

Zoological Survey.

The zoological survey committee reported that steps had been taken in New South Wales to commence a zoological survey in that State, and that the trustee of the National Park had made available a stone cottage, situated at Port Hacking, which would be the headquarters of the biological section formed by the Zoological Society of New South Wales.

Standardising Lime.

The State committee of Western Australia submitted a request that something should be done in regard to the standardisation of lime. The council decided to approach the standardisation committee with a view to complying with the request. The following were elected members of the council:—Dr. W. G. Woolnough, of Sydney; Dr. E. Kidson, O.B.E., Melbourne; and Professor L. Harrison, of Sydney. It was decided to continue the publication of Australian Science Abstracts. On the motion of Dr. J. M. Baldwin, it was decided to fix the maximum membership for each section or group of sections.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE.

From PRINCIPAL KIEK:—My attention has been directed to letters on this subject appearing in The Register of last Friday's date. It is not my intention to embark on a controversy with the advocates of the "single tax;" personally, I am in favour of the taxation of site values and of securing for the State what is called the "unearned increment" of land. But I utterly dissent from the view that all other taxation is "robbery;" indeed, I should regard it as highly inequitable to limit taxation in the way that "single taxers" desire. Mr. Newling's views about population may be supported by Prince Kropotkin, but the whole weight of expert opinion is on the other side; commonsense, as well as expert opinion, indicates that the population of the planet cannot be indefinitely multiplied without disaster. Scientific discoveries, improved agriculture, the opening up of new soils, &c., may postpone the operation of the laws set forth in Malthus's famous "essay" but that these laws exist and that these laws operate seems undeniable. (Cf. Professor Agar's address last week.) I may add that both the above subjects have been fully discussed by the Round Table Christian Sociological Society, as Mr. Newling will find out if he turns up the files of The Register. But my main object in writing is to disabuse Mr. Newling's mind of the extraordinary idea that our unemployment insurance scheme contemplates a payment of 6d. a week on each insured person by the State; no such sum is mentioned in our draft "Bill." On the contrary, expert accountants and statisticians among us estimate that the scheme will cost the State nothing at all, since the contributions of the employers and employed will more than meet the expenses. Mr. Emlyn Robinson tells us that the so-called "unemployment dole" has been a "blight" on England; I would say rather that it has probably saved England from revolution. Does Mr. Robinson expect the unemployed to starve quietly and die without making trouble? Mr. Robinson seems also to hold the curious notion that the unemployed workman is solely responsible for his unemployment, whereas obviously the unemployment in question is due to the working of a social order for which we are all responsible; it is indeed admitted by many economists that a "pool" of unemployment is necessary and inevitable in the working of a capitalistic system. Unemployment is a social as well as an individual matter. In any case, I would point out that the unemployed have to be maintained somehow; both the unemployed rich and the unemployed poor are ultimately parasitic on the community. When folks are unemployed through no fault of their own, I should say that their maintenance is not so much an act of charity as an act of justice—always provided that this maintenance is not on a scale that will encourage them to prefer maintenance to work, and that adequate measures are taken to check the "malingering" that Mr. Robinson fears. The "Bill" carefully provides such safeguards. We also agree with Mr. Robinson that employment on useful public works is far preferable to maintenance without work; if Mr. Robinson will apply to me for a copy of the "Bill" he will see that this is exactly what we have in mind. The essential part of our scheme is the provision of work; the maintenance clauses will only operate when work is not, and cannot be, provided. To both Mr. Newling and Mr. Robinson I would say that I fully recognise the need for other measures to try up the sources of unemployment; the point is that something must be done here and now to diminish the incidence of misery and demoralization; we can't let the unemployed continue in starvation and beggary while the rest of us are arguing about what is necessary to ensure a perfected society in which unemployment will be unknown.

STATISTICIANS' CONFERENCE.

The conference of statistical officers of the various States of the Commonwealth and New Zealand, called at the instance of the Federal Government, has sat continuously during the past week in the office of the South Australian Statist. It was called to discuss matters pertaining to the compilation of statistical data, with the object of securing for the statistics of Australia and New Zealand the greatest possible uniformity, combined with adequate compliance with modern requirements. The conference was opened on Monday, August 18, by the Chief Secretary (Hon. J. Jelley), who expressed a most appreciative opinion of the work of statisticians and the value of Australian statistics. The Commonwealth Statistician was appointed Chairman, and the other members were the Government Statistician of New Zealand, and the statisticians of the several States of Australia. The conference dealt with a long agenda, but by systematic arrangement all the matters therein were discussed and appropriate resolutions passed. The resolutions related to the following subjects:—Australian statistical forms (on which information had been exchanged for many years between the several States and New Zealand), census, population, and vital, finance, transport and communication, trade and commerce, local government, production, labour and industrial, insurance, statistics of consumption, and miscellaneous. Included in the matters discussed was a resolution passed at the conference of the Associated Chambers of Commerce held in Adelaide last May, namely, "That there is need for better and more up-to-date statistical information concerning finance, trade, and commerce in the Commonwealth; and that the Commonwealth and State Governments be urged to have such information compiled and published promptly." The statisticians concurred with the terms of that resolution. The statisticians will report to their respective Governments, and they are convinced that the methods agreed upon by the conference as to the collection, classification, and presentation will have an important effect upon the completeness and comparableness of the statistics compiled in respect of Australia and New Zealand, which already are of a high degree of the value among the statistics of the world.

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SIR JAMES BARRETT AND THE LAND TAX.

From E. J. CRAIGIE, Secretary Land Values Rating Committee:—Sir James Barrett's interesting and instructive lecture on "Man's minute enemies" was marred by one statement which will not bear logical investigation. Dealing with tubercular germs, he said, "the great enemies of this germ were sunshine and fresh air. If the sun could not get into the house it could be regarded as a potential consumption house. The policy of a political party in Victoria, who were striving to make the land tax the only tax, would have the effect of crowding the land with houses." The latter portion of this statement is not in accord with fact. The effect of the land values tax is not to crowd the land with houses; it has the reverse effect. The imposition of the tax has the effect of reducing the price of land, thus making it available to those who desire to build on easier terms. With the abolition of the taxation from improvements, citizens are encouraged to build better houses. They are not likely to spoil the appearance of their fine home by placing it on a small block of land. Fortunately, in this State we have evidence to show the fallacy of Sir James Barrett's contention. Fourteen municipalities collect all their revenue from the unimproved value of the land. If Sir James, during his stay in South Australia, will visit Thebarton, the first municipality to adopt land values taxation as the sole basis of assessment in 1907, he will find that the houses built since that date are bigger and better, and have a larger area of land than those built in the older portions of the town, and under the system of taxing improvements and not land values. The Act gives the citizens the power to return to the old system if they so desire. A reversion poll was granted in 1914, when the land owners reaffirmed the principle of taxing land values only by a bigger majority than was secured at the adoption poll in 1907, when tenants also had the right to vote. This should convince all unprejudiced people that the system is giving satisfaction.

SCIENTISTS BEGIN WORK.

BUSINESS IN FULL SWING TO-DAY.

NEXT CONFERENCE IN PERTH.

The scientists who are in Adelaide in connection with the biennial conference of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science were busy on Monday attending the meeting of the general council of the association, registering themselves for meetings and trips, and generally preparing for the week's work. To-day the business will commence in earnest as all the sections will begin the deliberations out of which it is hoped that much good for the people of the Commonwealth will arise.

The Adelaide University was a hive of industry on Monday morning. Scientists of all sizes and ages were busy preparing for the real work of the conference, which will begin to-day with the meetings of the various sections—the real workshops (if that term can be applied) of the congress. Both sexes were represented, and seldom before has there been such a gathering of intellect in the city. Adelaide this week will more than ever live up to its

work in laying the foundation of a library for the association. In addition, they expressed their appreciation of his work in laying the foundation of the library of the Royal Society, New South Wales, which was one of the best in the world.

The council appointed the President of the association and Sir Edgeworth David, Sir Baldwin Spencer, Mr. C. Gambage, and Professor S. Keats as a committee to administer the Muller memorial medal fund.

The secretary reported that since the last meeting they had lost by death three of their members in Mr. A. H. Dumaresque Belfield (member since 1889), Rev. James Carson (N.S.W., member since 1895), and Sr. J. T. Walker (life member, joined 1883).

The following were appointed State secretaries:—Queensland, Mr. N. T. C. White; New South Wales, Mr. E. C. Andrews; Victoria, Mr. E. R. Pitt; South Australia, Mr. L. Keith Ward; Western Australia, Professor A. T. M. Willemore and Mr. Gibb Maitland; Tasmania, Mr. Clive Lord; New Zealand; Professor C. C. Farr and Mr. H. B. Kirk.

Aid From the Governments.

The Chairman said the council should express its appreciation of the generosity of the Governments of New South Wales and Victoria, and that of the Commonwealth for their support. The movement was a costly one, and the Governments had aided their work by subscribing money and affording other facilities. The Federal Government had given £2,000, and the other two mentioned had subscribed liberally, and had thus helped to bring the scientific men into touch with each other.

Sir John Monash, in support, remarked that much of the success of the congress depended on the valuable aid the association had received from the Governments, and the least the scientists could do was to tender their sincere recognition of that aid. (Applause.)

Professor Sir Edgeworth David said the Pan-Pacific Congress alone would repay one hundredfold in a few years, by its results, the money that had been expended on it. More and more, as a result of the

congress, the general public would appreciate the fact that pure research was the thing on which they must concentrate, for no matter how apparently irrelevant their discoveries might seem, in the long run pure science was at the back of most social and industrial advancement. (Applause.)

Organization Methods.

A discussion followed on the need for the rules of the association being assisted by flexible by-laws and regulations. The secretary observed that for years they had depended solely on the original form of the parent society, and of late it had been realized that certain defects in the constitution could be remedied. The question had been raised as to the possibility of having all the papers of the different branches on the one subject printed under one cover; the question of affiliation had also been mooted. He had analyzed the organization methods of similar associations in other countries, and observed the possibilities of considerable improvement in their own. The need of sectional committee secretaries to have a knowledge of association procedure was stressed. They often did not know the history of resolutions, and the council especially desired that the case for new resolutions should be adequately presented. Secretaries should therefore co-operate with each other in the matter. Their research committees, too, lacked coherence and cohesion, and if the Australian Association were going on to greatness, there must be continuity of office and of membership. Their finance, too, should also be increased.

Professor Sir Edgeworth David formally moved the appointment of a committee to investigate the matter, consisting of Sir George Knibbs, Sir John Monash, Sir Baldwin Spencer, Mr. E. C. Andrews, Mr. L. Keith Ward, and Professor H. C. Richards. He added that the association had been in existence for 35 years, and was still working under the original constitution. The motion was carried.

Continuity of Membership.

Discussing continuity of membership, the secretary said that the financial position of the association was precarious to a certain extent, and it had no guarantee



PROFESSOR W. E. AGAR, President of the zoology section of the Science Congress.

name of "the city of culture." It would be well-nigh impossible to name one section of the scientific world that is not represented at the conference, and all are bent on doing their utmost for the benefit of their great Commonwealth. The Elder Hall was thronged throughout the day by members of the conference, who were registering themselves for the various sections or the trips that are being arranged. In the Prince of Wales Theatre in the morning the National Science Research Council conducted a meeting, at which the reports of several committees were received, and much general business was transacted. In the same building in the afternoon the general committee of the Science Association met. At that meeting it was decided to hold the next conference in Perth in 1926. That will be the first time the capital of the Western State has had the honour of entertaining the conference. At that meeting the President will be Sir Thomas Rankine Lyle, of the Melbourne University. On Monday night the retiring President (Sir George Knibbs) inducted the President-elect (Sir John Monash), and the latter then gave an extremely interesting address to the assembled delegates on "Power development."

SCIENCE ADVANCEMENT.

General Council Meeting.

A meeting of the general council of the Australasian Society for the Advancement of Science was held at the University on Monday afternoon. Sir George Knibbs presided.

On the motion of Sir Baldwin Spencer, the congress decided that the Vice-Presidents of the association should consist of the founder (Professor A. Liversidge) and all ex-Presidents domiciled in Australia.

The conference decided to send to Professor Liversidge the following telegram:—"Association sends founder heartiest greeting.—Knibbs, President."

Sir George Knibbs referred to the splendid work done by Professor Liversidge, not only in connection with the foundation of the association, but also for his