

The Advertiser

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ANTARCTICA

While allowing that the bad times have adversely affected the price of whale oil, as of other commodities, Sir Douglas Mawson still tantalises us with the prospect of gains to be made from the exploitation of the million square miles in Antarctica, which, by an Act passed this year, the Commonwealth has added to its possessions. Sir Douglas cultivates the cheery optimism which counts for so much in the equipment of a savant; and there is no doubt that he has infected many with his confidence in the commercial possibilities of the Antarctic, a part of the earth's surface as to which Commander Byrd, the American aviator—himself an explorer of some note—credits him with being "the greatest living expert." But, wide and deep though his knowledge of the areas discovered by the last expedition may be, it is rather in the language of hope than in that of certainty that he is constrained to speak of the prospects of mineralogical and other research. The doubt is whether there is such urgency in prosecuting further investigation as he suggests, for we are suffering from no dearth of coal in Australia, and the possibility that our segment of Antarctica includes another Klondyke, is clearly remote. Moreover, this territory, having been brought definitely under the Australian flag, is in no danger of passing under any other.

It will be agreed, however, that the regulation of the whaling industry is a matter of some importance; indeed, the need of such regulation was cited by Mr. Latham as the primary justification for the Antarctic Territory Acceptance Act. The slump in whale oil, though intensified by the depression, was in any case rendered inevitable by the devastating slaughter of Antarctic whales, no fewer than 265,000 of which were harpooned between 1919 and 1930-1. As to the strong competition evident in the whaling industry, the bad times have eased the situation temporarily; and further relief may be afforded when the convention is ratified by the Governments concerned, under which the killing of a certain species of whale, calves and female whales accompanied by their young, is prohibited, and a system of licensing enforced. In a word, it is proposed to restrain the zeal of the whalers, as it has been sought to do that of wheat producers, but with infinitely greater justification, for the unchecked slaughter of whales, like that of the rare birds of Australia, has only to be continued long enough to end in their complete extermination. Whale oil is used in the manufacture of margarine, glycerine, and high-grade soaps, and will therefore always be in demand; and, this being a lucrative industry, Australia should not allow herself by lethargy to be deprived of her share in it.

Adv. 4-8-33

Midday Organ Music At Conservatorium

Cesar Franck's "Piece Heroique," the andante from Debussy's string quartet, and Max Reger's A minor prelude and fugue, comprised the programme of Mr. John Horner at the lunch-hour organ recital at the Elder Conservatorium yesterday. All were played with sterling technique. To the piano accompaniment of Miss Gwen Paul, Mr. Leslie Dutton sang in clear, melodious fashion, "O God, Have Mercy," from Mendelssohn's "St. Paul."

At his recital on August 10 Mr. Horner will play the Bach allabreve in D, the Franck prelude, fugue, and variation, and the Mendelssohn C minor fugue. Dr. Ray Newling will sing.

Adv. 2-8-33

WEAKNESSES OF CONSTITUTION

Law Professor's View LESSONS OF 30 YEARS

Although, in the light of 30 years' experience, certain weaknesses had appeared in the Commonwealth Constitution, and an alteration to preserve the sovereignty of the States was desirable, there appeared to be no reason why most of the outstanding issues should not be satisfactorily settled by an amendment, said Professor A. L. Campbell (Bonython Professor of Law at the Adelaide University), at the last of this season's public University lectures, which was held at the Prince of Wales lecture room last night. His subject was "The History of the Commonwealth Constitution: Its Development and Interpretation."

Professor Campbell said that he did not subscribe to the somewhat common and generally unimproved attack made upon the draftsmen of the Constitution.

"People who complain that the advantages have been destroyed by the technicalities of the statutes, or of the lawyers, lose sight of the fact that the statutes are rigid, and therefore have to be construed rather strictly," he said. "In that respect, the Constitution is unlike any ordinary Act of Parliament, which is not so far-reaching in effect, which is therefore not scrutinised so closely, and which may immediately be amended and adjusted to meet new conditions or undesirable interpretations."

High Court's Part

Dealing with the interpretation of the Constitution Act by the High Court, Professor Campbell said that the doctrine, variously referred to as the Doctrine of Implied Prohibition, or Immunity of State Instrumentalities, which was to the effect that neither the Commonwealth nor the States could interfere with the officers or organs of government of the other, was applied consistently until 1920, when, in a classical action, known as the Engineers' Case, the Court held that it had no authority to depart from the express terms of the statute by applying the ordinary rules of construction.

"The result of this case," said Professor Campbell, "is that whatever may have been the intention of the colonies at the time they consented to enter the Federation to retain control of their own instrumentalities, they are no longer able to do so. The Commonwealth is free to legislate in any way consistent with its enumerated powers, so as to affect State instrumentalities, and thereby the product of the State executives. This has been a source of loud complaint by the State executives, which have held that it was impossible for them properly to frame their Budgets when they did not know how their operations might be affected by Commonwealth awards in the ensuing year."

Litigation And Confusion

Professor Campbell said that the Commonwealth's arbitration power, as it affected State executives, had been the subject of much litigation on the part of private employers and trade unions. Decisions under this head also had been responsible for much confusion, and even the late Mr. Justice Higgins had complained of the "Serbian bog of technicalities surrounding the Commonwealth Arbitration Court." That power had been intended probably to cover industries which necessarily were interstate in character, but, by a process of interpretation, it had been extended to cover disputes in which persons engaged in similar industries in different States, although having no immediate connection with one another, joined together for a concerted claim on the employers. It was possible today that persons might be parties to a dispute, although they were thoroughly satisfied with their conditions.

In the few cases in which a State might have encroached upon Commonwealth powers, the decision, generally, had gone against the State. The lecturer instanced the attempt of the South Australian Government to impose a petrol tax, and of New South Wales to enforce a tax on newspapers, in both of which disputes the tax was held to be Excess, and therefore void.

Professor Campbell said that while it was apparent that weaknesses in the Constitution needed attention, whether that should be given by a convention or other means needed a good deal of consideration.

Adv. 5-8-33

HASTENING CROP MATURITY

Professor Richardson Explains Process

RUSSIAN RESEARCH

Professor A. E. V. Richardson, Director of the Waite Research Institute, commenting on the cable published in "The Advertiser" yesterday regarding a new method of intensive culture for crops which, it was claimed, would enable them to grow in 10 days to the same extent as they would normally grow in three months, said that a process had recently been elaborated by Russian scientific research workers for shortening the period of growth of agricultural plants. It consisted of a special method of pre-treatment of seed, known as vernalisation. The treatment varied with the kind of crop, that is whether a long day or a short day plant, but in all cases sufficient water was added to the seed to start the growth of the embryo or germ, and the seed was kept in the dark for periods of from eight to 15 days at controlled temperatures, appropriate for the type of crop. The method was first developed by Dr. Lyssenko, a Soviet scientist.

"The difficulty of cultivating wheat in the semi-arid regions of Russia," said Professor Richardson, "is that the crop must be sown in the spring because the soil is frozen in winter, and this spring sown wheat is likely to be seriously damaged by the high summer temperatures when the plants are just coming into ear. The main requirements of this region, therefore, is an early maturing variety. A variety may be superior in all other respects, yet suffer great damage on account of its lateness of maturity. If the growth period of the crop can be materially shortened the effect of this climatic obstacle might be overcome."

Accelerating Growth

"Soviet scientists have given much attention to the problem of accelerating the growth rate of the plant. It has long been known that under artificial conditions (in a green house) it is possible to accelerate or retard the growth of plants by varying the conditions of light, temperature and humidity. Under ordinary field conditions, however, where none of these factors can be controlled, the vegetative period of a plant depends almost entirely on the natural conditions existing in the region. In selecting varieties of crops for given climates, therefore, we must choose those varieties whose vegetative period is such that seed formation is possible."

"The fundamental hypothesis guiding the Russian workers is that in the individual development of a plant there is a strict sequence of stages of development. Without passing through a preceding stage of development the plant cannot proceed to subsequent stages, and the process governing the formation of seed in cereals may occur not only in green plants but also in a seed with an embryo which has just commenced development. They emphasise the fact that the transition of a plant from the vegetative stage to the earing stage is not only independent of the size and age of the plant, but is not correlated in time with growth. For some periods of development darkness is required, and if a plant at the stage of newly germinated seed is placed in darkness it may be nourished by the food supply in the endosperm and may, before it is sown in the field, pass through the stages which require darkness."

Vernalisation Hastens Maturity

"Investigations in Russia have shown that the process of vernalisation accelerates the maturity of wheat, oats, sorghum, millet and maize, and in many cases has materially increased the yield of the crop. The work is only at the preliminary stage, and much more investigation is needed before it is possible to assess its value for agricultural practice."

"The investigations at the National Institute at Reading, recorded in "The Advertiser" yesterday, appear to be a test of the value of vernalisation for maize and oats."

"Sowings of Ford and Sepoy wheat treated in accordance with the methods advocated by Lyssenko, have been made at the Waite Institute, but it is too early to state whether the method of pre-treatment is likely to be of value to Australia."