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### SURVEYORS AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES.

MELBOURNE, April 18.

In giving evidence to-day before the royal commission appointed to enquire into the financial position and administration of the Melbourne University, Mr. William Thorn (secretary to the Surveyors' Board) said examinations were held by the board simultaneously in each of the capitals of Australasia. Graduates of the Melbourne University were not admitted without examination, as they were not considered to have had sufficient experience. Bachelors and masters of civil engineering were now required to go through the full examination. This rule applied to other universities of Australasia. Last week a student who passed through the university admitted to him that he was not competent to take an assistant surveyor's position. Since 1898 17 graduates had presented themselves, 8 of whom passed. Only one man passed at the first attempt who had not had experience as a surveyor.

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The inherent tendency of students to play practical jokes of a sometimes unpleasant kind, and to indulge from time to time in playful pranks, requires in connection with the Melbourne University a somewhat formidable statute, instructing the professors to maintain discipline and impose limited punishment. The council of the university decided recently to give the professorial board extended powers of punishment, and the board on Monday recommended that the statute be altered to give it power, in cases of misconduct or breach of discipline, to inflict such punishment as it thought fit, provided that the council might vary in any case in which it was proposed to exclude a student from the university for more than 15 months. The President of the board, it was also recommended, might inflict a fine not exceeding 20s, or exclude a student for 24 hours, or till the matter has been dealt with by the board, and the same might be done by individual professors or lecturers for breaches of discipline in class. These recommendations were adopted by the council, with the qualification that the council might go to the length of setting aside a sentence of rustication for more than 15 months.—Melbourne Age.

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### ADELAIDE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

The annual general meeting of the Adelaide Chamber of Commerce was held at the rooms, 23 Waymouth street, on Friday afternoon. Mr. S. J. Jacobs (President) was in the chair. The attendance was the largest on record.

The general committee, in presenting the fifty-third annual report, congratulated the members on the continued growth of the influence of the chamber. The report stated:—"The number of members on the roll is now 136, which constitutes a record in the history of the chamber. The committee are very gratified at this further indication of appreciation of the advantages of the chamber. A complete list of members, giving names, addresses, callings, codes used, cable address, &c., has been forwarded to all parts of the world in reply to each of the great number of enquiries received for particulars of local firms and their businesses. At the last half-yearly meeting the rules of the chamber were altered so that any society, association, or organized body, provided it became a member of the chamber, could be represented on the general committee by its President or nominee. By virtue of this new authority, the following gentlemen have been appointed ex officio members of the committee:—Mr. R. Riving, President of the Commercial Travellers and Warehousemen's Association; Mr. E. Kay, President of the Institute of Accountants; Mr. W. T. Stacy, nominated by the Marine Underwriters' Association. The committee are strongly of opinion that this innovation will be of great advantage to the chamber." Allusion was made to action taken by the committee in reference to English grain duties, seed wheat, customs administration, River Murray waters, interstate railway rates, the stoppage in the publication of trade statistics (in connection with which the committee deemed it essential that the customs statistical department should be urged to publish at least monthly returns of the movements of all goods between the states), commercial education at the Adelaide University, tender for Commonwealth supplies, drawbacks, and many other matters affecting commercial interests. Capt. Ben. N. Anderson and J. Jones were recommended for the positions of marine surveyors under the Marine Board, and the recommendation was adopted. Messrs. W. Herbert Phillips and A. S. Chesdale represented the chamber at the annual general meeting of the General Council of Chambers of Commerce, held in Sydney, June, 1902, and on their return duly made their report to the committee. Mr. S. J. Jacobs, the President of the chamber, was elected Vice-President of the General Council for the current year. The next annual meeting of the general council will be held in this city on June 16, 1903, and Messrs. S. J. Jacobs (the President) and W. Herbert Phillips (the Vice-President) have been appointed to represent the chamber. Satisfaction was expressed that the clause in the amending South Australian Navigation Bill relating

to the abolition of the Marine Board was rejected by Parliament, and in regard to the exclusion of British artisans under the Immigration Act it was stated:—"The incident was most unfortunate, producing as it did the impression that Australia meant by excluding competition in the labour market to establish an artificially high standard of wages, and thus paralyse industry and retard the advancement of commerce." The balance sheet showed a credit of £232 1/4.

#### —The Presidential Address.—

The President (Mr. S. J. Jacobs), in moving the adoption of the report and balance sheet, said:—"This being the fourth and probably the last occasion, at any rate for some time, that I shall have the privilege of addressing you from the chair, I take the opportunity of thanking the State Government for many courtesies extended to me as President of this chamber. I want also to recognise the inspiring interest exhibited by the two successive committees of my presidency in the work and objects of the chamber, and I want to testify to the industry and activity of the secretary (Mr. Creswell). It is also my duty to refer with gratitude to the powerful assistance which the press gives, by liberal publicity to the work of the chamber. It is intensely satisfactory to bring under your notice the fact that the number of members of the chamber is the highest on record during its long period of existence of 64 years, but there are yet a great number engaged in the commerce of this state who I should be glad to see adding by membership to the influence and power of a necessary and important institution. During the year the stream of commerce has flowed prosperously, and nothing has so much contributed to its fulness as the happy chance of agriculturists within the line of rainfall securing plenteous crops at a time when the less fortunate neighbouring states were suffering from total failures, and were necessarily buyers at abnormally high prices. It may be long before farmers again experience such a fortunate combination of circumstances, and they will do well to bear in mind, the able advice of Sir Jenkin Coles, and abstain from basing their calculations upon an isolated experience. The gains of the year will be best invested by farmers in adopting the most modern and scientific methods of cultivation, thus securing a cheaper cost of production to cope with the more difficult markets in the future. (Hear, hear.)"

#### —Australian Finance.—

There is every reason to believe that South Australian producers generally have substantially benefited by the increase of markets afforded by interstate freetrade, and no task could have been more interesting than to trace the movements of produce between the states had the necessary statistics been available. You will have recently read with interest that the Federal Government are projecting a statistical department, but in the meantime there is no reason why the Customs Departments should not furnish at least monthly returns of all imports and exports between the states. Such information would be of immense value to producers and merchants.

Nothing makes the prospect of the future more pleasing than the recent substantial advance in the value of metals—an advance which it is generally believed will be well maintained. In the increased impetus thus given to important mining industries we shall be able to more comfortably tide over the depression occasioned by drought. It was wise of the Government to send its geologist to report on the prospects of Arltunga. It would have been in the highest degree injudicious to place any reliance on the wave of speculation created by the florid suggestions of irresponsible mining experts. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Brown's report is sufficient to warrant an earnest and systematic development of a promising field, and is not to be regretted because disastrous to wild speculators. The trade generally of this state may be characterized as sound and wholesome, but there still exists the necessity for prudence, as a further continuance of the drought in the far north would prove a disturbing factor. The tendency of the money market throughout the year has been to harden—the scarcity of money arising from a series of bad seasons, and consequent decreased production and exports; and from an unusually heavy drain upon our stores of gold. There have been much excitement and alarm at the serious decline in the value of British and colonial Government securities. The fall was due primarily to the extraordinary demands on the English money market, but it afforded opportunity for a vigorous attack on the sufficiency of security offered for the present public debt of Australia. The strong suggestions that Australia, while recklessly financing and over-borrowing, has at the same time weakened the value of the security she offers by the socialistic tendency of her legislation, whether justified or not, should make Government and legislators pause and think. The warning may be useful. There is, however, this comforting element of independence, that loans for reasonable amounts—and we should only borrow and spend in reason—can always be floated locally with success. The heavy deposits with Australian bankers are a guarantee of this, but better still we have had recent experience of loans being floated locally on more advantageous terms than could be secured abroad. (Cheers.)

#### —Agriculture.—

Seeing that this chamber has always recognised that the interests of commerce are inseparable from the interests of the producers, it was not a matter of wonder that the afflicted farmers in the far north should have sought the co-operation of the committee in measures for the amelioration of their distress. The prompt and successful action of the committee was inspired by sympathy for the victims of misplaced industry and enterprise, but was based on a distinct understanding that there should be no further encouragement to cultivate unsuitable land. The weight of evidence is against the pursuit of agriculture beyond the line of rainfall, and a duty rests upon the Government of this state to withdraw the farmers from there into closer settlement upon more generous country. To grant seed wheat is to merely temporize. There should be careful investigation—opportunity afforded to those desirous of settling in better country—and a firm intimation that those who remain do so at their own risk, and without claim to further re-

lief. The ever pressing necessity of securing extended markets for our primary products claims attention. This would appear to be the duty of the Federal Government, and should take the form of commercial agencies established in every part of the world. There is, however, danger of neglect while it is left uncertain whether the Government of the Commonwealth or the Government of each state should take action, and no time should be lost in arriving at a perfect understanding.

#### —Transcontinental Railway.—

The question of completing the trans-Australian railway may be regarded as "sub judice." The benefit of the project to South Australia is not too apparent, but its advantages to the Australian Commonwealth are small indeed compared to those which would accrue from the completion of a transcontinental railway from south to north. Nothing can be of greater importance to the Commonwealth than to get into closer contact with the rest of the world, and a glance at the map and a recognition of the railway projects in Europe and Asia will at once convince unbiased investigators of the immeasurably greater importance in the interests of progress and development of the north over the west line. Our State Government it is to be hoped are sparing neither money nor trouble to secure the consummation of the scheme, which surely should have commanded the encouragement and support of a progressive Federal Government.

#### —Commercial Education.—

The active part taken by this chamber in the promotion of the higher commercial education has been recognised by the University of Adelaide in the appointment of your Vice-President (Mr. W. Herbert Phillips) and of myself to seats on the Board of Commercial Studies; and, further, by the gift of the principal of a prominent commercial academy of this city of two scholarships tenable for two years at his academy to be competed for by nominees of the members of the chamber. Everywhere the necessity for the higher commercial education is recognised, and there could be no more convincing testimony of its value than the gift made to the University for its encouragement by so able and experienced a business man as Mr. Joseph Fisher. (Cheers.) Our young men must take the matter seriously, or lose the best positions in life to those who have taken the trouble to complete their equipment by training.

#### —Customs Administration.—

The stringency which characterized the earlier administration of the Federal Customs Act has not, as was expected, been melted by time. Over the gates of the custom house there is still the legend, "All hope abandon ye who 'incorrectly enter' here." (Loud laughter.) Everywhere the Australian merchant is proclaimed an honest fellow, and treated as if he were

the reverse. (Cheers.) The course of commerce is clogged by an exaggerated fear for the safety of the revenue. (Cheers.) Attention is called to the increase of the amount of conscience money paid to the Customs Department, but no one is surprised that honest traders conceal their innocent mistakes and make good the duty anonymously. In the administration of such an Act as the Customs Act, framed with stringency to prevent fraud but not to hinder commerce, there is necessary a discriminating and far-seeing justice. I admit that the machinery of such an Act cannot be so nicely adjusted as to prevent friction occurring now and then, but legality is not necessarily a test of justice, and broader views are required in the interests of commerce. The committee have taken the utmost pains to bring before the Minister for Trade and Customs the grievances of traders in respect of customs administration. In some matters the Minister has fixed ideas, and relief can only be secured by certain constitutional methods tending to the appointment of a new administrator, or amendment of the law. Mr. Kingston insists—though it is difficult to follow his logic—that a uniform tariff must have a uniform administration, quite irrespective of the fact that different conditions can, and do, exist in different Australian ports necessitating a variation of procedure to suit the circumstances. Surely an administration that ignores this point of view must have a uniformity of unfairness and injustice. Mr. Kingston claims credit for consulting Chambers of Commerce before drafting the Customs Bill, but so far as the committee of this chamber is concerned their forethought and suggestions for the benefit of the Minister have not always had effect. In a letter to the Minister of March 15, 1901, being before the Customs Bill was drafted, the committee called the attention of the Minister to the difference of conditions existing between Port Adelaide and Melbourne; and in the light of subsequent events, when the Police Court has so often been called upon to do the work of customs officials, it is interesting to note that the committee at the same time suggested that in case of doubt and difference as to the construction of the Customs Act and regulations, and as to what (if any) duties were payable, provision should be made whereby the importer or his agent might ask for, and the Collector or Deputy Collector should give, his opinion; and, further, it was suggested that some such provision as exists in our local Stamp Act might be adopted with a view to expediting business, and preventing the possibility of bona fide traders being punished for mistakes when they could find no guidance. (Cheers.)

#### —General Council of Chambers.—

In the month of June next, representatives of all the Chambers of Commerce will meet in general council for the first time at Adelaide, and the opportunity will be taken of discussing and dealing with matters affecting the commerce of Australia. The principal Commonwealth issues have been after all, and must remain, commercial. It is almost difficult to name any subject which has engaged the attention of the Federal Parliament that has not been of vital importance to commerce, and thus the commercial interests of the different states become inseparably blended by the practically unrestricted powers of the Federal Legislature. It is the work of statesmen above all things to promote the commerce of Australia, upon the growth of which depends the expansion