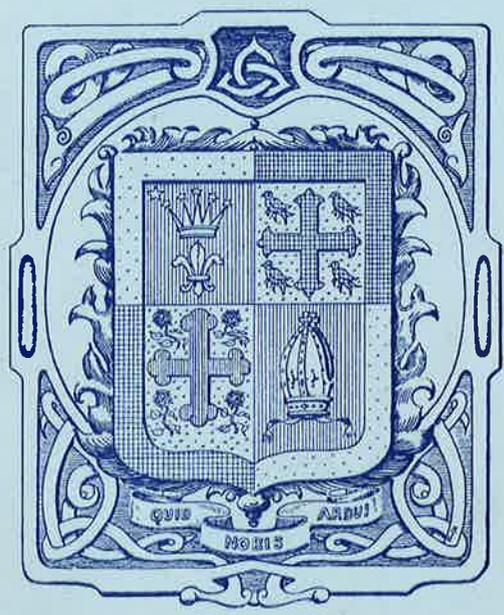


# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY



3<sup>rd</sup> :

## ANNUAL REPORT Year 1955 - 56

THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

ANNUAL REPORT

Year 1955-56

# THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

*President:*

VACANT

*Vice-Presidents:*

THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF KENSINGTON  
SIR HAROLD KENYON, M.B.E., J.P.

*Council:*

Miss Jean Alexander	The Lord Harlech, K.G., G.C.M.G.
Miss Rachel Alexander	The Hon. Mr. Justice Karminski
Hardy Amies, Esq.	Oliver Messel, Esq.
The Hon. Mr. Justice Barry	Lady Norman, J.P.
John Carter, Esq.	Duncan Oppenheim, Esq.
Sir Hugh Casson, R.D.I., F.R.I.B.A., F.S.I.A.	Dorothea, Lady Ponsonby
The Marquess of Cholmondeley, G.C.V.O.	Miss Irene Scharrer
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Miss Rachel Ferguson	Orlo Williams, Esq., C.B., M.C., D.C.L.
William F. Grimes, Esq., V.P.S.A.	Miss Irene Worth

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

*Chairman:*

H. Stephen Pasmore, Esq., M.B., B.S. (Lond.)

*Vice-Chairman:*

C. H. Gibbs-Smith, Esq., F.R.S.A., F.M.A.

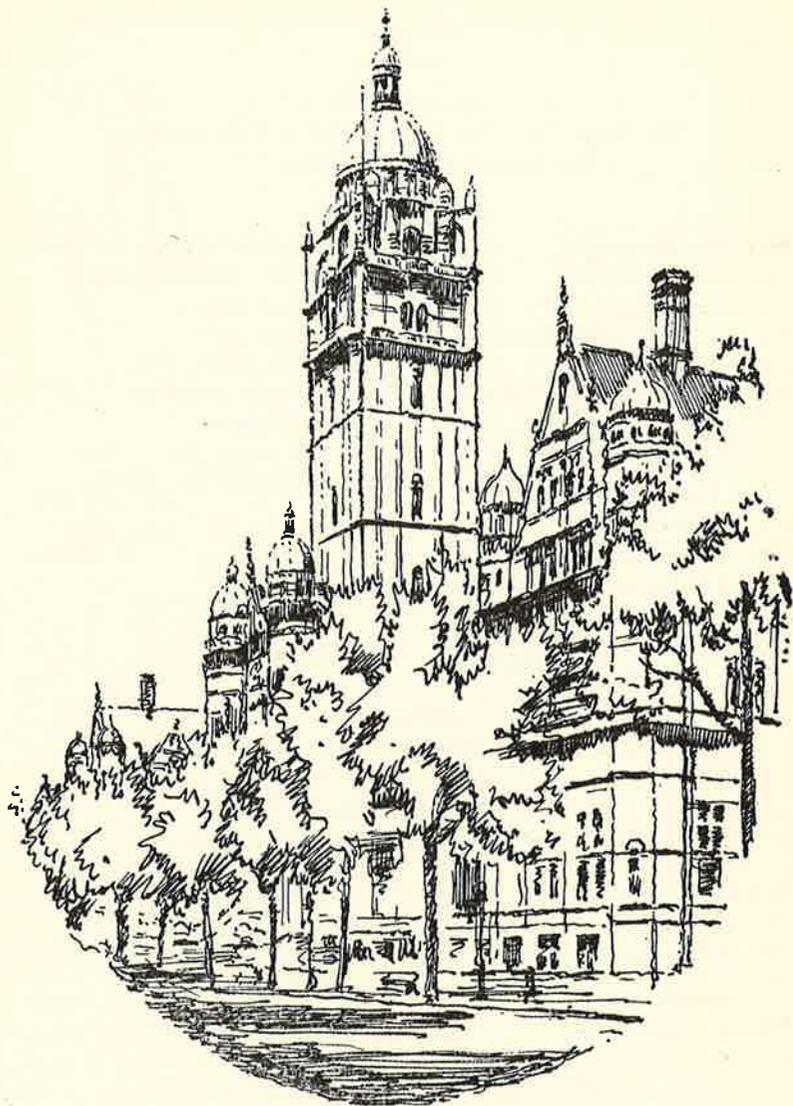
Geoffrey Agnew, Esq.	H. Gandell, Esq.
C. G. Boxall, Esq.	Keon Hughes, Esq.
W. W. Begley, Esq., F.R.Hist.S., L.R.I.B.A.	Hugh Shillito, Esq.
F. Carter, Esq.	Miss P. M. Ward
W. G. Corfield, Esq.	R. T. D. Wilmot, Esq.

*Hon. Treasurer:* E. Norman Butler

*Hon. Secretary:* Mrs. G. Christiansen

18. Kensington Square, W.8, Tel.: WEStern 0931

*Hon. Auditors:* Messrs. Wright, Stevens & Lloyd



IMPERIAL INSTITUTE

## A Description of THE BOROUGH ARMS

The Royal Borough received its grant of armorial bearings on May 23rd, 1901. The heraldic description is as follows:—

Quarterly Gules and Or, a Celestial Crown in chief and a Fleur-de-lis in base of the last, in dexter canton a Mullet Argent in the first quarter; a Cross flory between four Martlets Sable in the second; a Cross bottony Gules between four Roses of the last stalked and leaved proper in the third; and a Mitre of the Second in the fourth; all within a bordure quarterly Or and Sable.

Motto:

“Quid Nobis Ardui”  
 (“Nothing is too difficult for us”)

The arms are mainly derived from those Lords of the Manor and others who were the principal landowners in Kensington on the gradual division of the original Manor. In the first quarter is seen a silver star on a red ground, taken from the armorial bearings of the de Veres, who were the first Lords of the Manor. The golden celestial crown and fleur-de-lis are emblematical of the Virgin Mary, to whom the parish church is dedicated. The black cross and four martlets (or martins) on a golden ground in the second quarter represent the arms of the Abbey of Abingdon, to whom part of the Manor was given by the de Veres in the eleventh century, and who dedicated the church to the Blessed Virgin. In the third quarter of the shield the red cross and four red roses on a golden ground are taken from the arms of Sir Walter Cope and Henry Rich, Earl of Holland, who in turn became Lords of the Manor, the former being represented by the red roses and the latter by the red cross. The golden mitre on a red ground in the fourth quarter relates to the Abbey of Abingdon, whose mitred Abbot had the appointment of the Vicar of St. Mary Abbots.

The fleur-de-lis beneath the celestial crown in the first quarter may also be taken to symbolise the association of the Fox family with the Borough, as the last of the Rich stock sold the Manor to Henry Fox, who became Baron Holland, and a golden fleur-de-lis formed part of his armorial bearings.

2nd

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held at the Kensington Town Hall on December 12th, 1955, with the President, Lord Gorell, in the Chair.

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 1954 were read by the Secretary, and approved.

The approval of the Report and Accounts was moved by Dr. Stephen Pasmore and seconded by Mr. E. Norman-Butler, and approved.

The confirmation of the re-election of the Officers of the Society and the Executive Committee was proposed, seconded, and approved.

A motion of thanks to the Secretary for her energy and ability was moved by Colonel Crosfield and unanimously adopted. The Society also recorded its thanks to the Hon. Auditors, Messrs. Wright, Stevens & Lloyd.

The meeting was followed by a lecture by Sir Harold Kenyon, Vice-President of the Society, on the "Early History of Kensington."

## THE YEAR'S ACTIVITIES

During the winter months lectures included "Three Decades of English Ballet," by Marie Rambert; "Birds in Kensington," by Lord Hurcombe; and "Looking at Georgian Houses," by Mr. Alec Clifton-Taylor. A Viola Recital was given by Mr. Bernard Shore. During the summer visits were made to Lord Audley's studio for hand-painted glass; the College of Estate Management; the exhibition of Tapestry and Embroidery at Marlborough House; the Imperial Institute; the Royal Albert Hall; the Royal Horticultural Society's Garden, Wisley, Surrey; Holy Trinity Church, Brompton; the factory and bakery of Messrs. Fullers; the London Museum; St. Mary Abbots Church; and the Royal School of Needlework.

*Imperial Institute.* The Society organised a Public Meeting at the Kensington Town Hall in March to protest against the official decision to destroy the Imperial Institute. Lord Methuen was in the Chair, and the speakers were Mr. John Betjeman, Mr. A. S. G. Butler, Sir Hugh Casson, Mr. Stanley Hamp, Mr. Hitchcock, Lord Mottistone and Lord Ogmores. More than 600 people were present. (A full report of this meeting will be found on pages 15-33.)

Largely as a result of the Society's efforts, the famous Colcutt Tower is to be saved. Under a revised scheme for the expansion of the Imperial College of Science, the tower is to be preserved as a freestanding campanile. The Institute will go, and the

remainder of the scheme for the central site will be followed as originally planned. Although the Society deplors the destruction of the main Colcutt building in view of its architectural value and historical importance, it considers that the latest scheme retaining the tower is preferable to the original scheme which involved the total destruction of the building.

The Public Meeting was mentioned several times in the House of Lords Debate on 13th March on the Imperial Institute, and Mr. Stanley Hamp, the Architect, formerly a partner to Colcutt, who designed the building as a memorial of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, has congratulated the Kensington Society on "its great work for which all future and present generations will be grateful."

*Street Lighting.* The relighting of Kensington is under consideration by the Kensington Borough Council, and it is felt that this is a matter in which the Society should concern itself. Sir Hugh Casson has proposed that the different types of lanterns and posts might be put on show in the Town Hall and that suggestions should be made as to which types should be erected in which streets. The following letter from the Town Clerk was received by the Secretary:—

Dear Mrs. Christiansen,

### *Street Lighting*

With reference to your letter of July 31st, 1956, I am instructed to inform you that when the Council reach the stage of considering any definite proposals regarding the type and style of lamp standard to be adopted for the proposed improvement of street lighting in the borough, the interest of your Society in the matter will be borne in mind.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) J. Waring Sainsbury,  
Town Clerk.

30, *Kensington Square.* The Society has supported the National Trust in restoring this house to private occupation.

*Point Block Flats in Holland Park.* The Society is continuing to oppose the building of "skyscraper" flats on the grounds that many fine trees would be lost and the height of the blocks would be out of proportion to the other buildings in that part of the High Street.

*Refuse Collecting.* A large number of members of the Society have complained that the dustbins are only emptied once weekly, as compared with twice or three times in other Boroughs.

The Secretary has passed on this complaint to the Kensington Borough Council and has received the following reply:—

Dear Madam,

I duly submitted your letter of July 31st, 1956, regarding the refuse removal services, to the Council's Works Committee at their last meeting.

The Committee directed me to state that whilst special arrangements are made for the removal of refuse from hospitals, shopping areas and similar places, they are unable at present to see their way to recommend the Council to make any alteration in the frequency of collection of refuse from residential premises.

The general position will remain under constant review by the Committee.

Yours faithfully,  
(Sgd.) J. Waring Sainsbury,  
Town Clerk.

*St. Mary Abbots Terrace.* Members of the Society have asked if anything can be done to have the Terrace preserved, but we are informed that it has long been scheduled for development as luxury flats.

*No. 1, Palace Green.* Messrs. Clutton, Agents for Crown Lands, informed the Society that this house is to be converted into flats. The Victoria and Albert Museum are dealing with the Burne-Jones tiles and the William Morris panelling.

*New Public Library.* A preliminary sketch of the design by Mr. Vincent Harris, R.A., for the new Central Library has been made public. The Executive Committee of the Society are of the majority opinion that it is rather dull and uninspiring, but they are not at present in favour of a protest by the Society.

*Pembroke Lodge Site.* The Kensington Borough Council received a deputation of residents who objected to the loss of amenities which would be caused by the proposed development of this site, but were told that there was no valid planning objection to be made. The Society has been in touch with the L.C.C. concerning the development of the site and has obtained an assurance that as many trees as possible will be retained to preserve its present rural aspect.

*Tree Group.* A number of letters on questions relating to trees, both on the public highway and in private gardens and forecourts, has been received, indicating considerable interest in

the Borough on the subject, and it has been decided to set up a Tree Group, consisting of Alderman Francis Carter, Mrs. R. E. S. Cornwallis Gubbins and Mr. M. Hayman, with Mr. Begley acting as Secretary, to help in these matters.

Contact is being maintained with the Parks Department of the L.C.C., and one result of this has been the placing of a Preservation Order on a large Chestnut in Norland Square, which was in danger of injudicious lopping, or even felling.

The Society has decided to donate nine trees to be planted in Ladbroke Road, North Kensington, and three in South End Village.

Questions have also arisen during the past few months in connection with Pembroke Square, Campden Hill, Holland House, Cornwall Gardens, and St. Mary Abbots's churchyard.

Members are reminded that irreparable damage to a tree can be done by thoughtless or uninstructed action but that, given timely information, the Society can frequently offer advice which will lead to the end desired being achieved without ruining something which may have taken generations to mature.

(Sgd.) W. W. Begley.

In this connection it was felt that the Metropolitan Parks and Gardens Association would be of assistance and the Society is now affiliated with that Association.

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#### PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD GROUP

The Group has little to record, the members for various reasons not having been able to do very much. However, Miss Elizabeth Bennett has taken a series of excellent photographs of the interior and exterior of the Imperial Institute.

The Annual Subscription to The Kensington Society covers membership of the Photographic Group and new members will be gladly welcomed.

(Sgd.) C. G. Boxall.

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#### RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENCY

The Executive Committee learned with regret in April of Lord Gorell's decision to resign the Presidency of the Society. They wish to express their appreciation of the interest and support given to the Society by Lord Gorell during its first years of existence.

## FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

*October 9th, 1956.*

A lecture by Sir Hugh Casson, entitled "Beauty in Danger," at Kensington Town Hall, W.8, at 8.0 p.m.

Chairman: Sir Martyn Beckett.

*October 24th.*

A lecture by Mr. L. W. Lane, Tree Preservation Officer, entitled "The Truth About Trees," at Queen Elizabeth College, Campden Hill Road, W.8, at 8.0 p.m.

Chairman: Alderman Carter.

*November 8th.*

A lecture by Mr. George Williams, of the Council of Industrial Design, entitled "Design of Street Furniture," at Queen Elizabeth College, Campden Hill Road, W.8, at 8.0 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. J. Richards, Commissioner of the Royal Fine Art Commission.

*November 17th.*

A lecture tour of St. Mary Abbots Church, W.8, by Miss Judith Scott. Members please meet at the entrance at 2.30 p.m.

*December 11th.*

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Town Hall, Kensington High Street, W.8, at 6.0 p.m.

Chairman: Sir Harold Kenyon, M.B.E., J.P.

The meeting will be followed by a lecture by Mr. David Green, entitled "Henry Wise of Kensington and the Formal Garden."

Chairman: Mr. C. H. Gibbs-Smith.

*January 3rd, 1957.*

Mr. Howard Marion-Crawford, Actor and Broadcaster, will give a Reading at Leighton House, Holland Park Road, W.14, at 8.0 p.m.

Chairman: Sir Patrick Barry.

*February 4th-9th.*

An exhibition illustrating the work of the Historic Buildings Council for England, and Ministry of Works, will be held at The Odeon Theatre, Kensington High Street, W.8.

The exhibition will be opened by His Worship the Mayor of Kensington, at 2.30 p.m., on February 4th, and remain open daily from 2.0-6.0 p.m., until February 9th.

Dr. Craig, of the Ministry of Works, will give a lecture entitled "Our Heritage of Historic Houses."

*February 19th.*

A lecture by Mr. Christopher Hollis, Author and Broadcaster, entitled "G. K. Chesterton," at Queen Elizabeth College, Campden Hill Road, W.8, at 8.0 p.m.

Chairman: Lord Conesford.

*March 4th.*

A lecture by Mr. G. Berry, of the Metropolitan Water Board, entitled "The Evolution of the Water Supply to the Royal Borough During the Last Century," at Queen Elizabeth College, Campden Hill Road, W.8, at 8.0 p.m.

Chairman: Comdr. E. Wallis.

*March 25th.*

Miss H. Lowenthal, Senior Lecturer of The Victoria and Albert Museum, will kindly receive members at the Main Entrance of the Victoria and Albert Museum at 2.30 p.m.

She will conduct them through some of the Galleries and give a talk on "English Porcelain."

*April 15th.*

Mr. W. A. Eden, Senior Officer of the Historic Building Section of the Architects Department, L.C.C., will give a lecture on "Holland House," at the Town Hall, W.8, at 8.0 p.m.

Chairman: Lady Peplar.

## OTHER NEWS

*Membership* of the Society now stands at 504.

*Increase in Subscriptions.* Owing to the rise in postage, telephone rates and printing, the Executive Committee has reluctantly felt compelled to raise the minimum Annual Subscription, for membership of the Society, to one guinea.

We hope you will continue to give the Society your support.

*Christmas Cards.* Christmas Cards from last year will be sold at 3d. each. The new card illustrated on page 4 is price 4d.

The Secretary would welcome volunteers for selling cards.

*Family Service Units.* The Appeals Secretary has expressed gratitude for the response to their appeal from members of the Kensington Society.

The Society is affiliated to the Central Council of Civic Societies, the London Society, and the Metropolitan Parks and Gardens Association.

It would be appreciated if letters requiring an answer were accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

The Society is still anxious to hear from members interested in the formation of a History Group.

Extra copies of this Report may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, price 2s.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our lecturers, our hosts, and our hostesses for making our lectures and visits so successful, and, in particular, the Rank Organisation, for their kindness in putting their large reception room at the Odeon Theatre, Kensington High Street, at our disposal for the Historic Buildings Exhibition.

The following list of suggested names for commemoration plaques was sent to the L.C.C. The Society would be pleased to receive from members further suggestions of notable residents worthy of commemoration.

Sir Sidney Lee—108, Lexham Gardens, 1891-1926.

Andrew Lang—1, Marloes Road, 1888-1912.

William Horsley—1, High Row, Kensington Church Street, 1823-1858.

Thomas Sidney Cooper, R.A.—42, Chepstow Villas, 1868-1902.

Viscount Allenby—24, Wetherby Gardens, 1926-1934.

Ugo Foscolo—19, Edwardes Square, 1819—9 months.

Lloyd George—2, Addison Road, W.14, 1928-1937.

*The Observer*, April, 1956, in a series of articles under the heading "Eyesores," describes how Government departments and local authorities are wrecking our urban and rural landscape, and comments "But a great deal can be done by local residents, who, if they protest loudly enough, can often achieve more than they expect, particularly if they are well organised among themselves. The Council for the Preservation of Rural England, and local associations in cities, such as the Kensington Society, have done much to prevent major atrocities."

## RULES OF THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

1. The name of the Society shall be The Kensington Society.
2. The objects of the Society shall be to preserve and improve the amenities of Kensington by stimulating interest in its history and records, by protecting its buildings of beauty and historic interest, by preserving its open spaces from disfigurement and encroachment, and by encouraging good architecture in its future development.
3. *Members.* Members shall be Life or Ordinary.
4. *Subscriptions.* Life members shall pay a minimum subscription of £10 10s. Ordinary members shall pay a minimum annual subscription of one guinea, payable on 1st October each year.
5. *The Council.* The Council shall consist of not more than thirty members. They shall be elected by the Executive Committee.
6. *The Officers.* The Officers of the Society shall be the President, the Vice-Presidents, the Hon. Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer.
7. *The Executive Committee.* The Executive Committee shall consist of not more than twelve members and the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer. The Chairman of the Executive Committee shall be elected annually by the members of the Executive Committee at their first meeting after the Annual General Meeting.
8. The Executive Committee shall be the governing body of the Society. It shall have power to (i) Make bye-laws; (ii) Co-opt members and fill vacancies on the Executive Committee that may arise for the current year; (iii) Take any steps they may consider desirable to further the interests and objects of the Society.  
A Quorum of the Executive Committee shall consist of not less than five members.  
Not less than three Executive Committee Meetings shall be convened in any one year.
9. *Annual General Meeting.* An Annual General Meeting, of which 28 days notice shall be given to members, shall be held when the Executive Committee shall submit a Report and an audited Statement of Accounts to the previous September 30th.
10. *Election of Officers and Members of the Executive Committee.* All members of the Society shall be eligible for election as Officers of the Society or Members of the Executive Committee. Nominations must be sent to the Hon. Secretary,

duly signed by a proposer and seconder, within 14 days of the date of the Annual General Meeting. If more nominations are received than there are vacancies, voting shall be by ballot at the Annual General Meeting.

11. *Alterations of Rules.* No rule shall be altered or revoked except at a General Meeting of the Society. No motion shall be deemed carried unless it has been agreed to by not less than two-thirds of those present and voting.
12. The Society shall not be dissolved unless a majority of two-thirds of the subscribing members signify their approval of such a course by means of a postal ballot taken after receipt by the said members of a statement by the Executive Committee setting forth fairly and impartially a summary of the arguments for and against such course and the views of the Executive Committee thereon.

## PUBLIC MEETING

to discuss the preservation of

### THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTE

held on MONDAY, MARCH 12TH, 1956

THE RT. HON. LORD METHUEN IN THE CHAIR

THE CHAIRMAN: I regret to say that owing to a heavy cold H.R.H. Princess Alice is unable to be here. I have also to express regret that my "Big White Chief," the President of the Royal Academy, Sir Albert Richardson, cannot be here this evening, and it has fallen to my lot to act as his son. I am afraid you will find that I am a very inferior creature compared to him, but I shall do my best, encouraged by the thought that we have met here on no trivial account, but to protest in the strongest possible terms against the present intention of Her Majesty's Government to demolish the Imperial Institute in order to make way for a building, the detailed plan and elevation of which have not yet been made public, which will be an extension of the Imperial College of Science and Technology.

It is of course true that a first block design was exhibited at the Royal Academy last summer, but this is all that you and I, the public, have had officially. As a result of this exhibit, the Kensington Society sent a letter to *The Times* stating the Society's concern about the proposed redevelopment scheme. The outcome, I understand, was an invitation from the Rector of the Imperial College of Science and Technology, who offered to receive representatives of the Kensington Society to see the plans. Little information was given, and the detailed plans at that time were being considered by the Royal Fine Art Commission.

The Society had no further information until the Press release on January 28th last. The Society then approached the Member of Parliament for South Kensington, Sir Patrick Spens, who, I regret to say, cannot be here to-night owing to another engagement. He arranged to receive a deputation at the House of Commons. The members were sympathetically received, and it was quickly agreed that the comparative sacrifice in floor space which would be involved by the Imperial College would not justify the destruction of a building which has such historic significance, as well as beauty of its own. I understand that the Society has been continuously

in touch with the Royal Fine Art Commission and other interested bodies.

The Society therefore agreed to convene a public meeting to discuss the scheme. The Rector of the Imperial College of Science was invited to send speakers to put forward their views, but this was declined, as the matter was still being officially discussed. This meeting, therefore, has been called to discuss the preservation of the Imperial Institute.

I should like to congratulate your Society, and particularly your very active Secretary, Mrs. Christiansen (*Applause*) on their zeal in convening this meeting. Your Society, in my humble opinion, is doing a highly patriotic job for which we should all be grateful.

We have here a large-scale reproduction of this building, done from a drawing by Philip Hepworth, which gives some idea of its grandeur and style. When it was suggested that this should be exhibited, I said "Surely we ought to know what it looks like!" Perhaps in passing we may have occasionally noticed it, but few of us have a proper idea of its significance. We have to thank Mr. Hepworth for so kindly allowing us to use this drawing, and we have to thank the Editor of the *Sunday Times* for having this enlargement made at extremely short notice. (*Applause.*)

There are several factors to remember in this controversy. The first is that this building was erected to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee. It was paid for by subscriptions sent from all parts of the then existing Empire. It was completed in 1893 and opened by the Queen in 1897. To demolish a building born in such circumstances will strike us all, I think, as highly improper and likely to give offence to great numbers of people, including many who are no longer within the Empire. I can quite understand that an Act of Parliament will be required to legalise such an action, but that is beside the point. To me the idea that this building should be demolished is quite unthinkable. (*Applause.*)

A rumour got around that the building might be listed under the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. I therefore made inquiries, but all that I could ascertain was that the list of buildings in Westminster recommended to the Minister of Housing and Local Government for listing under the Act had not yet been approved. Whether the Imperial Institute was recommended or not by the Holford Committee I cannot say, but I should be very surprised indeed to learn that a building of this character had been omitted. It must be remembered that, as Mr. Denys Sutton, whose opinion I value, has recently pointed out, London is none too well endowed with large-scale monumental edifices. We are fond of making clean sweeps in our planning, which is wasteful and arrogant, rather than adapting and including in any plan which may be under consideration those buildings which are architecturally,

historically and even scenically valuable. It would not require genius to incorporate Colcutt's building in any new scheme. I know of no comparable building with comparable accommodation. It could be adapted to almost any use in the hands of a sympathetic architect, and there is any amount of space north, east and west of the building itself.

We have with us this afternoon a formidable list of distinguished speakers who are here to give you the history of the building and to say things which we sincerely hope will penetrate to those primarily responsible for this unenlightened decision and rescue this building from their cloven clutch.

John Betjeman is too well known to require introduction, but perhaps I should say, as a fellow member of the Royal Fine Art Commission, that he was a member of the Committee which we appointed to discuss this matter with the authorities, so that he is extremely well versed in the subject. We are very pleased to have with us Sir Hugh Casson, who was Director of Architecture for the Festival of Britain. It is a very happy augury that he should be here to support this protest meeting. I do not take too seriously the remark of a correspondent, writing to *The Times* from Bedford Square, that his tribute, with others, must be regarded as a kind of generous obituary notice.

Lord Mottistone, who will also speak, has been a champion in the House of Lords of the preservation of buildings of historic interest. For many years he and I have fought on the same side. He is also an eminent architect and Chairman of the Council of the London Society. In Mr. Stanley Hamp we have an eminent architect who was articled to Thomas Colcutt and later became his partner. In Mr. Hamp's letter to the *Sunday Times* of 4th March, when the very fine drawing which we have here was reproduced, he commented on the possibilities of the interior economy of Colcutt's main block, and I hope that he will tell us more about that this evening. Lord Ogmores, who is also with us, is to-morrow, with Lord Mottistone, initiating a discussion in the House of Lords on this very subject. We are also glad to welcome Mr. Hitchcock, from the United States of America. (*Applause.*) He is a great authority on Victorian architecture and what he has to say will interest us enormously. Finally, we have with us to-night Mr. A. S. G. Butler, F.R.I.B.A., the author of a well-known book on the architecture of the late Sir Edwin Lutyens.

MR. JOHN BETJEMAN: It is a great honour to be asked to be associated with this meeting, and it is a great honour to the Imperial Institute that there are so many people here, you, the people of Kensington and the members of the Kensington Society, who are here in its defence. Fancy architecture bringing a crowd into a town hall at a rather inconvenient hour at a time of traffic blocks! It is a great tribute.

If there had been a proposal in, let us say, 1856, to demolish St. Paul's Cathedral in favour of an arms factory to experiment in making an improved type of cannon to that which had been used in the Crimean War, there would have been plenty of people to advocate the destruction of the cathedral. First, of course, there would have come the argument of "urgent national necessity." Next, there would have been plenty of middle-aged people to advocate the destruction of the Cathedral on aesthetic grounds for not being Gothic, because in 1856 Gothic was considered to be the only Christian kind of architecture, and people regretted that St. Paul's had been built in the style of a pagan temple.

I know that it is very difficult to-day, when Georgian is fashionable and we rather dislike the Gothic revival, and when we think of the Vitruvian proportions of Regency buildings, which we all love and admire, for us, or at any rate for some people, to understand the kind of scale and proportion and manner of decoration which we find in that grand, unified conception, the Imperial Institute. I know, too, that there are people who think that the only architecture worth bothering about is that of assembling prefabricated parts in different patterns. That is a form of architecture, and is something to be taken seriously, but it does not rule out all other aesthetics. (*Applause.*) I should like to think that there were some people alive in 1856 who would be the equivalent of you who are here to-day and who would have stood up for St. Paul's if the decision had been made to pull it down.

One of the best ways of getting to like a building is to look at the building itself, which is better than looking at pictures of it. The next best way is to attempt to understand the spirit of the times when it was built. It is in that spirit that I want to approach the Imperial Institute.

Let me begin by quoting Tennyson:

"... some Imperial Institute, rich in symbol, in ornament which may speak to the centuries after us,

Of this great ceremonial, and this year of the jubilee."

The great success of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 prompted the Prince of Wales to write to the Lord Mayor of London to suggest the building of a suitable memorial to the fiftieth year of his mother Queen Victoria's reign in the form of an Institute which would be, to quote his words, "at once a museum, an exhibition and a proper locality for the discussion of Colonial and Indian subjects." The idea was taken up with enthusiasm and a committee formed to erect a building which would be, again to quote the Prince's words, "an enduring representation of Your Majesty's Colonies and India as well as of the United Kingdom." Contributions from Governments and private citizens from all over the Commonwealth and from Great Britain came pouring in, from private subscriptions in the United Kingdom amounting to £236,000,

which was a great deal of money in those days, to £1 10s. from Ascension Island. There were many contributions from India. The soldiers in India each contributed an anna for a brick, and these bricks now run in delicate lines, as though they were of precious metal, through the Portland stone of the frontage, and emphasise the horizontal bar effect which is given by the decoration all round the building.

In 1887 Queen Victoria laid the foundation stone of the building. The architect selected to put this conception of Tennyson's into stone was Thomas Colcutt, and we have his partner, Mr. Stanley Hamp, with us to-night, as the Chairman has mentioned. I should like to mention, for those of you who like looking at what is not fashionable, that Colcutt also designed the Palace Theatre, and the bank which can now be seen when one goes up Ludgate Hill and which has been exposed by bombing, the Midland Bank, and also the front part of the Savoy Hotel. To me his most attractive building is the Town Hall at Wakefield, with its wonderful oblong tower, one of the few successful oblong towers that I have ever seen.

The Committee which selected his design consisted of the Earl of Carnarvon, Lord Herschell, Lord Leighton, R.A., Sir Frederick Abel and Alfred Waterhouse, then President of the R.I.B.A. You probably know Waterhouse's maxim. "In designing," he said, "make your plan first and your skyline next, and then fill in." That is a very sound piece of advice, as we shall realise when we think of some of the blocks of flats which have arisen on Roehampton Common. The unsuccessful competitors were Sir Arthur Blomfield—we may well say "Thank goodness!" the Royal College of Music, which is going to be carefully preserved, was his—Sir Thomas Jackson, Sir Aston Webb, Sir Thomas Deane and Rowand Anderson. It is always said that Colcutt was never knighted by the Queen because he offended the Prince of Wales by insisting on putting up the campanile, which the Prince of Wales did not want, but which we do want.

The contractors were Messrs. Mowlem, and the building cost £279,000. That is without the great hall, which was never completed. If it were to be built in the same materials to-day, it has been estimated by three different people whom I have consulted—two architects and a surveyor—that it would cost between £3,500,000 and £4,000,000. The landlords of the site were, and still are, the Commissioners of the 1851 Exhibition. I do not know who they are; they must be dear old men. They have been consulted about what it is proposed to do, but have not liked to say anything yet. I feel certain that what they will want is a very good price for the site if the building is to be destroyed, because they have to keep up the British School at Athens, which I think may need repair!

If you stand at the top of the tower of the Imperial Institute, you can see the whole lay-out of the scheme. The Albert Memorial

appears as though it were a spire on the dome of the Albert Hall, exactly in a straight line; turning round, you will find that the tower is exactly halfway between the twin towers of Waterhouse's Natural History Museum to the south. It is all part of a grandly concerted scheme. The great hall at the back of the building was never completed, and the exhibition buildings on the ground level at the back are also temporary.

One half of the building was let in 1899 to London University, and they used the great hall for examinations. Originally, Lord Ogmore tells me, they used part of the block for administration, and then, ironically enough, just before the war the Warburg Library, a library of art history, was installed there. London University has treated its part of the building simply abominably, leaving it filthily dirty, never bothering to repair light fittings, removing some of the most beautiful fixtures, leaving the paint dirty, and partitioning off the staircase hall in such a way as to take away half its light, the partitioning being done in the shoddiest way with asbestos, and there are the names of different directors of the Warburg Library on the doors in British Railways lettering. We can understand that there can be a certain resentment about wanting the building to remain. If, however, you want to see what the Institute could look like, you should go into the Imperial Institute side, which has been kept clean, and have a look at the lamps and at some of the rooms which are still in use, and you will see the grandeur of their proportions and that they have plenty of light, because the building is a narrow one with light on all sides, not one of those inconvenient wells with a sink in the middle.

During and since the last war many buildings of architectural merit have been listed for preservation. The Chairman has told us that he could not find out whether the Imperial Institute was so listed. I have inquired about that, and Mr. Goodhart-Rendal told me that the listers had no idea that the building was in danger, or, of course, they would have put it on the list. I imagine that the Houses of Parliament are not listed either!

To come to the latest history, in 1950 the University Grants Committee put forward the idea of expanding the University on this site, and in the following year the idea was accepted by Imperial College. In 1953 the Government adopted this scheme and Mr. Graham Dawbarn was asked to make plans on the assumption that the main block of the Imperial Institute would be destroyed. Who asked him to make those plans we do not know. Why they were kept dark from us until last year we also do not know. Why we have never seen the completed plans we still do not know. The public was told nothing. It was not until March of last year that the Royal Fine Art Commission, a body set up by Statute to advise the Government on just such questions as this, was consulted. The Commission strongly protested against the destruction of the Institute main block on aesthetic grounds, which

are those which it has to consider. It did not believe that it was beyond the wit of an imaginative and sympathetic architect to incorporate a narrow and well-lit building, occupying only one-tenth of the site to be developed, in any new scheme. Why, one wonders, was the scheme kept dark and then presented to us as a *fait accompli*? Even the London County Council was not consulted.

That is the history, until to-day, of the Imperial Institute. There are others here who can speak of its architectural merit, and yet others, like Lord Ogmore, who can tell you about its magnificent work. I prefer to end with a vision such as must have been in the minds of its architect and promoters. I prefer to think of the Kensington of horse-drawn days. I think of the campanile, of this mighty memorial of a great Queen and a great age, and I hear the ten bells, a present from Australia, which have to be rung on the accession day of every sovereign, ringing out. Mr. Murray Easton has written to *The Times* to say that it is absurd to retain a memorial to an Empire which no longer exists. That may be his opinion. He is an architect and I am a layman, but in my opinion architecture is the most enduring memorial of civilisation that there is. (*Applause.*) It lasts longer even than music, literature and painting. The Victorian Age may not be fashionable at the moment, but this is one of its greatest monuments in England, an adornment to the sky of London and something which we all love for its delicate outline. That is shown by the number of people here this evening, because for every one of you there must be hundreds who feel as we do.

It has always been our custom in England, as in all civilised countries, to leave the great buildings of one age alongside those of a later, just as the spire of St. Mary's and the pinnacles of the Bodleian at Oxford gather so beautifully round the later classic dome of the Radcliffe Camera, and just as the elaborate late Gothic of Kings Chapel is set off by the eighteenth century severity of Gibb's Fellows' Building at Cambridge. Surely London University will carry on this English tradition and, if it must develop on this site, leave a great memorial which was erected by public subscription as a foil for the newer prefabricated work of to-day. The Imperial Institute is irreplaceable. We must save it from those who are snared by the false argument that if we have an Imperial Institute we cannot have any scientists.

MR. A. S. G. BUTLER: It is a very good thing that Mr. Hamp is here this evening, because, although he was not the architect of the Imperial Institute, he was Thomas Colcutt's partner, and Mr. Hamp and his office to-day are the heirs of that glory.

Much has been said already, and of course beautifully, by John Betjeman, but I should like to add one point which I made in a letter to the former Chancellor of the Exchequer—a rather venomous letter, I may add—in which I said that this building

is one of the few big examples of definitely British imperial architecture, just as Lutyen's Viceroy's House at Delhi, that superb palace, is another. Both fearlessly express with some exuberance our delight and our pride in our Dominions, and now it is proposed to pull down that one which most pointedly commemorates this attitude to Empire. It is strange to find such a lack of perception in a Conservative Government. (*Applause.*)

We shall probably all agree that this is not a battle of styles such as raged in the last century. Probably the new building is a fine design in the modern idiom. We have not seen it, but we must be fair and give the man a chance! All modern buildings are not horrid; even I, an Edwardian relic, like Peter Jones's emporium much better than all the other buildings surrounding Sloane Square. This technological block, however, may look a bit odd when it has replaced what is the heart, and more or less the soul, of a big group of Victorian monuments. Perhaps it would be better to clear away everything on the site, stuffed animals and all!

Mr. Hamp cannot but feel deeply grieved and angry, just as I did when I saw my best building in London destroyed by the Germans. There is no difference at all. (*Applause.*) This is a creative art, and if one has spent months of labour and sweat and tears on a design which is a delight to oneself and to other people when it is carried out, and then a Government—any Government—smashes it up, more or less in one's lifetime, what is the good of going on trying to be a good architect, or, to use a rather vulgar but snappy modern phrase, "What the hell?"

SIR HUGH CASSON: I should first of all like to say, as a member of the Kensington Society, how very proud we are to see such an enormous crowd here this evening. It must be rather encouraging to those political colleagues of mine on the platform—I hope they will not take offence at the description—who must consider themselves very fortunate that they can command an audience as large as this on a political question. It is gratifying to an architect and to all those of us who are interested in architecture to see so many people here who are obviously interested in their surroundings.

It is a particular tribute to the Kensington Society that we are all gathered here in aid of a building which is in Westminster. I do not suppose that Westminster has a society of this kind. We have Lord Mottistone, the Chairman of the London Society, here, and I hope that he will set one on foot soon, because Westminster has a lot of buildings which it ought to worry about, including the Imperial Institute.

There are three reasons, I think, for the preservation of this building: historical, ethical and architectural. I am not qualified at all to speak on the first two, and only in a minor way on the third, but I have been rather horrified or saddened by the silence

which has followed the announcement of the impending destruction of the Imperial Institute on the part of authorities that one would expect to be the first to spring to its defence. I do not know who these authorities are. It may be that as the Empire disintegrates the authorities disintegrate as well. There is the Royal Empire Society. I do not know what it does, but it exists, and I have seen no protest from the Royal Empire Society and no protests from other organisations of that sort. There may be a reason for it, but it is a pity that they have remained silent.

Most of the protests have come from the architectural side, on which I should like to say a few words. My only real qualification to speak to you is that I have the melancholy distinction of being the first refugee from the Imperial Institute site. Until about four months ago I was lucky enough to have a small office on the south-west corner of the Imperial Institute site, between the Norman Shaw house and the Imperial Institute, and I could see the Institute building from my window. About six months ago they started lopping off the site at the north-west corner, and I was pushed out into the street and had to leave. I tell this story because if any of you think that this matter is not urgent you are making a great mistake. Building is in fact going on now on the north-west corner. It already threatens the famous Norman Shaw house on the south-west corner, which I believe the Government has agreed to retain, and there is another Norman Shaw house further up which many people think is of equal distinction, and I think we should urge that this also should be saved from demolition.

Mr. Betjeman said he did not know who the 1851 Commissioners were. I believe that they are all in the Cabinet, and as the Cabinet presumably takes the decision, it can say "We will now ask the Commission whether we can destroy the Institute," and then, as the Commissioners, they agree. The Cabinet then says "We now have the Commission's agreement and can go ahead." Whether that is true or not I do not know, but I suspect that it is.

I should also like to reinforce Mr. Betjeman's remarks about the way in which the Imperial Institute administration keeps its part of the building. The director wrote to the Royal College not long ago to say that he was seriously worried by the fact that one or two contemporary light fittings—contemporary, that is, with the Institute—were missing in the corridors; he found himself unable to replace them, and did not want to spoil the look of the surroundings by having one fitting which was out of character. We did our best to find a manufacturer who was able to provide what was wanted. That shows the right spirit, and should be applauded here. (*Applause.*)

I feel more strongly about the campanile than about the building. I should like to keep both, but if one of them has to go I would keep the campanile, because London has so few spires. No one has the money to build them nowadays; it is very difficult

to find people who will put up the money to build a spire which cannot be let as office space, and so we are gradually losing the spires and spikes which are the most exciting part of London's skyline.

It may be that this particular site is the best available for the expansion which is contemplated. We must give the Government credit for not necessarily being barbarians. Because someone is a Cabinet Minister it does not necessarily mean that he is half-witted, though it is difficult to believe it. The members of the Cabinet have probably given this matter a great deal of thought. If this site must be used, I would ask them to consider a suggestion which some colleagues of mine have put forward and which I strongly support, that we should close Imperial Institute Road to through traffic and make a great grass courtyard in front of the Imperial Institute, a sort of university quad, giving one great area running from Cromwell Road to the Albert Hall. The Albert Hall will probably be next on the list for demolition; it seems hardly worth while going home! Between Cromwell Road and the Albert Hall there is a very remarkable area which is cut right in half by a very wide road which is used for the parking of coaches, which could easily be made into a pedestrian way for the student to wander about on without any risk of being run over.

I would not put up much of a fight for the Victoria and Albert Museum, and I am not crazy about the Natural History Museum, though I might fight for it a little; but the Imperial Institute is, I feel, something worth fighting for, and the fact that so many of you are here and agree is extremely encouraging.

MR. STANLEY HAMP: I am going to ask you two questions, and I hope that many of you will be able to answer them. Before doing so, I should like to say how inspired I have been by what we have heard this evening and by what I have seen in the Press. I have a feeling, however, that we have been talking all the time about aesthetics, and if we do that to Parliament or to the Cabinet we shall be told "Be more realistic and more practical, or we shall not listen to you." That is a very important fact which we have to face. We have to be practical, and in some ways economics must come into the consideration of this subject.

The facts, as I see them, are these. So far, nobody has seen the scheme which is proposed. How on earth can the public or any body of people express a view unless they are shown what is going to be put on the site? There must be a public inquiry at which all the facts are exposed and the general public is given a fair chance to understand the situation. At the present time, how many of you have seen what is proposed? We may tell you what we think it is, but we have not seen the scheme. We must do so.

If we are going to fight this, we must fight it to the end, and the first question which I want to ask is this: have the Government

or any authority power to pull down a national building which has been paid for by the people in the Colonies, in India and in this country, without having shown to the public generally what they are going to do? That is a most important question. We must not be bullied into accepting something which we know nothing about.

The next question is this. We are told that the site is too small and that therefore it is necessary to pull down this national building, constructed at great cost, in order to use the area on which it stands. Is it possible to imagine anything more fantastic, when we know perfectly well that there is an area at the back of the site almost as large as is occupied by this building? It is occupied by the Royal College of Music, a building which we could pull down with the greatest pleasure, and there we should have the land which is wanted. If they want more land, they must go to the other side of Queen's Gate and the other side of Exhibition Road. There is no reason why they should not do that, instead of pulling down a building which is a heritage of this nation, put up as a tribute to a great occasion and in honour of a great Queen.

Are we going to submit to its destruction? I say No; we must fight and stop it. I remember Mr. Colclutt talking to me about this when he went in for the competition. He told me that the only two buildings on the whole of that big site which had to be retained were the Albert Hall and the Natural History Museum, and that he could put his building where he liked. He said "I realised that those two buildings form an axial line from north to south, and I decided to put my building on the centre of the axial line and have a tower which would dominate everything and form a fine composition." He also said that all round these buildings the land was to be left open for trees and lawns and fountains, making a pleasure garden and something which would be a joy to the people of Kensington. That is what should have been done. Mr. Colclutt added, "Remember, all the buildings in Queen's Gate and in Exhibition Road will come down before very long; it is inevitable. That will provide a site for magnificent buildings which will face this great area of grass and trees." It is difficult to imagine anything more wonderful than that.

I say that the authorities have not studied their programme from the right angle. There has been no sense of town planning or of building up something which would be a great heritage for this nation, and for future generations in oversea countries.

I have heard that the owners of the site are being offered by the Government £1 million to sell their property for it to be pulled down to make way for this scientific building. That is a terrible bait, and it is an unhappy state of affairs. The fact remains, however, that there is no need to pull this building down if they will take the trouble to ascertain how it can be used for university purposes. I was in it recently. There are great rooms on the

principal floor and the two upper floors which could be used for libraries, or even for laboratories. There are laboratories there now, but with inadequate fittings; if properly designed and equipped, they could be very fine. That, however, is a matter for the Ministry of Education.

I should like to conclude by saying how glad I am to see such a large audience here. I am sure that the influence you can bring to bear will be tremendous. God help us in our fight!

MR. HITCHCOCK: As an outsider, I should like to begin by saying how much I agree with the planning considerations which Mr. Hamp has brought out. It is obvious that the area between the Albert Hall and the Natural History Museum has been excessively over-built in the years since the Imperial Institute itself was built. It is fantastic to plan to put anything more on that area, particularly as across Exhibition Road there is property round Princes Gardens which is almost derelict, and which would provide, with the gardens themselves, a splendid and far finer site than that proposed by the closing off of the road in front of the Exhibition buildings. I also agree with the ethical considerations which have been mentioned.

I believe, however, that the reason I am here is to say a few words to you about the place of the Imperial Institute as a building in the history of nineteenth century architecture not alone in Great Britain but in the world. The architecture of this country in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is not particularly popular here to-day, yet those were decades when English architecture was peculiarly influential on the world at large. That was particularly true, it must be admitted, of the private architecture rather than the monumental architecture of that period. The private architecture was recognised throughout the world as offering leadership and guidance which were followed by the rest of the world. Sir Hugh has mentioned the fine houses by Norman Shaw in the same area and the hope that they may be preserved. A curious fact about this period in Britain, however, is that it did not produce much monumental public architecture. Mr. Betjeman has reminded me of something which I had forgotten, the building in Wakefield by Collcutt. In London itself I can think of only one other public civil building—I will leave to Mr. Betjeman the question of churches—produced in the same period, and that is by Norman Shaw, the New Scotland Yard.

If I think of European architecture as a whole in the eighties, I cannot think of any public building of the quality of the Imperial Institute as representative of that time. I can—but here I may be prejudiced, being an American—think of two public buildings in America of that decade, the Allegheny County Court House in Pittsburgh by H. H. Richardson, our greatest architect of the nineteenth century, and the Boston Public Library, by his pupils McKim, Mead and White. Those two buildings, I think, are in the same high category as the Imperial Institute.

Reference has been made to the destruction caused by bombing. Had the Imperial Institute been damaged by a bomb, I think that everyone would have been disturbed, but from my experience I believe that with increased building activity here you are going to have more trouble in this way from public authorities, and above all, I regret to say, university authorities can be much worse than bombing when it comes to the destruction of buildings. Institutions which by their very nature should respect the continuity of culture by retaining and maintaining significant monuments are in our countries the first to seek to tear everything down. Speaking of the maintenance of buildings, what Mr. Betjeman said was very interesting. The tactic sometimes is first of all to let a building decay and then say that it must be pulled down.

It is not a question of whether this secret project of Dawbarn's is good, bad or indifferent. There are two entirely separate arguments; one is that this is no place to put a big new building anyhow, and the second is that there is plenty of room behind the Imperial Institute if you are so foolish as to want to carry out further building on this site, which will allow the retention and use of so soundly built and so exceptional a building. A building of this character can always be used for other purposes, and in the total complex of the institutions which occupy this great quadrangle there must be purposes to which this building can be adapted. That has been shown by using part of it for the Warburg Institute. I fully agree that this will not by itself solve the problem of extending the Imperial College of Science and Technology, but in the long run this must be such a vast project that it is probably extremely stupid even to consider a site for it so close to the heart of the city. Having been a professor myself, and having taught for three years at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which is an exactly comparable institution and one which I understand it is intended to emulate, I recall that the M.I.T., which began in the City of Boston, had to move out across the river. That seems to me the really courageous and sensible thing to do in this case. (*Applause.*)

We must find out what the building, if preserved, can be used for, and we must offer alternative solutions to the problem of retaining it on the site, but I should like to say again that to lose the Imperial Institute and to lose that fine tower from the London skyline would be to lose one of the really remarkable buildings produced in the world in the decade of the eighteen-eighties.

LORD MOTTISTONE: I have got what I think is called a Press scoop with me, and I should like to read it to you. Lord Kinnaird and I were sitting in the London County Council building at 5 o'clock this afternoon while the Town Planning Committee was deliberating on the question of the Imperial Institute. When they came to the end of their deliberations at 5.15, we were in the ante-room, and the Chairman handed me what was intended as a general

announcement to the Press, so that I hope that the Press will not mind if, so to speak, I get there first. You will see it in the papers to-morrow, and it offers us a ray of hope. It reads as follows:—

“Imperial College. Before reaching any final conclusions on the development of the Imperial College, the Town Planning Committee resolved that there should be further discussions regarding the manifold implications of the scheme between the Architect of the Council and the developers. It was indicated that it might well be advisable to initiate discussions at a higher level.”

That means that not everyone is going to take this lying down, and I think that that is splendid.

I have only one or two points to add to the excellent remarks which have been made already. No one has yet referred to the sheer and incredible waste of throwing away this magnificent building. (*Applause.*) What on earth can the Government be thinking of at this time of all times, in the middle of the “squeeze,” to throw away at least £4,000,000 on the scrap-heap? It is not as if the building was old. We all tend to speak of it as if it were older than it really is, but it is only seven years older than I am. I know that I am getting on, but I am not a building, and a building of sixty-three is in the prime of life. It is grotesque to pull it down at this stage.

The other point which I want to make has already been touched on. There is a suggestion that because a new building in the present mode will be put up all round it, it will be out of place and should be destroyed. It may seem out of place to some people, but that is no reason for destroying it. It is quite probable that its jewel-like quality may be enhanced by the stark blocks surrounding it. In any case the fact that it will not go with its surroundings is no reason for destroying a building. Let me give you an exact parallel. Let us suppose that some of us decided to club together and buy what we regarded as a very beautiful picture, say a picture by a Pre-Raphaelite, and let us suppose that we decided to give it on permanent loan to the National Gallery, but we had not a frame for it, and so we asked them to arrange for a frame. What would we think if a short time after that we received from them this message: “We have found a suitable frame for your picture, but when we put the picture in it we found that it did not fit. We have therefore destroyed your picture, and I am sure you will be delighted to know that we have put in its place a very good modern painting.” That is, as I say, an exact parallel.

I have a personal reason for being interested in the Imperial Institute of which I was unaware until a short time ago. My father fired the first shot on the miniature range which was built under the Imperial Institute, and it was a bull's eye. I cannot necessarily emulate that, but I and all of us who are trying to save this building will aim as carefully as we can!

LORD OGMORE: I speak to-night as a citizen of Westminster, and I wish to congratulate most heartily the Kensington Society on taking the initiative to preserve one of our buildings, but also, of course, one of the nation's buildings. I agree with all that has been said by the very distinguished artists and architects who have spoken this evening, and I should like to put one other point which they have only mentioned in passing but which is my own chief interest in this problem.

It seems odd to me that the purpose of this building should have been forgotten. When the soldiers in India, as we have heard, each contributed an anna for a brick out of the very meagre pay which they received in those days, they did so not merely to erect a building but to erect a building for a specific purpose. That purpose was described by the then Prince of Wales in the words which have been read out by the Chairman this evening, namely, to disseminate knowledge of the Empire—as it was then, now the Commonwealth—amongst us all here and amongst the various people from the Empire and Commonwealth who come to this country.

That work is of great importance; people talk about the dissolution of the Empire but forget that there is still a great Commonwealth, and that the Colonial Empire still consists of forty-one separate countries, all of which are represented in the Imperial Institute Museum, while all the Commonwealth countries, the independent members, have displays there as well. Scores of thousands of children as well as adults visit the Imperial Institute every year and see in a very graphic way something about the work and lives of their fellow-citizens overseas.

Only the other day I was passing the Institute and saw the Queen Mother come out accompanied by the Duke of Cornwall and Princess Anne. They had been to see pictures of the visit of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh to Nigeria. What the Royal children saw, scores of thousands of other children have seen also. In the cinema, films of the Commonwealth are shown and provide an opportunity for people here to learn something about their fellow-citizens in other countries.

So far as I can see that work may be permanently lost, and at best it will temporarily be lost. I asked a question recently in the House of Lords on this subject, and the Minister said that there would be temporary disturbances of this very important work. How “temporary” it will be can be judged from the fact that no site for the new Imperial Institute has yet been chosen, that no money has been allocated for the purchase of a site, that no building has been designed to go on the site and that no finance has been arranged for the building of this new structure. You can see that we are likely to be in Never-never Land. Do any of us really believe that, in these days of stringency, any Government in this country is going to spend £5,000,000 on buying a large site and

erecting a big museum? Personally, I cannot believe it, and therefore I am very much afraid, as are many other people who are particularly interested in the work of the Imperial Institute and what it is doing for the Commonwealth, that there will be a permanent dislocation of the great work which is being done there.

It is important that this work should be done. People from overseas will tell you that they are amazed and disgusted at the lack of knowledge of the ordinary people of this country of their fellow-citizens overseas. It is a lasting disgrace that while the people of the Colonies do so much for us in peace and in war, and are so loyal that they desire to remain in the Commonwealth even when they become independent, the people of this country take so little notice of them and have so little knowledge of them. This is one of the few places in the whole of the United Kingdom where it is possible to obtain knowledge of what is being done in the other countries of the Commonwealth. I can assure you, as a member of one of the Houses of Parliament, that in both Houses there are many members who feel this very strongly and who will fight in the last ditch to preserve the work of this great Institute.

The meeting was then thrown open to general discussion.

A lady who said that she had worked in the Imperial Institute for forty years suggested that there was some misconception about the maintenance of the building by the university. The university, she said, held its portion of the building on a peppercorn rent, and the onus of maintaining it was on the Ministry of Works. It was so badly looked after that the one open space which remained out of all those envisaged by the founders of the Institute was a once lovely courtyard at present used as a coal dump. In one of the beautiful rooms used for examinations an enormous Persian carpet had been left on the floor and was now ruined by ink-stains. The building had been intended for the enjoyment and use of the public and should never have been handed over to the university.

A member of the audience, who said that he had returned to this country after many years abroad, mentioned that while back-benchers on both sides of the House had protested against the proposed destruction of the Imperial Institute, an ominous silence had been maintained by both front benches. Silence by the Government front bench was understandable, in view of the fact that the Government were committed to the scheme, while on the part of the Opposition it must be due to the fact that it was their party which had tried to destroy the Empire, and who therefore felt that the building belonged to the past and should be allowed to disappear.

MR. E. HOLSINGER, an economist from Ceylon, said that the idea of pulling down the Imperial Institute in order to erect a science building was wholly contrary to the policy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in fighting inflation. Mr. Macmillan had appealed

to industrialists not to put up new buildings, and that was the Government's policy for the suppression of inflation, and should be implemented by the Government itself. If the Imperial Institute were to be treated in this way the same policy would be followed elsewhere in the country where science institutes were needed, and it would mean doing every job twice over. There was nothing to prevent proposals being made to pull down the British Museum to make room for the expansion of London University. It was true that there was a desperate need for science buildings, but they should be erected on vacant land. Science consisted of many departments which had no necessary connection with each other, so that the Imperial College of Science need not be housed in one giant building, but could if necessary be accommodated in twenty-five separate buildings in different parts of London.

The pulling down of the building would mean the end of the Imperial Institute, because if any suggestion were made for the erection of a new building for the Institute it would at once be pointed out that that was an inflationary action. There was no country in Europe with a greater shortage of public buildings than Great Britain. Failure to deal with inflation would lead to the collapse of the whole plan to provide more science institutes, because it would ruin the country. We therefore proposed the following resolution:—

“That this meeting expresses the view that the destruction of the building of the Imperial Institute or of any other serviceable building in use by a public institution is contrary to the declared policy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer for combating inflation, because it must inevitably give rise to additional new buildings for the re-housing of the displaced public institution; and that the extensions to the Imperial College of Science should be built upon vacant land.”

The resolution was seconded, and it was agreed, with Mr. Holsinger's consent, that it should be put to the vote after the official resolution on the subject had been voted upon.

A member of the audience referred to the regret expressed by Sir Hugh Casson that no Empire organisation had objected to the proposal. The League of Empire Loyalists, which the speaker represented, had in fact done so and had written to the editor of a great national newspaper on the subject, but the editor had declined to print the letter.

Another member of the audience asked whether the Imperial Institute building had been scheduled under the Town and Country Planning Act as a building of historic or architectural interest which should be preserved and, if it had been so scheduled, inquired what had been the reaction of the Minister to the proposal.

MR. GARTON, replying to the question at the invitation of the Chairman, said that the building had been included in the survey

of the City of Westminster which had been made for the purposes of Section 30 of the Act, but that survey, owing to departmental difficulties, had not yet been implemented. It had been the intention of the Ministry to record the Imperial Institute as a building of special architectural interest. (*Applause.*)

Another speaker said that those who loved London as he did could not stand idly by and see the campanile pulled down. If they did, their children and grand-children would wonder why they had allowed it to happen. Too many people in this country favoured destruction rather than construction.

MR. DENYS SUTTON suggested that the Committee and the Kensington Society should get into touch with bodies such as the Royal Empire Society on the imperial aspect of the matter, and with architectural bodies in the Dominions and Colonies. The peoples of those Dominions and Colonies having subscribed for the erection of the building in the past, there might be many of their descendants, he said, who would take the matter up with their respective Parliaments and Governments to see that representations were made in London. The previous speaker had asked what their children would think of the destruction of the Imperial Institute. He had had a letter from his daughter, aged fifteen, that morning, writing from her school to say: "I see in the paper that there is to be a meeting. I hope you will go along and stop them pulling down the Institute." He suggested that a Committee of those interested, in liaison with the Kensington Society, should take the matter up. If no solution was reached in the House of Lords, what was to be done? There would have to be a continuation of the protests. Sustained protests often gained their object, and continuous pressure and logical argument would defeat the misplaced enthusiasm of those who wished to destroy the Institute.

MRS. CHRISTIANSEN said that the Society had been in touch with the Royal Empire Society and had invited their representatives to attend the present meeting, but they had said that they did not wish to intervene.

THE CHAIRMAN suggested that the Kensington Society should take up Mr. Sutton's suggestion and form a Committee, co-opting one or two people on to the Committee and working through it.

A speaker who said that he had spent much of his life in the Dominions and Colonies in the service of the Crown observed that to him the Imperial Institute was first and foremost a symbol of loyalty. He was sure that there were hundreds of thousands of Her Majesty's subjects who were resident in this country or who visited it who would bitterly regret the destruction of the building on those grounds. That point of view should be forcibly expressed, whether or not the matter was taken up by the Royal Empire Society, because the honour of this country was at stake. (*Applause.*)

THE CHAIRMAN, in view of the lateness of the hour, closed the discussion by calling upon Mr. Austen Hall to move a resolution.

MR. H. AUSTEN HALL accordingly moved, and MRS. CHRISTIANSEN seconded, the following resolution:—

"That this meeting protests in the strongest possible terms at the proposal to demolish the Imperial Institute, on the grounds of its artistic and historic importance, and in view of the opinions expressed at this meeting and by many notable authorities, and urges the Government to retain the building under all and every circumstance."

THE CHAIRMAN put the resolution to the vote, and declared it carried with only a very small minority against.

He then put the resolution proposed by Mr. Holsinger, which was also carried.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which was carried by acclamation.



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