

# BROWN COAL.

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The interesting question of the possible utilization of the coals of this State has again come to the fore. The question is admittedly an economic one, but the economic aspect is part and parcel of the technical questions involved.

It is generally assumed that the knowledge we have about the material is sufficient to enable us to draw up a verdict distinctly adverse to the possibility of using the material. It is questionable, however, if we really have sufficient evidence, or if due relative weight has been given to the various items of such evidence as we already have.

As mined, the coal usually contains about half its weight of water. It would be interesting to know roughly what it would cost, on a big scale, merely by taking advantage of our dry climatic conditions, and by suitably exposing the wet material, to reduce the water content to about half its amount. On drying, the material crumbles, it becomes partially a powdered fuel, the very type of fuel which at the present day is meeting with most successful use. In any case, the powder can be briquetted if desired.

Its sulphur content is high; this, on the whole, is disadvantageous. It is possible, however, to recover sulphur from coal gas so as to yield sulphur itself—a valuable by-product. Sulphur is always present in all coals; a 3 per cent. content in black coal is not unusual. Our coal is often condemned for its low calorific power and high ash content, comparisons being made with low-ash, high-grade black coal. It should be remembered that black coal high in ash can be successfully and economically burnt under suitable conditions.

Many samples of the coal have been examined chemically, and a few big-scale tests made of its behaviour on distillation. &c.; but very little seems to have been done on anything more than a few cwt. of material. It is quite certain that the degree of success in the treatment of brown coal which has been reached in, say, Germany, has not been reached by limiting the field of operations to academic discussions, or to the treatment in unsuitable or crude apparatus of a few pounds or cwt. of material. Every coal has its own peculiarities. Its utilization needs individual study, and can best be effected in certain types of apparatus, or perhaps one type. It is this fact which is responsible partly for many forms of apparatus for utilizing, particularly by distillation, the various types of coal. Many firms abroad possess units for big scale experimental work, and will undertake tests. The time has come to take advantage of the knowledge gained in the treatment of coals on a big scale, if the utilization of our coals is contemplated.

To quote a recent private communication from an English expert:—"Each particular coal must be treated on its merits, and a final selection made from the many types of plant that are at present available, first on their applicability to the particular coal involved; and, secondly, on the capital, labour, and operating charges of the system selected for final consideration."

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## ORGAN RECITAL.

Under the auspices of the Elder Conservatorium an organ recital was given in the Town Hall on Thursday at mid-day by Mr. John Horner. There was a fair attendance, and the programme of selections was greatly enjoyed, although the organist did not seem quite at his ease on the instrument which, with its old-fashioned features, seemed to puzzle him at times. Nevertheless he gave, as is usual with him, masterly interpretation of the various items. He opened with the Concerto in G by Vivaldi, in three movements—allegro, adagio, and allegro, the majestic nature of which was well emphasised. Scarlatti's "Siciliano," with its beautiful melodic phrases, was finely played, and the dainty Minuet by Boccherini, was delightful to hear. Then followed selections by modern Italian composers. The first two were compositions by Oreste Ravanello, and included a pretty pastorale, beautifully played, and a finale, in which the full tone of the organ was given play with great effect. Enrico Bossi's "Musette" and "Alleluia" were also pleasing numbers. The former was conspicuous for bright melodies, and the latter for its noble and spirited strains and full chords, with which it concluded. Mr. Alan Cheek sang "Honor and Arms" (Handel) to the accompaniment of the organ, and his effort was highly appreciated.



## FORESTRY EXPERTS TO ARRANGE FOR CONFERENCE

Mr. R. L. Robinson, O.B.E., B.A. (Oxon), B.Sc. (Adelaide), and Major R. D. Furse, who have arrived in Sydney from Britain by the Ventura. They will prepare for the Imperial Forestry Conference to be held at Canberra on Wednesday, September 26. Mr. Robinson is a South Australian.

framed in a clear and simple manner. The professor promised that, as far as he was able, questions should be set in the manner suggested. Already, he thought he could see some ways by which this could be effected. At a date to be named hereafter, he would invite the English teachers in all the schools to send him papers, which they considered contained the types of questions best calculated to draw out the real abilities of their students.

Mr. McDonnell said this did not mean that the professor and his examiners should abrogate in any way their right of independent judgment, but it did mean that for the first time the teachers of English in this State would be empowered to offer suggestions to the examiners, which, coming from all the schools, would naturally be of immense help to the examiners in the framing of suitable questions.

### The Professor's Report.

In a report from the professor, which was read by Mr. McDonnell, it was stated that the conference held on Saturday morning had cleared up a great deal of misunderstanding. He wished, however, to draw attention to a most serious factor in the present situation—one which he firmly believed to be the main cause of the large number of failures in English which occurred last year. The Public Examination Board and Committee discussed, three or four years ago, the question of the reduction of the compulsory interval between the intermediate and the leaving certificate examinations from two years to one year. An assurance was then given that the two years' interval would in practice be maintained in the case of all save exceptionally brilliant candidates. It was also definitely stated that there was no intention of lowering the leaving standard. Accepting the assurance regarding the interval the University did not press for the raising of the intermediate standard. It was obvious, however, that if the understanding were not observed most serious trouble would result, as the standards which were appropriate to a two years' interval could not possibly, for the majority of the pupils, be appropriate to an interval of one year. Unfortunately now, as the University records showed, a majority of the pupils were sent up with one year's preparation only, and by far the greater number of failures occurred within this class. In 1927 476 pupils of the one-year class presented themselves for the leaving examination in English, against 396 of the two-year class. The percentage of failures was 66, as against 56. The members of the one-year class were presumably regarded by their teachers as being brighter than those of the two-year class, otherwise they would have been granted the longer period of preparation; so that it surely became a duty of the Government to see that the to assume that if this period had been granted to them, or to all of them, the exceptionally brilliant minority, there would have been a preponderance of passes over failures for the aggregate number of candidates.

His contention that the single year interval was quite inadequate for the ordinary candidate was strikingly confirmed by certain external opinions on the Adelaide courses which he had recently obtained. They came from three men who had had control of the public examinations in Victoria and New South Wales. Each of these authorities, writing independently, expressed complete approval of the Adelaide leaving certificate syllabus and examination paper, but declared that the intermediate standard was too low, and that only in the rarest cases could

the interval between intermediate and leaving be bridged in one year.

Three choices seemed to be open—(1) An observance of the two-year interval, in all save exceptional cases; (2) the raising of the intermediate standard to a height which would bring this examination within an actual one year's interval of the leaving examination; or (3) a continuance of failures, at, or near, the present percentage. He was desirous of meeting the teachers' wishes in every way consistent with the maintenance of a reasonable English standard at the public examinations, and felt greatly encouraged by their assurance that they themselves wished such a standard to be kept. Naturally, however, his first duty was to the University and to the State of South Australia, for which he had been made the trustee in respect of the English examination. The interests of the State would be very badly served by any lowering of the present standard.

ADV. 12-7-28

## THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

LECTURE BY MR. A. L. G. MCKAY.

At the request of the Public Service Commissioner (Brigadier-General S. Price Weir), Mr. A. L. G. MacKay repeated the lecture, "The Public Service as a Profession," which he delivered before the Institute of Public Accountants, at a gathering of civil servants in the physics lecture-room at the Adelaide University on Wednesday night.

The Premier (Hon. R. L. Butler), who presided, moved a vote of thanks to the lecturer. He said Mr. MacKay had not only shown them where their duty lay, but had informed them how they could make that duty more interesting by learning, knowledge, and industry. He had set a high ideal, which they should encourage. He agreed that the civil service should be a profession. It was the civil servants of England who came from the universities, who had helped to build up the Empire. They went out into the colonies, meting out to all people fair play and justice, and always fitting the round peg into the round hole. He belonged to a class that was not a profession. He did not see how politicians' work could be a profession so long as they had representative government. In the first place, they could not control the entrants. (Laughter.) The man in the street did not want professional politicians. However, it might be advisable to have those people who devote the whole of their time to it, and considered the economic effect of all legislation that was passed. It was a good idea to help civil servants increase their knowledge. The Prime Minister had pointed out that there were millions of pounds for scientific research, but it was the men who were wanted. It was the duty of the Government to see that the civil servants were effectively trained. At Broken Hill the companies were training their young men and giving them every opportunity so that they could carry on. If they could do that, the Government could give the same consideration to their young men, who had brilliance and industry, and who would, in a few years' time, replace the heads of departments, who had so ably guided the civil service. They could be proud of their civil service, and should be thankful that it had not become Americanised. (Applause.)

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