

## The R.A.O.U. and the C.S.I.R.

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In order that members may understand the position of the R.A.O.U. in the matter of the proposed co-operation with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (C.S.I.R.), the following extracts, taken from the latter's Tenth Annual Report, for the year ended June 30, 1936, are helpful.

In previous Annual Reports of the Council, attention has been drawn to the valuable work which was carried out by the Council's Standing Committee on Agriculture, which comprised amongst its members the permanent head of each of the State Departments of Agriculture, and also to the fact that the results of that Committee's work had been so satisfactory that steps had been taken by the Commonwealth Government to increase its status and to extend its sphere of usefulness.

As a result of a conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers on agricultural and marketing matters, convened at Canberra in December, 1934, by the Commonwealth Government, an Australian Council of Agriculture was established. In order to enable that Council adequately to perform its duties a permanent technical committee was appointed, to be known as the Standing Committee on Agriculture whose duties, in addition to acting as an advisory body to the Council of Agriculture, include the following:

- (1) To secure co-operation and co-ordination in agricultural research through the Commonwealth.
- (2) To advise the Commonwealth and State Governments, either directly or through the Council, on matters pertaining to the initiation and development of research on agricultural problems.
- (3) To secure co-operation between the Commonwealth and States, and between the States themselves, with respect to quarantine measures relating to pests and diseases of plants and animals, and to advise the Commonwealth and State Governments with respect thereto.

It was further decided that the personnel of the Standing Committee as reorganized should consist of (a) the permanent head of each State Department of Agriculture, (b) the three members of the Executive Committee of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, (c) the Secretary of the Department of Commerce, and (d) the Director-General of the Commonwealth Department of Health.

Meetings of the Standing Committee on Agriculture were held at Canberra on May 25 and 26, 1936, and were followed by meetings of the Australian Council of Agriculture on the next two days. At these meetings, reports by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research were furnished on the following matters:

... (t) Protection of birds of economic value. ...

Following these meetings I received the following letter, dated June 15, 1936, from the secretary of the C.S.I.R.:

"With reference to Sir David Rivett's letter to you on 12th May last and to previous correspondence on the above matter, I desire to inform you that the question which you raised regarding the straw-necked ibis and also the general question of the importance of conserving birds of economic value, came up for consideration at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Agriculture held at Canberra on the 25th May last.

"I think you know that Professor J. B. Cleland, in his capacity as President of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union, was

also in communication with Sir David Rivett on the matter, and that he informed Sir David Rivett that the Union would be prepared to advise on points that require elucidation, to indicate how any necessary work can best be done, and through its many members to do much of this work at a comparatively trivial cost.

"The Standing Committee on Agriculture appreciates the importance of this matter and it decided that it would be very glad indeed to accept Professor Cleland's offer and to have advice as to how the proposed work can best be done, and as to what the cost would be. I am accordingly writing to Professor Cleland in the matter."

Since then the matter has been discussed at the Annual Congress of the R.A.O.U. in Adelaide in October, 1936, and a resolution was passed that the Council should form a Standing Committee to co-operate with the C.S.I.R. In December the Council appointed me Convener of this Committee and several members are to be appointed to act upon what will be the Union's official body to collect and collate information required and to carry out the details of the scheme.

It would seem, then, that a chance is offered to the Union to forward some of its avowed aims in a rational way. Many of our problems are long-dated and universal, others immediate and local, but whatever they are they can only be solved by co-operation amongst members. I feel sure that members will see the advantage of being linked up with a body such as the C.S.I.R. Our study of the ecology of birds, which includes their relationship to their surroundings, whether animal, plant or inanimate, is surely a science worthy of our best efforts, and one which will bring us credit and raise our status, at the same time attracting many potential members not especially interested in the technical side of ornithology.

It should be noted that, though not in itself one which can actually legislate in the matter of bird protection, the Standing Committee of the C.S.I.R. appears to be the only body which is able to make recommendations carrying weight in every State of the Commonwealth. Further, many of the individual members are, in their own States, in control of the machinery which formulates and administers legislation in the desired direction.

Possibly questionnaires to the members of the Union generally could be issued, through *The Emu*, on certain specified questions, and information will be sought through other channels. But if any individual member has any matter to bring forward it will be welcomed, if it comes within the activities of the Union's Committee.

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Members desiring the current or other volumes of *The Emu* bound are requested to send loose parts to the Hon. General Secretary by May 10. Binding arrangements will not be delayed after that day.