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THE FOREST LEAGUE.

New Appointment Criticised.

Protection of Roadside Trees.

A meeting of the executive of the South Australian branch of the Australian Forest League was held at the office of the secretary (Mr. W. W. G. Tate), in Adelaide, on Monday. Sir William Sowden occupied the chair, and Sir Douglas Mawson, Capt. White, Messrs. Anthony, M.P., J. H. Vaughan, E. H. Cowell, and Cr. G. McEwin were also present.

Legislation Regarding Roadside Timber.

With regard to complaints that had been received from country correspondents concerning the wholesale sacrifice of roadside timber, it was resolved that steps should be taken, if possible, to have the Bill which was introduced to Parliament last year replaced upon the agenda of the House of Assembly, for it was felt that it had been lost through a misunderstanding in the Legislative Council, and that unless the control of wayside trees be taken out of the hands of the district councils and be placed under the jurisdiction of the Forestry Department, the roads will be rapidly denuded of all shade.

Conservator of Forests.

The appointment of the Conservator of Forests received prolonged attention, and the articles published in The Register on the matter were warmly approved. It was resolved that no time should be lost in approaching the Government with a suggestion for the future management of this important branch of State industry.

CORRESPONDENCE.

Sir,—The history of appointments to the Conservatorship of Forests is singularly unfortunate. Reference to newspapers of the date of the appointment of Mr. Gil shows the spirit in which that appointment was received, and protests are now heard on every hand against the amazing action of the Government in ignoring the absolutely unequalled claims of Mr. Corbin, a resident of 11 years in the State and giving preference to an outsider, who has occupied a position subordinate to that of Mr. Corbin for many years in a State from which our Government appears to be fond of introducing officers to fill posts which might reasonably be regarded as promotional rewards for our own people. If the present forestry blunder be irretrievable, there is one way in which the Government may redeem its unhappy mistake. During the last day or two I have gratified my curiosity by looking up the published records of Mr. Corbin—whom, to prevent any misunderstanding, I may add, I have not seen for many months—and I am justified in saying that no other man in Australia with whom my interest in forestry has brought me into contact in all the States has so impressive a record as Mr. Corbin. I find that he holds the degree of B.Sc. in three universities, and that he studied scientifically and practically in—among others—the great forests of Germany, where knowledge in forestry is specialized; that he was employed in highly important practical forest work by the Government of India; that in Australia he founded and organized the only School of Forestry in Australia; that some of the students of that institution are now receiving higher remuneration than their master; that he was selected by the Federal Government to report on forestry schemes for the new Federal capital; that he revolutionized local forestry by his experiments in Kuitpo Forest, which has long been a show place for visitors to the State; and that he is as enthusiastic in giving gratuitous practical advice in connection with the introduction of private forestry, as in the performance of the work for which he is remunerated, so inadequately—this because of his intense love of forestry and his belief in the national importance of promoting it by every proper means. My suggestion is that the Government may turn what might otherwise be a sad mistake into a greater public service by granting a subsidy of a comparatively small amount to the Adelaide University as an aid to the enlarging of the present School of Forestry, conducted by that institution, and combining with it a Chair of Forestry, which could be the first of the kind in the Commonwealth—a distinction peculiarly appropriate in a State

which has the poorest natural forests in the Commonwealth, and yet, with scientific afforestation, can easily be made to produce the fastest-growing and most profitable soft-wood forests in the world. I should think that a grant of £300 or £400 a year, in addition to Mr. Corbin's salary now received at the University, would be sufficient to effect the purpose which is here earnestly urged for acceptance as a means of promoting the growth of an enormously profitable industry, considered both publicly and privately in the light of investment. I am, Sir, &c., A MEMBER OF THE FOREST LEAGUE.

Sir—Upon my return to the city from the north this week-end I was astonished to find the position of Conservator of Forests had been filled by the appointment of some one outside the State, when we have such a remarkably good man as Mr. H. Corbin, B.Sc. Mr. Corbin has not only proved himself a brilliant man in other countries (one of them Germany, which is the cradle of the best foresters in the world), but has a thorough practical knowledge of local conditions; this he has well illustrated at Kuitpo Forest. I am only one of thousands in South Australia who view this oversight as another setback to forestry in this State, and, goodness knows, it has been languishing long enough. Here was a chance of a good man to take charge, and he is turned down. I am, Sir, &c., S. A. WHITE.

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CONSERVATOR OF FORESTS

Mr. Corbin's Rejection.

The Government's Reasons.

As soon as the House of Assembly met on Tuesday, Mr. Robinson said he wished to refer to the recent appointment of Conservator of Forests, and to ask the Government whether, in future, when all other things were equal, preference of appointment to positions in the service would be given to those already in the service.

The Premier (Sir Henry Barwell) replied:—That is undoubtedly the policy of the Government. (Laughter from Labour members.) It has not been departed from in the slightest.

Mr. Edwards—Yes, it has.
The Premier—Well, you know a great deal more about it than I do. We have read a good deal, and heard a good deal, about this appointment. (A Member—You will hear a good deal more.) The Government had made no mistake in regard to the matter. That statement was no reflection whatever upon Mr. Corbin, as regards his academic attainments. He was a lecturer at the University, and quite possibly was doing very good work; but an administrator was wanted.

Mr. Edwards—He has that qualification.
The Premier said that Mr. Corbin's academic attainments were certainly very high, but one must say it after what had been stated—he was lacking in business acumen and in administrative capacity.

Mr. Hill—You are attacking a civil servant who cannot defend himself; it is cowardly.

The Premier—That is all very well; but members spoke without knowing the true facts. It was only members of the Government who knew them.

Mr. Edwards—But we do know.

The Premier—The result of the experience of the Government is that he does not possess the administrative capacity needed for the position.

Mr. Price—And what do you know of the capacity of the man from overseas whom you have appointed?

Mr. Reidy—There are others in the department who have administrative ability.

The Premier—That may be; but, in the appointment, the Government has not departed from its policy that, other things being equal, the position goes to the local man. It is easy for people to criticise when they have neither knowledge nor

Mr. Hill—Put the credentials on the table.

The Premier—If I am forced to it I can put on the table the opinions of every Minister who has had anything to do with Mr. Corbin in the last six years.

Mr. Edwards—Be careful you don't lose the adjournment of the House on it.

The Premier—As an administrator, he is out of the question.

Mr. Price—Will the Premier bring down the credentials of Mr. Julius and Mr. Corbin, so that members can compare them?

The Premier said that the credentials of Mr. Julius were available for members who liked to see them. As he had said, the academic attainments of Mr. Corbin were well known, and very high; his administrative capacity was known to the Government, and none outside could speak to that, yet every one appeared to know. When he gave the reason for the rejection of Mr. Corbin he was charged with having made a cowardly attack, although the reason for the statement was to comply with the request that the reason should be made known. There was no difference of opinion between members of the Government on the matter. The appointment of Mr. Corbin as Conservator of Forests was entirely out of the question.

Mr. Price repeated his request that the credentials of both men should be tabled.

The Premier said that the House would not be able to compare the men as far as administrative capacity was concerned by seeing the credentials. That depended entirely upon experience, and, as the result of six years' experience, he could say that the appointment of Mr. Corbin was out of the question.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor.

Sir—Various criticisms of the disastrous blunder made by the Government in appointing a Forestry Commissioner have failed to emphasize certain aspects of the case that are worthy of notice. The first of these is that Tasmania, the one all-forest State of the Commonwealth, has so misused her endowment that a notable student of forestry, Hutchins, in his "Forests of Australia," stigmatises her efforts in this respect as "the worst in the world." Yet our expert is to be imported from that State. Nothing in the shape of a national forest policy has ever been put into force in Tasmania. As a Tasmanian and a student of afforestation problems, I have been forced by sad experience to these conclusions. Secondly, forestry is regarded as such an important State activity that the expenditure of the "Forestry Department" does not figure anywhere in the annual volume; indeed, all figures that bear on this function of the State have been conveniently repressed. One has to go to the Commonwealth Year Book (No. 15, 1922), which shows that in this model forest State the average annual expenditure on forests for the past five years has been £1,429 (p. 311). Further, that the total forestry "department" consists of 10 persons—One administrator (he was not Mr. Julius), six professionals (including four office clerks at Hobart), and three general. Why Kuitpo alone would absorb the whole staff employed by the Tasmanian department. In the face of these facts we have a man from Tasmania appointed over the heads of technically trained University men. To any one who knows the prestige of our University school of forestry the situation is worthy of Gilbert & Sullivan. An enthusiast in the matter of forestry would be a decided inconvenience to a Government that is not seized of the importance of the problem. That Mr. Corbin is an enthusiast has been proved by his wonderful work with the schoolboys at the Kuitpo camps. It may be, of course, that the hand making the appointment is that of Esau, but the voice—the voice is that of Jacob.—I am, Sir, &c.,

"SILVIUS."

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GIFT FOR MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY

A telegram from our Melbourne correspondent on Tuesday stated:—The Chancellor of the University of Melbourne (Sir John McFarlane) has received a cheque for £2,000 from Sir John Higgins, on behalf of Lady Higgins and himself. This makes a total of £7,200 from these benefactors to the University. This last cheque is given toward the equipment of the Agricultural Laboratory and of the Veterinary Department. "The pastoral and agricultural industries," says Sir John Higgins in his letter, "must ever be paramount in the life and progress of the Australian Commonwealth. Therefore, it is necessary, and indeed imperative, that research work connected with these occupations should proceed without interrup-