

THE AGRICULTURAL BUREAU.

Annual Congress Opened.

Improved Farming Methods Discussed.

The value of the application of science to agriculture and the necessity for finding overseas markets for the State's products were referred to by his Excellency the Governor at the opening of the congress of the Agricultural Bureau last night.

The thirty-seventh annual congress of the Agricultural Bureau was opened by his Excellency the Governor (Sir Tom Bridges) in the Victoria Hall last night.

The chairman of the Central Agricultural Bureau (Mr. A. M. Dawkins) who presided over a large attendance, said they felt that, although the agriculturists were but one-tenth of the population of South Australia, they were the producing interest and as such, carried the direct burden of the prosperity of the State. It added grace, lustre, and dignity to their gatherings when they asked his Excellency to address them. (Applause.)

Science and Agriculture.

His Excellency said:—I feel it a great honor to open the deliberations of your conference. Many of you are experts in your own line, and it would be presumptuous for me to attempt to lecture on subjects of which you know more than I do. At the same time there are one or two questions of general interest that I would like to touch upon. One of the subjects which has been uppermost in my mind, and which I think is very important, is the application of science to agriculture. You probably know that the Commonwealth Council for Scientific and Industrial Research finds that four-fifths of the problems of Australia are those which directly relate to primary production. We may ask ourselves what those problems are. As far as South Australia is concerned they are classified somewhat as follows:—Insect pests, such as codlin moth, the lucern flea, dried fruit grub, and the blow fly, and plant diseases, such as tomato wilt, and take-all wheat. There are also the problems of the soil, such as maintaining and building up fertility, the use of fertilisers in real production, and top-dressing the stores as well as reclamation of seepage soil and wind-swept areas in irrigation settlements. There are the problems of plant grading and the selection of new varieties of wheat, barley, and oats, and the study and protection of native fodder plants, and the development of new plants, such as subterranean clover. I think we should realise that in all these matters there is room for investigation, and the solution of any of these problems would mean greatly added wealth to the community. South Australians are exceedingly fortunate in having an establishment at hand to grapple with these difficulties. Although the Waite Institute has only recently been founded, it has a great future. I think we all regret that it was not founded 50 years ago. At present the aim of individual producers as well as of the State is to reduce the cost of production, and to increase the output as much as possible in order that we may keep our place in the markets of the world.

The Help of Science.

To do this we have to invoke the aid of science, which must give us the benefit of its researches in the way of the most modern appliances and methods. Of great importance to us is the control of our products and the marketing of them overseas. From investigations I made in England last year, I believe that side of the question still leaves a great deal to be desired. Another problem is the increase of the population of the cities at the expense of the country side. If we would stay the drift to the towns we must make life on the land not only liveable, but also lucrative. (Hear, hear.) Science must come to our aid again with all its amenities, such as the motor car, broadcasting, quick communication on land and in the air, and a general increase in the standard of living in the country. I think we should realise that the era of pioneering and experiment has passed, and we cannot pay too much attention to the development of this great country on scientific lines. It is an acknowledged fact that if civilisation is to progress it can only do so along the road that has been laid down by scientific thought and research, and it is not too much to say that nearly all the problems in Australia to-day, domestic, social, or industrial, are capable of a scientific solution. During this era of favorable seasons we should not neglect the lessons we have had in the past, or overlook the needs of the future. I feel sure that the Bureau of Agriculture can exercise a strong influence on the prosperity of the State by its deliberations and by its dissemination of information. I wish you success in your conference, and I hope I will be able to attend the opening next year. (Applause.)

In moving a vote of thanks to his Excellency, Mr. H. S. Taylor said it was an ancient custom with people of his race that Parliaments should be declared open by

the King in person, or his accredited representative. Although the congress could not claim the lofty dignity of a national Parliament, it was also a parliament—that of the primary producers. In the unavoidable absence of the King the opening ceremony was customarily performed by his Excellency, to whom they were deeply indebted for having conformed with that custom. (Applause.)

Increased Crops Expected.

The Minister of Agriculture (Hon. T. Butterfield) who was greeted with applause, said it was twelve months since he had last addressed them, and he was pleased that he had been spared to do so once again. He had been struck by the number of the younger generation who were present. It was pleasing at all times to see the young men taking part in the deliberations, which were necessary for the welfare of their country. He was pleased, too, that they had had such an excellent season. Whether in the far north, in the mid-north, in the purely agricultural districts, or in the South-East, the season had been all that could be desired. He hoped when they went back to their districts they would experience that further small fall of rain that was necessary to make the season one of the best ever known. It was quite within the bounds of possibility that the 344 million bushel yield experienced in 1913, and even the record harvest in the 1916-17 season, would be equalled. The farmers in the mallee districts were having an exceptionally good season. Not only on the West Coast, but east of the Murray, the crops were really excellent. With the co-operation of science with agriculture, the resultant better methods of farming, and the excellent seasons, there would no doubt be excellent results on the great majority of farms in the mallee areas, as well as on the river and the West Coast. To expect the 1916-17 crop to be beaten was, of course, expecting something big. It was, however, only a few years ago that they looked upon a 10-bushel wheat harvest as a great achievement. To-day nothing under 12 bushels was considered of much merit. He ventured to say that in the next 20 years the State would make equal progress to that which had been made in the past. They could look forward with every confidence to a great increase in the yield of wheat in this State. They were working land to-day that would not have been worked 20 years ago, and they were getting from it, with a limited rainfall, excellent yields. His Excellency had referred to the advantages which would accrue as a result of the researches of the Waite Institute. There could be no doubt that there would be very great benefits to be derived from an institution of that kind. Ministers always hesitated to invest money in institutions which might not give results. This was because Ministers were made of politicians, who always had one eye on their seats, and who thought failure would be punished when the elections came round. The man who forecast a 34-million bushel crop in the very near future was an optimist of the first rank, but he (the Minister) prophesied that 25 years hence the crop would be over 50 million bushels. That was an absolute certainty. The possibilities of wheat production were almost unlimited.

Unlocking Leases.

He had seen vast areas of land as yet untouched, countless thousands of acres held for speculative purposes, with no intention on the part of the people who owned the land of touching it. Some of the owners had never seen their land. Those leases must be unlocked, and his Government had done a great deal in doing this. As Commissioner of Crown Lands, he had been successful in having inspectors appointed, one on the West Coast, and the other on the mallee lands above the river. Those inspectors examined every block, and reported to the Government how a block of land was worked, the kind of man working it, and what his possibilities were, so that in the Lands Department, if the man were in need of help, the records could be inspected, and it could be ascertained whether the man was worthy of assistance. The Government had been sending out pointed queries to the registered lessees of untouched land, giving them to understand that they could not hold the land in that condition any longer. The Government were now laying water on the land before it was allotted, so that the man who came on it would start to make good from the day he entered it. (Applause.) Another point they had to bear in mind in connection with wheat production was wool production. It was necessary in these days, as everybody present would realise, that if they were going to be successful wheat-growers they should be able to keep sheep on their farms. The number of sheep in South Australia showed no substantial increase. There had been times in the past when the State had carried nearly as many sheep as at present.

He looked forward to a great increase in the flocks, especially on the mallee lands. He dealt with the recommendations of the Rural Commission with respect to the drainage and development of the South-East, which, he said, had great possibilities. The drainage scheme, if undertaken, would be the biggest project of its kind ever carried out in the southern hemisphere, and it would mean untold wealth to the present holders of the land. Therefore the Government must acquire the land, make experiments, carry out the scheme, and some years later reallot the land in smaller holdings. When that scheme was put into effect the South-East would carry scores of thousands of people, and would be a hive of industry. They were jubilant over the position of the wheat-grower to-day, but this was not the case with regard to the dairyman and the fruit-grower. Their position was not so good as might be desired. Certainly the butter stabilisation scheme had improved the position of the dairy farmer, but unlike the wheat-growing industry, the dairy and fruit-growing industries were not limited by the value of land, but by the market. The Government had no hesitation, therefore, in supporting the pooling system. They had gone to the rescue of the Farmers' Union when it was "down and out," and had enabled it to carry on by giving it financial assistance. The Government had gone to the help of the dried fruit industry when it was almost in its death struggles. Everyone had admitted at the time that it was in a powerless position. He supposed the Dried Fruit Act was the most extreme legislation ever passed in the State; it gave the Government complete power over the dried fruit industry. They had to have that power if they were going to protect the industry, and they had placed the fruit-grower in a better and sounder position than he otherwise would have been. (Hear, hear.) That legislation, which was for two years, would lapse during the present year. The Government had received many requests for a re-enactment of the measure, and had decided to accede to them. A measure would be introduced in this session, and, if passed, would remain in force for three years. (Hear, hear.)

The pooling system was a compulsory one. They would remember that at one time, before B.A.W.R.A. was established, it was said that the only thing they could do with their wool was to sink it in the sea or to burn it. Yet the problem was solved by orderly marketing, and orderly marketing was pooling. The pooling system, he prophesied, would be one of the essential features of the future, not only in respect of wheat and wool, but of every product of the farm or garden. The sooner they realised that their neighbor's interest was their own the better it would be for all concerned. (Applause.)

The State Bank.

The Minister dealt with the work during the year of the Department of Agriculture. He said he wanted to see a better spirit of co-operation between the department's inspectors and the men on the land. During the year the Government had opened a State Bank for the benefit of the primary producers. That institution would undoubtedly have the interests of the men on the land at heart. If they borrowed from that bank as they probably would, it would certainly not call up its capital in a bad year. They would, in bad seasons, be responsible to the bank for the interest only. The Government wanted the bank to have the best opportunities for obtaining the cheapest money available for the man on the land. He congratulated them on the fine muster they had at the opening of the congress. He owed a debt of gratitude to the officers of the department, from Professor Perkins downward, for the loyal services they had rendered. They had been zealous in the interests of the people, and had availed themselves of every opportunity of meeting the producers. The Government had increased the staff, and in the near future it would be necessary to extend it further, by the appointment of an additional instructor. With regard to the pastoral industry, he hoped that the number of sheep would materially increase. Large areas were lying untouched. Boring had been resorted to, and that day the Government had given the Surveyor-General authority to install two more boring plants. It was not fair for a settler to have to go out and test land for water, which, after discovery, would be there for countless ages, for the benefit of those who came after him. The rich man would not do this, so the work was left to the poor man or the Government. The Government had, therefore, undertaken it. He believed that what the Government had done in the north-west would add materially to the flocks in the State. He appreciated the difficulties under which the man on the land labored. Only recently he had bought a mallee farm, and was going to have "another go" at it. He was, therefore, still "one of them." He wished them all the success that could possibly come to them. (Applause.)

Improving the Yield.

The Chairman said the bureau had a successful year. There had been an increase of 700 members, and the crop competitions had increased by three, making the total 10. The competitions were extremely valuable, as they brought out the best methods of farming. In that way the bureau had done valuable work in increasing the production of the State. When the bureau was started in 1900, the wheat yield in South Australia was a little more than 6,000,000 bushels, and the average was three and three-quarter bushels to the acre. The number of members in the bureau was 38. They were men of vision, and saw the possibilities of applied scientific information. In 1908 the yield was a little more than 8,500,000 bushels, the average being five bushels to the acre. There were 1,400 members of the bureau at that time. The yield in 1908 was 19,000,000 bushels. The average was eleven and a half bushels to the acre, and the number of bureau members, 2,200. The yield was nearly 23,000,000 in 1918, the average yield being ten and a half bushels. The number of members in the bureau had increased to 5,166. Last year the yield was 28,000,000 bushels, the average being eleven and three-quarter bushels, they then had 6,440 members. That showed the value of the application of science to agricultural problems. They had learned that the soil was not an inanimate thing, but was teeming with microscopic life, and that it therefore required special treatment to preserve that life, for the nutriment of the plants. They had been able to conserve moisture in the soil, and thus work land which was previously thought useless for profitable cultivation. A great deal had been done in the improvement of wheat, but there was still much to do. They owed a lot to the new machinery which enabled them to reap tangled crops which otherwise would have gone to waste. When they learned to cultivate their land properly, their yields would increase. He would like to see the Government spend more money in research work dealing with the diseases which affected live stock. For some unknown reason sheep died overnight. It might be a matter of diet, and if they could determine the amount of feed necessary for each sheep they might prevent many of the deaths, and keep more stock to the acre than they were now doing. (Applause.)

the wheat yield in South Australia was a little more than 6,000,000 bushels, and the average was three and three-quarter bushels to the acre. The number of members in the bureau was 38. They were men of vision, and saw the possibilities of applied scientific information. In 1908 the yield was a little more than 8,500,000 bushels, the average being five bushels to the acre. There were 1,400 members of the bureau at that time. The yield in 1908 was 19,000,000 bushels. The average was eleven and a half bushels to the acre, and the number of bureau members, 2,200. The yield was nearly 23,000,000 in 1918, the average yield being ten and a half bushels. The number of members in the bureau had increased to 5,166. Last year the yield was 28,000,000 bushels, the average being eleven and three-quarter bushels, they then had 6,440 members. That showed the value of the application of science to agricultural problems. They had learned that the soil was not an inanimate thing, but was teeming with microscopic life, and that it therefore required special treatment to preserve that life, for the nutriment of the plants. They had been able to conserve moisture in the soil, and thus work land which was previously thought useless for profitable cultivation. A great deal had been done in the improvement of wheat, but there was still much to do. They owed a lot to the new machinery which enabled them to reap tangled crops which otherwise would have gone to waste. When they learned to cultivate their land properly, their yields would increase. He would like to see the Government spend more money in research work dealing with the diseases which affected live stock. For some unknown reason sheep died overnight. It might be a matter of diet, and if they could determine the amount of feed necessary for each sheep they might prevent many of the deaths, and keep more stock to the acre than they were now doing. (Applause.)

REG. 5-10-26

AT ELDER HALL.

On Monday evening a vocal recital was given at the Elder Hall by the pupils of Mr. Clive Carey, assisted by Miss Gwen Moss (violinist) and Miss Alice Meegan (at the piano). An interesting programme was presented, those taking part being Madame Dorothy Beck, Miss Olive Barnett, Miss Agnes Wainwright, Miss Isabel Barton, Miss Lilian Wilkinson, Miss Dorothy Vardon, Mr. J. Swan, Dr. P. R. Newling, Mr. Ewart Lock. Mr. Carey invited a number of guests to be present, including Mrs. H. H. Dutton, Mrs. Angus Johnson, Mrs. Charles Dashwood, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Mellor, Mrs. Napier Birks, Dr. Ethel Hillier, Miss Sylvia Whittington, Miss Maude Puddy, Mrs. John Bagit, Mr. H. Winsloe Hall, Madame Delmar Hall, Miss Violet de Mole, Mrs. Smedley Palmer, Mrs. John Corbin, Mrs. Reginald Quested, Mr. Charles Schilsky, Dr. Florence Hill, Miss Betty Ann Hill, Dr. and Mrs. A. H. Souler, Mrs. Samuel Johnson, Mrs. H. W. Kelly, Mrs. Charles Tonkin, Misses Tonkin.

MAIL 2-10-26

Mr. Frederick Bevan, the popular singing teacher at the Conservatorium, is looking extremely well after his eight months' holiday abroad, and is apparently ready to take up his work again next week, on the opening of the fourth term of the Conservatorium. He found great pleasure in meeting Mrs. Cowan (formerly Ethel Hantke) in London, and Mrs. John Mundy (Clytie Hine) and Otto Heggie in America, the three being old and favorite students. He also met Mr. Harold Wyke, but their intercourse was broken by the coal strike, so he was not aware that the polished floor nuisance at a hotel where he was staying had caused Mr. Wyke a nasty accident and resulted in a sprained wrist, from which he has barely recovered.

MAIL 2-10-26

Miss Mignon Weston has resigned her position of secretary to the Conservatorium to devote herself to orchestral work. She has for some time played first oboe in the South Australian Orchestra as well as in other local and visiting musical combinations, and will now give her attention entirely to musical matters. She has in many ways rendered valuable service to the orchestra since its inception.

ADV. 7-10-26

THE ELDER CONSERVATORIUM.

WELCOME TO MR. FREDERICK BEVAN.

At the Elder Conservatorium last night Mr. Frederick Bevan, who recently returned from a tour abroad, was tendered a welcome social by his students. He was welcomed on behalf of the class by Mr. I. G. Reimann. In his reply, Mr. Bevan gave a talk on his experiences abroad, chiefly of those in musical matters. Musical items were contributed by J. Ardill and Sydney Coombe, Ada Wordie, Jean Sinclair, Thomas, Professor Harold half of the students of Mrs. Mer and Miss Gill, made a to Mrs. Palmer.