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THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

FOURTH PROGRESS REPORT

FROM THE

JOINT COMMITTEE ON RURAL
INDUSTRIES.

(ORGANIZATION OF PRIMARY PRODUCTION.)

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE
ON RURAL INDUSTRIES.

(Appointed 3rd July, 1941.)

The Honorable JOSIAH FRANCIS, M.P., Chairman.

Senate.

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Senator the Honorable HERBERT HAYS.
Senator EDWARD BERTRAM JOHNSTON.
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* Discharged from attendance, 12th November, 1941.
† Appointed, 12th November, 1941.
‡ Discharged from attendance, 25th March, 1942.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON RURAL INDUSTRIES.

FOURTH PROGRESS REPORT.

The Joint Committee on Rural Industries, appointed to inquire into the effects of the war on the marketing of Australian primary produce and on the economic condition of the Australian rural industries, has the honour to present the following Progress Report.

ORGANIZATION OF PRIMARY PRODUCTION.

1. One of the outstanding features of the investigations by the Joint Committee on Rural Industries has been the desire of the primary producer to help in the ever increasing demand for the production of essential food-stuffs and other rural products. Given guidance and leadership farmers are only too ready to meet demands, but, lacking that guidance and leadership, the sudden changes of demand and the difficulty of making the necessary adjustments have left a sense of frustration in the minds of many men on the land. Specialized industries—wool, wheat, meat, dairying, &c.—are organized on sectional lines, but a national constructive plan to co-ordinate agriculture and grazing and direct war-time activities of rural industries is wanting.

During the war activities should be so directed that the general efficiency of Australian farming should be raised and diversified production encouraged.

2. Fully recognizing the urgency of the need for planned primary production, the Joint Committee on Rural Industries is unanimously of opinion that it is a war-time necessity for the Commonwealth to have a definite directing and guiding hand in agricultural and pastoral policy.

For this purpose it is urged that a small but efficient Federal Secretariat should be created under the strong leadership of a Commonwealth Director of Primary Production to formulate and direct policy on a national basis. Such a Director should be a forceful man, of organizing ability and with a sound knowledge of Australian agricultural practice. He should be supported by a staff of practical technical and scientific men, including one well versed in agricultural economics. In consultation with Federal Departments and the Australian Food Council—of which he might well be a member—he should decide upon the requirements in the Commonwealth of the various primary products; he should devise and direct the policy that would lead to an adequate supply of such products, involving decisions as to expansion and restriction of crops and the guaranteeing of adequate prices.

3. At the outset a part-time Consultative Committee should be available to the Director to assist in the formulation of policy for agriculture as a whole, covering food and fodder crops and non-food crops such as wool, cotton and tobacco.

4. The Director's functions should include consultation and co-operation with the State Agricultural Departments and, through the State experts, to bring the policy to the farmer.

5. State Committees presided over by the Ministers of Agriculture should be established to implement the policy, and local Committees should be formed to contact and direct the farmer and, if necessary, help him to obtain essential plant, supplies and assistance.

JOS. FRANCIS,
Chairman.

Parliament House,
Canberra,
28th May, 1942.