication of the main causes of such deterioration and so has immensely increased the task of their more permanent preservation. The question left to us to consider in this connection, therefore, is the date from which this task will have to be begun and that necessarily depends upon the date on which the Government usage ceases. We have been given no assurances as to when that will be: it may be in seven years or longer. The least that can be anticipated is five. Ideally, it should be within the next few months; but we recognise that that is not now practicable and we content ourselves, therefore, with saying that, in our view, it should be at the earliest date possible.

* See Appendix D.

† pp. 33 and 34 below.

60. We are unanimously of the opinion that the Nash Terraces are of national interest and importance and that, subject to certain reservations (see paras. 68-70 below) they should be preserved as far as that is practicable and without strict regard to the economics of "prudent" estate management; but differences of view legitimately arise as to the length of time for which they can in fact be so preserved.

61. Subject to our unanimous opinion as expressed in the preceding paragraph, we consider that there is a minimum which must at all costs be restored and preserved, namely (from west to east):—

Hanover Terrace.
Sussex Place.
Cornwall Terrace.
York Gate.
Park Crescent.
Chester Terrace.
Cumberland Terrace.

York Terrace is admittedly not of quite the same architectural merit, but we nevertheless feel that it also should be preserved.

62. As to the method of preservation, we have already indicated the two possible alternatives: namely reconditioning of the Terraces in their present form, or conversion on some such scheme as that prepared by Mr. de Soissons. A combination of these two methods is perfectly feasible. In any circumstances it would have been difficult to make definite and comprehensive recommendations on various matters arising from our terms of reference, but it would at least have been possible. In the circumstances with which we have in fact been confronted, as set out in paras. 13-15 and 58-59, we have been forced to the conclusion that we cannot do more than lay down general guiding principles upon which we are unanimous. The decisions must eventually be taken by those responsible for the management of the Crown Estate when the term of the Ministry of Works comes to an end, in accordance with these principles and in the light of the structural conditions of the property at that date.

63. It is clear that the application of Mr. de Soissons's method has much to commend it, so long as the rents of the converted property are not fixed on too high a level: equally in other cases—depending on the condition of the property—it may be more expedient to carry out now only the "first stage repairs" as defined by Dr. Faber in paragraph 11 of his Report, with provision for further and more comprehensive adaptation and repairs at whatever date the Government office use ends, when, as we feel it essential to emphasise, the problem can for the first time be considered as a whole. We would indeed be sanguine if we considered that this use would come to an end in seven years.

64. It must be a matter for later decision—since it is a decision which cannot possibly be taken now if it be conceded that the Terraces are to be preserved for so long as possible—whether circumstances at any given date require a piecemeal or a wholesale demolition and rebuilding. We wish, however, particularly to emphasise that in our opinion on either alternative any rebuilding must be in accordance with a master-plan. Such a plan would have to be prepared under the direction of the best architectural and landscape advisers in collaboration with the Commissioners, the Borough Councils and the London County Council as the planning authority. Regard should be had to the whole as an important civic improvement scheme, embodying in

one unit the Park, the Terraces and the immediate areas of redevelopment adjoining. This would ensure comprehensive consideration and give it unity. Further, it is essential that the recommendations on the various matters referred to in subsequent paragraphs of this report should apply throughout.

II. Use

65. We are agreed that use should be residential, whether in the existing, converted, or new buildings; and that due regard should be paid, in fixing any rents, to the desirability that occupation of these magnificent sites should not be the privilege of any particular income-group. We would deprecate the use of any of these sites as offices of any description, and consider that use by medical and other professional men should not be allowed to grow to such proportions as to affect the essentially residential character of the district.

66. We do not consider that hotels should be permitted in this area, but would not object to conversion of some of the large houses in Cumberland Terrace for use by learned institutions or clubs.

67. We do not conceive it as an essential part of our task, or indeed possible at this date, in the circumstances governing our inquiry, to give detailed directions as to management of the Crown Estate, but wish nevertheless to put forward two specific proposals mentioned to us, which we view with favour:—

(a) *Hostels for London University.* In our opinion favourable consideration should be given to a proposal made to us by representatives of London University, that a portion of the Terraces should be made available at the earliest possible date on suitable and not too onerous conditions to the University for conversion for use as a hostel for students or alternatively that, if demolition of a Terrace or Terraces is inevitable, then it is desirable that the new building should take the form of a hostel. It is a deplorable thing that the students to-day are gravely hampered by hours of travelling to and from outlying districts, and have no form of communal life. A hostel in Regent's Park would be a splendid indication that the importance of University studies under good conditions is appreciated by the Government, and we strongly commend this proposal to their attention. The need is urgent.

(b) *Music Centre.* During the war, a vastly increased public for good music arose in London, the Queen's Hall was destroyed, and the need for worthy premises is acute. We listened with sympathy when these facts were put before us by representatives of the London Society. The Society claimed that the centre of Park Square would be an ideal site for a proposed new Music Centre for London, and whilst we have no hesitation in stating that in our view the Square should not be so used, we consider that there is a strong case for establishing a Music Centre at some site nearby in the Terraces area.

III. Suggested new building

68. In making our main recommendation that the Nash Terraces should be preserved for so long as possible, we mentioned certain reservations. We recommend that, as soon as practicable, the site of Someries House, Cambridge Gate and Cambridge Terrace should be cleared, together with buildings behind so as to give a frontage to Albany Street; and that a Music Centre should be erected upon it. In this location an entertainment centre (admittedly differing in character) would be re-established on or near the site formerly occupied by the Coliseum, pulled down in 1875. Someries House is a building of no great merit, and has been much altered since it was first erected;

Cambridge Gate—a Victorian building—is architecturally of no interest, and some of it is especially badly attacked by dry rot; and, of all the Regency Terraces, Cambridge Terrace has perhaps the least merit.

69. An alternative use for the area made available by the removal of Somerley House, Cambridge Gate and Cambridge Terrace would be that of sites for a Music Centre and a hall of residence for students of London University. Both these buildings would have frontages on to the outer circle of the Park, and on to Albany Street on the east. It may well be that circumstances would dictate a decision in favour of this alternative. The siting of the new buildings and the general layout would make it possible to link the Park by planted pedestrian ways with the proposed redevelopment area within the borough of St. Pancras. We feel that a scheme on these lines would not injure the amenities of the Park as existing to-day, nor would it break the continuity of the frontage as conceived by Nash. It would have the further advantage of opening up the Park for the immediate enjoyment of the inhabitants in a redeveloped area of terrace houses around Munster Square, Clarence Gardens and Cumberland Market, and continue to link up by a planted way with Nash's Park Villages East and West, an early example of English garden suburb layout. We feel also that such a suggestion if adopted would go far to remove a feeling of isolation and of living behind a barrier of more favoured property.

70. Since the rest of our Report was drafted, we have been informed that the site at present occupied by the chapel and precincts of St. Katharine's Royal Hospital may shortly revert to the hands of the Crown. We recommend that our conclusions in this section should be closely considered in relation to this site also.

IV. Other Recommendations

71. There are a number of other matters on which we make the following recommendations:—

(a) The use of the 212 houses in these Terraces as Government offices under the Ministry of Works should be terminated at the earliest date possible, and the houses handed back to the Crown Commissioners, who should be duly reconstituted to deal effectively with this important national property in accordance with the principles laid down in this Report.*

(b) The present building line should be adhered to in perpetuity, and there should be no encroachment of any kind upon the Park, nor should the Ring Road be re-sited in consequence of any new development. We would not necessarily object, however, to some encroachment on the ornamental gardens outside the perimeter of the Ring Road, should this be required.

(c) We would greatly deprecate any further building within the Park itself, and consider that the Park and Terraces area should always be dealt with as a whole, and that a landscape architect should be brought into consultation whenever changes are contemplated, either in the Park or in the Terraces. We would define "Park" for this purpose as including the area enclosed by Park Square and Park Crescent, which should permanently remain an open space.

(d) The area enclosed by Park Square and Park Crescent should at once be substantially cleared of the mass of overgrown shrubs and trees which—even in winter—completely obscure the vista of Park Crescent leading

* See also paragraphs 72-75 below.

down to Portland Place, which was one of the most attractive features of Nash's conception. This would also, in the other direction to the north, clear the view on the line of the Broad Walk towards Parliament Hill.

(e) Park Crescent should in any case be preserved for so long as possible with the present façade, and the gaps left in it by bombing should be made good by new building to the former façade design.

(f) The height of any new buildings should not be greater than that of the present buildings (other than Cambridge Gate) though in a completely new design there would not necessarily be objection to isolated towers of a greater height.

(g) The colour of any new buildings might vary from white to a dark cream.

(h) The unsightly additions on the tops of the buildings should be removed as soon as possible.

(i) Advantage should be taken of any scheme of restoration or reconstruction to remove unsuitable additions at the rear of the Terraces which have been built from time to time.

(j) Access to the Park on the eastern side should be improved for pedestrians. At present, access for the full length of Albany Street is extremely poor, and the Terraces constitute a wall preventing inhabitants of this congested area from entering except at Chester Gate and at the north and south ends.

V. Implementing of Policy

72. We should be failing in our duty if we did not draw attention to a matter which has troubled us considerably and is a necessary corollary to our recommendations: namely, the fitness of the Office of the Commissioners of Crown Lands, as at present organised, to carry out whatever policy may eventually be agreed.

73. It is clear that, even had there been no war in 1939-1945, the Terraces to-day would not appear as an outstanding product of efficient estate management. The original ground-leases invested the lessors with ample power to prevent the making of undesirable alterations to the exterior of the premises. Notwithstanding this, at various periods during the 99 year terms, the Commissioners have apparently permitted the indiscriminate addition of extra storeys gravely to the detriment of the general proportions of nearly all the Terraces. Furthermore, vandalistic alterations to the interiors seem to have been allowed in some cases, as for example the conversion of a Regency room into the imitation of a "Tudor kitchen."

74. When the leases came to an end it was not the policy of the Commissioners themselves to repair the houses if they were yielded up in bad condition. We understand that in some cases new leases were granted in consideration of specified works of repair and improvement by the lessees. But in other cases no major repairs were carried out, as stated in the evidence given before us on behalf of the Crown Commissioners, the houses "were just let in the condition in which they were; the tenants simply stayed on." Having regard to the construction of these houses, apart from their architectural character, we think it would perhaps have been more satisfactory if in every case, when the original ground-lease expired, steps had been taken to see that the property was put into really sound order, at the expense of the lessee to the extent that it was his liability to do this.

75. We also find it difficult to believe that more could not have been done, during the war years and since, to put damaged buildings of this importance into at least a weatherproof condition. The evidence given before us by the Permanent Commissioner (who was appointed in 1941) confirms us in this view, and in reaching it we are not unmindful of the obvious difficulties, nor of what was in fact accomplished. We were told in evidence that the Office of the Commissioners of Crown Lands is organised on the basis that practically all the properties are let on full repairing leases. We are of opinion that in any future lettings responsibility for the repair and maintenance of at least the main structures should be undertaken by the Commissioners and that the organisation for the management of the estate should be strengthened accordingly.

Acknowledgment

76. It is customary for such a Committee as ours to conclude its Report by a general reference to the excellence of the work of its Secretary: we have reason to give specific adherence to, and to lay much emphasis upon, this custom. Our deliberations have of necessity been considerably more prolonged than was originally anticipated, and since we were appointed our Secretary, Mr. A. N. Coleridge, has left Government employ and undertaken a management in business with wide and heavy responsibilities. With much public spirit, however, he has continued to act as our Secretary, and we wish to place on record our high appreciation of, and our great indebtedness to, the industry and ability with which he has carried out his difficult and laborious duty.

(Signed) GORELL,
I. M. BOLTON.
E. R. FORBER.
J. H. FORSHAW.
ERIC MACLAGAN.
T. DRUMMOND SHIELS.
JOHN A. F. WATSON.

A. N. COLERIDGE,
Secretary.
21st January, 1947.

APPENDIX A

Evidence

In the course of its enquiry the Committee received evidence from the following. Those marked with an asterisk gave oral as well as written evidence.

MINISTRY OF WORKS

*Sir Eric de Normann, K.B.E., C.B. (Deputy Secretary).
*Mr. E. Batch, M.B.E.

MINISTRY OF TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

*Sir Thomas Sheepshanks, K.B.E., C.B. (Deputy Secretary).†
*Professor W. G. Holford, A.R.I.B.A., M.T.P.I. (Chief Technical Adviser).
*Mr. A. R. Wagner.

CROWN LANDS COMMISSION

*Mr. O. S. Cleverly, C.B., C.V.O. (Permanent Commissioner).
*Mr. L. E. C. Osborne, F.S.I.

CROWN ESTATE PAVING COMMISSION

ROYAL FINE ART COMMISSION

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

*Mr. Edmund Hambly (Vice-Chairman of the Town Planning Committee).

ST. MARYLEBONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

*Alderman C. S. Steel (Mayor).
*Mr. T. J. Wilson (Town Clerk).
*Mr. A. L. Downey (Borough Engineer).
*Mr. T. J. Hutton (Chief Rehousing Officer).

ST. PANCRAS BOROUGH COUNCIL

*Councillor F. W. Powe.
*Councillor Eric Cook.
*Councillor R. Chinn.
*Mr. R. C. E. Austin (Town Clerk).
*Mr. C. S. Bainbridge (Borough Surveyor).

ST. MARYLEBONE DIVISIONAL LABOUR PARTY

*Mr. T. Vernon.
*Mr. Howard Marshall.
*Dr. Elizabeth Jacobs.

ST. PANCRAS BOROUGH LABOUR PARTY

SOUTH-WEST ST. PANCRAS LABOUR PARTY

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

*Mr. Harold Cloughton.
*Sir William Halliday.
*Dr. D. W. Logan.

ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS

*Mr. Robert Atkinson, F.R.I.B.A.
*Mr. C. Lovett Gill, F.R.I.B.A.
*Mr. A. W. Kenyon, F.R.I.B.A.
*Mr. C. D. Spragg (Secretary).

INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

*Mr. Christopher Hussey.

NATIONAL TRUST

LONDON SOCIETY

*Viscount Esher.
*Dr. Hely-Hutchinson.
*Miss E. Bright Ashford.

† Now Permanent Secretary.

GEORGIAN GROUP

*Mr. Marshall Sisson, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.
*Mr. A. W. Acworth.

TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE

*Mr. Thomas Sharp, L.R.I.B.A., P.T.P.I.
*Lieut.-Colonel H. P. Cart de Lafontaine, O.B.E., F.R.I.B.A., M.T.P.I.

CHARTERED SURVEYORS' INSTITUTION

AUCTIONEERS' AND ESTATE AGENTS' INSTITUTE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

REGENT'S PARK PROTECTION SOCIETY

INDIVIDUALS

*Mr. H. E. Bailey (District Valuer, St. Marylebone).
*the late Mr. P. J. Black, P.P.I.Struct.E., L.R.I.B.A.
*Miss Elizabeth Bowen.
*Mr. Michael Browne.
*Mr. Louis de Soissons, A.R.A., F.R.I.B.A.
*Mr. A. N. Dove.
*Dr. Oscar Faber, O.B.E., D.C.L., D.Sc., M.Inst.C.E., M.I.Struct.E.
*Mr. Baxter Greig, F.R.I.B.A., M.I.Struct.E.
*Mr. R. T. James, M.Inst.C.E.
*Mr. G. Langley-Taylor, F.R.I.B.A., F.S.I., F.L.A.S., M.T.P.I.
*Mrs. A. Lindsay-Pynn.
*Mr. Sydney A. Paine, F.S.I.
*Professor Sir Charles Reilly.
*Mr. Albert Stacey, F.A.I.
*Mr. John Summerson, F.S.A., A.R.I.B.A.

APPENDIX B

Report by Dr. Oscar Faber, O.B.E., D.C.L., D.Sc., M.Inst.C.E.,
M.I.Struct.E., Consulting Engineer

PART I

Observations

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

I was appointed by letter from Mr. Coleridge dated the 12th June, 1946, and the terms of reference were contained in a letter of the 17th May, 1946. These are that I am to give an opinion on the structural condition of all the Terraces, and the second paragraph intimated that I should be able to judge, after a preliminary inspection of the Terraces, of the type of Report that would be of the most assistance to the Committee under its terms of reference, which are, "to consider the future of the Terraces adjoining Regent's Park from all aspects, architectural, Town Planning, and financial, and to make recommendations as to their future adaptation or replacement to meet modern requirements."

I do not propose to touch on the architectural and Town Planning aspects of the matter, but I should, I think, not be giving the assistance to the Committee which they may reasonably expect if I did not attempt to touch on the financial implications of some of the alternatives which appear to be available.

2. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This long and arduous task would have been impossible without the active assistance of all those gentlemen from whom I have asked it, which has in every instance been readily given and which is hereby gratefully acknowledged. These gentlemen include—

Mr. A. N. Coleridge, Secretary to the Committee, who has given me much valuable information and assisted me with contacts;
Mr. L. E. Osborne, F.S.I., Surveyor of Crown Lands, and his assistant, Mr. C. A. Gardner, P.A.S.I., who accompanied me on some of my inspections and assisted me with local history;
Mr. R. C. Henderson, District Surveyor to the Ministry of Works, who is responsible for the adaptation of approximately 200 houses for temporary office user by Government Departments;

Mr. W. A. Leach, Clerk of Works;
Dr. W. P. K. Findlay, Expert on Dry Rot, at the Forest Products Research Laboratory, by kind permission of the Director, co-author with Mr. Cartwright of the valuable bulletin issued by that Department on "Dry Rot in Wood";

and
Dr. Ramsbottom of the Natural History Museum.
Both these gentlemen were kind enough, at my request, to meet me and to go over a number of houses with me and advise me on the dry-rot problem generally.

Mr. Sydney A. Paine, F.S.I., Quantity Surveyor, who kindly answered some questions in regard to the estimates which he has given to the Committee.

I would also take this opportunity of acknowledging the valuable assistance I have had from members of my own staff:—

K. G. H. Montgomery-Smith, M.Inst.C.E.;

and

C. R. Glover, M.Inst.C.E.;

as it would have been impossible for me to have prepared this Report without considerable collaboration.

3. HISTORICAL

The houses were mostly built to the designs of John Nash between 1812 and 1828. They are, therefore, approximately 125 years old.

Mr. Summerson's book on John Nash I have read with the greatest interest and I will refrain from referring to any matters therein as they are, of course, now well known to the members of the Committee.

Though I am not concerned with the architectural or Town Planning aspects of the matter, I would like to be numbered among those who have a very high appreciation of Nash's Conception, and in my view he did a great work for London, and thereby deserves the thanks and recognition of us all. His Conception of Regent's Park as a large open space surrounded by Palaces was in advance of other ideas put forward at the time and has done much to add to the amenities of this part of London, and if it should be found possible, having regard to the other aspects of the matter, to retain the general Conception for which Nash was responsible, I, for one, should be pleased.

It is unfortunate that John Nash lived at a time when the contemporary quality of building was at a very low ebb from the structural point of view.

The houses have mostly been let on lease and the quality of their maintenance has varied greatly, but on the whole they were well maintained up to 1939, when the War broke out. There are exceptions to this, however, as there is considerable evidence that there were serious outbreaks of dry rot prior to 1939 and considerable structural repairs were also necessary, principally in the rebuilding of some of the back walls as is not uncommon with buildings of this antiquity where constructed with timber lintels and of brickwork, consisting of stock bricks in lime mortar finished in the case of some of the walls, particularly the front walls, with rendering and paint. There is evidence of considerable settlements, which, of course, cracked the rendering and to some extent loosened it. This, in turn, facilitated the entry of water into the brickwork, which had little opportunity of escape owing to the painted rendering, and so attacked the timbers in the walls and produced the liability to dry rot.

During the War 1939-45 the condition of the Terraces generally deteriorated greatly, partly as the result of direct hits which demolished some houses and set fire to others, and by near incidents causing extensive blast which pulled out the windows and damaged the roofs of many other houses.

While a certain amount of first-aid repair work was carried out, the difficulties in regard to labour and materials during the War, particularly during the latter half of it, were such that this first-aid repair was rather inadequate, and many of the temporary repairs were blown out by subsequent incidents. In many cases the houses were exposed to flooding by rain through the roofs and window openings for several years, and I found many of them still subject to leakage to-day and a few with water dripping through successive floors causing ceilings to collapse, adding very greatly to the dry rot and causing great deterioration in all directions.

Many of the incidents also added greatly to the deterioration of the external features such as columns, porticos, rendering, and most of the houses are unquestionably in a much worse condition to-day than they were in 1939.

Another historical fact which added to this deterioration was the fact that many of the houses previously occupied were left empty during the latter half of the War and, therefore, unheated and less cared for than normally, so that their deterioration was left relatively unchecked. Even those which were occupied were prevented by shortage

of materials and labour from receiving their normal care whereby defective rendering and painting of the exterior could not be attended to, and consequently the ingress of water and the growth of dry rot proceeded at a rate greater than pre-war.

4. SCOPE OF OUR EXAMINATION

I have personally examined the inside and the outside of over 100 houses, and my two assistants, referred to in paragraph 2, have examined others and reported to me.

The opportunity given by the Committee for climbing so many stairs has been greatly appreciated and has compensated to some extent for my inability to take my usual Swiss climbing holidays.

I do not, however, pretend to have examined every house and there is a limit to what was physically possible.

In the first place, the work done by the Ministry of Works, particularly in Cornwall Terrace and York Terrace, had already removed a good deal of the damaged floors, lintels, roof work, etc., prior to my appointment. On the other hand, the opening up which the Ministry of Works were carrying out enabled me to see many things which would otherwise not have been easy to inspect, and I have taken all the opportunities in this regard which were available. This is particularly valuable in the matter of dry rot, where I am assured by the Clerk of Works and by Mr. Henderson, and I saw for myself, that many of the interiors which at a first glance appear to be sound were found on opening up to be permeated with dry rot in a manner which could not otherwise have been guessed.

Nor have I examined any of the houses which are occupied by tenants, as I was anxious not to disturb them, and also because the inspection of such houses would reveal little without opening up of ceilings, partitions, window linings, plastering on battens, etc., which was, of course, unthinkable.

Generally speaking, the houses in Cornwall Terrace and York Terrace were already in process of rehabilitation by the Ministry, and at the time of my visits they were just beginning to open up some of the houses in Clarence Terrace and Sussex Place on the west and some of the houses at the south end of the terraces on the east.

Where houses had been demolished by bombing I was able to see some of the foundations, but I have also had these exposed in a considerable number of other houses and have measured the thickness of the walls in quite a number of places.

Where houses have not been stripped I was, of course, only able to see what was visible on the surface, but so many have in fact been stripped or partly stripped that a very good indication was afforded thereby.

One of the difficulties with which I was faced, and with which anyone else would be faced, is the fact that so much hidden defect can exist with houses of this type which it is quite impossible to see until extensive stripping is done.

Mr. Henderson and Mr. Leach have both assured me that many of the houses which they entered seemed to be in excellent condition internally until they came to strip them, and it was only stripping that revealed the extent to which they were impregnated with dry rot. I mention this particularly because I think it may account in some measure for the divergency of evidence which the Committee will hear.

Those who are satisfied to see houses in apparently good condition where occupied or recently occupied and well maintained may easily get the impression that the houses are eminently desirable and nothing much needs doing to them to make them fit for extended occupation. Whereas those who have seen houses even of this description stripped, as has occurred already in many of the houses in York Terrace and Cornwall Terrace, will see that, as a result of stripping, many serious defects came to light which would previously not have been discovered.

5. TERRACES CONSIDERED

The terraces to which we have given consideration include the following:—

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Hanover Terrace. | Albany Terrace. |
| Kent Terrace. | Park Square East. |
| Sussex Place. | St. Andrew's Place. |
| Clarence Terrace. | Somerley House. |
| Cornwall Terrace. | Cambridge Terrace. |
| York Terrace. | Chester Gate. |
| York Gate. | Chester Terrace. |
| Ulster Terrace. | Chester Place. |
| Ulster Place. | Cumberland Terrace. |
| Park Square West. | Cumberland Place. |
| Park Crescent. | Gloucester Gate. |

These contain 374 houses.

Mr. Coleridge kindly gave me a list of those in which the Committee are primarily interested with which the foregoing is consistent.

6. HOUSES TAKEN BY THE MINISTRY OF WORKS, FOR TEMPORARY OFFICE USER

These were given to me in a letter from Mr. Henderson dated the 15th July, and include some, but not all, the houses in the following:—

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Sussex Place. | Cambridge Gate. |
| Clarence Terrace. | Cambridge Terrace. |
| Cornwall Terrace. | Cluster Gate. |
| York Terrace. | Chester Terrace. |
| York Gate. | Chester Place. |
| Ulster Place. | Cumberland Place. |
| Ulster Terrace. | Cumberland Terrace. |
| St. Andrew's Place. | Gloucester Gate. |
| Somerley House. | Prince Albert Road. |

The houses in Mr. Henderson's list includes 211 houses, of which, however, 12 are not included among those which we were examining, leaving 199 out of the houses contained in the previous paragraph. In other words, of the 374 houses which we are considering, the Ministry are dealing with 199.

The Ministry have divided their houses into eight groups for purposes of their own organisation, and they have divided them up also into two categories: (a) and (b). (a) represent the houses thought to be generally in poor structural condition, and as a continuous terrace requiring more adaptation than is necessary in small blocks of houses. (b) is representative of a group in fair condition and in smaller blocks, where the cost of adaptation is likely to be less.

Out of the 199 houses which the Ministry are rehabilitating out of those which come under our consideration I find that 44 are in Category (b) and 155 in Category (a). Any average over the whole, therefore, has to be weighted in this proportion to give a true average.

7. GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AVERAGE REGENCY HOUSE

While there are considerable variations among the houses, nevertheless, the typical Regency house conforms approximately to the following description:—

Walls.—All the walls are of stock bricks set in lime mortar. The walls are generally 22½ inches thick up to ground floor and 18 inches thick above this level. This applies both to the front, rear and party walls. Some of the upper storeys, however, contained 14 inch walls, reduced in some cases to 9 inches at the window backs.

Walls carried on Timbers.—Where porticos occur the ground floor generally projects in front of the main upper wall, which is in that case in some Terraces carried by large timber beams at first-floor level, these beams being frequently strengthened by having iron ties up to other timber beams at a higher level, these iron ties being frequently closer together at the lower level than at the upper level, that is to say, sloping so as to afford a rudimentary truss, but the slope is limited by the window openings so that the trussing is incomplete. This construction has allowed a considerable sag of the wall above first-floor level, which reveals itself by diagonal cracks in the wall, particularly between the windows. These cracks occur in nearly all houses where the main wall is carried on timber trusses, but particularly so where rotting and other deterioration of the timber beams has occurred. The houses with flat fronts between the porticos are not usually so badly cracked as regards their front walls.

Floors.—The floors are of timber throughout and mostly, but not always, span from front to back in continuous length of joist, some of which are 40 ft. to 50 ft. in length. They are, however, supported on a central partition, which usually consists of 9 inches of brickwork up to ground floor and a plastered stud partition from ground floor upwards. Most of the other partitions are also plastered stud partitions from ground floor upwards.

Stairs.—The walls round the staircases are, however, usually of 9 inches of brickwork and the stairs themselves are, in some houses, of stone up to second floor and timber above, though in some houses they are of timber throughout.

Areas.—The ground floor is usually 2 ft. or 3 ft. above general ground level and the basement is usually provided with external areas to admit light, these areas being generally about 6 ft. wide.

Roof.—The roof is normally of timber construction covered with battens and slates, though in a few cases there are special constructions such as domes, which are constructed of timber covered with thin sheet metal.

Stucco and Paint.—All the fronts facing the Park have their walls rendered in Roman cement and finished with paint. This paint was probably redone about every four