

8 MAY 1946

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Canberra Hog
Farm:

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Mr. Gardiner moved:

That this Council recommends to the Minister that he give favourable consideration to the erection of a Hog Farm on the site already chosen on the Molonglo River at the earliest possible date.

There was quite a lot of discussion on this matter at the last meeting and it was deferred until this meeting in order that we may obtain the views of Dr. Downes, who was not present at the previous meeting. I think the question of the continuance of a Hog Farm in Canberra is too serious a matter to leave in its present state. The existing proprietor is very concerned as he feels that he will have to leave the farm if something is not done about it. The question was reviewed some considerable time ago and a new site was inspected and agreed upon. This site is on the Molonglo in close proximity to the existing Abattoirs. I suggest that the Council recommends the going on with that project because even the proprietor informs me that if the contemplated improvements were carried out to the present farm, it would still be uneconomical to run from the point of view of labour. With a place laid out on modern lines, as a new place would be, he could make a greater success of the farm. Perhaps Dr. Downes can give us some information on the matter.

Dr. Downes: On the date of the last meeting I was ill and, in passing, I wish to apologise to the Council for not taking steps to appoint a deputy.

Before moving this motion, I think it would have been better had Mr. Gardiner obtained full information by question.

Mr. Gardiner: I did, at the last meeting.

Dr. Downes: I saw a report in the local paper, and I was somewhat amused by it. I will sum up from my viewpoint the whole question of the Hog Farm in regard to pig feed and garbage disposal. Garbage disposal involves the collection of garbage first and then disposal by means of feeding to pigs, incineration or by other means. That is one side of the picture. On the other side of the picture is hog farming, consisting of raising pigs and feeding them, either with mixed feed utilising garbage or by a more scientific and balanced feeding. I think it is the opinion of our veterinary advisers that we will never reach a desirable standard of either hamers, baconers or porkers by garbage feeding because we cannot get the appropriate balance.

The second point about garbage feeding is that it is impossible to carry on in a proper hygienic manner unless there is an adequate water supply. You have to cleanse thoroughly. It is very essential that people should know quite a lot about hygiene in piggeries and the advantages of producing a good pig. It is undesirable to utilise "swill" for feeding. At the present time there are certain sentimental pleas for utilising garbage. There is always the plea made that it is wasted food. During the war the plea was made that we went in for salvage on a wide scale and therefore, we should use everything practicable, including garbage for hog raising. Now there is a sentimental reason

that we should use this "swill" for feeding pigs. Veterinary people have expressed the opinion that it is not an economical proposition.

Now let us go back to the other angle of this question - the disposal of garbage. I believe that every big city in Australia will eventually arrange for the main bulk of its garbage to be disposed of by incineration. I do not say that newer alternative methods of disposal will not become available. I think they will. It is perfectly obvious that the garbage should not be disposed of by tipping, excepting as an emergency measure. I believe that newer methods of disposal are possible to eliminate a proportion of the present cost of collection. I do not know whether I have made myself as clear as I would like, but the matter of Commonwealth money is involved and I have for my part to vote against this motion.

Mr. Shakespeare: In connection with the disposal of wet garbage, I take it one of the means might be converting it into fertiliser.

Dr. Downes: That is one method which, on the information I received, is not economical.

Mr. Shakespeare: Would it offset the loss you are going to sustain?

Dr. Downes: To some extent. Variations in the type of garbage received is a contingency to be contended with. Summing up my view of the subject is, firstly hygienic disposal of garbage, secondly the hygienic raising of pigs, and thirdly I desire that Commonwealth money should not be spent unwisely.

Mr. Shakespeare: The position as I see it is this - a site was allotted for this farm and at that time it was considered that it had an adequate water supply. The water supply has failed. The Health Department wants water provided there and the Department of the Interior is not prepared to put water there.

Mr. Johnston: When you say "put water there" it does not mean only a tap - an intensive scheme is involved.

Mr. Shakespeare: The chap who is going to get it in the neck is the hog farmer. You either extinguish the industry or provide for its being carried on elsewhere.

Dr. Downes: There is a possibility of running piggeries without utilising garbage.

Mr. Shakespeare: That has been done by the present farmer to some extent. Do you suggest that this farm could be carried on at the present site if he ceased to use wet garbage.

Dr. Downes: I suggest that pig raising in the Territory should be done by dry feeding. I am not talking about the present farm. I believe that the officers of the Health Department in charge of piggeries would like to see dry feeding carried on in piggeries suitable for the purpose.

Mr. Shakespeare: Subject to a change in his technique would the Department of Health favour the continuance of the piggery at the present site.

Dr. Downes: Subject to certain alterations in the farm, I think so.

Mr. Shakespeare: Some time ago you intimated that the Health Department had alternative plans for the development of a Hog Farm on the Molonglo River.

Dr. Downes: That is not the position. This matter ~~has~~ not been finally determined by the Department. There is a good amount of Commonwealth money involved in the alternative proposals and it has been under mutual discussion with the Departments involved. The matter is at present under consideration by the people concerned.

Mr. Shakespeare: Suppose you have dry feeding - what then? You will have to have a water supply.

Dr. Downes: Very, very small, as compared with wet feeding.

Mr. Shakespeare: Do you consider it advisable to have a second farm for the disposal of wet garbage?

Dr. Downes: I am not in favour of another hog farm for the disposal of wet garbage. I am against the establishment of a hog farm on the site on the Molonglo River. I have inspected a likely site on the Molonglo River. I would stress that a site has not yet been chosen but a site has been inspected. If that site were chosen, it is such that the disposal of the effluent into very good country would not contaminate the Molonglo River.

Mr. Shakespeare: Of course, we thought that about the Abattoirs. Apparently it is questionable whether any site should be developed north of the Lake Scheme.

Mr. Johnston: I think the question whether the effluent would contaminate the waters of the Molonglo would depend largely on the care with which the farm was run.

The Chairman: The present farm was established solely to dispose of wet garbage. If there is some other way of disposing of wet garbage, there is no need to continue a hog farm for that purpose. If a person wants to establish a hog farm, it should not be linked up with the Government in relation to the disposal of wet garbage.

Mr. Gardiner: There is the question of the proprietor investing his capital in the project. He has made a success of it, but he could not carry on the farm economically without wet garbage.

Mr. Johnston: The Commonwealth put more money into it than the proprietor.

Dr. Downes: I suggest Mr. Gardiner finds out what amount the proprietor has put into it and what he has taken out of it.

The Chairman: We tried to discourage the present proprietor from going on to the farm.

Mr. Gardiner: A few public servants get into certain positions and they dictate the policy of this Territory.

Dr. Downes: I suggest that you have not the true facts and that you get them before you submit a motion of this nature to the Council.

Mr. Gardiner: The time when departmental heads could get together and decide whether a man can continue with his livelihood has gone.

The Chairman: We set the farm up.

Mr. Shakespeare: Here is a man who is a lessee and no man can be a lessee in such a venture unless he sinks some of his own capital. The basis of his business is that there is a certain Government policy and the Government policy changes and where is the man left.

The Chairman: He was informed of the position and advised not to go on to the farm.

Mr. Shakespeare: What is the latest information in regard to the Motion carried at the last meeting?

Dr. Downes: What were the terms of the motion?

(The Secretary read the motion at this stage).

Mr. Shakespeare: The Government has not apparently made up its mind as to what it is going to do about wet garbage, the effect of its proposals on the present lessee, the present unsatisfactory water supply of the existing farm, etc. Until these problems are decided it is considered that nothing should be done to disturb the present lessee.

Dr. Downes: In what way would we disturb him?

Mr. Shakespeare: He could not be more disturbed than he is today.

Dr. Downes: I would certainly agree that if he is, by reason of Government policy, pushed out of the present pig farm, land for dry pig farming should be made available to him.

Mr. Shakespeare: What would you say in regard to his interests and improvements on the present site?

Dr. Downes: What improvements? I repeat my earlier suggestion that Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Shakespeare again consult the lessee before asking the Council to pass this motion.

Mr. Shakespeare: (After consulting with Mr. Gardiner) We will adopt the suggestion of Dr. Downes and see Mr. Kilmartin again in regard to the facts.

It was resolved that further consideration of the motion be deferred.