PRESS STATEMENT

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AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION BUREAU

Recently the Rural Committee of the Liberal Party met in Canberra. The Committee discussed at some length a proposal to establish an Agricultural Research and Extension Bureau. The purpose of such a Bureau would be to achieve some co-ordination in our research and to give an additional stimulus to extension. The Bureau would not be designed to detract from the authority and prerogatives of any existing body or organisation - it would be designed to work in co-operation and to help those bodies that are now operating in these fields. For example, research is conducted by C.S.I.R.O., by universities and by various State organisations. There is not always as much co-ordination between these different bodies as there should be. Indeed, within the ranks of C.S.I.R.O. itself there is sometimes too little co-operation and co-ordination between the different research stations.

In the United States, every research station, whether it is run by a State university or by the Federal Government, has a complete list of all the research work undertaken in every State of the Union. This is cross-referenced so that it is easy to see if any work is being done on a certain subject, or what work is being done at a certain Station. No such information is available in Australia, and because it is not available it may well be that there is some duplication or that different people are conducting research into similar matters in different parts of the country, and that they could both benefit very greatly if they got together and discussed mutual problems. Some of this happens at the present time, but not enough.

These matters are made more difficult in Australia because there is a question of divided responsibility. The Commonwealth has the responsibility for fundamental research and the State has the prime responsibility for applied research and for extension.

The proposed Agricultural Research and Extension Bureau would certainly take no rights away from the State Governments. It would indeed seek to work with them. If there were certain fundamental problems to which a certain State might like to direct the attention of C.S.I.R.O. it could use the facilities of the Bureau to do so. On the other hand, if the Bureau felt that there was some particular matter that was not receiving sufficient extension in a certain State, it might be able to provide the funds to enable this to take place. In addition, the Bureau would be able to inform all States of what was happening in the others so that each area would be able to get the advantage of the advice and knowledge of what was going on in other parts of Australia.

The Federal Rural Committee of the Liberal Party has for some time been concerned about these matters because it recognises that good research and the proper application of the results of research can have a very real effect on the costs of primary industries in Australia.

I examined these matters at some length in the United States and am convinced that the proposed Agricultural Research and Extension Bureau would make a good contribution to the Australian efforts in these fields.

We cannot adapt the American system entirely to our situation because the machinery that has been developed there is quite different. In Australia it is more a question of developing machinery suitable to our own
circumstances which will help us to achieve results similar to those that they have worked out in the United States.

I must emphasise that this matter is a proposal of the Federal Rural Committee — it is not a policy decision by the Government. There are, however, various things going on in these fields, and the Commonwealth is examining ways and means of seeing what can be done to assist rural industries in these directions.