Some time ago there was quite a lot of publicity concerning the possible establishment of a Pastoral Research Station in Western Victoria undertaken as a joint organisation between the C.S.I.R.O. and the State Department of Agriculture.

Last week I sought the latest information on this matter from the Minister in Charge of C.S.I.R.O. and I thought many people may be interested in the latest position concerning this Research Station and therefore I want to give the full story as it stands at the present time.

In November 1955 the Premier of Victoria approached the Prime Minister to see if the Commonwealth would join with the Government of Victoria in establishing a Pastoral Research Station in the Western District of Victoria.

The matter was referred to officers of the C.S.I.R.O. and the Victorian Department of Agriculture who carried out a survey in Western Victoria. The general conclusions reached by the survey were these:-

Firstly, that there was a variety of problems, both of pastures and livestock, which were responsible for substantial losses in productivity and which were preventing the development of the region to its full productive potential.

Secondly, the problems appeared to involve investigation of pasture establishment, maintenance and management, and livestock nutrition and management. It was believed that the problems would be susceptible to investigation by simple but carefully planned field studies.

Thirdly, the pasture and livestock problems did not appear to be of such a character as to justify the establishment of a research laboratory or the purchase of an area for long term research.

Following upon the survey which led to these conclusions, Sir Ian Clunies Ross, Chairman of the C.S.I.R.O. and Mr. Ryan, Director of the Department of Agriculture in Victoria, submitted a number of recommendations which involved the leasing by the Victorian Department of Agriculture of 500-750 acres of
land. The overall responsibility for staffing and maintenance of the field station would belong to the Victorian Department of Agriculture whilst the C.S.I.R.O. would be consulted in connection with the experimental programme and would, on its own initiative, undertake certain pasture plant improvement work on the station which would involve the possible development of pasture plants especially suited to the needs of Western Victoria.

I think it is most significant that at its last meeting the Wool Research Committee which was established by this Government at the end of last session to examine problems relating to wool research so that wool may maintain its competitive position in the world's markets. At its last meeting, this Committee recommended that grants of £5,000 be made for establishment costs of this research station and that a grant of £3,000 per annum be made towards the cost of salaries and maintenance.

This is one of the small ways in which the Wool Research Committee is getting down to its practical job of helping wool growers solve many of the problems involved in the growth of wool.

From the latest information I have available, the Victorian Department of Agriculture is at present looking for a suitable area which it could use for the purposes which were outlined in this survey. It would be impossible, of course, to say exactly where the research station may be situated because that will depend in a large measure where suitable property can be found.

There is one other thing on which I would like to say a few words tonight. Last week, the general debate on the Budget finished. In this debate, many Members from both sides of the House discussed the particular aspects of the Government's financial policy and its influence upon different sections of the community. I have already reported upon the Budget in fairly full detail but you may wonder why the House is still involved in debating matters stemming from the Budget. Once the debate on the Budget in general has been completed, the House gets down to the solid business of debating the Estimates in detail. During the debate on the Estimates,
each Department is taken singly and the subject for the debate is, broadly, the administration of the Department and the wisdom of the Department's expenditure for the coming year.

During the debate on the Estimates the Ministers concerned are nearly always in the Chamber listening to the points brought forward by Members and often the Minister will rise during the debate to answer points made by Members during the course of the Estimates debate.

In the House of Representatives, the periods which any Member may speak are limited for the different kinds of debate by what are called the Standing Orders and for the Estimates, a Member may speak on any one Department for 15 minutes and if there is a further period available in the debate on that Department and if another Member who has not spoken does not claim the time, the Member may speak for a second period of 15 minutes.

It is during the Estimates debate that Members are given a chance to reveal detailed knowledge of administration and departmental affairs.

The debate on the Estimates is expected to last until nearly the end of this month.
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