

Waite Research Institute Of National Importance NEW BUILDINGS FOR PLANT DISEASE STUDY OPENED AT URRBRAE

Research Seeks To Minimise Heavy Toll By Insect And Fungus Pests

WORK NOT SPECTACULAR, BUT VALUABLE

"THE money that has been expended here will be returned a thousand-fold," said Mr. R. B. McComas, a director of the Commonwealth Bank, when opening the new plant culture houses and insectary at the Waite Research Institute yesterday.

"I AM sure we will have great developments, but we must not expect anything suddenly," he told a big gathering of guests. "As far as the world is concerned, the institute may not do anything spectacular, but it will be useful."

MR. PETER WAITE'S VISION

Mr. McComas said that the vision that the late Mr. Peter Waite had of the development of this State was being given material form by that branch of the Adelaide University. Its work was not only of Australasian, but of national importance.



Mr. R. B. McComas

Mr. Waite had done good work in enlisting the sympathy of Mr. Walter Young, one of Australia's ablest men. When the proposal to provide funds for the plant culture houses and insectary came before the Bank Board, Mr. McComas said, he realised the enormous toll being levied on the world by insect pests, and he was pleased that his colleagues were willing to assist in the construction of the insectary, particularly Professor Chapman, who presided, traced the growth of the University, which was

opened in 1877 with four professors, one of whom taught the whole of the natural sciences.

Today the University was equipped to teach all fundamental branches of pure science, he said.

Mr. Peter Waite's magnificent gift of an agricultural research station had placed the University in a position which was the envy of every university in Australia.

NO PLANT DISEASE SURVEYS

The Director of the Institute (Professor Richardson) said the buildings would provide facilities for two distinct, yet complimentary, phases of research—those concerned with the investigation of the life history of the more important insect and fungus pests which exacted heavy toll of crops, orchards, and gardens; and those which aimed at a better understanding of the principles underlying crop production and soil treatment.

"No estimates are available about the total losses caused by insect and fungus pests," the Professor said, "because no plant disease surveys have been made."

Dr. Richardson added that Mr. McComas had done pioneer research work in several fields, particularly in the utilisation of Australian deposits of phosphate rock.

At the instance of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Cowan), supported by Mr. Anthony, M.P., a vote of thanks was accorded Mr. McComas.

Professor Richardson said the Commonwealth Bank had played an increasingly important part in the economic life of the nation, and it was destined to play an important part in the encouragement and development of agriculture, another aspect of national life. They were very pleased that Mr. McComas had been chosen to represent the bank at that gathering, because he had done pioneering work in several fields of research, particularly in the direction of the utilisation of Australian deposits of phosphate rock.

Investigation of Plant Diseases

The buildings would provide facilities for two distinct, yet complementary, phases of research. The first group of researches were those which aimed at investigating the life history of the more important insect and fungus pests which exacted such heavy annual toll of the crops, orchards, and gardens of South Australia. The second group aimed at a better understanding of the principles underlying the production of crops and treatment of the soil—the study of the principles of plant nutrition and plant physiology, plant breeding, and soil technology. The investigation of plant diseases and their control was of great importance to Australia, because their prosperity was so dependent upon production from the soil. No accurate estimates were available as to the total losses caused by insect and fungus pests, because in the past no plant disease surveys had been made. In other countries, notably in the United States, where fairly accurate estimates of damage due to plant disease had been made, it was found that those pests were responsible for a loss of 10 per cent. to 15 per cent. of the total agricultural product of the country.

Mr. McComas said his association with South Australia began in 1881, when he was interested mostly in wool sales. He had met Mr. Peter Waite many years ago, and the vision he had shown in the future of the State had been fully developed in the great branch of the University, that of agricultural research, the work of which was Australian-wide, if not world-wide. Another good work had been done in enlisting the sympathy of Mr. Walter Young, with whom he had been associated for 13 years in connection with the wool clip. He had seen a great deal of Mr. Young's work and had formed a high opinion of him. He realised the heavy toll made on agriculture by pests, and therefore he was pleased to assist in the erection of the insectary. He felt that



Mr. McComas

ADV. 10. 12. 29 PLANT CULTURE ADDITIONS TO WAITE INSTITUTE

There was a representative gathering at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute, Glen Osmond, yesterday afternoon, when Mr. R. B. McComas (a director of the Commonwealth Bank) officially opened the plant culture houses and insectary. Professor R. W. Chapman (Acting-Vice-Chancellor of the University) occupied the chair, and on the platform with him were Sir John Melrose, Mr. R. B. McComas, the Hon. M. McIntosh (Minister of Education), the Hon. J. Cowan (Minister of Agriculture), Messrs. W. J. Young (chairman of the board of management of the Institute), E. Anthony, M.P., and Professor A. E. V. Richardson (director of the Institute).

The chairman, in outlining the history of the University since its foundation, said it had established itself in the confidence of the community to such an extent that it had been generously supported by the Government and by private citizens. The magnificent gift by Mr. Peter Waite of that beautiful estate for the purpose of an agricultural research station had placed the University of Adelaide in a position which was the envy of the other Universities of Australia. That day they were asking Mr. McComas to open the splendid

new glass houses that had been built from funds contributed jointly by the Commonwealth Bank and the University. The council of the University was extremely gratified at the appreciation shown of the work being done by the Waite Institute when the directors of the bank felt justified in deciding that a special fund controlled by them should be used to assist in the building of the insectary.

the money expended would be returned a thousand-fold, and trusted it would fulfil all expectation. He had pleasure in officially declaring the buildings open.

The Minister for Agriculture moved a vote of thanks to Mr. McComas, which was seconded by Mr. E. Anthony and carried.

An inspection was then made of the buildings by the guests.

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TAXING THE MEANS OF CULTURE

The proposal to place what would practically be a prohibitive duty on books, which is outlined in an interview with Mr. Beck in another column, if seriously made by the Federal authorities would mark a distinctly retrograde step. The time has not arrived, probably it never will arrive when the people of the Commonwealth can afford to entertain a spirit of aloofness in matters of education. They must keep in line with the great world movements of thought, just as they must be abreast of the times in action. "A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit," and the more widely such books are circulated the better will it be for the nation. A wiser policy would be to encourage a catholic taste in reading. The mind is enriched and the outlook enlarged by contact with the thoughts of the wise. To the printing press the world owes a debt that is beyond computation. It has supplied a vehicle which places within the reach of the humblest the wisdom of the ages. The latest inventions in mechanics, the accomplishments of Art, the theories of philosophy, the discoveries of science, and the treasures revealed by research are broadcast to the world through this medium. "Reading maketh a full man," said Francis Bacon, and since his day books have been multiplied to an extent which he could never have dreamed of. More than ever before is it desirable, when the interests of life are so many, and when knowledge extends over such vast and varied fields, that the best publications on all subjects should be within the reach of everybody. Any attempt to class books with ordinary merchandise can result only from an entirely mistaken view of the position. One object of Customs imposts, it is true, is the protection of local industry, but no duty that could be levied would have the effect of causing the great mass of literature imported to be printed in the Commonwealth. It has been alleged that employment could be found for 10,000 persons in the various branches of the printing trade if the books and magazines imported were produced in Australia. Possibly that may be true, but the reply is that they would not and could not be produced here.

ADV. 11. 12. 29

AUSTRALIAN CULTURE IS IT TO BE TAXED?

By H. RUTHERFORD PURNELL

The proposal to place a duty on books is one for which there is more cause for alarm than for anything that has happened since the war. If carried into effect it will cut at the root of the intellectual life of the whole community and will to a large extent negative the efficient but costly education system of the country. At this stage of the country's development, when a free and liberal education is, we fondly hope, creating a desire for reading, the increase in the cost of books in the post-war period is already tending to counteract the benefits of education, especially in its highest form, the self-culture that comes from the love of books. The threat to tax books which will so enormously increase their cost as to make them actually prohibitive is a proposal that suggests rather the desirability of a tax on stupidity.

In the whole history of Australia it can be said that there was never a time when intelligence and knowledge were so much needed, whether it be in politics or industry, or in the realm of pure literature. This can only be obtained through books, which should be abundantly accessible to our young people in their developing days as well as to the older ones to add knowledge to their experience of life. The statement by a deputation of printers that five million pounds' worth of books which are imported into Australia might be printed here, and give employment to 10,000 Australians, is plausible on the face of it, but will not bear examination in the light of common sense.

It cannot be denied that books are being printed in Australia that are a credit to the country, and can be shown with pride in other countries with a much longer tradition; but the printers that are at present capable of doing such work are few in number. Their work is highly skilled and involves not only the paper, printing, and illustration process industries, but also that of binding. Where is the army of 10,000 skilled printers and bookbinders to be found that can cope with the £5,000,000 worth of books? The very fact that the population of the country is so comparatively small will prevent the production of the books that are most needed, including the necessarily costly scientific and technical books required for the development of Australian industries. Books are made cheaper by being produced in large numbers. To set up and print such books here in the few copies required to satisfy the local demand would make the cost quite prohibitive. A duty on the importation of books is a handicap to trade, even to the trade that seeks the protection afforded by the duty.

The immediate effect of the duty would be merely to increase the cost of books. The only country that indulges in this expensive form of taxation is the United States, where the huge population creates a demand sufficient for the production of many of the books that are required. But it does so at great cost, as can be seen by a comparison between English and American book prices.

It is unthinkable that a Labor Government will entertain a tax that will react so seriously on its chief supporters. To the working man, whose intellect has been roused by the liberal system of education, books that should be easily accessible are a luxury that he can ill afford. The proposed tax would place them so far beyond his reach as to affect his whole intellectual life. The rich man will still be able to afford them; but the worker, struggling to maintain himself and family, must go without. How much better for him to have the unhampered use of the products of the master minds of all nations. There is abundant work for the Australian printer to develop the literature of our own country, without attempting the impossible task of printing the books of all other countries. The late Government's proposals as to a tax on amusements would not have harmed the working man a tithe as much as the present proposal. The one would tax his pleasure of the moment. A duty on books would be a blow to his mental equipment for life.

At the Librarians' Conference held last year in Melbourne, the librarian of the Public Library of New South Wales made the statement that not one in four adult Australians ever reads a book. In a recent estimate of American culture it was stated that 50 per cent. of the community are regular readers of books. The difference is largely due to the fostering of reading by the liberal system of free libraries, whereby the dearth of books is counteracted by their free accessibility in the libraries. In Australia the library movement is extremely backward. Practically speaking, books must be paid for; and practically they are beyond the purses of large numbers who most need them. The proposed duty may, though I doubt it, enrich a few master printers. It will, without doubt, intellectually impoverish the whole nation.