

# OUR FAUNA AND FLORA.

## An Interesting Review.

Nature, the weekly British illustrated journal of science, on February 9 published the following notes upon the local Science Guild handbooks, "The Mammals of South Australia, Part I," by Dr. F. Wood Jones, and "The Fishes of South Australia," by Edgar R. Waite:—

It is not necessary to insist on the utmost and extreme importance to the biologist of the fauna and flora of the Australian continent. It is perhaps well to reiterate the oft-repeated warning that this fauna and flora are in great danger of rapid extinction. For these two reasons the South Australian branch of the British Science Guild is to be warmly commended for its enterprise in arranging for a series of handbooks descriptive of the animals and plants of South Australia. Realizing the lack of inexpensive and authoritative works on the biology of Australia, which it rightly supposes is a severe handicap to the progress of science in that continent, and the need for a wider diffusion of accurate knowledge of this interesting and primitive biological community, the guild has rallied to its aid the services of an enthusiastic body of South Australian biologists, who, between them, have planned this series of handbooks. The Government of South Australia has come to its assistance by undertaking the printing and publication. For this enlightened and broad-minded policy it deserves and will receive the thanks, not only of the public of Australia, but also of scientific men the world over.

1. Dr. Wood Jones's account of the monotremes and carnivorous marsupials is a model of what a popular handbook should be. Excellently and clearly written, illustrated by nearly 100 beautifully clear line drawings—specially prepared for this work, we take it—by the author, and admirably reproduced, it is full of authoritative information on the structure, classification, and habits of these interesting mammals. It is prefaced by a brief account of those characters of the mammalia which are of importance in classification, general definition of scientific terms, and explicit instructions for making records and measurements of specimens. The classification of the mammalia, definitions of the sub-classes, and accounts of the families, genera, and species follow in turn, and concise keys to these are provided in every case, while the author does a great service by including the native and common names of all the mammals. His chapters on the distribution and past history of the didelphia, the place of the didelphia in the mammalian phylum, and the special problems of the mammalian fauna of Australia will be specially welcome as the considered opinion of an expert. We hope that Dr. Wood Jones's departure from Adelaide will not interfere with or even delay the publication of the second part of his handbook.

2. Mr. Waite's handbook on the fishes is practically a reissue, in more popular form, of his admirable "Catalogue of the Fishes of South Australia," published in 1921, and as such, therefore requires no special mention here except to say that its reissue in this form enhances its utility for the general public and provides a worthy companion to Dr. Wood Jones's handbook. The illustrations have been beautifully prepared and admirably reproduced.

The British Science Guild, the authors, and the Government of South Australia are to be congratulated on the inauguration of this excellent series of handbooks. It is to be hoped that nothing will interfere with the early completion of this valuable and greatly needed work.

Advertiser 24 MAR 1924

## INTER-UNIVERSITY SPORTS.

### CONTESTS IN LONDON.

Five Australasian athletes competed at the Queen's Club meeting. The Oxonian Porritt (Wanganui) was beaten by a couple of feet in the 100 yards race by the Cambridge athlete Harrison, whose time was 19 1/5th sec. In the weight-putting contest Austin (Melbourne), of Cambridge, was third with 39 ft. 2 in., Lawton (Brisbane), of Oxford, was fourth with 38 ft. 6 in. The winner was an Oxonian, Thomson (America), with 42 ft. 2 in. Hare (Melbourne), of Cambridge was fourth in the 20 yards low hurdles, which was won by the Cambridge president (Bristowe), Simmer (Adelaide), of Oxford, was third in the pole jump with 11 ft. 4 in., which was won by Baird (America), of Cambridge, with 11 ft.—Reuter.

The inter-university sports were held in glorious weather, and there were 5,000 present. His Majesty the King received an ovation. Oxford and Cambridge took 25 events each.—Reuter.

## ADDRESS BY MR. S. W. JEFFRIES.

Mr. S. W. Jeffries, one of the Liberal Federation candidates for North Adelaide, addressed a large audience in the Prospect Institute, on March 20. He said he wished it to be clearly understood that he was the nominee not of any individual nor of a Parliamentary party, but of the Liberal Federation. He was not responsible for the statements of any individual, nor the actions of any class of persons. He was standing solely by the platform of the federation. It was not a contest between Sir Henry Barwell and Mr. Gunn. It was a contest between the principles for which liberalism and socialism stood. The issue was plain—liberalism or socialism. He pointed out that all the "authorised" attacks of the Labour Party had been directed against one man—the Premier. A great deal had been made of the Premier's remarks about a white Australia; but whatever construction might be placed on those remarks, it did not alter in the least the attitude of the Liberal Federation towards that political ideal. The first and foremost plank in the platform was the maintenance of a white Australia. The Socialists, by their methods in this matter were trying to mislead the people into a belief that liberalism would break in upon the policy of a white Australia. They, no doubt, had a copy of the Liberal platform, and know that was one of the planks.

In the matter of taxation, the Liberal Party stood for a just apportionment of the burdens upon all classes. This would not penalize any section, nor permit railway rates and freights to be used as a means of taxation. That was absolutely fair and equitable. A just apportionment was the ideal his party stood for, and a just apportionment was what he would strive to bring about. The provision that railway freights and rates should not be used as a means of taxation would meet with the approval of all; but the railways must be run on business lines. The appointment of Mr. Webb was excellent. It seemed that now the railways were



MR. S. W. JEFFRIES.

being conducted with a due regard to ordinary business principles. The less Parliament interfered with Mr. Webb the better for the people; but no harm could be done by intimating to the Chief Commissioner that it was the policy of the Government, as soon as it should be economically sound to do so, to make a rearrangement of freights, so that the man on the land could be relieved of the great burden he now bore.

Mr. Jeffries dealt with the question of education, and stated that he was not in favour of a free university. Where that had been tried it had proved a failure. Those who would benefit principally were the people who could well afford to pay. The better scheme was to increase the number of bursaries and scholarships. He was deeply interested in primary education, and in the education of the children in sparsely settled districts. It was the proud boast of the Government that where there was an average attendance of six the department would maintain a school. The linking up of the theoretical with the practical in education was to be commended. The further development of educational facilities would receive his whole-hearted and enthusiastic support. The Socialists had thrown out a challenge calling upon the people to decide whether the Legislative Council should be retained. The electors must think seriously before they put into power a party which had declared that it would abolish the Upper House.

In the matter of immigration, the group system seemed to be as nearly ideal as was possible. The immigrants entered a circle where they were made welcome. Contented immigrants were those who were treated on the group system. Mr. Jeffries said that he was not in favour of a free university. Where that had been tried it had proved a failure. Those who would benefit principally were the people who could well afford to pay. The better scheme was to increase the number of bursaries and scholarships. He was deeply interested in primary education, and in the education of the children in sparsely settled districts. It was the proud boast of the Government that where there was an average attendance of six the department would maintain a school. The linking up of the theoretical with the practical in education was to be commended. The further development of educational facilities would receive his whole-hearted and enthusiastic support. The Socialists had thrown out a challenge calling upon the people to decide whether the Legislative Council should be retained. The electors must think seriously before they put into power a party which had declared that it would abolish the Upper House.

# THE NEWS

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 1924.

## EMPIRE ECONOMIC COUNCIL

(By Harry Thomson.)

Recent cables announce that the Imperial Economic Committee has been sentenced to death. From Australia's point of view it is tragic to consider the death of an institution that might have been so useful. Fortunately the parents, Messrs. Baldwin and Bruce, are still living and in the prime of life, and there is ground for hope that their next venture may be a hardier infant.

There is ample room for such a Council, and ample need. In Empire matters no less than in international ignorance is the great enemy of progress. And between the Dominions and Great Britain there is an amazing amount of ignorance. At the recent Conference, for example, not once, but many times, some such argument as the following was used: "England gives free trade to all. Why cannot Australia, which runs cap in hand to England so much, do the same, and let in British goods free instead of taxing them, thereby erecting an artificial hurdle?"

### Opposite Conclusions.

The argument really leads to the opposite conclusions to that at first sight indicated. Figures, which prove anything, will more than prove this. Up to 1920 the average rate of preference given by Australia to Great Britain was 7 per cent. Since 1920 there has been a higher tariff all round, but the rate of preference to Great Britain has gone up to 12 per cent. There has been no particular decrease in the absolute rate of duties imposed on British goods coming in to Australia. In other words, the British hurdle has remained the same. But by reason of the fact that the margin between the British and foreign hurdles has increased since 1920, there has been a considerable increase both in the aggregate amount of British goods coming into Australia and in the relative amount as compared with imports from foreign countries.

It is easily demonstrable that far more British goods are sold in Australia owing to the preferential tariff as it exists today than would be sold if there were absolute free trade granted in Australia to both British and foreign countries. In the latter scheme depreciated currencies, sweated labor, dumping, abnormal facilities for the production of particular articles, would all have their sway. With a preferential tariff all these can be regulated.

### Overlooked in England

All this is completely overlooked by a great many lecturers and politicians in England. All they see is the hurdle. They quite fail to see and to appreciate the effect of the higher hurdles on each side, over which the foreign streams of goods have to leap before they can be sold in Australia. In other words, they fail to realise that free trade is not always fair trade. This is one of a number of equally important economic principles that an Economic Council could do a great deal in advertising—and perhaps applying.

Such things as these rest on a correct appreciation of economic principles. Even more important would be the function of an Economic Council in collecting and disseminating actual facts of trade interest. To take one example, that is not without significance in view of the present temperance and prohibition discussion in this State—and not without humor. In pre-war days Australia had the more or less proud position of being the premier Dominion so far as the importation of whisky from Great Britain was concerned. Her position of pre-eminence in this respect was not seriously threatened. Toward the end of the war the United States went dry. In 1922 Canada had moved up to the premier position so far as the importation of whisky was concerned.

Looking at this from the point of view of the British distiller, what an advantage it would be to him to have in existence a permanent Council whose business it was, among

other things, to follow, and, if necessary, exploit such trade movements as these. To take another example nearer home. Preferences have been given to Portuguese wines even to the extent of protecting particular names, such as "Port." There should at least be a Council authorised to watch and see that no Dominion's interest is prejudiced in such or similar respects.

### No Plea for Shackles

It is not the function of this article to suggest anything in the nature either of a Constitution or of an agenda for an Economic Council. Least of all is it the writer's purpose to advocate that trade should be subjected to any artificial shackles or curbs. We saw too much of that during and just after the war.

There may, of course, be other reasons than the making of profits to justify the carrying on of a business or industry, but normally, in any commercial enterprise, the touchstone of success or failure is dividends, and dividends only. The business is a success and should be carried on just to the extent that it produces dividends.

The one reason why, exceptions excepted, a "Government-run" commercial enterprise is rarely a success is that other factors than this one are allowed to influence the management. Seniority of employes, political pull, the influence of votes, the effect on other industries, are all considered, and there is not one objective, but several. Any purely commercial undertaking should be flexible and as free of outside control as possible. But in the direction of acquiring information, of passing it on to the quarters where it will be most needed, of making representations to Governments, of watching any unfair trade barriers that may be set up by foreign countries—all that may be valuably done by an Economic Council.

### Example of Germany

Before the war Germany, which was rapidly acquiring a strong hold on a great deal of the world's trade, relied immensely on expert commissions, or cartels, or "understandings." Her tariffs were models of careful discrimination—and careful draftsmanship. A great deal of Europe was a Zollverein in which she was the dominant partner.

It is not suggested that the British Empire should ever become a Zollverein to that extent. But in a slight way much may be done. As an auxiliary an Economic Council would be an extremely valuable adjunct to British and Dominion trade.

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## Taxation Tangle

Transferred officers suffer in alteration of method of control of the public purse.

## FALLACY OF COMPOSITION

(By T. S. Opie, B.A., Dip. Ec.)

Dr. Earl Page spoke recently in favor of the centralisation of loan raising in Australia. Competition between the States and Federal Government in borrowing money is bad, not only because it is likely to raise the interest rates, but because it tends to make Federation a farce. All six States form a Commonwealth—at least so the Constitution says. Why, therefore, the unseemly scramble for the money? Surely the security of the whole is better than that of the part in the eyes of investors.

So far so good. But why did the Commonwealth Treasurer so zealously assist in bringing about the decentralisation of taxation? "We shall borrow money as one man, but we shall obtain the cash necessary for interest as a many-headed monster." There does not appear any rational reason for this Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde attitude except perhaps for frightening the taxpayer.

A Royal Commission was appointed in 1920 to enquire into "the harmonisation of Commonwealth and State taxation," among other things. In its second report a majority of the commissioners recommended that "the power to impose income tax should be exclusively vested in the Commonwealth." Evidently Royal Commissions are merely decorative, for the advice has been ignored, and the present wonderful system, advocated by the minority of the commissioners, adopted.