

available to plant roots; and one frequently finds oneself, so to speak, compelled to bring coals to Newcastle. Fortunately, however, in cases such as these, we are generally able to avoid the purchase of expensive foreign potash manures, and to attack the problem indirectly through the free use of a natural local product—gypsum. Gypsum has the effect of mobilising soil potash and rendering it available to plants. When, therefore, the soil or subsoil is relatively heavy, and potash hunger is suspected—and this would generally be justified when a lucerne crop fails to respond adequately to phosphate dressing—the lucerne field should be dressed annually with 4 cwt. to 5 cwt. of gypsum during the winter, and always prior to the first summer irrigation.

**Phosphates.**  
Lucerne can no more thrive in the absence of an adequacy of phosphates than wheat, or any other of our crops, and, with a few exceptions, we know our soils to be generally poorly stocked with this constituent. Phosphate dressings are therefore, essential to numerous and heavy crops; they may, too, be said to be essential to quality in these crops. Hence I recommend in the first place dressings of 2 cwt. to 3 cwt. at seeding time, and subsequent annual dressings of 1 cwt. applied towards the end of winter and prior to the first summer irrigation. It should be added, of course, that in those soils, in which phosphates are already abundantly present in soil or subsoil there is no need so waste useful money in useless dressings.

**THE MAIL**  
ADELAIDE: SATURDAY, JULY 5, 1924.

**HEALTH LAW**

Developments for the protection of the people's health have moved so rapidly in recent years that the Public Health Act passed by the Parliament of South Australia 26 years ago is now seriously out of date. As Dr. F. S. Hone, president of the Public Health Association, pointed out in his lecture on Thursday night, this Act was one of the most advanced pieces of health legislation in the world at the time it was imposed. But now it lacks beneficial provisions that have been adopted in many other countries, and in addition the administration of some of its provisions has become lax.

That the health law of this State needs revision is clear, and Dr. Hone has performed good service in bringing the need before public attention. His declaration may serve as an introduction to further and fuller statements that may be expected from the health conference that is to take place in Adelaide within the next few weeks.

Since the present Health Act was passed there has been a remarkable change in the method generally adopted for the protection of the people's health. The old idea was that the function of the medical profession was to cure people when they became sick. The modern idea is that it is more important to prevent them from becoming sick. This is the principle upon which are based the advocacy and practice of hygiene, sanitation, cleanliness, fresh air schemes, physical culture, housing reform, and other factors that may be summed up in the laconic phrase "preventive medicine." Health legislation that does not make prevention of ill-health its chief and primary function falls short of the standard that now prevails in the most advanced parts of the world.

From the administrative point of view the present position in South Australia is far from satisfactory. The responsibility of seeing that the health laws and regulations are carried out is divided between the Central Board of Health and the local boards. Dr. Hone made the sweeping assertion that "with but few exceptions, and those chiefly in the larger municipalities, local boards had failed to recognise their responsibilities." He might have added with just as much verity that the Central Board of Health does not fulfil all requirements. It has a way of dealing with local boards that does not help them in their tasks and sometimes antagonises them.

It will be seen, therefore, that more than a mere liberalising of the health law is needed.

**THE NEWS**

SATURDAY, JULY 5, 1924.

**Australian Economic Problems**

(By Harry Thomson.)

A remark in these columns recently to the effect that certain British politicians made the mistake of regarding freetrade as a law of Nature has led to the rejoinder that certain Australian politicians regard protection as divine in origin. There may be a good deal of ground for the belief when we read of an estimated surplus of £10,085,697, and when we consider the colossal amounts realised by customs duties in Australia.

The plain truth of the whole matter is that a generalisation that fails to take account of time and place and circumstance is as useless and as meaningless in matters of national trade and commerce as it is in a private business.

In recent years there has been a notable advance in the historical treatment of economics and economic theories. Mr. W. J. Ashley, who was knighted for his eminent services in industrial and trade matters during the war, was the first and foremost British exponent of the system of collating your facts first and building your theories up after.

On the Continent and in America economists went a good deal further. The close alliance in the United States between the great financial and trading corporations on the one side and the universities on the other led to the analysis of actual facts and figures, and the building of a theory on these rather than on a priori reasoning.

**Examination of Factors**

The articles that I have contributed to these columns from time to time have failed in at least one of their objects if they have not driven home the conclusion that in my opinion almost every economic problem, and in particular those related to tariffs, can only be answered by actual examination of the different factors on the spot. There are no axioms—or very few—in applied economics. The problems are much more akin to those in engineering and building construction than to those in euclid, for conditions are in a state of flux and subject to outside influences all the time.

To take the simplest example—the amusement tax. It is simply playing with the problem to talk about "taxing the poor man's pleasure," and that sort of thing. There are certain criteria for testing the goodness or badness of a tax, such as "ease of collection," "equality of sacrifice," and so on, laid down in the various textbooks on public finance. These can be applied and the answer readily given.

**Big Surpluses**

There is a good deal of confused thinking on the subject of "surpluses." It seems to be assumed that all surpluses are good, and presumably the bigger the surplus the greater the good. The £11,000,000 surplus must be a very great good indeed! Actually it is probably a very great evil. It means just these things:—

1. That £11,000,000 more was taken out of our tax-paying pockets that was necessary even to meet our Canberra and other national extravagances. That "forced loan" is certainly not a good to us who pay it.
2. There was that much interference with trade and industry and the capital invested in trade and industry, and this capital might very well have been employed in production and earning something. That is not a good.
3. Inevitably the £11,000,000 excess must have cost something in salaries and so on to collect. It is difficult to say how much, but it was an unnecessary expense, and certainly, therefore, not a good thing.
4. The £11,000,000 was not, of course, paid by the importing merchant. He advanced the money and collected from the consumer to reimburse himself. In so collecting he naturally charged his 8 or 10 per cent. on this money, as on all the other money invested in his business. The consumer consequently paid £1,000,000 more for the articles than he otherwise would. That again is not a good, and the direct result in the direction of keeping prices up is obvious.

In all the circumstances it is difficult to see where and how an £11,000,000 surplus is a good thing in view of the fact, particularly, that most of it was obtained by unnecessarily heavy indirect taxation.

**"First Things First"**

Some day someone will write a handbook for Australian politicians entitled "First Things First." The first chapter of that book will set out "some elementary truths" for the consumption of the nursery politician. He will be taught that Australia is a very big country with a very small population, and that for a long time, particularly so far as international trade is concerned, primary industries are all-important.

Wool and wheat and wine and one or two other things other countries will buy, and that is all they will buy. The cost of production of our manufactures and the cost of taking them to the world markets is much too high. So far as manufactures are concerned we must largely occupy ourselves in taking in one another's washing. And in protecting industries a good deal more time and attention should be directed to distinguishing between industries that are naturally adapted to Australia and those that are not.

**Infant Industry Argument**

The "infant industry" argument has been pushed far more than was ever warranted, and a good many such weak-legged infants are bolstered up artificially and might better have been strangled at birth. For industries necessary to the defence of a country and for industries naturally adapted to production by a country there is a case for artificial and limited protection, but for very few others.

Of all other protection ultimately the burden falls on the primary industries. The high cost of agricultural instruments is not the least of the burdens on the agriculturist. It is perhaps the heaviest burden on the man who is just starting to build up a farm. The whole matter comes back to this—there is very real need in Australia for the scientific study of a good many of the problems of economic development with which she is faced. Universities and Chambers of Commerce and Manufactures, and even trade unions could do a good deal more in this direction than they have done in the past.

They could very well show a lead to the politicians.

*Register*  
8 JUL 1924

**"THE BONDS OF EMPIRE."**

STRIKING LECTURE BY PRINCIPAL KIEK.

At the last meeting of the Round Table Christian Sociological Society, held at Parkin College on Friday, Principal Kiek, M.A., B.D., addressed a large attendance. He criticised the type of "Imperialism" which gloried merely in the bigness of the Empire. To enthuse over an Empire merely because it was big was as foolish, he said, as to enthuse over a man for the same reason. Some of the small States had rendered larger service to humanity than some of the vast Empires. The true Imperialism believed in the British Empire because it believed in its peculiar mission, tradition, and destiny. This Empire was different from all other Empires known to history, because it was based upon the principle of self-government, and, in the case of the non-European populations, upon the principle of trusteeship. There was no suggestion of subjection in the relations of the dominions to the mother country. Britain would never repeat the mistake that had lost us the American colonies. The case of South Africa was cited as a remarkable example of the loyalty created by the grant of full self-government. Continuing, Principal Kiek pointed out that an Imperial Navy shielded the dominions from foreign aggression, yet the whole burden of this fell on the British taxpayer, the contributions of the dominions in the past having been almost negligible. Britain admitted dominions' products to her markets without tariff duties, but the dominions were free to protect their own industries against British competition. So far from the dominions having any grievance against Britain on the score of tariffs, Principal Kiek thought that "the boot was on the other leg." The dominions must allow the mother country the same right to determine fiscal policy as they claimed for themselves. Australians who counted upon Britain turning protectionist were, he thought, living in a fool's paradise.

**Dominions and Foreign Policy.**  
Sketching the growth of the Empire, the lecturer asserted that it was much less the result of State policy than the result of private enterprise. It was almost fair to say that the Empire had been created "in a fit of absence of mind." Imperialism was a by-product of Empire, not a factor in making it. It was notable, too, that the Empire owed little to bureaucracy. Principal Kiek thought the absence of excessive officialism had been one cause of the success of British colonizing effort. Proceeding, Principal Kiek discussed the principles of the Durham report (1840), which had been called "the Magna Charta of the colonies." Lord Durham advocated granting the colonies complete local autonomy, while reserving to the Imperial Government all matters of Imperial concern. The growth of nationhood in the dominions, he said, had made those reservations obsolete. Lord Durham would have been shocked at the spectacle of colonies imposing tariffs to the detriment of the mother country, or shutting out from their territories any of the King's subjects. The only region where any trace of the old subordination remained was in foreign policy. Since the British Government was almost entirely responsible for providing and financing the defence of the Empire, it was natural that it should exercise the control of foreign policy, upon which issues of peace and war depended. Canada was restive under this system; a treaty between Canada and the U.S.A. had been recently made, in connection with which Canada repudiated all intervention from the Home Government. The British Ambassador at Washington, Canada, however, was not dependent upon Britain for its own defence, since it was covered by the U.S.A. under the "Monroe Doctrine." The U.S.A. would go to war before it allowed any foreign Power to attack or annex Canada. This partly explained why Canadian sentiment on this subject was in advance of Australian. Yet all sorts of anomalies might arise, if the dominions claimed to negotiate with foreign Powers as independent States and to "run" a foreign policy of their own. Such "independence" might easily lead to separation.

**Imperial Federation Opposed.**

Principal Kiek went on to say that he was utterly sceptical about any proposals for Imperial Federation. He was sure that Australians would never agree to be taxed by an Imperial Parliament in which their representatives would necessarily be in a small minority. Any such attempt to make a Constitution for the Empire would raise more problems than it would solve. Nor did he think that the Imperial Conference would ever be permitted to acquire any real legislative or executive authority. Leading British statesmen agreed with Gen. Smuts that the Imperial Conference could not bind the Parliaments and peoples of the home country and the dominions. In the course of further remarks the speaker touched upon the problems of India. He strongly advocated the maintenance of the British "Raj," its withdrawal would, he said, in all probability land the country in hopeless anarchy. The country was not yet fit for responsible government; democratic institutions presupposed intellectual, social, and political conditions which in India did not exist. Meantime he threw out the suggestion that Britain might administer India as a mandatory of the League of Nations. This would demonstrate her disinterestedness, and at the same time increase the prestige of the League. He concluded by affirming that artificial schemes for holding the Empire together were neither necessary nor workable. They must trust to the sentiment and commonsense of the peoples concerned to maintain the Imperial nexus.

In a discussion which ensued the Hon. P. McM. Glynn, Mr. W. A. Hamilton, the Rev. H. Giles, and other speakers joined a vote of thanks to the lecturer which was heartily adopted.

**FIELD NATURALISTS' EXCURSION.**

The National Park was the scene of an excursion by the Field Naturalists' Society on Saturday. Delightful weather prevailed for the outing. Under the leadership of Professor J. B. Cleland the excursionists explored the picturesque reserve. Dr. Cleland identified a great variety of fungi, both indigenous and alien. The *Boletus luteus* is found in the neighbourhood of pine trees, and is probably parasitic. Many other species were discovered exhibiting a wide variety of form and colour, ranging from purple red, brown, and yellow to a dull white. Most were pronounced to be edible. Native flowers were eagerly looked for in order to help in the projected plant survey; and, although it was somewhat early in the season, many species were found, including *Hibbertia*, *Hardenbergia*, the dainty *Drosera* (sundew), a carnivorous plant accounting for numbers of flies, gnats, and mosquitoes; *Scolecia* (so called from its resemblance to a tiny left hand), native flax (*Linum Marcinale*), *Banunculus Lappaceus*, a resounding name for the popular buttercup, *Leucopogon* (white beard), *Kennedyia Prostrata* (otherwise scarlet runner), the Centaury plant, from which a wholesome beverage, flavoured like quinine, is produced; native *amaryllis*, *Doonea viscosa* (native hop), native *Ullac* (*Kennedyia Monophylla*), *Myoporum* (closed pores), *Rosaes*, and other varieties. The trees observed included several kinds of eucalyptus—*Eucalyptus* (peppermint), *E. Acrotrata* (red gum), *E. Leucocylon* (blue or yellow gum), *E. Citriodora* (lemon scented gum), *E. Cornuta* (yate gum of W.A.), *Tasmanian blue gum*, *E. Wimalala* (white gum). The acacias included *A. Pycnantha* (golden wattle), *A. Obliqua*, *A. Balberrana* (the bootamunda) in full bloom, *A. Longifolia* (long-leaved wattle). A great abundance of mosses and lichens were observed exquisite in form and of the most delicate tints. Among the native birds noted were the magpie, thrush, wattle bird, the purple-crowned lorikeet, the red-backed parrot, the rose-gilled honeyeater, and the golden-winged honeyeater. The secretary, Miss W.