Professor J.W. Paterson.

Professor J.W. Paterson was the son of a Scotch farmer of Peebles. He was born in 1869 and was therefore 44 when appointed to the Hackett Chair of Agriculture. After early schooling he spent five years on his father's farm where he became acquainted with the details of farm management and every form of manual work. Graduated B.Sc. Edinburgh 1894. Early in 1895 went to Gottingen and during long vacation worked on a moorland farm in the Grand Dueby to get an insight into local practice. In 1896 sat at Leipzig for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, selected Agricultural Chemistry and Economics and passed with honours.

Professor Paterson was a competent agriculturist. The list of technical papers published before he came to Western Australia was impressive. While in Western Australia he published his text book "Nature in Farming" which he dedicated to the Chancellor, Dr. Hackett. He was conscientious in his efforts to make the University a Western Australian University and not merely a Perth University. The number of country centres where, at the invitation of local organisations, he delivered courses of lectures was very large, and there were in addition numerous visits of inspection and advice which he was always ready to undertake for the benefit of groups or individual farmers. All this he regarded as part of the work of a University Professor and covered by his professorial salary. This of course was the correct view. It was an obligation, clearly expressed in the terms of appointment, which received small recognition by the majority of the teaching staff.

A clause in a letter which the Senate authorised the Chancellor to send to each member of the teaching staff appointed during Dr. Hackett's Chancellorship definitely states that the appointee may be required to do extension
work without extra pay.

In common with every Agricultural Faculty in Australia the enrolment of students was never very large, but of the few several have since done work which has made them known outside Australia and most of the remainder now serve the State in the Agricultural Department and by their work prove their training to have been sound.

Professor Paterson did good work for the State but he suffered from several disabilities. He was a pragmatical Scot and many found it difficult to disagree with him without rancour. His Scotch accent was strong and peculiar. For instance inquiry was a word he frequently used and as pronounced was always "enquiry." He never said put but always something like "pit". A favourite student was one named Doscas and Paterson's slow and ponderous and very Scotch behest during lectures to "put a note in your book Mr. Doscas" became a catch phrase with the whole University. He was a tall, well built man of dark complexion and shining hair, once jet black, then half white. His most serious disability was that owing to some nervous disability was that owing to some nervous disorder he was unable to keep his head still. It was always on a slow wobble. And then there was his age. The attitude of academic circles towards age came as a surprise to me. The very words "Senator" and "Professor" smack of the grave and reverent seignior. But I found a strong prejudice which held that unless a University man had secured some substantial and permanent and academic job before he had passed the early thirties, there must be something deficient about him. So the 44 year old pragmatical Scot with the wobbly head was heavily handicapped. With the practical farmers none of these disabilities weighed a straw and he soon became a very popular and respected figure at country gatherings and esteemed as an exponent of scientific agriculture. But not so his
University colleagues. All through the eleven years he was Professor there was a persistent depreciative attitude. The physical defects were also very patent to the Chancellor and Mr. Grasby when they went to Melbourne to interview Paterson with other applicants. At Hackett's suggestion the Senate agreed to appoint him, but at £600 a year. This was £200 less than other Professors were getting and that amount was for the time being to go to a fund for Agricultural Scholarships.

He was appointed Vice-Chancellor in 1918. Some members of the staff, whose depreciation of Paterson had been dormant while he was only concerned with his department resented his elevation to the Vice-Chancellorship and Paterson was not the man to try and disguise his authority in soft words. A remarkable letter to the Vice-Chancellor (Paterson) from a member of the staff was about the first sign that moves had begun to secure the appointment of Whitfeld as permanent Vice-Chancellor. The letter from the member was not dated but was apparently written some time before the end of November 1919 when Paterson's first year as Vice-Chancellor was coming to an end:

".....The Professorial Board should consider the question "of Vice-Chancellorship, and in my opinion the Board should "(1) receive an assurance from you that you do not intend "to resign at the end of year, or (2) receive an assurance "from you that you will not resign without first giving "the Board a chance of nominating your successor, or (3) "both these assurances failing, proceed forthwith to "nominate your successor. This is a matter of very great "importance to every member of the Board and indeed to the "whole teaching staff and I hope you will bring it before "the Board before it is too late."

As the position of Vice-Chancellor is entirely in the gift of the Senate, this letter from one of the staff
to the Vice-Chancellor can only be construed as a rather impertinent manifestation of a strong desire to get rid of the Vice-Chancellor to whom it was addressed and to make certain that some unnamed person whom the writer of the letter desired to be Vice-Chancellor had ample notice during which to prepare for the vacancy.

Paterson's reply is not on record, but significantly enough the Chancellor (Riley) wrote 20/11/1919 asking Paterson to retain the position of Vice-Chancellor. He replied the same day accepting. Still another letter of the same date (20/11/1919) from the Chancellor informed Paterson that his salary had been raised by £200 per year to the same level as the other Professors. It would appear from this rapid sequence of letters that the Chancellor had been authorised to give Paterson the rise in salary if he agreed to carry on as Vice-Chancellor.

On 15/12/1920 the Chancellor wrote thanking Paterson on behalf of the Senate for three years service as Vice-Chancellor. On 20/2/1923 the Chancellor intimated that another £100 had been added to his salary. This I presume had reference to the payment towards his superannuation which up to then had been withheld owing to the nervous affection from which he suffered.

In June of 1925 Paterson took seriously ill and was granted a series of short periods of sick leave, but was unable to resume work until March 1926.

Under date 19/11/1932 there is an unsigned memo, apparently by Whitfeld to the then Chancellor, Sir Walter James, that he mention to the next meeting of the Senate that Paterson reaches normal retiring age in June 1934. "I think," the memo, says, "the Senate should give him twelve months notice as it did Wilsmore of its intentions, i.e., whether it wishes him to stay on after the age of retirement or not." Paterson strongly resented the suggestion which reached him that he had forecasted
retirement. He protested vigorously against being treated differently to Wilsmore who had been continued on until he had reached 70 years of age. But Wilsmore, even at 70, was a much more efficient man than Paterson at 65.

So on 21/11/1933 he was notified that he would be retired on 31/12/1934.

Paterson and I always got on very well. He appeared to recognise in me a kindred spirit and "brother Scot" and he claimed in a heavy, jocular way that some distant Clan relationship existed. As an illustration of the kindly heart underlying his gawky manner I recall the following incident.

While the Senate was discussing the arrangements for a degree ceremony during Paterson's term as Vice-Chancellor I voiced an objection to the notice on the invitation card that evening dress was to be worn. I expressed the opinion that it was a mere compliance with a snobbish convention, but my chief objection was that some of the graduands were the children of wage earning parents who, particularly the fathers, would probably not have evening dress. These, by the wording of the invitation, would be barred from attending a ceremony of great importance to them and their children. Paterson was apparently unable to believe the reasons I gave to be my real reasons and assumed that I was objecting to evening dress being prescribed because I was not provided with the necessary garments myself. So, much to my astonishment, he came to my house and solemnly offered me the loan of his. As he was about 3 inches taller than me and of less girth I would in his clothes have contributed to the hilarity of the Ceremony.

Notwithstanding his physical defects and his pragmatical manner Paterson was always a direct speaking honest gentleman with strict standards of duty and conduct.

One of the most difficult interviews I have ever had with any man was when he came to see me with the evident
but unexpressed desire that I would support his protest against being retired at 65 when Wilmore was kept on to 70. I think I was somewhat under the influence of Wilmore’s thinly disguised contempt for Paterson’s chemical knowledge and thought we could get a better man. I did not respond to his lead or promise to support his desire for an extension of his engagement, so after some time he said “Very well Mr. Somerville, I understand” and changed the subject. During the remainder of his stay with us he never gave any sign that he resented my failure to support him.

The Vice-Chancellor reported to the Senate (July 1934) that he had consulted Paterson as to the type we should seek as his successor. Paterson had responded with a long letter in which he reviewed the future policy of the Agricultural Department and the type of man we should seek as his successor. So, notwithstanding that he considered he had been badly treated by not having his term extended to the age of 70, he still conscientiously played the game to the end.

As soon as possible he returned to Scotland, and like others who owe much to Western Australia, he apparently ceased to take any interest in this country. He was always an immigrant on a foreign shore - he never became an Australian.

Professor W.J. Dakin.

The successful applicant for the Chair of Biology, W.J. Dakin, D.Sc. (Liverpool), was described by Mr. Cyril Jackson as bright, keen and with a good manner. The description was undoubtedly correct. He obtained his M.Sc. Liverpool in 1907 and in the same year was awarded an 1871 Exhibition Fellowship. In 1907-8 he worked in the Laboratory of Kiel University and in Heligoland for four months after being permitted by the German authorities to join the investigation tour of the ship Poseidon.
1909-10 Lecturer in Zoology at Belfast University; 1910 Assistant Lecturer and Doctor of Science same year; 1912 Senior Lecturer, Department of Zoology, London. This last was the position he held when appointed Professor of Biology, Western Australia. The Chancellor's letter of appointment contained his standard intimation that the Professor's work may include extension lectures.

In October 1919 Dakin wrote to the Vice-Chancellor "I am asking the Senate for leave of absence on the understanding that I provide such assistance as will be satisfactory to Professorial Board and the Faculty .... the granting of my request will not involve the University in extra expenditure for I only ask for this leave on the understanding that I provide extra assistance to my Lecturer, Mr. Cayser."

This application is of interest for it was the first and was granted on condition that it did not involve the University in any extra expenditure.

On 24th October, 1919 the Senate granted leave to Dakin on condition that no extra expense to the University was involved and that arrangements for carrying on the Department were satisfactory. The Vice-Chancellor (Paterson) methodically got letters from Messrs. Shearmun, Montgomery and Cayser agreeing to do Dakin's work while he was away. But notwithstanding Mr. Cayser's written undertaking he took the opportunity of a better job offering. This threw the Biology Department into confusion. Urgent requests were sent all over Australia for temporary assistants. The Chancellor (Riley) was moved to send a sharp reprimand in which he said "the Senate was a good deal annoyed" and again on 17th March, 1920 asking Dakin if he knew there was a possibility of Cayser leaving during his (Dakin's) absence. Dakin sent a very indignant reply to this on 5th May, 1920, and on 8th June, 1920 a cable announcing that he had been offered the Chair of
Zoology at Liverpool. The Senate with its usual generosity to members of the teaching staff agreed to liberate him at the end of the year. The following are extracts from a letter, 20th June, 1920 —

"......... I should like the Authorities to understand that the offer of the Chair of Zoology at the University of Liverpool came as a great shock to me, just as the vacancy came as a tragedy to the University world here. I had no idea at any time in fact of staying in this country and was in London at the British Museum working up a collection of West Australian insects for our Department in Perth when the newspapers announced the death of Professor Doncaster, F.R.S. Two or three days after I was offered the Chair and asked to visit Liverpool to meet the authorities. I felt of course greatly honoured but pointed out that I had in duty bound to return to Perth and to finish off the year ......... To my surprise the Liverpool Senate agreed to wait to January, 1921."

And that finished Dakin's connection with Western Australia, but as with most men who once enjoy a term in Australia its pull proved irresistible and some years after Dakin was back in Australia at Sydney University.

The very interesting letter from Professor Dakin which follows was in reply to one from me asking for personal reminiscences about the opening of the West Australian University and also the following question — "If I might I would like to ask you what were your reactions to conditions in England generally after some years in Australia, and what do you consider is the effect on Australian national sentiment of the continued importation and appointment to positions of great influence on Australian youth of forceful, dominating and highly competent persons like yourself after they have reached an age when their personal loyalties and even their
"accent have been fixed?
"The second question I regard as of considerable
"importance. The effect of these continued importations
"upon the development of Australian literature, art and
"science is very great."

It will be seen on reading Professor Dakin's letter
that he has rather missed the point of my question. There
can be no doubt that the importation of up to date
scientists is of enormous benefit to Australian science.
It may even be argued that the same applies to literature
and art. But my question is to the effect of all this
importation upon Australian sentiment, and I suggest that
it is kept too English and not sufficiently Australian.

"The University of Sydney,
Department of Zoology,
11th October, 1944.

"Dr. W. Somerville,

"I'm very glad indeed to hear that you are
"writing a history of the University of Western Australia.
"It ought to be done before the personal things are
"forgotten. They have a bearing very often on bigger
"actions.

"Well, here are some points for you.

"Before I was appointed to the University of W.A. I was
"Senior Lecturer in Zoology at University College, London.
"I had not long been appointed and it was usually accepted
"that the next move from this appointment was to a
"professorship. Now Wilmore was Lecturer in Chemistry
"in the same institution and so we both knew that the
"other had applied for Western Australia about two months
"before the appointments were made.

"Wilmore was an Australian. He loved
"Australia and he was hoping and hoping that he would be
"appointed. He kept telling me all about Australia and
"making me enthusiastic about the fine work that could be
done there. I was keen on going for quite a different
reason too. I was a zoologist and Australia had
excellent opportunities for research in Zoology -
expeditions were always leaving for Australia.
"

Well, in due course, both Wilsore and
myself found we had been appointed. Just before Wilsore
left, however, he was offered the very fine professorship
of Physical Chemistry at the University of Liverpool.

He didn't know what to do. He knew this would be a
wonderful appointment with everything required, but he
loved Australia and he felt he had in duty bound (having
signed an agreement with the Agent General in London) to
go on to Perth.
"

We arrived. We found even before arriving
(at Colombo) that the University courses were to begin
in March although the buildings were not completed, and
no equipment was available for Science.

Some details of what we did between our
arrival and the opening lectures are given below, but I
may say that between the busy hours of planning there were
hours of depression (particularly at night) at the complete
inability of most of the general public to understand our
plight or to sympathise. I was very young and enthusiastic
and I felt that the situation had to change. Wilsore
could see the terrific difference between what he had ex-
pected, what he would have had at Liverpool, and what was
available in Perth. He never recovered from this all the
time I knew him. So in this case an Englishman fitted
into the scene better than an Australian!!
"

My wife had only just taken a first class
degree in Zoology six months before we left England — we
had only just been married. So I had an excellent
assistant and the University had an extra helper free of
"cost. She was needed. I think without her help I should
have returned to England.
"Well, the University had been advertised to
"open on a definite day and lectures at least were to begin.
"Day after day we went down to the site and
"watched the wooden buildings going up - we stepped over
"the foundations before the flooring boards were laid down,
"yet the place was to be opened within two months. We
"marvelled at the smallness of the rooms. We could not
"believe that no provision was being made for any
"laboratories - just eight plain similarly sized lecture
"rooms - one each for Whitfield, Wilsmore, Shann, Ross,
"Murdock, Woolnough, Wood and myself.
"So Woolnough and I got together and decided
"to "pool" our two rooms, making one large one which was
"to be used by us alternately. This depended on agreement.
"We had to prevent the intervening wall being built,
"unofficially, and we decided we would fix up the one
"large room as a laboratory. Lectures could also be held
"in it if benches were moveable.
"This became the only large room in the
"building and was laboratory, Reception Hall for parties,
"Lecture room for lectures open to the public, and even
"the "chapel" for Ross's wedding!!
"
"On the Sunday morning before the opening,
"due on the Monday, we visited the place after the workmen
"had left. It was a complete mess. Shavings and bits of
"wood were all over the place. My wife and I with Ross
"swept up our rooms. After that had been done, Mrs. Dakin
"sat on the floor and finished making the diagrams she had
"been working on all week.
"
"Previously to this, we had been collecting
"specimens of plants around the gardens and spending every
"week-end in the bush and on the seashore after specimens.
'We walked over vast areas with Professor Woolnough who first initiated us to the Australian bush. Fortunately I had discovered about twelve new microscopes in the Perth Technical School, bought for some class which never materialised. We arranged for their loan to the University and so by this stroke of luck, Biology was in a position to make some kind of a start.

Then we bought pie dishes, and with no laboratory attendant we melted paraffin wax into our first dissection dishes. One day a rough looking, but very hard working young man turned up, looking for a job as a laboratory attendant. After a little energy was spent in convincing the Senate that no practical work could possibly be carried on without attendants, we got him. He was a godsend until unfortunately he enlisted (as he would) and went off to the war.

One of our most extraordinary experiences was the wholesale system of professorial board meetings to make a Calendar with all its rules and regulations.

The University opened its doors quietly but with an entrance number that completely upset most expectations. I think it was said that it was a record for the first year in any Australian University.

No arrangements had been made for any retiring rooms for students except a small cloak room for the women students. So soon after the University opened Mrs. Wilsome and Mrs. Dakin gave an afternoon tea party for the women students and women members of the Senate to bring some of the difficulties forward. It was requested that a room be added to the cloakroom where women students could sit and rest between lectures. The idea was looked upon as a luxury at first. The wives, however, persevered and donations were made and obtained in money and kind for furnishings. In the end a suitable room was achieved with furniture and a gas ring for boiling water and making tea.


"Since both Mrs. Wilsmore and Mrs. Dakin were University graduates they took the lead in helping the women students to take their part in the foundation of the Guild of Undergraduates of the University. Mrs. Ross, also a University graduate, joined them when she arrived a few months later."

"Another early incident of interest was the hard work put in by all to hold an opening reception and kind of exhibition to show off the University to the public of Perth."

"Just when further difficulties were arising, and yet almost immediately after we had obtained our first scientific apparatus from Europe, a great 'fillip' was given to us by the arrival in Western Australia of an advance party of the British Association for the Advance- ment of Science in 1914. There is no telling what this Meeting might have achieved in Australia. But even as the main body arrived, war broke out and everything was changed."

"Professor Shann tried to enlist, but was refused on the grounds of having other more important duties in the University. Some professors went to England on Munitions work (Whitfeld and Wilsmore). I went to Colombo, Ceylon, in the first long vacation of the war (at the end of 1914) and joined up with their Public Health Department in carrying out routine work on plague and pathology generally. After staying in Ceylon for some months, I returned to Perth and since there was now a great shortage of doctors, and it was pointed out to me that I could be usefully employed helping in the Perth public health department when not teaching, I entered voluntarily on these duties. I was thus busy with the Cerebro-spinal Meningitis outbreak amidst the troops in Western Australia and later too helped in the influenza outbreak."
Research in Zoology had, by this time, faded out as a possibility although I managed to cram in a little and published one textbook and several research papers. Amongst other more successful research items was the organisation and leading of a Scientific Expedition to the Abrolhos Islands. The money was subscribed in England and sent out from the Royal and Linnean Societies. The materials were sent to specialists all over the world and in the years which followed, many publications on the results appeared in the Journal of the Linnean Society of London.

In 1920 I left for England on "sabbatical" leave — but owing to staff difficulties I could only spare six months away. At the end of that time, just as I was leaving for Australia, I was invited to the Professorial Chair at my old University, Liverpool. Notwithstanding the fine buildings and the excellent equipment I was going to, I felt a great loss at leaving Western Australia in 1921. The opportunities in a new country like Australia were rather exciting — the originating of a new University had an attraction all of its own. But above all, the wonderful hospitality and kindness of many West Australians had left a deep impression which was never filled up. On the other hand the restriction in both research and teaching through inability to get funds was serious, and in 1921 there was not even a glimmer of hope that any money would be forthcoming from the Hackett Estate, or the Government.

I took up my duties at Liverpool in 1921 and remained as Professor there until 1928, being Dean of the Faculty of Science during my last two years. During that time I was made External Examiner at the Universities of London, Belfast and Wales. I was Secretary for the Zoology Section of the British Association.

I had no thought, whatever, of returning to Australia although the climate of Liverpool often made us
"Long for the sunny days of Australia. In addition I had never forgotten some of the research work I had wished to carry out but from which I was prevented by the war.

Perhaps it was news of this which had reached the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney. Thus, when I received an invitation to the Chair of Zoology at Sydney University I regarded it in quite a different light from what would have happened if the vacancy had simply been noticed in a scientific journal.

It was by invitation that I returned to Australia and to Sydney, and part of my reason was research, and part was due to the happy feelings left by my sojourn with West Australians - shall we say sentiment? There was no financial advantage, strange to say, in fact there was a loss, for I not only had to bring out my family and furniture but I soon found that a house in Sydney cost two - three times the amount of a similar one in England. I do not think many men would do this.

You have asked a question - the effect on Australian National sentiment, of the importation of people like myself. I think the complete answer is - "Very little, if any at all."

When I was appointed to Sydney, two other professorships were filled in the Medical Faculty. A rather notorious Sydney professor (who was afterwards found guilty of serious crimes, and committed suicide) wrote an article in one of the newspapers objecting to the appointments. It did not produce even other letters. The only effect of these importations which I have noticed is an unpleasant jealousy and feeling of resentment, at the time, by second-rate Australian lecturers who coveted the positions filled. But these men forget altogether that England makes no obstacle to the appointment of Australians and I could name a whole series of
"Australians who are professors in England - for example Hancock, History, at Birmingham, who was for a time lecturer in your own University of W.A., and the famous Florey now at Oxford.

The fact is that in the greater part of the British Empire there is freedom of movement in the appointment of professors and good men can get where they will.

The greatest tragedy in University appointments is to appoint the men who have never moved about, who are narrow in their views, who have never wanted anywhere else, who stick on and expect a senior post only on the grounds of seniority. That is avoided at all costs in England. It has not been avoided in Australia where there is altogether insufficient movement between our own Universities.

Naturally I think from a National viewpoint, the best professor in an Australian University, is an Australian who has been on the staff of other Universities and has been for some little time in Great Britain, or America, or other big suitable centres of education or Science. But these good Australians are being snapped up in England, Scotland, the U.S.A. and so on. And they will continue to be snapped up so long as Australian conditions are poor in the extreme compared with the facilities in other lands.

So far as students are concerned, I think at Sydney it is a huge advantage to have professors who have been trained and have lived in different parts of the world. There is no direct personal effect, because speech and manners are not sufficient today to make a student conscious of being lectured to by an Englishman (although he will recognise a Scotchman!)

I think that is my answer to the question. Australia can congratulate herself if she can get good men as
"Professors. What she has to avoid is getting second-rate men from overseas just as from any other quarter. This has sometimes not been realised. There is no advantage in going to an unknown source overseas - better take your own and well-known second-rate than some unknown one.

But if you can for some reason attract good men - then there is nothing against it. In other words - the University will succeed which fills its chairs with a completely open field and takes care to be fully informed of the characters and abilities of the applicants.

I hope the above will be of some use in your work.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(W.J. Dakin)

Professor of Zoology.

Dr. N.T.M. Wilsmore.

The University was very fortunate in its selection of the first Professors, but the most outstanding figure of them all was Dr. N.T.M. Wilsmore, D.Sc., F.I.C. I got to know him more intimately than any others of the University staff. From about 1915 to 1936 when the Chemistry Department was moved into the new Science Buildings at Crawley, we lunched at the same table in a Perth restaurant. I grew to admire and marvel at his encyclopaedic mind and his modesty about his own knowledge and attainments. If any question arose in discussion among his intimates about which anyone was in doubt the invariable decision was to ask Wilsmore. The question might relate to any of the sciences, history, economics, etc. If he had any exact information, and he usually had, it was immediately forthcoming in a few clear cut sentences conveying the maximum of information with the minimum of words.
If he did not know he said so. There was never any loose surmise or guess to cover up want of knowledge. He either knew or did not.

He was the best hater I have ever known, and withal a most loyal friend. Any remark in the least disparaging to an absent friend immediately brought Wilsomore hot in defence. In the company of those he did not know well he was very reserved and even stiff, but with his intimates he was delightful company with a keen sense of humour and a fund of good stories.

He had an excellent wit of the mordant, rather acid type. He was given frequent opportunities to display this by presamen who got into a habit of asking Wilsomore to explain obscure telegrams received from overseas relating to some development in science. If he thought the development referred to in the telegram was genuine he would be at pains to amplify and explain. If he thought it bogus he would frizzle it up with some sarcastic comments which were always good reading.

Wilsomore was not built to create a favourable impression on first contact. His shy and reserved manner towards strangers, his pale yellow hair and thin beard, and above all his obviously defective eyesight all tended to make approach difficult.

His participation in Senate politics was limited to a term of less than one year as Vice-Chancellor. He was modest and silent about his own attainments and had a hearty contempt for the pushful self-advertiser.

One result of all these characteristics was that quite a number of people prominent in University affairs never realised how distinguished a scientist we had among us. He was content to do his job teaching brilliantly. I have heard his ex-students describe his lectures as masterly. The number of chemists he trained and the status they
acquired after their student days is his monument.

I have mentioned his defective eyesight. It was a subject he never mentioned and consequently no one in my company ever asked any questions about it and I never knew the extent of the disability. He always carried a powerful lens in his waistcoat pocket and when he desired to read any letter or book in public it was always used to supplement the spectacles he habitually wore and the paper was held within a few inches of the eye. How he did his scientific work was a mystery. To master his disability and acquire the reputation he had as a scientist must have required a dogged determination and perseverance of which few men are capable.

The facts of his career are well put in an unusually well informed obituary notice published in the "West Australian" at the time of his death. (One significant fact not mentioned in this notice is that so impressed were the Senate with his value as a teacher, that when he reached the retiring age of 65 he was asked and agreed to continue to the age of 70).

(From the "West Australian" 15th March, 1940):

"Dr. N.T.H. Wilsome, who retired from the Chair of "Chemistry in the University of Western Australia at the 
"end of 1937, died at his home at Claremont on Wednesday 
"night, after an illness lasting a month. He was 72 years 
"of age. After his retirement Dr. Wilsome engaged in 
"chemical research work.
"

Brilliant chemist and inspired teacher, Dr. Wilsome 
"came to the University of Western Australia as Professor 
"of Chemistry when it opened in 1913 with an outstanding 
"reputation for scholarship and research. Graduates in 
"chemistry working in this and other States, honours 
"graduates occupying key positions in commercial and 
"technical firms in Australia and Great Britain, all testify 
"to the late Dr. Wilsome's capacity to inculcate knowledge
"and his ability to rouse the best in students.

Dr. Wilsome was born in 1868 at Williamstown, Victoria.

Almost the whole of his life was passed in academic surroundings. He was educated at the University of Melbourne, the University of Göttingen (Germany) and University College, London, proving a brilliant student. For a time he was first assistant at the Department of Physical and Electro-Chemistry at the Federal Polytechnic at Zurich (Switzerland). From there he passed to the position of Assistant Professor of Chemistry at University College, London. Dr. Wilsome's only break from duty at the University of Western Australia before his retirement was in 1917 and 1918, when he was summoned to London to work at the Headquarters Staff Department of Explosives Supply.

He was a member of the Senate of the University of Western Australia from 1916 to 1922 and in 1924 was Vice-Chancellor.

Among his qualifications were those of Doctor of Science of the University of Melbourne, a Fellow of the Institute of Chemistry of Great Britain and Ireland, an Associate of the Australian Chemical Institute and a Member of the Institute of Chemical Engineers.

It was while he was assistant-professor at the University of London that Dr. Wilsome applied for the post of Professor of Chemistry in the University then being established in Perth. He secured the appointment but, before he left England, such was the recognition given to his capacity and work, the authorities of the University of Liverpool offered him the Chair of Physical Chemistry vacated by Professor F.G. Donnan, who went to University College, London, on the retirement of Sir William Ramsay.

While the Liverpool post was much the better appointment, Dr. Wilsome was unable to accept the position owing to his prior arrangement with the University of Western Australia.
"Dr. Wilsmore published many chemical papers. At London his work included both physical and organic chemistry, in which he achieved important results. His investigation of electrode potentials and his discovery of ketene, then a new type of organic compound, were of a special interest to the profession. Many technical interests had Dr. Wilsmore's attention outside his university work. A member of the State committee of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research from its inception, he acted as chairman of the committee on a number of occasions. Nine or ten of his students are now employed in the technical work of the council. A member of the Australian National Research Council since its inception, Dr. Wilsmore also took an active interest in the work of the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science and, with Mr. A. Gibb-Maitland, he organised the association's successful conference in Perth in 1926. He was general president of the Australian Chemical Institute in 1937-38; president of the West Australian branch of the institute in 1919-20 and again from 1937 to 1939; and president of the Royal Society of Western Australia in 1930-31.

Many Pressmen are indebted to Professor Wilsmore. His encyclopaedic mind was a rich asset always at their disposal. Cryptic telegrams from the other side of the world on technical discoveries and developments were readily interpreted by him; he discussed with special insight the conclusions to be drawn from these discoveries.

The remains of the late Dr. Wilsmore will be cremated privately at the Karrakatta Cemetery today. He is survived by his widow and son."

There were two matters which somewhat clouded the last years of Wilsmore's association with the University. The first had nothing to do with the University but it
affected his health just at the time when he was in hot controversy with Whitfeld and Ross and some members of the Senate in an effort to have the plans for the new Science Buildings altered to embody his ideas as to the requirements of his Department. His worries over this private matter probably made him express his desires as uncompromising demands which irritated and antagonised some members of the Senate.

Tenders for the Science Buildings were called for in May of 1934. Whitfeld reported to the Senate the previous March that Wilsmore had visited his pastoral property in the Menzies district. He had encountered very hot weather which had so tired him that on return home he had a slight haemorrhage of the Bronchial Tubes which kept him away from duty for some weeks. This was about the time when he withdrew from any discussion about the plans and passed the matter on to Tattersall. The pastoral property had been purchased to establish an only son. It was an enterprise for which Wilsmore was by temperament and training entirely unsuited. Moreover after a short trial the son left the place and all the worries of running it by hired managers fell upon the father.

The discussion over the plans for the Science Buildings was long, and towards the conclusion even bitter. So much so that the two Departments - Chemistry and Physics - though in the same building were completely sealed off from each other. The central archway, instead of being as it should, the main entrance to the Building, serving both Departments, became a mere passage-way through the building without connection with either Department. Wilsmore and his Associate-Professor Tattersall urged that all the money available should be spent on what Wilsmore called a brick workshop leaving the ornamental facade until more money was available. He
Ross and Whitfield were determined to have a building which, from an architectural point of view, was a fitting addition to the existing buildings. Wilson was not only a poor controversialist but he also knew himself to be an expert in the building. His method was to state his case clearly and if it was opposed he would withdraw into silence. The other hand both Ross and Whitfield were very persistent controversialists, not hesitating to repeat their arguments as often as necessary. Moreover, and most important, they both had seats at the Senate table and so Wilson had not. So some of Wilson's desires were overruled and he showed his resentment in an uncertain way. This was to a large extent justified. He felt that he was being overruled by men much less qualified than he, and moreover of which he was his own department, and he should have had his way. On the other hand Ross was more discreet, could hide his feelings and was a much better "mixer". I know from conversation, as such events.
with Sir John Northmore that he was antagonised by Wilsmore's attitude towards Ross and I know also that Sir Walter James was aware of it but regarded it with the good humoured tolerance born of temperament and long experience in party warfare. But with both men it discounted Wilsmore's case.

An extract from Sir David Rivett's appreciation of Wilsmore is most apt - "It was rather a paradox that a man who had studied laboratory design and equipment in many countries and who probably knew more about these matters than any other Chemist in Australia, should have been obliged to work for years in utterly unsuitable buildings, and later when the chance came to create new laboratories, should have been denied the exercise of his full freedom in the planning of them."

In 1935 Wilsmore reached the retiring age of 65 but the Senate were very pleased that it could continue him as Professor. When he reached 70 his mental and physical vigour was unimpaired and the Senate would gladly have retained him had not the University Act made retirement at 70 compulsory.

The Senate desired him to take the title of Emeritus Professor, and as it was understood that he did not like the term, as Pro-Chancellor, and Mr. Gillett, a member of the Senate, were appointed to wait on him at his home and request him to accept. He however declined. He quoted in a joking way Murdoch's gibe that an Emeritus Professor was a worn out Professor and said he had no desire to be dubbed worn out. He also told us that he had notified all the Scientific Societies of which he was a member and other correspondents that he in future was not to be addressed as Professor but as Doctor. This punctilious determination not to appear to be what he was not was characteristic of the man and in contrast with some of his colleagues who assumed the title of Professor when not entitled to it.
8th December, 1937.

The Chairman of the Professorial Board.

Dear Beasley,

In the Agenda for the meeting to-morrow of the Professorial Board I find a notice of motion by Professor Ross to confer on me the title of "Emeritus Professor".

As, however, I do not desire that title, I hope that my colleagues on the Board will agree to take no action on this matter.

I have never had much regard for empty titles. Moreover, the word "emeritus" has more than one meaning. One meaning of it, which I find in my dictionary, is: having become unfit for service; worn out. Of course I should not dare to challenge the accuracy of that description, should my colleagues consider that it fits me; but I trust they will forgive me for preferring not to carry the label. I am aware that many better men have borne the title of "Emeritus"; but I fancy they are honoured rather in spite of that title than because of it.

I may add that in order to avoid, if possible, sailing under false colours I have informed my regular correspondents that after the end of this year the title of 'Professor' should not be applied to me.

As the presence on the Agenda of this motion regarding myself renders it inexpedient for me to attend the meeting, I shall be greatly obliged if you will kindly tender to my colleagues on the Board my apologies for my absence, and also convey to them my farewell good wishes.

Yours sincerely,

(M.T.N. Wilsmore)
24 Richardson Avenue,  
Claremont. 
10th December, 1937.

"Dear Somerville,

I saw in the paper that you are due home by this time. You will probably find the present cool weather a pleasant change from Kalgoorlie.

As a precaution against a garbled version of an incident at yesterday's meeting of the Professorial Board being served up to you and other members of the Senate, I enclose a copy of my farewell letter to the Board. After the meeting I was amazed to learn that only the first and last paragraphs of my letter received the courtesy of being read to the Board, the middle paragraph being suppressed. When I wrote that paragraph I thought it harmless enough; but perhaps it was deemed likely to hurt the over-tender feelings of some prospective candidate for the proposed honour.

My strongest reason for declining the proposed title does not appear in my letter. You would easily guess it; but, just to confirm your guess, it is that on no account would I accept a favour instigated by our Universal Butinsky.

Yours sincerely,

(N.T.M. Wilsomore)
24 Richardson Avenue, 
Claremont, W.A. 
12th December, 1937.

"My dear Somerville,

Many thanks for your very kind letter, which
I read when we got home. I fear that not more than one
or two members of the present Senate would take the same
generous view about my small services. As I told Battye
the other day, the only members left on the Senate out of
the original team of 1912 are yourself, Battye and Walter
James.

I regret to say that there is no room in the
new chemistry building which could be spared for an
outsider. The only private labs are those for Bayliss,
Tattersall, and Elliott. All the other rooms will be
needed for general purposes. In the senior laboratories
every working place was occupied last session, and more
benches will very soon be needed in the two large senior
labs.

In any case, it would not be fair to the
incoming man to have his predecessor pottering about
in his Department. All the same, I am grateful to you
for having thought of my having a room there.

I think A.D.R.'s motive for butting in was
merely the usual one of trying to pose outside the
University as the King Pin of the staff, if not the whole
University. He played the same game a few months back
over Sutton's Doctorate. That was really initiated in a
motion at a Prof- Board meeting by James Nichols, which
was seconded cordially by me. Then Nichols got bowled
over by 'flu; and the next thing we heard was A.D.R.
rushing round with a subscription list to give Sutton
his robes, although everyone that knows anything knows
that A.D.R. has never cared a hoot about Sutton. Of
course the usual inspired paragraph appeared, saying that
"A.D.R. had started the movement - not a whisper about
James Nichols. The accounts were never audited, so one
may be allowed to speculate whether A.D.R. remembered
to add his own cheque to the fund.

Yours very sincerely,

[Signature]

1796
On leaving the University in 1937 Dr. Wilsmore became consulting Chemist to Flaimar & Co., and as his Laboratory was in Perth I was so fortunate as to enjoy again very frequently his company at lunch. This continued for about 2 years. Late in February 1940 he was taken ill and died after a month's illness. He refused to see any friends during his last illness. One of his last conscious acts was to direct that a gift tobacco pouch be sent to me. The pouch was one of a limited number made of leather tanned with the extract from the Wandoo (White Gum) tree. In the technical development of this process Wilsmore's advice had played a considerable part.

Dr. Wilsmore was perhaps too big a man as a scientist for the work open for him to do in Western Australia. To come here from the niche in the scientific world he had won for himself in England was a stepping down from great opportunities to very cramped opportunities. Wilsmore had known for some time that he was well in the running for the Chair of Chemistry at Liverpool University when the then occupant died. This occurred shortly after Wilsmore had accepted the West Australian Chair and as anticipated he was invited to accept Liverpool. A smaller man would not have hesitated but with his usual punctilious, perhaps in this case quixotic, regard for his undertaking he refused Liverpool. Western Australia was the gainer by this act of sacrifice and the West Australian University the richer for his presence with us for so long.

There may have been another reason for refusing Liverpool. Wilsmore was a good Australian, not in any narrow sense, but he loved his native land, and it may have been that he was not unwilling to escape the gloom of English skies and welcomed the opportunity of doing something direct for his fellow Australians.

After writing the foregoing I received a letter from Professor Dakin giving some reminiscences. One passage
confirms the belief that Wilsmore was actuated by his love of Australia — "Now Wilsmore was lecturer in Chemistry in the same institution (University College, London) and so we both knew that the other had applied for Western Australia about two months before the appointments were made. Wilsmore was an Australian. He loved Australia and he was hoping and hoping that he would be appointed. He kept telling me all about Australia and making me enthusiastic about the fine work that could be done there .... Well in due course we were both appointed. Just before Wilsmore left, however, he was offered the very fine professorship of Physical Chemistry at Liverpool. He didn't know what to do. He knew this would be a wonderful appointment with everything required, but he loved Australia and he felt he had in duty bound (having signed an agreement with the Agent General in London) to go to Perth."

I desired to conclude this sketch of Wilsmore's association with the West Australian University with an appraisement of his status and attainments as a scientist so I applied to Sir David Rivett, M.A., D.Sc., F.R.S., than whom there was none more competent. In my letter to Dr. Rivett explaining what I desired I said — "I desire to do justice to Dr. Wilsmore. I knew the man but I am not qualified to properly assess Wilsmore, the scientist. Will you help me in this?" It will be realised on reading the following article and letters how generous was Dr. Rivett's response.

"Commonwealth Council For Scientific and Industrial Research
314 Albert Street,
East Melbourne, C.2.
22nd August, 1944.

"Dr. W. Somerville,
2 Albert Street,
Mosman Park,
Western Australia.

"Dear Dr. Somerville,
I hope you will be good enough to pardon my delay in acknowledging your letter of August 2nd., due in part to absence from Melbourne.

I shall be quite glad to write a few notes about the late Professor Wilmore's scientific work; but it would help me very much if you would just let me know approximately how many words you require. You will know better than I just how much of your history you will be devoting to individual members of the staff.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(David Rivett)

Chief Executive Officer

Commonwealth Council for Scientific and Industrial Research,
314 Albert Street,
East Melbourne, C.2.
14th September, 1944.

"DR. W. Somerville,
2 Albert Street,
Mosman Park, W.A.

"Dear Dr. Somerville,

"Thank you for your further letter of August 29th.

"from which I gather that something of the order of 1000 words about our late friend, Professor Wilmore, would meet your purpose. I have put together some notes which are enclosed with this; but I confess to a certain amount of anxiety lest you may not be wholly in accord with the point of view I have taken.

"To me it was somewhat of a tragedy that Wilmore should never have had a chance in Perth to develop the School of Chemistry in the manner for which he was so particularly fitted. His teaching, of course, was excellent and the standard of his students was, I am quite convinced, as high as in any other University in Australia, and higher
"than in most of them. It was, however, on the research
side that he was particularly competent as an investigator
and as an inspirer of others. For reasons which were
probably beyond anyone's control, he never had a chance to
give of his best in that direction, and in these notes I
have not hesitated to say so. Perhaps you would rather not
be so outspoken.

There is, of course, no necessity at all to
associate me with these comments, unless you prefer that
I should take responsibility for a view with which others
may not agree.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

(David Rivett)

Professor N.T.M. Wilsome, the first occupant of the
Chair of Chemistry (1912-1937), was one of the early and
most distinguished students of Sir David Masson in
Melbourne in the late eighties. He graduated in 1890 and,
after some few years in research work with Masson, went
overseas in 1894 for three years experience under Sir
William Ramsay and Professor Norman Collie at University
College, London. There followed some four years of
physical chemistry at Göttingen under Professor Walther
Nernst, with special studies in certain lines of physics
and electrical engineering. To gain some knowledge of
technical chemistry he transferred in 1901 to Zürich where
he was soon invited to join the staff of Professor Richard
Lorenz as first assistant in the department of electro-
chemistry. Then in 1903 he returned to University College,
London, as assistant in organic chemistry, and later,
assistant professor. Thus in the ten years 1894 to 1903
Wilsome gained a wealth and diversity of experience and
"training in chemistry, physics and associated sciences which was rarely achieved in those days and is almost unknown in one individual today. He spoke German fluently and was deeply versed in all current chemical literature; while his knowledge of laboratory technique and his skill as an experimenter (especially in the making of glass apparatus) made him one of the most sought-after advisers amongst the workers in the chemical laboratories of London. The manner in which he overcame a handicap of short-sight was a constant source of wonder to all his associates.

This is not the place to enlarge upon Wilsmore's original investigations before he came to the University of Western Australia. One may read of them in the many appreciative obituary notices published in technical journals after his death in 1940. Apart from his earlier work on organic derivatives, his name will always be linked with two particular lines of investigation. The first was the development of the theory and of practical methods of measurement of electrode potentials, which he determined for over thirty metals against the hydrogen electrode as standard; the other was his remarkable discovery of the parent compound ketene, followed by study of its polymerisation and the production of derived compounds by methods later extended to yield valuable industrial chemicals. Of all such matters it is unnecessary to speak in detail here. It is sufficient to say that his modest little laboratory in the basement of the old Chemistry Department at University College was almost a Mecca for young and old research workers seeking advice on experimental problems of all kinds. Nothing was too great a burden for Wilsmore when there was a colleague to be helped, and maybe his greatest contributions to his science in those days were to be found in the aid he so freely gave to others.

Then at the end of 1912 came the appointment to Perth. Shortly after he had accepted it, he was invited to succeed
"Professor Donnan in Liverpool: but with almost quixotic
unselfishness he regarded himself as bound to reject the
attractive northern post and to hold to his promise to
return to the antipodes. One could wish that the story of
the next quarter of a century might have been for Wilsmore
in Perth what it certainly would have been had he gone to
Liverpool: a story of the steady development of a school
of research in physical chemistry.

Unfortunately it was not to be. Conditions in the
sheds (for they were not much more) allotted to the School
of Chemistry in St. George's Terrace were almost intolerable.
There was no money for any equipment beyond that required
for students, and only a man of Wilsmore's ingenuity could
have done so much with so little. He sacrificed everything
to maintain high standards in his classes and in his
teaching laboratories. As a teacher his repute grew ever
higher. "Wilsmore's men" were regarded in the Eastern
States as people upon whose thoroughly sound training full
reliance could always be placed. But alas! the load
thrust upon the teacher and administrator was so great
that the original theorist and experimenter was denied any
adequate scope to exercise his talents. It is a story that
has been repeated too often in our Australian Uni-
versities: but perhaps Wilsmore is one of the most tragic
cases of our failure to provide a man with opportunity to
give of his best as a scientific investigator. For two
years, during the First Great War, he was given free scope
for his powers. On the headquarters staff of the British
Ministry of Munitions at Story's Gate, London, he for a
brief period came into his own: but that is another story.

In the general scientific life of Australia, Wilsmore
played a very significant part. Ever jealous of the
standards of science, he was a ruthless critic of
activities which seemed to him to betray them in however
small a measure. He fought hard in the Australian Chemical
"Institute (of which he was a General President) to make the
entrance standard at least equal to that of the British
Institute: his efforts to keep the Australian National
Research Council upon a high level of achievement were
unceasing. As a leader in the State Committee of the
Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, his advice
and guidance in its earlier years were invaluable. He
battled fearlessly for what he seemed to be the right, but
always generously and in the most kindly spirit. A quick
wit and a notable capacity for finding just the right words
at the right moment made him a powerful critic, but never
an unjust one. Unfortunately he had only too much about
which he might have been critical in his University ex-
perience: but he rarely complained about personal diffi-
culties. It was rather a paradox, for example, that a man
who had studied laboratory design and equipment in many
countries and who probably knew more about these matters
than any other chemist in Australia, should have been
obliged to work for years in utterly unsuitable buildings;
and later, when the chance came to create new laboratories,
should have been denied the exercise of his full freedom
in the planning of them.

All this, however, is in the past and it is idle to
speculate on what might have been had circumstances
permitted Wilsom to work without handicap as teacher
and investigator. He sacrificed much by coming to a young
University facing difficult initial years, but one thing
is certain and that is that he did not permit one iota of
his high standards of chemical education and of scientific
ethics to be lowered because of the handicap that con-
fronted him.

He has left a tradition of sound teaching in the
Chemistry School that is his lasting memorial.

(David Rivett)

14/9/44.
Mosman Park.
22nd September, 1944.

"Sir David Rivett

Dear Sir,

I am at a loss to know how to thank you for enabling me to place on record so fine a tribute to Professor Wilsmore by one so competent as yourself.

I am completely in accord with your point of view relating to the great loss to science which resulted from the lack of facilities in Perth to give him the scope his great talents warranted. So much of that as is due to the small resources of Western Australia is no one's fault. But the frustration he endured when the Crawley Science Buildings were erected deserves to be strongly condemned.

I am glad to have in my possession several letters he wrote to me in my capacity as advocate on the Senate of his desires in the matter of laboratory design. This desire put briefly was that all the small capital available should be spent in useful buildings, leaving an ornamental facade to be erected in the future when there was more money. But Whitley and Ross both urging the importance of ornamental architecture was too strong a combination.

Again thanking you for your generous help,

Yours truly,

(W. Somerville)

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Another man who was for a long time in close contact with Professor Wilsmore at work and had special opportunities for learning his qualities as man and a teacher was Mr. P. Babington. He was a member of Wilsmore's staff as Demonstrator from 1913 to 1936 when he resigned "owing to
the increasing burden of years".

At my request he has been good enough to write the following excellent character sketch of Professor Wilsomore:


"Dear Dr. Somerville,

"I enclose some notes on Professor Wilsomore's work and activities.

"I have not attempted to make a continuous narrative as I thought it would be more convenient to put it in a form where you could select what you considered relevant.

"If I have omitted any points on which you would like more detailed information please let me know and if I can I will supply it.

"I saw the press notice of Mrs. Wilsomore's death and I am sure that you will agree with me that the world is poorer by the passing away of a very good and kind lady.

"With kind regards.

"Yours very truly,

(P. Babington)

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"Shortly after the outbreak of the last war Professor Wilsomore left for England and offered his services to the Government. He was placed on the headquarters staff and remained in England till the end of the war. He gave an address to the Chemical Society on some aspects of war chemistry but said that he could not enter into any details as the information he possessed was extremely confidential. After that I never heard him refer to his war work, but I believe that it was mainly administrative and concerned with the establishment of war factories and that he was associated with a South African whose speciality was organisation. I have heard him speak with great
appreciation of this gentleman for his utter disregard of red tape and general bureaucratic control and that it was due to his "drive" and the ready support of Lloyd George that the factories were erected in such record time.

Professor Wilsmore never at any time spoke or even hinted at his own activities. It is probable that he was associated with this South African in the planning and erection of the factories. At the end of the war the Professor quietly returned to his University duties, and the South African to his fruit farm.

During the Professor's absence the Chemistry Department was managed by Associate-Professor George Tattersall and the laboratory was fitted with enough benches to accommodate all the enrolled students. There was sufficient equipment for ordinary purposes, but great lack of special apparatus for the training of the senior second and third year men and they worked under considerable handicap. Here, however, they were helped by the Professor's great skill in glass blowing for he was one of the best, if not the best glass blower in the State and he made and devised a great deal of special apparatus for the students and for lecture purposes. He encouraged students to become proficient themselves and was always ready to come to the blowpipe table and teach them.

I mentioned the handicap but in a sense it was a benefit because it taught the men to improvise and obtain good results from appliances made by themselves. Graduates who went to England with scholarships have told me how they valued the foundation of self-help that they were taught by Professor Wilsmore.

Many of the students trained in these difficult times have done extremely well, (I can quote a few names from memory - John Somerville, Alan Mitchell, Walter Worboys) in responsible positions overseas. In the State, Dr. Eric Watson, head of the Pharmacy Department, Technical
"College, Dr. Kent, authority on fuel, Dr. Samuel, wheat
"and flour specialist, Mr. Kretzger, research officer on
"Penicillin, also several chemistry graduates are on the
"staff of the C.S.I.R. Mr. Boas once told me that
"he was at times sharply criticised about the number of
"West Australians on the C.S.I.R. staff and hints were
"dropped that he was unduly favouring them. "I can't help
"that," he said, "my duty is to pick the best men and
"Wilsmore's men are the best because they have been taught
"to think for themselves."
"
Professor Wilsmore's basic method of teaching was to
"make students read and think for themselves and not to
"take statements for granted because they were in a book.
"In his introductory address at the first lecture of a
"session he always warned the students not to waste time
"in taking elaborate notes as they would never be able to
"pass an examination from their notes alone, which would
"and must always be supplemented by steady reading. To
"ensure this, after explaining the really salient points
"of a given element he would say "I need not describe the
"other compounds of this element as you will find them
"fully described in the text book."
"
He intensely disliked what he called "cookery book
"chemistry" i.e. students being merely letter perfect from
"the text book without really understanding the mechanism
"of each reaction, and to that end he would ask a student -
""You add a reagent to a solution and you obtain a precipi-
"tate. Very good. Now give me the equation showing exactly
"what has happened."
"
He paid great attention to building up a sound
"theoretical foundation for students to work on, and to that
"end he spent practically the whole of the first term on
"physical chemistry, for, as he often said "If the founda-
"tion is there details can be looked up as occasion serves."
"I do not pay much attention to a student forgetting a
reaction which he can always look up. I do it myself."

"Another thing that I have heard him say is - "In an examination, if a student makes a statement that is entirely wrong, provided that it shows evidence of logical thought, I will give him credit for it because it is better to think wrong than not think at all."

"His standard was very high and he would not drop it. During my time he never gave first class honours, but his second class were equal to first class in many other universities and his men knew their work.

"He was extremely hard working and rarely left his desk, and when not busy with administrative work was reading current scientific journals to keep abreast of recent research so that he was in a position to say in a lecture "Such and such a statement in the text books is now not quite correct as within the last few months it has been amplified and corrected."

"Generally speaking Professor Wilsmore was one of the most able men that I have ever met, and by that I draw a distinction between "able" and "clever" for in many instances many of the latter are unable to apply their theoretical knowledge to the best advantage. The Professor, however, was essentially practical and had a wide knowledge of most industrial processes, but at the same time was by no means indifferent to academic research in pure chemistry may and often does lead to valuable results as he pointed to one example, viz. Dr. Haber in Germany purely as an academic problem investigated the possibility of making synthetic ammonia and succeeded not only in doing it but producing it on a commercial scale. Without Dr. Haber's process, Germany, due to the naval blockade, would have been deprived of sources for fertiliser and explosives and would have been forced to sue for peace in 1915."
I gathered the impression that by nature he was extremely sensitive and high strung but had deliberately cultivated an iron self control and reserve whereas I know from personal experience that he was always considerate and thoughtful. I only know of one point on which he was intolerant. He literally was unable to understand any man slacking on a job. It did not matter if it was sweeping a floor — it was worth going for it flat out or leaving it alone — and that was his own life. He went flat out to all he put his hand to. He was not what I would call a physically robust man but he possessed a large stock of nervous energy and determination. It struck me, especially in his later years, that he was living on the capital of his nervous energy and not on the interest.

With all his apparent reserve he took the keenest interest in the welfare of the students and had perfect and accurate knowledge not only of their work but of their tendencies and occupations in their leisure time. How he found out the latter I have not the remotest idea, but know it he did.

He particularly objected to any publicity or self advertisement and was rarely seen or heard in public unless there was some very good reason. The average social round did not appeal to him either. When the Duke of York was here there was a garden party at Government House to which he was duly invited. I met Mrs. Wilsmore and said — "Have you come to fetch the Professor?" and she replied "No, I am going with the Whitfields. He won't come." The Professor was pulling some equipment to pieces and was cheerfully covered with oil. He remarked that he didn't want to shake hands with the Duke of York who, he presumed, would manage to scratch along without shaking hands with him, and anyway he was busy.

If he did not know a thing he would say so and never
"tried to talk round the subject or assume knowledge that he did not possess. As he remarked he was just an ordinary person and not a walking encyclopedia Brittanica. During the war, and owing to scarcity of tin plate, a soluble form of Bakelite was used for coating cardboard food containers. He told me that he had only read of it and had never seen it. I offered to make some and did and tested its insoluble and waterproof action. Some time after a man called to consult him as to the possibility of manufacturing Bakelite in the State. The Professor said "I really have no practical experience of the matter, and I think it would be better if you saw my demonstrator, Mr. Babington, who has done some work on it, and will be better able to advise you than I am." That was characteristic and it takes a big man to say a thing like that. He was totally devoid of any trace of conceit or self glorification.

As your own experience will have taught you -- the man who knows his work and knows that he knows it, never talks about it. There is nothing to talk about. It is the man who is not certain who talks.

His reputation in scientific circles was not merely local or even purely Australian. A graduate returned from England told me that when he spoke of being trained at an Australian university it was received with polite indifference, but when he mentioned that he was a pupil of Professor Wilsmore there was an immediate change of front and as he expressed it, all gates were open and every consideration shown him.

Professor Wilsmore was an excellent speaker, with a good delivery. Concise and lucid he never wandered from the point. If he was speaking on non-scientific subjects he could be extremely amusing, for though it was not generally credited to him he had a very keen sense of humour.

He was a very widely read man, and thoroughly abreast
of modern literature and all political and social
problems. I never heard him discuss politics, barring
occasional caustic comments on professional politicians,
but I think that he was essentially democratic in his
views. Money for the sake of possessing it did not appeal
to him as ostentation and useless extravagance he disliked.
What his private recreations were I have no idea as he
rigidly kept his public and private life apart. I do not
think that he went into society much and by "society" I
mean so called "smart society" and all that it implies. He
was not the man who could obey the scriptural injunction to
"suffer fools gladly" and if a conversation did not
interest him I think he would quietly get out of the way.
That, however, is only my personal opinion.

He had the engineering faculty very strongly developed.
Two of his schoolfellows (my namesake Mr. Chas. Babington,
retired from the Survey service, and the late Col. Le
"Soeuf") told me that except for his short sight he
probably would have been an engineer, as during their
school days they generally would find Norman Wilemore in
the railway running yards underneath a locomotive."

(P. Babington)

Professor E.O.G. Shann.

Edward Owen Gibbin Shann, M.A. when appointed to
the Chair of History and Economics in 1913 was thirty years
of age and had had a brilliant academic career. An extract
from his application is as follows - "I graduated B.A. in
March, 1904. In my second year I gained first class honours
and the Dwight Exhibition in History together with first
class honours and half the Hasting Exhibition in Philosophy.
In March 1904 I obtained the final honours scholarship in
"the School of History and Economics thereby qualifying
"for the Degree of M.A. At the end of the same year I
"obtained the Wyslaski Scholarship in Constitutional
"History and divided the Wyslaski Scholarship in Economics."

Shann was a scholar at Queen's College, Melbourne
during the whole of his student career 1901-04. He
graduated in Arts with the highest honours in the School of
History and Political Economy and was at once appointed
Resident Tutor in these subjects in the College. In 1906
he was appointed Professor of Logic and Philosophy in
Adelaide University. In 1908 he went to England where for
a year (to use his own words) "I did research work principally
in French Syndicalism."

In addition to his University work he had, according
to a testimonial from Donald McKinnon, some experience in
both business and politics. To quote - "He was my private
"secretary 1905-11 with two breaks of a year each .......
"As my secretary he has come into contact from the inside
"with all political movements in Victoria since 1905 ......
"Apart from politics Shann has shown energy and capacity
"in handling matters of private business ....... has a
"fair knowledge of the business side of the management of
"trust matters and pastoral interest." This Donald
McKinnon was part proprietor of Argus, Chairman of
Insurance and Pastoral Companies and general big bug in
the financial world of Melbourne.

In May 1911 Shann was appointed Lecturer in History
and Economics in Brisbane University and in 1913 Professor
of History and Economics in Western Australia. With this
dual subject his lecturing had to cover a wide field and
the first assistant appointed was Mr. A. H. and later on
History became the subject of a separate lectureship
leaving Economics his sole subject, but it was not until
August 1931 that his title was changed to Professor of
Economics. It is very probable that no change would have
"the School of History and Economics thereby qualifying "for the Degree of M.A. At the end of the same year I "obtained the Wysilaski Scholarship in Constitutional "History and divided the Wysilaski Scholarship in Economics."

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During the war years 1914-18 the granting of Rhodes Scholarships had been limited so that by 1920 funds had accumulated and the Trustees offered one additional to be known as the All Australia Rhodes Scholarship. This was awarded to Mr. Hancock. From Oxford he went on to further honours, Professor of Modern History Adelaide 1924-33 and now Professor of Economic History at Oxford.
been made then but for the application from Mr. Alexander, the Lecturer in History, to be given the status of an independent Lecturer.

In April 1917 Shann enlisted. His letter to the Vice-Chancellor (at that time Ross) is as follows:
"On Thursday last I was accepted as a recruit for the A.I.F.
"...... What arrangements (financial) will the University make during my absence on active service. I understand that the Senate decided early in the war that members of the staff who enlisted should not suffer pecuniary loss.
"But as I must enter the A.I.F. as a private it seems to me unreasonable to expect the Senate to continue to pay me the difference between my present salary and the pay of that rank. I am prepared therefore to surrender £250 of my salary towards providing a substitute." The General Purposes Committee at its April meeting directed that Shann be informed that in its opinion there was no chance of the Senate agreeing to his terms.

On April 11th, 1917 he again wrote suggesting Portus as a substitute. Portus was at that time I think Director of Workers' Educational Activities at the Sydney University.

On 17th April the Vice-Chancellor wrote to the military authority saying - "The Senate have tried both in England (by cable) and Australia to find a substitute Professor without success ....... consider Shann's work as Professor more valuable than as private."

On 19th April Major Bilton wrote - "...... If Shann applies for discharge it will be granted."

This application was apparently made for the Vice-Chancellor announced to the May meeting of the Senate that the enlistment had been cancelled.

In September 1917 the State Government informed the Senate that it desired the services of Professor Shann to act as Chairman of a Royal Commission to enquire into -
(quoted from Commission's instructions) "the cost of the
"necessities of life, the profits made in their disposal
"to the public, the effects of the fluctuations of prices
"during the last three years upon the standards of living
"of wage earners and other persons, and the methods of
"conditions of production, importation and distribution of
"the necessities of life in Western Australia and to submit
"suggestions etc. etc."

The demand for this investigation had arisen as
follows: The index figures published by the Commonwealth
Statistician showing the variations in the purchasing
power of money were based upon a list of 46 articles,
almost exclusively food, together with house rent. All
Arbitration Courts and wage fixing authorities assume that
the prices of the innumerable articles upon which the
wage earner's wages are spent, including boots and clothing,
rise and fall to the same degree as do the prices of the
articles in the list. During the years 1915 and 1916 it
was the duty of the writer as a Member of the Arbitration
Court Bench to point out to the Union advocates when before
the Court that this assumption, while it was probably
reasonably correct in peace time, was not valid in time of
War. From information I had collected it seemed clear to
me that many articles, notably boots and clothing, had in-
creased to a much greater degree than the index figure
indicated. It followed from this that when the Arbitration
Court raised wages to accord with the decreased purchasing
power of money as indicated by the Statistician's index
figure, the wage earner's wages were still below what they
would have been if the index figure had correctly reflected
the increase in the price of necessary articles not in the
Statistician's list.

So the Unions used their political influence and the
Commission was appointed. The members were Professor Shann,
Chairman, Mr. E.L. Driver to represent the wage earners and Mr. E.S. Lazarus to represent employers.

Shann made a good job of this Commission. His strength was tested by certain merchants trying to deny the power of the Commission to demand particulars of their business methods and results. The findings confirmed the belief that the index figures were not reflecting the facts. According to them 1917 prices were slightly more than 10% higher than in 1913. Some of the Commission's findings are as follows:— Prices of men's boots in 1917 were 24.56% higher than in 1914. In Manchester goods the rise was 60%. These findings were one of the causes which led to the Commonwealth Statistician extending his list of weighted articles to include clothing.

In December 1917 Shann set questions in Part A of the Junior Certificate History paper from the period prior to 1603. From memory I think all or a very large proportion of the examinees failed. Protests were made to the Senate and on 16th January, 1918 Shann was informed that the Senate had decided that all who had failed in Junior History in November should be allowed to sit for a supplementary in March. He protested against the terms and the work entailed upon him but admitted having made a mistake.

The reason why the above is mentioned is that it, with the Owen Case, constitute the only two occasions in my memory when the Senate has interfered in academic matters. The Owen Case was one in which the student insisted on being allowed to sit for more subjects than the Professorial Board regulation permitted. The Senate on appeal upheld the student and he passed in all subjects undertaken. Thereby it would seem he justified the Senate over-riding the Professorial Board.

In October 1922 a very naive application came from the Primary Producers' Association that Shann would preside
over a conference to discuss and decide upon a policy with respect to Land Value Taxation. The application constituted a test as to the possibility of making practical use of a Professor of Economics in the solution of a live question—a question moreover in which he should be an expert. But the Professor was very wisely too busy.

In October 1920 the then Vice-Chancellor, Professor Paterson, asked to be relieved of the Vice-Chancellorship at the end of the year. The Senate decided to ask the General Purposes Committee and the Professorial Board to express an opinion as to his successor. Apparently the reports favoured Professor Shann for in November 1920 it was decided that he act as Vice-Chancellor as from the conclusion of Professor Paterson's term, 1st January, 1921.

This raised the constitutional question—Can a member of the Senate be at the same time Vice-Chancellor? The University solicitors advised that he could not. Thereupon Shann decided that he would be Vice-Chancellor and resign from the Senate.

While Vice-Chancellor Shann began to move towards the establishment of a Chair of Law. The first step was to secure the approval of the Professorial Board, and in May 1923 that body reported to the senate—

"(1) That a teaching faculty in Law be established "at an estimated cost of £1,350 for the first year and "£1,650 for the second and all succeeding years. The "Professor's salary would be £1,000 with five single subject "courses at an average of £120 = £600 and annual maintenance "of £50."

"(2) That a joint deputation with the Barristers' "Board wait on the Premier to further the matter."

The Senate approved of this scheme unanimously with one curious exception. Sir Walter James voted against the proposal, and not content with that he requested that his
dissent be recorded. This action was of greater significance for at this time he was Leader of the Bar. In contrast with the foregoing estimate of cost it is interesting to note that in 1945 the total salaries are £1,275.

The scheme hung fire for some time. As usual finance was the difficulty. An increase in the Government grant was urgent to meet the growing needs of other Departments and Shann realised the difficulty of securing money for a new department unless the legal profession showed some willingness to assist. To secure this Shann devoted some effort. There was opposition within the legal profession for it was argued why should they be subject to a levy when none was imposed upon engineers and others. However, Shann persevered and there is no doubt that the final establishment of the Chair of Law was due to him.

In July 1925, two years after the Senate had approved of the Chair, the Senate received a letter from T.A.L. Davey as to the intentions of the Bar and asking the Senate to appoint a representative to act with a deputation they were arranging to see the Premier. This request was agreed to and Professor Shann was appointed.

In 1926 leave was granted to Shann to go to England and Whitfeld reported to the March meeting of the Senate that he had gone and to the August meeting that he had returned. The purpose of his visit is not stated.

The deputation to the Premier appointed July 1926 does not appear to have had much effect, for in December of that year a report prepared by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Shann and Senator H.C. Keall was presented to the Senate. The object was to show what action was necessary to establish the Chair. The main feature of the report was advising an approach to the Government for funds. There is no mention of any contribution by the legal profession.

In March 1927 came a letter from T.A.L. Davey
enclosing one from the Premier advising the Senate to appoint a Committee to co-operate with the Barristers' Board and to make recommendations establishing a Faculty of Law. This Committee seems to have finally got over the difficulties for the next mention of the matter is the special terms granted to Professor Beasley who had refused to accept the appointment until the provision which governs the payment of superannuation endowment to all other members of the staff, namely that it does not begin to accrue until after twelve years service, was changed in his favour to it beginning with the appointment. He also stipulated that "The conditions will be similar to those under the British Federated Superannuation Scheme."

This stipulation is significant and of unknown meaning (unknown by the West Australian University when agreed to) which I am afraid will only be realised when the Professor comes to retire.

In July the Government were asked to contribute £575 to the upkeep of the Chair of Law.

F.R. Beasley, B.A., LL.B. was appointed at the September 1927 meeting of the Senate.

In December 1929 Shann expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of sympathy and accord between the staff and Senators. With this was involved the idea that we had too many committees - Finance, General Purposes Committees and the Buildings and Grounds Committees. He thought the General Purposes Committee and the Finance Committee could be combined with the Professorial Board. A Committee was appointed to consider the matter. The result was the establishment of the Academic Board which is dealt with in the Chapter "Senate Committees."

Under date October 9th, 1930 Shann wrote to Whitfield ...... "I have been asked by the Bank of New South Wales to act as consultant to the Bank during the "long vacation and shall be glad to have the Chancellor's
"permission to accept the invitation. If it is forthcoming "I propose to leave for Sydney by the Katoomba on November "15th." The next (October 10th) day Whitfeld advised the Chancellor, James, that the permission should be granted.

On 14th October James agreed in a short note of three lines.

On 15th October Whitfeld wrote to Shann asking for further information. James had not apparently shown much enthusiasm.

On 23rd February, 1931 James wrote to Battye and self ... "Shann has been advising the Bank of New South "Wales during the vacation ... he returned about ten days "since ... Mr. Davidson wishes him to return to Sydney ... "Shann unwilling to go unless Bank offers him a permanent "position on its staff ... I took the course of telling "Shann that I had no doubt the Senate would grant the leave "and I understand he has already booked his passage for "Sydney. I hope I can count upon your support in my action."

That James should have taken this unusual course shows how uneasy he was at the reception the public would give to the idea of a University Professor leaving his students to enter the service of a corporation trading for profit. He also knew doubtless that the Bank's representaive had been actively lobbying Senate members.

Shann wrote to Whitfeld (no date but presumably about 22nd February, 1931) - "Following conversations "with the Chancellor, Mr. Hepper and yourself I must now "formally apply for leave without pay for a year which is "necessary if I am to act as consultant to the Bank of "New South Wales. As it seems to the Chancellor and "yourself to be a matter of duty in the present national "emergency that I should do this work."

There would not have been the air of hypocrisy about this last sentence if he had been open and candid about the terms of payment on which he was acting. A special meeting
of the Senate was called for Friday, 27th February, 1931, the business as stated by Whitfield in the circular being:

"The Bank of New South Wales has made strong representations to the University to be allowed to use Professor Shann's services for a period of one year during the present financial difficulties. They consider that he, as senior Professor of Economics and his special study of Australian Economic History, is indispensable to them at present. Against his own inclination he has agreed to apply for one year's leave of absence without pay and the Chancellor has taken the responsibility of authorising him to make arrangements to leave for Sydney forthwith."

The Senate granted the year's leave. I objected on the ground that the Bank was a Corporation trading for profit and we had no right to allow it to use University talent to further its profit making and incidentally sacrifice the interests of the students by depriving them of one who was chosen as their tutor because of his outstanding qualifications. I received small support. The majority met my contention that our first duty was to the students by saying that Shann would be better qualified after his return from contact with actualities. They said also that the work was of national importance etc.

To show how public opinion was tending some extracts are here included taken from an article written for the "West Australian" by John Curtin, afterwards Prime Minister of the Commonwealth. The article was not prompted by the first leave given to Shann to serve the Bank, but when after two years' absence he was sent as the Bank's representative to the world economic conference in 1933.

Extracts from Mr. Curtin's article:

"It (the Bank of New South Wales) is one of the most influential of the financial corporations in Australia."
"None the less it has no qualifications justifying it in
"being represented at the World Economic Conference. If
"it has persons in attendance thereat to watch its
"interests their status will be precisely that of a
"lobbyist in the corridors of a Parliament House during a
"tariff debate ...... Farmers, manufacturers, traders,
"workers - all these have as much at stake in respect to
"the work of the Conference as Banks. Yet on the
"application of a Bank the University of the State prac-
tically places at its service the resources of the Uni-
"versity in so far as they are required.
"Surely a principle of more than usual importance
"is involved in this proceeding. It is the duty of the
"University to train students in economics ...... If any
"business or interest of a private or sectional nature
"desires the services of an economist it is free to engage
"any of the persons who by study and training are offering.
"But it is a strange departure from practice when a private
"Corporation takes from the University for lengthy and
"irregular periods, not the students who are studying or
"have qualified, but the tutor whose detachment from business
"interests is one of the assurances of the impartiality of
"his teaching ...... The relationship of Australia to
"Sterling is undoubtedly involved. It is well known that
"the Bank not only opposes any movement towards parity for
"the Australian pound with Sterling, but desires a greater
"depreciation than is now ruling. The question is
"essentially controversial and there is reason to believe
"that the Commonwealth Bank is strongly against the views
"held by the Bank of New South Wales and publicly stated
"by its General Manager. It is obvious that the University
"has been placed in an invidious position in that it is
"difficult if not impossible for its Economics Professor
"to avoid being associated with views on a national question
"that are not supported by the National Bank ...... But
"liberty of thought and expression as an individual even
"though the individual be the occupant of a University
"Chair maintained at public expense is a vastly different
"thing from the practical identification of a University
"Professor as the engaged advocate of the policy sought
"and desired by a particular business enterprise."

Professor Whitfeld's reply to this vigorous
examination of the policy which allowed the Professor of
Economics to be away from his University duties for long
periods is given in full.

"Vice-Chancellor's Report to Convocation, 2nd June, 1933.
"
"The only outstanding event since my last report to
"Convocation has been the granting of leave of absence
"(without pay) to Professor Shann to enable him to attend the
"World Economic Conference on June 12th, 1933. The leave is
"given for the 2nd term, and during Professor Shann's
"absence his work will be taken by Mr. C.V. Janes, M.Com.
"(Melbourne). Professor Shann was granted this leave at
"the request of the Bank of New South Wales, to whom he is
"acting as economic adviser.
"
"The University's action in granting this leave has
"been criticised in the Press, but the critics do not
"understand the essential and fundamental condition under
"which the staff have been allowed to take consulting work.
"
"Members of the staff, especially the scientific staff,
"have been given permission to act as advisers or con-
"sultants to private individuals, to money-making companies,
"to institutions and to government departments. The
"essential condition is that the member of the staff is
"free and independent, he is not a hired advocate or
"propagandist, he gives his advice according to the best
"of his knowledge and belief, and is not financially
"affected by the acceptance or otherwise of his advice. I
"remember that on one occasion I was given permission by the
"Senate to give technical advice to a Government Department which was the defendant in a law suit. One of my colleagues at the University was given permission to advise the plaintiff. We both gave our honest opinion on the facts of the case, and on comparing notes afterwards we found out our opinions were practically identical.

Professor Shann has never been the employee, the hired advocate or propagandist of the Bank of New South Wales. He has been an "adviser" or "consultant". The Bank has to some extent followed his advice: it believes that his views are sound, and likely to benefit Australia in what may be an extremely important and critical conference, the decisions of which might bear very hardly on a primary producing and debtor country such as Western Australia.

It has been stated that there would be no objection to Professor Shann going to represent a government, but this would not be true if he went as an "advocate" or "propagandist", for he would then be taking part in "party politics." The essential point is that he gives free and independent advice."

(H.E. Whitfeld)"

Two features of this document stand out. The first is that the effect upon the students by the loss for long periods of their guide and adviser of professorial rank and the substitution thereof of stop gap second rate guides, is not thought by Professor Whitfeld of sufficient importance to be mentioned.

When a man, he may be of any rank or any calling, has been in a job for a long period and feels his tenure is secure, he inevitably tends to regard the limitations imposed upon the pursuit of his personal interests and pleasures by his job to be irksome. He very frequently, if not under strict control, comes to regard the interests he should serve as subordinate to his personal desires.
After being for many years a member of the Court of Arbitration I sometimes detected myself reasoning on the assumption, to use Workshop parlance, that "the job belonged to me." The necessity for securing the endorsement of my actions every three years kept my feet on the earth.

That Shann and Whitfeld were well advanced in this process of mental change is shown by the fact that Shann could write as he did from Scott's Hotel to Whitfeld and that Whitfeld as Vice-Chancellor could receive it without protest. Whitfeld had apparently informed Shann of the difficulties experienced in securing temporary substitutes. One of them, Mr. Solomon, had just had a long and serious illness. Shann, by way of a P.S. to his letter, says -

"If the Economics Department shows signs of petering out you had better recall me, but etc..."

The parlous condition of his Department only merited a post-script.

For Whitfeld to compare Shann's activities on behalf of the Bank to that of an expert giving evidence on oath in a Court of Law shows how completely he had failed to grasp the fact that Shann had become an active political agent to secure political effect being given to the Bank's financial policy. The supposedly detached University Professor was as his own letter describes his action ..... (the Economists)"are doing our best to push the Government into a sound monetary policy." How completely this "sound monetary policy" was a political partisan policy is shown by its disastrous effects on the wage earners when it was put into effect by the Premier's Plan.

At the March 1931 meeting of the Finance Committee the question was raised as to whether the Bank or the University should pay the £100 a year to Shann's superannuation while he was in the employ of the Bank. The Committee decided that it was the Bank's responsibility and should be paid by it or by Shann himself. It was generally
understood that he was receiving a very handsome payment by
the Bank over his professional salary, and so to demur at
the payment was considered rather mean. When the report of
the Finance Committee came before the Senate in March 1931
the Chancellor, James, intervened and ruled that "as leave
had been granted to Shann in February under certain con-
ditions those conditions could not be further considered
except by notice of motion."

This ruling would have been sound if the Senate had
known what the conditions of leave were and had endorsed
them. But Whitfeld, following his usual custom, had
wrapped up all questions of payment in secrecy.

The Chancellor's ruling was in effect that the Senate
had agreed to pay Shann's superannuation during his employ-
ment by the Bank, or in other words they used £100 to pay
a Bank liability. This aspect of the matter must have
forced itself upon Shann for, on being granted his second
year's leave, he intimated that the University would not be
required to pay it. The annual contribution to his
superannuation.

As the result of the Chancellor's ruling I gave
notice to move that the Bank of New South Wales be asked
to pay the annual contribution to Shann's superannuation
for the year he was in their service. This was seconded
by the Pro-Chancellor, Mr. Andrews, but was lost - majority
against not recorded.

At the time of the discussion about the matter I
thought it only fair to Shann to ascertain from himself
what he understood by the words "leave of absence without
pay." In reply he said he had discussed the matter with
Whitfeld on two occasions and had been assured that the
University would continue to pay it. This was done without
consulting the Senate and obviously in excess of the Vice-
Chancellor's jurisdiction.

So as from some time towards the end of January 1931
Shann entered the service of the Bank.
In March of the same year Whitfeld went on six months leave and I became acting Vice-Chancellor. As acting Vice-Chancellor it fell to me to notify Shann of the change in his title from Professor of History and Economics to Professor of Economics.

Under date 19th November 1921 Shann wrote to Whitfeld -

"The Board (Bank of New South Wales) and general manager are pressing me to stay on here for another year. I am very reluctant to do so as the work is unremitting and I feel rather like a fish out of water. On the other hand its nearness to important decisions in public policy is fascinating and I am aware that a less liberal line might easily be taken ...." If you could see your ways to giving me another year's leave I should prefer that to a permanent appointment here."

The same arguments were gone over by members of the Senate as on the first application for leave. The University's first obligation was to the student. It had no obligation to any profit-making corporation, however wealthy and powerful. The students were being penalised by having to do with a temporary second rate substitute for the Professor. The Senate was reminded that the chief reason urged in support of the first year's leave was that the Professor would return after a year's contact with actual affairs better qualified to serve the students. Yet here was the Professor asking for a second year's leave with the intimation that if it was not granted he would consider leaving the University for a permanent appointment on the Bank's staff. True to its invariable custom the Professorial Board supported Shann's application saying "the leave will be of great educational value."

Nevertheless a second year's leave was granted. Somerville desired it noted in the minutes that he objected
to the leave.

Shann wrote from Scott's Hotel, Melbourne 14/4/32 - "We economists are an inveterately hopeful band ......
"are doing our best to push the Government into a sound
"monetary policy. Herewith I send you our latest assault
"on the forts of folly. Let Murdoch see it when you have
"had your fill of it .... P.S. If the Economics Depart-
"ment shows signs of petering out (Solomon, his substitute,
"had had two operations) you had better recall me, but it
"will take us all our time to get the idea of reconstruc-
tion into political heads by next February, so perhaps
"there is sound cause for my carrying on here. It is not
"pleasant at times and I count the months to my return."

From Sydney 2nd June, 1932 - ".... Unemployment is
"a nightmare. There seems to be increasing signs that our
"report (this I presume was the Experts' report signed by
"Melville, Shann and Copland upon which the Premier's Plan
"was based) will bear fruit. I shall probably be sent to
"Ottawa and I hope Melville will be sent too. In that
"event we shall fight the good fight for an all British
"currency policy on similar lines and for Free Trade as
"its sphere to work in. But the strain of all this is
"rather trying. The academic calm and freedom next year
"appeal more and more. Salute the Brethren for me."

From Sydney 23rd November, 1932 - This letter
opens with a reference to a letter card which is not on
the file but apparently intimated that he would finish with
the Bank in February 1933 - ".... since writing that
"letter card I have felt nothing but relief at the decision.
"It may be that a physically heftier man would feel obliged
"to stay here and fight for monetary reform within the camp
"of the Trojans, but not I. I must be back in academic work,
"free to think and YAMMER as I like and I am coming. The
"drudgery of carrying on has become very trying but that
"will pass.
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"currency policy on similar lines and for Free Trade as

"its sphere to work in." But the strain of all this is

"rather trying. The academic calm and freedom next year

"appeal more and more. Salute the Brethren for me."
When may I resume. I'd like to do a month's work on
lecture material before term opens. Can you put me on the
salary list as from 1st February? If so I can quit this
quarrelsome scene towards the end of January."

Whitfield was willing but Northmore J., Chairman of
the Finance Committee, objected and it was not allowed.
The Senate March 1933 welcomed Shann on resuming duty.

On May 4th, 1933 after only two months back at the
University a special meeting of the Senate was called to
consider the question of allowing Shann to attend the World
Economic Conference as the representative of the Bank of
New South Wales. The Vice-Chancellor supported the leave
using the same arguments as had been used twice previously,
great emphasis being laid on the value to the students when
Shann returned. He also mentioned the difference of
opinion about the exchange without showing any awareness of
the fact that it was a highly controversial and political
party question. Here is his circular to Senate members:

"Extract from Minutes of Special Meeting of Senate held on
4th May, 1933"

"BUSINESS"

"To consider the question of allowing Professor Shann to
attend the World Economic Conference to be held in London,
beginning 12th June, 1933."

"The following report (circulated with the agenda) was
received from the Vice-Chancellor:-

'The General Manager of the Bank of New South Wales is
very anxious that Professor Shann should be present at the
Conference. He considers that this is very desirable in
order to protect Australia's interests as a primary
producing and debtor country. One matter on which there
is a sharp cleavage of opinion in banking circles is
whether the Australian pound should be brought back to
parity with sterling. Again, Australia's trade with the
East may be seriously affected by the Conference. If the
World Economic Conference does actually arrive at decisions,
these decisions may very greatly influence Australia's prosperity for a number of years. The other countries attending the Conference will probably have the advice of all their leading economists, and Professor Shann has made a disinterested study of Australia's problems for 25 years.

To attend the Conference, Professor Shann should leave on May 8th. He has nearly completed this term's lectures, and would return in time for the third term. The University students would benefit by his increased knowledge and experience after his return. If he can secure a satisfactory lecturer for the second term, I consider that the national interest should induce us to grant him leave."

Leave for six months was granted and presumably Shann left Fremantle for London on May 8, 1933 as the University then had indicated would be necessary for him to reach London in time for the opening of the World Economic and Monetary Conference. Mr S. M. Bruce was the representative of the Australian Commonwealth Government and with Shann as special representative of the Bank of New South Wales, the Banking interests were well represented. According to the "Round Table" magazine the object of the Conference was to bring about a recovery (that is a rise—not) in the prices of primary commodities. The conference was undoubtedly regarded by the British Government as one of great importance. Sixty nine states had been invited to send delegates and sixty eight responded by sending 168 delegates. It was opened by the King on June 12, 1933. According to some American statements the Monetary side of the Conference was of more importance than the Economic side. This view was expressed by Mr Cordell Hull. It was hoped that an agreement could be reached for stabilising the Pound, Dollar and Franc in terms of one another.
Almost immediately the American delegates gave out a statement apparently under instructions from Roosevelt that "The American Government found that measures for the stabilisation of relations between Dollar, Pound and Franc would now be untimely".

Notwithstanding this bomb the Conference by June 30 succeeded in drafting a formula for stabilisation. This was promptly rejected by Roosevelt with contumely. This wrecked the Conference and on July 10 Chamberlain in the Commons admitted that if the Government had known how America would act they would never have called the Conference. So Shann's visit to London was made a useless waste of time. According to a letter from Whitfeld to the Perpetual Trustee Company Shann returned to duty at Western Australian University on 22nd August, 1933.

July 14, 1933 Whitfeld sent the following remarkable cable to Shann in London:

"Mitchell (Adelaide University Vice Chancellor) states that Adelaide prepared offer you Professorship Economics stop. We should like to know firstly whether you wish to go secondly whether you would be willing stay Perth definite period before leaving regards reply paid. Whitfeld"

This cable is a truly remarkable example of how small was the weight given to the interests of the students when the personal interests of a member of the teaching staff are concerned. There was a man who had been away 2½ years, very much to his financial advantage, while his students had to be content with any scratch team of second rate teachers which could be got. Moreover the chief argument used by those who favoured his two and a half years absence was that he would be more competent on his return from the experience he would gain with practical affairs and the students would
benefit by this experience of the Professor. Yet the moment Whitfeld, Vice Chancellor, who was the official guardian of the interests of Senate and students, got a hint that Shann might be offered the Adelaide Chair he does not even wait for Shann to make an application to break his contract but eagerly offers it. He does not even wait the two days necessary to consult the Senate but acted without its consent and in flagrant disregard of any limitation on his own authority. Shann of course accepted Whitfeld’s offer by cable, 27/7/33. But before this was received Whitfeld had reported to the Senate and that body without waiting for an application from Shann decided that if he had the opportunity to go to Adelaide the Western Australian University would release him from his contract at end of 1934.

August 8, 1933 - Whitfeld to Mitchell re Shann, "Senate and Community would like Shann to stay at this University during 1934 and that you are quite agreeable to this arrangement". In accordance with this arrangement Shann gave notice, 15/6/34, of his resignation to take effect on December 3, 1934.

Unfortunately he was not destined to serve the Adelaide University very long. His tragic death occurred on May 23, 1935 after little more than two months work there.

There is a curious letter from Whitfeld to Shann dated 21st May, 35:

"I am not clear from your note why it is that it takes you 15 minutes to go to the Library and return to your room. Is it you are so overburdened with duties that your walking pace has become very slow or is it the enticement of the refectory which, if I remember rightly, is close to the Library, and the attractions of the undergards."

This allusion to the refectory is evidently a gentle piece of banter of Whitfeld to offset some gloomy
letter received from Shann but it never reached him for he died two days after it was written.

At 7:45 p.m. on May 23 1935 Professor Shann was found dying on a concrete pavement about 12 feet from the main University Building. His skull was badly fractured and he died while being taken to Adelaide Hospital.

The building from which he had evidently fallen has two stories and the windows on the second floor are about 20 feet above where he was found.

There was no inquest, the Coroner deeming that unnecessary. A student who attended the Professor's last lecture said the Professor did not appear as well as usual last night. Normally he lectured in a half standing position, with one foot on a chair, from behind the long table in the lecture theatre. Last night he sat on a chair in front of the table. The lecture lasted the full hour from 6.15 to 7.15 p.m. After the lecture the Professor appeared to be in his usual health although it was true he had asked the class if he might sit down to deliver the lecture.

Sir William Mitchell stated that the Professor had confided to him that he had lately become giddy from lecturing. (The window of the room from which he had fallen was raised about 2½ feet. So it would appear that feeling giddy after lecturing and walking upstairs to this room he had felt a desire for fresh air, had raised the bottom sash, then overbalanced and fallen out of the window.)

He was 51 years of age.

The following reports of speeches by Sir Walter James, Chancellor, and by myself are taken from the Senate proceedings when the death was announced by the Chancellor.
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

Extract from SENATE MINUTES of 17th JUNE, 1935.

(Speaker: Sir Walter James).

I recall Shann in those early years when he came to us, full of life and vigor, coming to us no doubt as others did with visions of the young University undaunted by the difficulties confronting them.

He was one of those first members of our teaching staff to whom this University will remain deeply indebted for all time. Their learning; their gifts of teaching, and above all their unquenchable enthusiasm have left an indelible impression on our young University: a puny infant when they took charge, but now after 21 years under their wise and forceful guidance, a vigorous body of good repute and ascending tradition.

Professor Shann was above all things vital: his energy of mind and body may account for his premature and ever regrettable death. He gave of his best to whatever he touched: it must be done thoroughly and well or left alone. It is plain now that he spared himself too little and gave too much.

To nothing did he give, with such rich and overflowing measure, as he gave to the University he helped to mould and which he so unselfishly loved.

As a teacher others can judge better than I. As a man each can form an estimate. He was a most human and lovable man: insistent and perhaps somewhat pertinacious where one impinged upon his special subject, but insistent only in a desire to help: pertinacious only when he felt very strongly.

I never heard him utter a vicious word: never knew him lacking in toleration or wanting in sympathy. It is no wonder that those of us who knew and admired him deplore his death with a sense of great personal loss.
217.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

21/8/44.

Extract from SENATE MINUTES of 17th JUNE, 1935.

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Mr Somerville also spoke as under:-

I am one of the few remaining members of the Senate which appointed Professor Shann to the position he held in this University, and I would therefore like to join with the mover and seconder of this resolution in recording our appreciation of his work and our sympathy with those whom he has left behind.

Professor Shann's subject, and particularly his specialty - Industrial History - and my position as a member of the Court of Arbitration, gave us many questions and opinions in common. All through the years that he was a member of this University we discussed many questions and exchanged many letters. Sometimes in accord, also at times in active opposition. Our views became most divergent during the last three years of his occupancy of the Chair of Economics, and it is therefore a matter of very great pleasure and satisfaction to me to have in my possession a long letter which I received from Professor Shann. He himself describes it in the letter as one of the last he will probably write as a member of the University of Western Australia. In that letter, in response to a gesture from me, he gives utterance to the warmest feelings of friendship and goodwill. As I say, it is a matter of very great satisfaction and pleasure that my long association with such a lovable man should have terminated on that note.

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A very graceful and artistic memorial has been erected to Shann's memory in the University grounds; it takes the form of a semi-circular seat of Donnybrook stone. Along the back of the seat is the inscription -

"TANGARO clear away the clouds that RU may see the stars."

This is an extract from the Maori Saga which has been passed on from generation to generation, by memory, of the original migration from Samoa or whatever island it was from which the original Maories came. RU was a leader and when he was sorely beset by the hardships and dangers of the voyage he prayed the God TANGARO to clear away the clouds that he RU might see the stars. This appealed to Shann the individualist as the cry of a strong man to be given a chance to fight his own way. A weaker man or one whose individualism had been sapped by socialistic coddling and government regulation would have prayed to be saved from the dangers of the voyage but RU cried I can win my own way if given a chance so let me see the stars.

As an economist Shann was strictly orthodox, his roots were well down into Adam Smith and he could be called an apologist for Capitalism, not of course for its worst features, that during his latter years was impossible. As an individual apart from the Economist his kindly nature and his personal desire for reform was frequently at issue with his orthodox economics.

The first Professor of Economics at the Melbourne University, W. E. Hearn, emphatically declared in a speech -

"The law of Gravitation or the law of the circulation of the Blood have not been more fully established than the Doctrine of Free Trade. "Scotts History of Melbourne University, page, 30."

If Shann was not so definite and emphatic as Hearn he was not very far in advance of him. In a letter to Whitfeld (2nd June, 1932) in which he speaks of his hopes
of being sent by the Bank of New South Wales to the Ottawa Conference and that Melville will also be sent there, he says - "In that event we shall fight for an "all British currency policy --- and for Freer Trade as its sphere to work in."

Protectionist tariffs as a means to establishing industry frequently drew forth his scorn, he spoke gibingly of "three elderly gentlemen sitting in an Arbitration Court - seeking by their Awards to control the rise and fall of wages", he frequently declared that the Private Banks were the proper Controllers of Money and Credit.

In his farewell address to the W. A. Economic and Historical Society (1934) Shann said -

"The issue (at pending Federal Elections) is "whether "our monetary institutions shall continue to be controlled "in the Public interest in one style that is admired all "the world over for its fluidity and success, or in another "style even more definitely responsive to the Law making "will of the Community".

He reached the apex of his influence on Public affairs when with Giblin Copland and Melville he drafted the Experts plan for dealing with the Depression of the 30th. This became the Premier's Plan which in turn led the Federal Arbitration Court to reduce wages 10% below the Harvester Standard of 1907, a 25 years retrogression.

Shann's Economics belonged to what Stefan Zweig has called the "Golden Age of security". Security that was for the well to do and those comfortably off, which terminated abruptly with the outbreak of war in 1914. For at least 20 years after the termination of that War the efforts of Economists and Tory Politicians was to restore the "Golden Age of Security" and the Premier's Plan was part of this effort. Then the writings of Sutcliffe in Australia (1926) and of Colin Clarke and Keynes in England destroyed the conception of National income upon which the Premier's plan (or more correctly the plan of the Economic experts) was founded. With these considerations in mind one can see a pregnant significance in Shann's last remark to Sir William Mitchell, the Adelaide Chancellor, shortly before his death that "he found it necessary to reorientate his Economics."
Again Sir William, speaking to News Reporters at
the time of Sham's tragic death said - "He had just com-
pleted a new approach to economics, escaping from the
"abstractions of the Classical school and the empirical
"character of the Historical school. It was this scheme
"which made him unwilling to rest." Opinions will differ
as to what the learned chancellor meant by this erudite
paragraph. I think it may fairly be assumed he intended
to say that Sham had realised that his former teaching
had to be revised to accord with recent developments, and
he found it was a heavy task. The following are a selec-
tion from the many letters I exchanged with Professor Sham
during the time he occupied his Chair in W. A.

Those of 29th June and of September 8th and 13th,
1926 have reference to the Brochure I had published called
"21 Years of Arbitration Court Work" and to Sham's kindly
efforts to secure the publication in London of other writing
by me on the same subject.

18th March and 10th April, 1931 are about service
with Bank of New South Wales.
8th May, 1931 - Run' on Sydney State Bank.
8th August, 1931 refers to my trouble as acting
Vice Chancellor with the crisis in University finances -
quoting Luthers hymn - hopes for future.
3rd May, 1932. The papers had reported something
I had said about the Expert's plan and this was his comment.
19th May, 1932. My reply to 3rd May.
Economists who signed the Report have become politi-
cal partisans.
Professor and Bank employee a false position.
Economists contrasted with Chemists.
Churchill and gold standard.
Concentration on wages.
2nd June, 1932 - Sham's reply to 19th May.
Defence of Economists.
We who persuaded Theodore to reduce interest.
Suggestion that he (Sham) had liberalised views
on Money expressed in New South Wales Bank Circulars.
All our memoranda do not see the light.
Personal longing for return to Academic work and
the "Pleasant grounds at Crawley."
The last paragraph in Shann's chief work "An Economic History of Australia" would serve as a condensed expression of his whole Politic Economic Philosophy. It is undiluted Laissez faire. I quote —

"These schemes of price manipulation (and I interpolate Wage fixation) one and all bespeak a hazy appreciation of the functions of prices in guiding the economic use of man's resources. Australians have too often legislated as though a price (or a wage?) might be made at whatever figure the producer in search of an easier life chose to call a fair thing. But the prices that direct the going and comings of sound prosperity are the signs by which men learn from willing buyers their changing needs. A government or Board of Control that seeks to fake the World's prices (or I again interpolate wages) does so at the peril of the Citizens and producers whom the faked prices mislead."

This is undiluted Laissez faire and has been much better said by Shann's precursor Herbert Spencer. About him I quote from Beatrice Webb in "My Apprenticeship" pages 329-30. "And here I must recall a queer deep rooted fallacy lying at the very base of Herbert Spencer's administrative nihilism; an error of reasoning pervading the capitalist world in which I was brought up, Herebert Spencer asserted and every Capitalist assumed that the system of profit making enterprise with which we were all familiar; belong to the "natural order of things" whereas any activity on the part of the State or the Municipality, or even of the Trade Union, such as factory acts, public health administration, compulsory schooling and standard rates of wages were "artificial" contrivances or to use the philosophers own words "clumsy mechanism devised by political schemers to supersede the great laws of existence", and therefore, bound - because they were "against nature" - to be social failures. For instance, a rate of wages determined by unrestricted individual
competition was a "natural rate of wages"; a rate of wages determined by combination or by law was an "artificial wage" and therefore, injurious to the Commonwealth.

Today it is difficult to understand from whence came this curious fallacy; probably it arose, like so many other fallacies from a muddle headed use of words."

There is much more of the same kind. The whole of Capitalism with all its rules and laws is intensely artificial and no scrap of it is "natural".
20th June, 1932 - Tea growers and reduced wages.
21st November, 1934 - Exchange - proposed judgment
by me in Arbitration Court.
23rd November, 1934 - Exchange - long 3 sheet
comment by Shann.

The third sheet is of particular importance and
value to me. It is what I alluded to in my remarks to
the Senate when the Chancellor announced Shann's death.

I very much regret I have no copy of my apology
for my absence from the farewell dinner. I have no
recollection of its terms but Professor Alexander, the
Chairman on the occasion says they moved Shann and were
accepted as cancelling out any ranour left by our
previous correspondence.

28th November - My reply to 23rd November.

University of Western Australia
P.O. Box C.130
Perth, 8th September, 1926.

W. Somerville, Esq.,
Arbitration Court,
Supreme Court,
PERTH, W.A.

Dear Mr Somerville,

I send you herewith a copy of the
"Socialist Review" for July, the Editor of which, Mr John
Strachey, is quite anxious that you should write for it
an article

(1) of not more than 3,500 words
(2) intended for Trade Unionists, who form the bulk
of his readers, and
(3) avoiding any advocacy of compulsory arbitration
in England, and recognising the difference in
conditions, social and political, between England
and Australia.

For the moment, I have mislaid the memo-
randum I made as an outline for another article to be sub-
mitted to Mr G. P. Gooch, the Editor of the "Contemporary
Review". Probably it is in my copy of your pamphlet.
Perhaps it would expedite matters if you sent me another copy of the pamphlet from which I could quickly re-write the memorandum. I hope you will decide upon writing the article for the "Contemporary". If you do so, I should like to send a covering letter to the Editor, and at the same time to write Charles Trevelyan on the matter.

Yours faithfully,

(Edward Shann)

Encl.

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St. Ives Hotel,
21 Lancaster Gate,
LONDON, W.2
29. 6. '26

Dear Somerville,

Why, oh! why did you not write this letter a month or so earlier? It reached me only today, just a fortnight before I sail for home, and the pamphlet has evidently missed the mail, for it has not put in an appearance. It will arrive next Tuesday, I expect, giving me just a week in which to act, and one already thickly spattered with engagements.

Never mind. I shall do all I can, and will count myself a duffer if I don't persuade someone to publish or to look after your "plod" (which is academic slang for manuscript or other mental output.)

If you had given me this commission earlier your own wife would not have recognized the portrait of the author "drawn by the firm's tame artist from descriptions supplied." It would have deceived St. Peter. As it is I shall hardly have time to work up my brief. You will be suffering from me in person within ten days of receiving this.

We have had a wonderful holiday, tho' I have done a fair amount of work in spasms. What has surprised me most has been the reasonable expense at which we have lived, and lived well.

We have much, very much, to learn from the old nation, but some things we can teach them. Not cricket. But more of that when we meet.

Ever yours sincerely,

(Edward Shann)
THE TRIPLE BENCH, representing the law, the workers and the employers.

(i) Law-making functions and lack of training for such work from which a law-trained judge inevitably suffers.

(ii) Cost-of-living: Defects as a basis.
(a) A family wage? What family?
(b) Cost-of-living a static principle excluding the variation of wages with productivity.

(iii) Ameliorations made general by the Court's Awards.
Record Books, for policing of awards.
Paid annual holiday
Roster for semi-casual work.
Record and supervision of piece-rates
Various safety matters: -
Blowers
Water-jets
Prohibition of dry-rubbing
Safeguarding of bronzing.

(iv) Apprenticeship.
Builds of working masters being extinct, the Court takes their place as guarantor of good training.
Technical schooling as the necessary scientific supplement of working instruction.

(This last section calls for detailed elaboration.)

LABOUR'S POSITIVE ROAD TO PARTNERSHIP.
Dear Professor,

I do not know how to sufficiently thank you for the trouble you have taken on my behalf during your holiday.

I would like to undertake both articles but as I am a slow worker and have a lot on hand it may be some time before I can start either. But I would be very glad to have your memorandum for the "Contemporary" article as a guide so that when I do get a move on it will be on right lines.

Yours truly,

Professor E. Shann,
University,
PERTH.

University of Western Australia,
P.O. Box C.130,
Perth, 13th September, 1926.

Dear Somerville,

A letter unsigned which reached me from the Arbitration Court on Saturday, must have been your work, or rather the result of your dictation. No need to thank me: you have done more for the University than the University has done for you.

Herewith I enclose my rough suggestions for the "Contemporary" article. You need have no compunction in advocating compulsory arbitration in its pages, if you feel so inclined.

There is a passage on page 9 of the pamphlet that I cannot let go unchallenged. You say "The ordinary orthodox view of trade-unionism, instilled into "the lawyer"by college and university teachers, is that it is an unmixed evil". That is not true. The most influential university teacher of economics of your generation and the acknowledged master of such teachers in mine was and still is (despite his death last year) Alfred Marshall.
of Cambridge, an active co-operator throughout his life, whose text-book on the subject ends with a chapter, written as long ago as 1892, summing up powerfully in favour of unionism. My own tutor at Queen's Melbourne, was John Andrew Arthur, who died in office as Minister for Home Affairs in the Second Fisher Ministry, although a lawyer.

Also, before you quote the catechism about "that station in life" again look up the exact wording of it.

But these are details. God speed the plough.

Yours sincerely,

(Edward Shann.)

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Albert Street,

COTTESLOE BEACH,

18th March, 1931.

Professor Shann,

University of W.A.,

PERTH.

Dear Professor,

When you applied for and were granted a year's leave without pay, did you understand that the University would still be under the obligation to pay their contribution of £100 towards your Superannuation Policy?

I am quite sure that when the Senate agreed to the proposition without pay, no one imagined there was a mental reservation to the extent of £100; but the legal mind draws a subtle distinction between "without pay", and payment of this £100.

As the position now stands, the limited University funds are to be depleted to the extent of £100 to meet a liability which, in my opinion, falls properly on the Bank. I am not content to allow the matter to remain there, and, before the question is again debated, I thought it only fair to give you an opportunity of saying what you understood when leave was granted to give your services to the Bank.

Yours truly, (W. Somerville.)
226.

University Club,  
Phillip Street,  
SYDNEY.  

30th March, 1931.

Dear Somerville,

A letter from Albert Street, Cottesloe Beach dated 18th March 1931 which came to hand unsigned this morning must be from you.

Before writing my application for leave without pay I discussed with the Vice Chancellor the matter of the University's contribution of £100 to my superannuation insurance. I understood, quite definitely, from two separate conversations with him that the University would continue to pay it during my leave of absence.

Yours truly,

(Edward Shann)

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Albert Street,  
COTTESLOE BEACH,  
April 10, 31.

Dear Professor,

I apologise for sending you an unsigned letter. That is the result of an inferiority complex with regard to my writing. Probably you will say after struggling through this that the beforementioned complex is warranted.

I was surprised at the contents of your letter. To my mind it is clear that the Vice Chancellor exceeded his authority when he gave you the assurance that the University would pay this £100.

I daresay Professor you think that in pursuing this matter I am actuated by some feeling towards yourself and the Bank. I assure you that is not so. I see only that in my opinion the Senate have misused £100 of University funds. Supposing Whitfeld had gone as adviser to the Newcastle Steel Works for a year, would you not hold that the Steel Works should relieve the University of all the charges it would otherwise carry for that year for his services? Yours truly,
C/o University Club,
70 Phillip Street,
SYDNEY
21st April, 1931.

Dear Somerville,

Your letter of the 10th gives me the opportunity of putting to you some aspects of my year's leave which you have overlooked. I am still a member of the staff of the University, having been one since February 1913, with only two terms' leave in 1926. I am as much entitled as anyone to "study leave". I am enjoying — though at times I doubt the joy — facilities for the study of banking, economics and politics so manifold that I am going harder from morning to night than I have done since I was Vice-Chancellor. And those who know me best do not regard me as a loafer. On my return — and you need have not the least doubt about my returning — I shall know more of the inside workings of banks and other institutions than most. Will that not add to my ability to teach, to my usefulness as a member of the University staff?

Another matter. In making my arrangements with the Bank as to the fee it pays me as consultant I was influenced by the arrangement into which I entered with the Vice-Chancellor. Had I thought that the University would refuse to pay its part of my superannuation insurance premium I should have acted otherwise. If the University should turn back upon the arrangement made it would penalize me, not the Bank. Have I deserved any such treatment. It would certainly seem invidious by comparison with that given to others on leave. But a truce to business.

I am told that the Canberra Conference in February missed by sheer muddle-headedness an agreement between the Government and the banks on lines developing out of the "experts'" reports. It is wretched work, at
times, watching obstinate men stick at imaginary differences when they all mean well by the community. If I had had a son I'd have trained him for the diplomatic Public Service. Some of the Treasury men win my very highest admiration for their tact and patience.

Things are bad, of course, but Anglo-Saxons never despair of a fair compromise.

I send herewith (1) a copy of a little compilation that was the outcome of some Easter overtime, and (2) an Australian Alphabet written by a friend of mine. You may enjoy N more than L, but I can revel in all of it.

Yours very truly,

(Edward Shann)

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14 St. Neol Avenue,
Woolloomooloo - Potts Point.
8th May, '31.

Dear Somerville,

Pardon this ambiguous address. The house I have taken is a border-liner and I'm not sure whether our new Vice would prefer me to live in the one suburb or the other. Congratulations on the honour and condolences on the hard work it will involve. Still work is the best fun in life and you will revel in it.

When I wrote I hadn't the foggiest notion of your impending promotion. So don't suspect me of attempted bribery in sending you Medley's Alphabet.

You know how heartily I concur in what you say of the press. The constant search of "copy" is at its worst in these big cities over here. Melbourne thinks Sydney on the verge of riot and pillage while Sydney pictures Melbourne as grass-grown and starving. In fact
both places are remarkably phlegmatic. The run on the Savings Bank here was originated, intensified and finally brought to its culmination - the withdrawal of a million and a quarter on 22nd April - by unwise advertisements and undue publicity.

There certainly are plenty of fools to cater for.

Yours sincerely,

(Edward Shann)
Bank of New South Wales,
SYDNEY.
5th August, 1931.

Dear Somerville,

Many thanks for your note of the 27th telling me, amongst other things of the change in my "style and title".

Of course I have no illusions about the half-general opinion that "economists" should either condone continued living beyond our resources (as developed) or be hanged. But you are appreciating what living on trust means.

Don't give in. When I took over the V-C'ship, though the troubles were less severe, I remember quoting to myself: "Never came man to so lost a business!" And at this moment every man in an important post of responsibility is doing the same now and then. But you are there, like the rest of such lonely souls to give life and detailed expression to an idea. If your idea of the University is sound, inclusive of the spirits that will make W.A. a wiser, kinder place, it and you will win.

How does Luther's hymn go?

"And if they take our life
Yet is their profit small
These things shall perish all
The City of God remaineth".

I suppose each generation re-shapes the idea of the city not made with hands and I'm sure the Australia to be will not be as I dimly picture it. But I'm equally sure honest effort to make it better for the youngsters than it was for us doesn't all go astray.

Pardon my writing like this, but your letter read as if you were a little down-hearted. You've got a good team over there and you mustn't weaken in driving, cheering and calling them on.

Yours sincerely,
(Edward Shann).
Dear Somerville,

I see by a cutting out of the "West" that my daughter Marjorie sent me that you thought my action in signing this report a partisan one. It may amuse you to know that the Lang party here, on the strength of writings in which I had a hand, are proclaiming that A.C. Davidson, the General Manager here, is a convert to the Lang Plan.

My impression is that both you and they misjudge a little.

What a capital set of speeches you had at the opening of the Winthrop Hall. Sir William Mitchell's and Murdoch's seem to have been the best. It was very pleasing to read in the Western Mail how well the whole ceremony went and to admire the completed work.

How grows the sanctuary of trees?

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

(Edward Shann)

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Perth

19th May, 1932.

My dear Shann,

Your very disarming letter to hand, together with a copy of the Report. I wish we were not so constantly at issue. So much of my life has been given to securing for the wage earner a larger share than even the "extravagantly paid" Australian gets of the good things he helps to produce that, when anyone asserts in cold blood that he gets too much, I am instinctively at him. If in the inevitable exchange we hurt each other, then I am afraid it cannot be helped.

I do not know what report was sent to you, but
what I did say was — "Professor Shann had signed a report which would be the centre around which would rage one of the fiercest political battles in Australian History. One side would quote it with approval and the other denounce it as an unnecessary and unwarranted attack upon their standard of life. The Professors who signed the report would cease to occupy the position of detachment from party strife and impartiality which should characterise all a University Professor's Acts, and become, in the minds of the big majority of Australians, active political partisans."

I stick to that. As a University Professor, and at the same time accepting the Banks' money, you are in a false position. Do not deceive yourself: the Nationalist politicians and the Banks would not give a dime for a report signed by plain Mr. Shann and by Mr. Giblin. What they want is a report over the signatures of as many Professors as possible, well knowing the pathetic belief which the Australian public, especially the wage earners, have in the wisdom and impartiality of Professors. You may remember a pathetic resolution passed by a Primary Producers' Association asking a Professor to advise them as to the wisdom of an unimproved land tax. In very truth the status attached to the title Professor is a very fine thing, which should be very precious to all who are so fortunate as to have the honour to use it. It is, however, a delicate thing and will be easily destroyed.

What a blessing it would be if one could go to an Economist as one would to a chemist, and ask "If A is added to B, what reaction do you get?", and accept the answer without question! The sad fact is that a large section of the people, particularly the wage earners, really believe that the same reliance can be placed upon a report by Economists as upon one by chemists; witness the hundreds of poor little letters to the papers, asking why the great and good Economists cannot tell us what to
do. You are, in my opinion, just a number of little boys - and very presumptuous little boys, who, having gathered a few shells on the seashore, pretend you can map the ocean currents.

What is the explanation of the Australian Economists' obsession about wages? Can it be that association with Bankers and other habitues of expensive Clubs is too much for the economic stomach? None of you ever fail to get down on the same side of the fence with the big bank balances. Even your amateurish proposal for the establishment of a rural peasantry is tarred with the same brush.

I notice that you give a very mild approval to the reduction of Interest, but I am quite certain that no Economist would have had the guts to mention such a proposal had not Theodore and Scullin belled the cat.

For a long time I have been asserting that the slump in world prices was deliberately engineered and started by some understanding between the big American and English, and probably French, Bankers, their aim being, of course, to increase the purchasing power of the interest on war loans. The Australian Banks, of course, are only straws on the flood. This movement probably once started rapidly got beyond the control of the originators, but that it was started deliberately I have no doubt. When first made, this assertion would have been dismissed by the journalists and economists as a wild guess (possibly it was), but it is surprising the number of big guns who are now repeating it in various forms. One of the latest is Comrade Churchill, and he, the blighter, was the instrument chosen to start the smash in prices and wages. To quote further from Brother Churchill:-

"These days of absurd nightmare, of these years when plenty springing from enterprise and science
seems only to lead to privation, when generous harvests are dreaded like the plague, when all men has done and has yet to do, is limited by chance discoveries and releases of a single metal."

Why not lift your nose from its persistent sniffing at wages and let us know what you think of the money root of our troubles? Wages are not the cause of the world (including Australia) trouble. There is no need, of course for me to emphasise this to you. A growing number of Economic writers of the highest standing are asserting that our troubles are due to mismanagement of our currency. Why, in the name of all that's holy, do not our Australian Economists direct some attention to this, instead of concentrating on wages - But there! I forgot the overseas Economists are not Bank employees.

You require that wage earners and their families should get back to 10% less than they had in 1907, and forfeit all they have battled for, for 30 years. Well, I hope they will fight you tooth and claw!

Yours for the Revolution,

Bank of New South Wales,
Sydney, 2nd June, 1932.

My dear Somerville,

For reasons I was not long in realising I found your very outspoken letter good reading. Respect for a man who has fought so well for the University of my dreams cancelled out any little resentment of his candid criticism. And, paradoxical as it may seem to you, I share passionately your views about the future development of money. But the best way of persuading old men setin other views is not that of storming at them.

As to wages the economists' view is that wage-earners, to a lesser degree than others but to some small degree, must share in the general recoil in order that their standards may go forward with the rest in the re-
organization, towards which we are, I hope, heading. This is no metaphorical moral, nor matter of "equity" but the only way in which an equilibrium admitting of joint action can be re-established. Wage-earners are vitally interested in such a regrouping of resources. If things go smash everywhere those with least private reserves are likely to suffer most, while the poor human will to re-organize is getting slowly and blunderingly to work on unnecessarily bungled materials. But let us sink, for the moment, that difference in points of view. I want you to adopt a truer view on another point.

It goes against the grain to say anything in praise of one's calling, but you really are alittle unjust to the economists concerning interest. We did have the "guts" - your phrase - to press that proposal of a cut in fixed money charges in the teeth of the fiercest opposition from Tories, and "mugwumps", and it was we who convinced Theodore, the most courageous of the Labour leaders, that it could and would be done.

As the money I do not suppose you read the Bank of N.S.W.'s circulars but they, even after adoption by conservative directors, retain traces of more liberal views than those still dominant amongst some bankers, but no longer, thank God, at the Banks of England and of New South Wales! They are bringing down on us the usual charges of unsoundness, inflationism &c.&c.

The Australian economists are not "concentrating on wages" and have not done so in any conference I have attended. Not all our memoranda, for example on oversea debts &c., see the light, but we happen to be conferring next week for the third time on that subject. If we were not, we would certainly be the incredibly sinister folk on whom you reflect in your letter.

You cannot imagine how glad I shall be of academic freedom once again. Yet the chance to work upon some of
the problems of banking within these institutions was worth seizing. That I have occasionally been in the limelight, against my will, is only proof that both political parties, having handled finance very badly, have become aware of this. Whatever happens we shall live to talk about the old economic puzzles in the pleasant grounds at Crawley next year.

Thank you for writing so frankly. It was a friend’s act. Whatever happens next week do not doubt that I realize there is plenty of keen and disinterested thinking being done both inside and outside the A.L.P.

Yours for Australia,
(Edward Shann)

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Albert Street,
BUCKLAND HILL.

20th June, 1932.

My dear Shann,

If some of our Australian Economists were to be deported - No! that word will not do, Australians believe in freedom of thought and speech, always provided it coincides with that of the Nationalist party, is in short orthodox and so deportation is a fate not to be thought of for Economists. Exported - No! that would imply we could get on without them. Let us say "took a long holiday in Ceylon," then to be consistent they would doubtless recommend "That equilibrium between costs and prices be sought by paying each Coolie 10% less than his usual 5 cents per day. Then unemployment in Coolie circles would decrease and all would be happy. But supposing the Javanese Coolie were to accept 20% less than his usual 5 cents per day. Well! that could be the subject of another report in a few months time.

Yours truly,
P.S. Enclosed was a press cutting about the plight of
Ceylon Tea growers who had to sell their product at less than cost and so should if the so called Expert report was correct be assisted by a reduction in wage.

21st November, 1934.

Professor E.A. Shann, M.A.
Department of Economics,
University of W.A.,
CRAWLEY.

Dear Professor,

Would you be good enough to give me a ring or a short note to say if you see anything profoundly wrong with the enclosed statement which I had proposed to make from the Bench. I naturally wish to escape saying anything silly about a subject to which you have given so much study. Will you help me?

Yours truly,

It should be remembered that something in excess of 30/- out of the price at present obtained for an ounce of gold is due to the operation of the exchange.

Exchange is an impost paid by the consumer of imported goods and by the remitter of interest to the gain of the exporter of Australian produce.

Consequently the worker in the Gold Mining Industry has ever since this imposition of exchange been contributing from that portion of his wages which he spent in the purchase of imported goods towards the price of gold.

18 Karoo Street,

PERSONAL.

South Perth W.A.

Dear Somerville,

23rd November, 1934

EXCHANGE AND ITS EFFECT UPON WAGE PURCHASING POWER.

Here is my amended version of your draft.
"The price of gold in terms of Australian currency is a fact incidental to a monetary policy that has defended, with some success, the balance of the whole Australian economy. In so doing the present exchange rate has helped to maintain every industry in our economy. It has meant better prices to the exporting industries and better turnovers to the importing and sheltered industries.

"If, however, it is desired to analyse the first impact on various industries of the altered exchange relation with sterling, it may be considered that something in excess of 30/- out of the Australian price at present obtained for an ounce of gold is due to the operation of the Anglo-Australian rate of exchange.

"Regarded as a new charge and taken apart from its diffused effects on the balance of the Australian economy, exchange was and may be thought of as continuing to be an impost paid by the consumer of imported goods and by the remitters of interest, to the gain of the exporter of Australian produce.

"Comparing the position of the worker in the Gold Mining Industry since the emergence of this exchange charge with the position he would have occupied had the Australian pound been kept near to par with sterling, he may be thought of as contributing towards the price of gold from those portions of his wages that he has spent in the purchase of imports and in taxes used to defray the added cost of remitting interest."

May I add a few comments on this revised version? It is now respectable as a piece of economic analysis but quite inconclusive as a plea for increased wages for the mine-workers. For example, it would be an easy task to put up a counter claim that the workers in the industry had, in actual fact, drawn advantages from the steadier and wider employment that has arisen directly
from the higher price of gold. Moreover you would find it hard to show that this advantage was less substantial than the contributions to the price of gold they may be thought to have made through imports and extra taxes. I have not looked into the point but I doubt whether miners consume much in the way of imports whose prices have not been allowed for in cost-of-living adjustments.

But my objection to your line of argument is fundamental. Like most pleas for "fair dealing" and equity, it assumes or implies that a past relation between the parties is the standard to which the future should be assimilated. It is always hard to darn the fabric that time's rough use has worn out, but even when it is possible this does not prove that no better trousers are available. If we can afford them I am all in favour of a new pair. Patching, despite its pious reverence for the past, can never be thorough-going. If you attempt an assessment of the losses and gains through past monetary twists in industrial relations, why confine your attention to the twist in the relation between sterling and the Australian currency? You are dealing with gold. And it so happens that the departure of sterling from its time-honoured relation with gold is distinctly greater than the alteration in the rate of exchange between the Australian pound and the pound sterling. But if you try to tot up a tally of the gains and losses to the mine workers from that greater monetary revolution you will land yourself in a fine tangle.

Therefore I persist that any case for increased wages should be based on economic rather than on equitable grounds. It should, like all sound economy, look to the future, not to the past. The golden age, if anywhere, is in the future.

The gold-mining industry is called on to play a part of increasing responsibility because of the decline in the economic strength of other industries. Can
it do so on a High-Wage basis? If the answer is 'Yes' these higher wages will attract more men and 'stroke up' those already in the industry. Moreover the increased purchasing power among these workers and those from whom they buy will contribute strength all round to our economy. Recent years have shown that our wage-fixing tribunals can effect these re-shuffling with a keen eye to the general economic balance, that, I hold, should be their only, as it is their best guide.

May I add a note or two on personal topics? I appreciated nothing at that dinner they gave me lately at the University so much as I appreciated your letter of apology for absence. I am glad to be able to write this - Probably my last letter to you at this University - in a matter on which we find ourselves, for once, in some degree of accord. May I suggest that, if the Senate appoints Fisher as my successor, you cultivate his acquaintance with a shade less suspicion of the dismal science than you have sometimes shown in the past? He is a younger edition of Murdoch and you all need an economist with a lighter touch than mine. So do not be fobbed off with an engineer. The world is full of devilishly ingenious engineers but is in distinctly short supply of economists with the bowels of compassion. Fisher is one of them and, as Jerry Portus of the W.E.A. and Adelaide says, "If Perth takes Fisher it will be a good take".

With kind regards,

Yours truly,  
(Edward Shann)
PERTH.
28th November, 1934.

Professor A.E. Shann, M.A.
Department of Economics,
University,
CRAWLEY.

Dear Professor,

Many thanks for the trouble you have taken to revise my stuff, but I am afraid I will not be able to use it. You see, I am not at the moment concerned with the general effects of the exchange, or as to whether the effect upon the community is good or bad. All I am concerned with is the effect it has had upon the prices obtained by the Gold Mining Co. for its product. So, if and when my stuff is published, you do not see your suggestions reflected in it you will please understand that I thank you for them and have weighed them carefully.

If the Senate should secure the services of Fisher, I will be glad to know him, but I am afraid, my dear Shann, that my attitude towards your dismal science will not change until I am safely planted in Karrakatta. Suspicion is too mild a term. The conviction is deep in my bones that the men and women whose industrial interests have been my life work owe an enormous amount less than nothing to your subject. It has ever been on the side of money privilege and power. It has provided the weapons by which the underdog has been driven back into his kennel. Today every member of an Employers' Federation or Chamber of Commerce or Tory politician on the stump, even though he may know less about Economics than I know about navigation, feels quite safe in using that blessed phrase, "contrary to the fundamental principles of Economics", and each and every proposed reform is damned. Even your discarded garments serve. If you will ponder this view you will, I believe agree that Economics is being used
today to block reform in our rotten system of distribution, just as it was used to block regulation of Child Labour. I suppose it was ever so. In the stone age the best club, the sharpest spear, and the best looking woman went to the capitalist of that day. The constant suggestion is that in fundamentals the position has not and cannot change. I will challenge this as long as I have breath. However, you will regard all this as libellous tripe so I will stop.

May all good luck and prosperity attend you and yours in your new sphere and may you train up a few young economists who will see and preach that the rank and file is entitled to more of the good things of life than the scraps the powerful are generous enough to toss them.

Yours truly,

(W. Somerville)

P.S. The stuff herein mentioned was my definition of what exchange was and its effect upon the purchasing power of wages to be used in an Arb. Court judgment see No.20.

SHANN'S STATUS AS AN ECONOMIST.

In May 1931 during my term as Acting Vice-Chancellor I wrote to Shann to inform him that the Senate had, in response to representation from Mr. Alexander the Lecturer in History, decided to change his Title of Professor of History and Economics in such a way as to give recognition to Mr. Alexander's position. In reply Shann wrote under date 25th May 1931 ---- "The most accurate division of the Department and Titles would be to make Mr. Alexander Lecturer in Charge of Political History and myself Professor of Economic History and Economics. The latter title, however, sounds rather a mouthful and the Academic Board may think it better to give me the Title of Professor of Economics. I do not like the latter solution
because I fully realise that my "line" is Economic History rather than Economic Theory. The latter is becoming too mathematical in method for my peace of mind in "Professing" it."

This personal estimate of his "line" is of very great value. Shann's activities on behalf of the Bank and his influence on the Premier's Plan had a direct effect upon my work as a member of the Industrial Arbitration Court Bench and compelled one to form my own estimate of his status as an Economist, but my own estimate was not sufficient for my purpose, it was probably biased. I desired for this record an estimate of Shann the Economist by his Peers with whom he had been brought into contact, so I wrote to the various Gentlemen whose letters follow, and to them I desire to express my very best thanks for the interesting and historically valuable matter they have supplied.

My letters of application were all on the same lines of that to Mr. Melville which is included.

2 Albert Street,  
MOSMAN PARK,  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA.  
20th February, 1945.

Mr. Melville,  
Economist of the Commonwealth Bank.

Dear Sir,

I was for over 30 years a member of the Arbitration Court Bench and I have been a member of the W.A. University Senate since its inception. In both these capacities, I was brought much in contact with the late Professor Shann during the whole of the 20 years he was in W.A. I mention these facts to show that I should have some qualifications for the self imposed task of writing a History of the W.A. University. I am making a feature of the lives, the work and attainments of the
Professors appointed when the University first began.

One of the most striking personalities of these was Professor Shann. He was a friend of mine and I would like to do him justice. I am not competent to adequately appraise his standing as an economist with his peers. Would you be kind enough to let me have a few notes.

While acting Vice Chancellor during Professor Whitfield's absence in America in 1931, it fell to my lot to write to him informing him of a Senate decision to change his title from Professor of History and Economics to that of Professor of Economics. This had led to some correspondence with the head of the Department of History. The relevant portion of Shann's letter to me, is as follows:--

"The most accurate division of the Department and Titles, would be to make Alexander, Lecturer in Charge of Political History and myself, Professor in Economic History and Economics. The latter title, however, sounds rather a mouthful and the Academic Board may think it better to give me the title of Professor of Economics. I do not like the latter solution, because I fully realise that my "line" is Economic History, rather than Economic Theory. The latter is becoming too mathematical in method for my peace of mind in "professing" it."

I have found that the Professor's own estimate as to his true "line" is shared by some competent critics, whereas the Public know him only as an Economist. His term as Economic adviser to the Bank of New South Wales and his share in the Report of the Experts, which led to the Premier Plan, are the reasons for this opinion. The Premier Plan has now passed into History. Is there any sufficient reason why the inner history, leading up to it should not be recorded, and more particularly, what was Shann's share in the Experts report?
Could you refer me to any Magazine article, giving an appraisement of Shann's work.

I am afraid you will think me very presumptuous, in writing so to a busy man. I can only pray your mercy.

Yours truly,

Commonwealth Bank of Australia,
Ref. ED/DM.
Sydney N.S.W.
13th March, 1945.

Dr. W. Somerville,
2 Albert Street,
MOSMAN PARK. W.A.

Dear Dr. Somerville,

I should be very glad to do anything I can to help you in your task of writing about the life of Professor Shann as part of a history of the Western Australian University. I enclose a note I wrote for the "Economic Record" at the time of Professor Shann's death, which may be of some use to you. There was also a note by Professor Copland in the September 1935, issue of the "Economic Journal". These references may supply you with some of the material you want. If, however, you think I may have any further information which would help you, please let me know, and I shall try to supply it.

On the particular point you raise in your letter, I would agree generally with Professor Shann's own estimate of his bent. His strength did, I think, lie in economic history rather than economic theory, although the vividness of his style contributed a realistic setting for economic theory, particularly as it applied to Australia.

The history of the Premiers' Plan is a rather tangled affair, and I am afraid it would not be easy to unravel it. If, however, the two notes to which I have referred you do not give you sufficient information
for your purposes, I should be glad to try to answer any questions you might wish to ask.

Yours sincerely,

(L.G. Melville)

OBITUARY,

PROFESSOR E.O.G. SHANN: AN APPRECIATION

Professor Shann's interests were so varied, the width of his knowledge so great, that it is impossible to appraise him only as an economist, or even as a scholar. He fitted into no classification. He was the antithesis of the specialist. The critic sometimes discerned irrelevancies and lapses from logic in his argument. But the irrelevancies were usually the intentional search of the artist for background and atmosphere; lapses from logic a reaching out for conclusions which lay beyond reason.

I came to know Shann comparatively recently, but during the five years since we met, we worked and travelled together constantly. That companionship will always be one of my happiest memories. The more one knew of Shann, the more one grew to love him and trust his conclusions. With him, familiarity bred respect.

Born in Hobart in 1884, his work subsequently took him to every State in the Commonwealth. His versatility is indicated by the posts he filled; the breadth of his interests by his writings. Shann's sympathy was too keen, his interests too broad to permit him to specialize. The extent of his reading and general knowledge was phenomenal for a hard-worked professor in an Australian University. Yet he found time and place for his fellow-men.

1. This issue of the Record was about to go to press when news was received of Professor Shann's death. We are greatly indebted to Mr. Melville for this appreciation. About a month before his death Professor Shann wrote a review of Dr. Fay's Imperial Economy which is published in this issue. It strikingly illustrates those qualities of scholarship and literary style to which Mr. Melville refers. - Editor.
He was always the liveliest inspiration and the gayest companion, while conversation and controversy alike, with him were a never-failing stimulus. The teaching of economics was the most abiding among his varied interests, notwithstanding that he found lecturing a great physical strain. The effort which it cost him to lecture never caused Shann's interest in his students to flag; he was always intensely concerned in their progress and in their affairs.

Shann is often painted by those who do not know him well as a dogmatic free trader, and an unrelenting individualist. Such a picture of him is badly distorted. He was essentially an eclectic. Schools and authorities meant nothing to him, except that they sometimes provided an analysis which he proceeded to apply to the conditions around him with penetrating judgment. True, he was often impatient with the superficial reasoning of many protectionists and planners, but it was not protection he distrusted so much as the complexities of administration; not the plan, but the planners.

"In the politics of a protectionist country there is no rest. Having given certain industries an advantage in the home market, your protectionist is torn with anxiety that they will take advantage of the consumer. Hence his addiction to boards. Subconsciously aware that he has run a risk of high prices and slack service, he calls on a board of experts to guard against it. But his board, soon or late, advises him that the task is too complex. He gets rid of it, or reconstructs it, and the farce begins again. But the manufacturer or other candidate for advantage makes straight for Parliament House."1

2. Quotas or Table Money, p. 10. Written November, 1932.
3. Ibid., p. 5
4. Ibid., p. 19.
When faced with any plan for economic control his shrewd insight went behind the theories of the idealists to the task of administration, the constituencies which would be called upon to vote and the powers of the vested interests created by the plan. "It is not the idealists in a protectionist party who exert most sway when tariffs are made or amended. It is the realists, hard-headed business men in the particular industries which acquire vested interest behind every tariff item .... Every such interest will enlist, too, a regiment of wage-earning electors well coached in the danger to their own jobs from any 'monkeying with the national policy'."2

When faced with plans for quotas to raise prices of Dominion exports, he quickly discerned that "The main drive at Ottawa came from the British Delegation and the real aim of its vanguard is a sheltered home market for British farmers and landlords, as well as for British manufacturers."3 "You may be sure, too, that British agrarians, already agitated to vehemence about the glutted state of their market, will narrowly scan any degree of expansion proposed for the Dominions' share of imported meat."4

These matters may seem obvious enough in 1935, but in 1932 their were few who did not consider Shann an alarmist. Protection in Britain was to be a tariff war to end war, while quotas made a brave show as a means for raising prices and increasing trade. Had we not entered that new age when "planning" was to take the place of unregulated individualism and ill-conceived State intervention? Blessed words and abstract theories still had power to beguile the unwary. On the Aorangi on our way to Ottawa, a hot favourite at a ship-board race meeting was a horse named "Recovery" by "Quotas" out of "Quantitative Restriction"!
It is a tribute to Shann's acumen and vision that what he has written has often been discounted at the time, but accepted as a matter of course within a few years. In 1927, though there was some shaking of heads, it was argued in the Eastern States of Australia that all was well with the Australian policy of public works. Admittedly, there had been some extravagance, but on the whole, the money had gone to develop the resources of the country. The value of exports was rising rapidly enough to meet the growing interest on the external debt, while the internal debt, after all, involved only the problem of transfer. "The average man who loves a gamble turns a blind eye to any likeness between the sound prosperity on the continuance of which he budgets, and the booms and manias of long ago. Things are different now, he assures you as he shakes off the warning hand on his shoulder."5 "Things are different now," echoed the wise men of the East, but from the West came the warning voice of Shann calling to Australia to put her house in order "lest drought and falling prices of wool and wheat overtake us again." The facts and figures arrayed against him were unassailable, given stable conditions overseas. Shann, with his usual penetration, had correctly diagnosed that the level of overseas prices was not to be relied upon. "I am not insensible to the big contrast between the late 'eighties and the present, in that we are enjoying good prices for wool and wheat. But the level of world prices may not prove stable. Wholesale prices have been falling steadily of late and we cannot afford to mortgage every fresh margin of our living fund. Falling prices and the cessation of overseas credit wrought a painful havoc on the living fund of Australia in the 'nineties. A like combination of circumstances would do so again."6

5. The Boom of 1890 - and Now, p.1. Written April, 1927
6. Ibid., p.34.
An intense lover of Australia and Australians he possessed himself, in no small measure, the qualities he admired in his fellows: vigour, vitality and, perhaps, at times, a little ruthlessness. It was his love for Australia which made him one of her shrewdest critics. "The more the policy of a hermit Australia succeeded, the more surely would it bring slothful intellectual standards, and as a consequence, material decay, until, with scorn, some sea power from the world where necessity had maintained knowledge and energy knocked in the closed door." "In Australia the collective, authoritative way has had a trial long enough to admit the elaboration of 'economic control' into many uncontrolled wastes, and the piling up of a mammoth debt." The implacable enemy of prices manipulated to "express the organized producers' belief in their own worth to society," and of the "method of government direction quaintly called economic control," Professor Shann preserved his faith in a "wider planning, a monetary policy that would permit of recovered equilibrium, and an expansion of consumers' demand." For Australia he rejected the idea of self-sufficiency in trade, but looked forward to the "self-sufficiency in finance (that) would be the reward of self-respect." "This is a big idea well applicable to Australia by the Commonwealth Bank."

Always scholarly, Shann's writings were never dull. He combined solid research with a delightfully vivid style. He added to his gifts as a economist and historian a rare intuition and sympathy which made the dead past live and created reality out of economic abstractions.

Such was the man, who from 1930 until his death in 1935, was constantly called from his teaching to aid Australia in her struggle to keep her people employed and to preserve her self-respect. It would be futile to seek the dominant figure in those dramatic years. Pro-
bably there was none, each laying what gifts he had before the altar of Australia's needs. The gifts that Shann had to offer were of no mean order. He brought his shrewdness, his wealth of experience and contacts in all parts of Australia, his scholarship, his sparkling writing, his personal charm, and his friendly criticism to add to the common store. The history of those years of depression might have been very different without his help. Because of his untimely death, Australia will be the duller and the poorer.

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Commonwealth Bank of Australia,
Sydney, N.S.W.,
1st May, 1945.

Professor F. Alexander,
University of Western Australia,
39 King Street,
PERTH, W.A.

Dear Professor Alexander,

I have been away from the office for some weeks and was therefore unable to answer your letter of 26th March sooner.

I had a letter from Dr. Somerville some time ago, asking some of the same questions that you raise in your letter. In reply, I referred Dr. Somerville to an appreciation of Shann's work which I wrote for the "Economic Record" of June, 1935, and also commented on the questions that he asked. I am not sure whether my reply will give him all the information he wants, but if there is anything further he needs, I shall be only too happy to try to supply it.

There is one point on which perhaps I should add to what I wrote to Dr. Somerville. I stated in that letter that "I would agree generally with Professor Shann's own estimate of his bent. His strength did, I think, lie
in economic history rather than economic theory, although
the vividness of his style contributed a realistic set-
ting for economic theory, particularly as it applied to
Australia." I did not intend that comment to be taken
as implying that Shann was a historian rather than an
economist, and it may be as well if I now make that clear.
The argument as to what an economist should be seems to
me a very sterile one. It is what economists do that
matters, and in fact they specialise in many different
ways: some in analysis, some in descriptive economics,
some in economic history. The fact that Shann's bent was
economic history rather than mathematical analysis does
not mean that he should not be regarded as an economist.

Yours sincerely,

(L.G. Melville)

C/- Treasury,
CANBERRA, A.C.T.
28th March, 1945.

Dear Dr. Somerville,

I am very sorry to have delayed for so long the
answering of your very pleasant letter about Shann. I
thought Melville was in a much better position to make
an appreciation than I was. They worked closely together
and made jointly the most vital contribution to the
Premiers' Plan. So I asked him for an appreciation,
which I hoped to send along with a few words on my own.
He has been very harried over Banking Bills and it has
not come. So I have sent him an S.O.S., which I hope will
produce results and in the meantime send this explanation
and apology.

Personally I think it is rather a mistake to
separate out economic analysis and brand it "Economics".
History and analysis are mixed up at every turn - in-
creasingly so in recent years - and it should not bar a
man from status as an economist that he has worked chief-
ly at Economic History (in the broadest sense) and not
specialized on the technique of analysis.

The Economic History approach covers both the present and the future and would be more fertile and useful in advising the Bank of New South Wales than the analytical approach. The same might be said of the Experts' Report in the Premier's Plan. I am using History in the broad sense now becoming common - not the scissors and paste brand of History which is now recognized as only a humble servant of Historical Studies.

Shann no doubt felt himself as time went on increasingly unfitted to lecture to advanced students on recent developments in Economic analysis. I don't think that was any bar to his status as an Economist.

Here is a little incident that illustrates Shann's open-mindedness. A year after the Premiers' Plan, the economists reassembled and made a new report, confirming the old and going further in the matter of easing the strain. I pushed hard for a programme of credit expansion and public spending, now that the - as we thought - necessary amount of deflation had been carried out (except in New South Wales). While sympathetic in principle, the Committee thought it still dangerous to recommend this, and I put in a minority report to the Prime Minister on my own. A week later Shann told me that he had been chewing it over and was now thoroughly convinced that my proposal was right. Unfortunately, however, though Lyons was ready to act, the Treasury was only half persuaded and in the end did nothing. So Economics lost a good opportunity of justifying itself by works.

Yours sincerely,

(L.F. Giblin)

P.S. I don't know of any published appreciation of Shann, except Melville's in the Economic Record (June, 1935, pp. 80-83) which no doubt you know. This is good but does not quite answer your question.

I still have lovely memories of the Hobart Labour
Conference, and your team from the West, who were thought to be a little wild, and of Andrew Fisher's recurrent "Let us affirm the principle, gentlemen", i.e. make a "Resolution" of it and not put it into the platform. I remember I sat steadfastly at the feet of Chris. Watson and learned a lot from him.

(L.F.C.)

39 King Street,
PERTH.

E.6833
E.7463
27th March, 1945.

Professor D.B. Copland,
Commonwealth Prices Commissioner,
CANBERRA, A.C.T.

Dear Copland,

A foundation member of the Senate of the University of Western Australia, Dr. W. Somerville, is working on the history of the first thirty years of the University in which, as you know, the late Edward Shann played a very important part. Dr. Somerville would like to reinforce his own knowledge of Shann and his work by the critical estimates of some contemporary Economists. He is particularly anxious to obtain any written material which may be available in the form of an appreciation of Shann's work. I am writing to Gerry Portus asking him if he could let me have a copy, if he has one, of the address he gave at the University of Adelaide on the occasion of Shann's death.

I seem to recall an appreciation of Shann from your pen, but I can't place it. If there is anything of this sort available and you have a copy, it would be welcome. Failing that, could you find time to send me a paragraph in the form of a frank appreciation of Shann's role as Economist as you knew him. Somerville might either quote this as emanating from you or, if you prefer use it merely as the comment of a contemporary Economist.
I'm back in civvies trying to do the double job of the Department of History and Adult Education, applying in the latter field some of the experiments made possible by the greater resources available to Army Education. There's no doubt of the growing demand for civilian Adult Education of all types; the problem is how to meet it with limited resources.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(F. Alexander)

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UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.
Adult Education Board and Library.

39 King Street,

PERTH.

27th March, 1945.

Dr. W. Somerville,
2 Albert Street,
MOSMAN PARK.

Dear Somerville,

This is a belated reply to your letter of 4 March regarding Shann.

I recall clearly the incident to which you refer, but I have not kept the document. In your letter, you had mentioned the fact of many differences of opinion with Shann but that these had not prevented you from retaining a warm appreciation of his ability and sincerity. I was in the chair at the Farewell Dinner and I read the relevant section of your note. Shann, who was at my right, said to me afterwards that he had much appreciated your note. He added some such sentence as "It was characteristic of Somerville's directness and honesty."

The enclosed copies of letters to Melville, Copland and Gerry Portus may produce results which will be useful to you. I selected the three men deliberately. You may evaluate their comments on Shann in the light of the
following information:

Portus was a close personal friend whose interest in Economic History as well as earlier associations made him very sympathetic to Shann personally though he was in the main opposed to the conservative side of Shann and the latter's periodic associations with "respectable" people and institutions.

Melville, as Economist to the Commonwealth Bank after he left the Chair in Adelaide, is what Shann used to call a 'mathematical economist'. There was not much in common between him and Shann, either in their approach to Economics or in their earlier associations, but Shann did have a great respect for Melville's intellectual ability. I think anything Melville cares to write about Shann may be taken as an objective appreciation by one who saw enough of Shann's work in the more or less political negotiations as well as his paper work to be able to pass an informed judgment.

Copland and Shann worked pretty closely together, even collaborating in one or two books, as you know, but Shann was in private rather contemptuous of what he considered Copland's demagogic egotism.

(F. Alexander)

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.
Department of Trade & Customs.
Commonwealth Prices Branch,
CANBERRA. A.C.T.
11th April, 1945.

My dear Alexander,

Thank you for your letter of 27th ultimo. I am glad to know that Dr. Somerville is working on the History of the first 30 years of the University. Shann doubtless played a large part in the history of the University and I shall be very happy to send you anything that might be of assistance to Dr. Somerville. I wrote
a short note on Shann for the British Economic Journal. It will be found in the September 1935 issue. I haven't a copy of the Journal beside me at the moment, but I shall look it up in the course of the next few days and I may be able to send some further material.

I saw Burton in Melbourne yesterday and suggested to him that as an economic historian he might say something about Shann's work. He was, of course, more distinguished as an historian than as an economist, but he had great capacity in getting the economists together for discussion during the critical days of the depression and in presenting a clear account of the conclusions of the discussion. I will always remember Shann's tactics on these occasions. We didn't have a Chairman at our meetings, but Shann more or less assumed the office of scribe. At the appropriate moment in the discussions he could carefully take his fountain pen from his pocket and a writing pad from another pocket and proceed to write down what he thought a suitable record of the discussion. That, you will agree, placed him in a strategic position because he had something concrete before him. Not that he didn't do this well, but we all tend to be influenced in our writing by our impressions of what other people have said, rather more than by what the other people actually thought. Melville and I used to be both very amused at this. You didn't object because after all we were, more or less, in agreement and Shann had a happy turn of phrase.

I don't see any prospect of going to the West immediately because my colleague, McCarthy, will be making an official visit and will deal with the office and other problems that inevitably arise. All the same I should very much like to go and to visit you and others at the University.

With kind regards,