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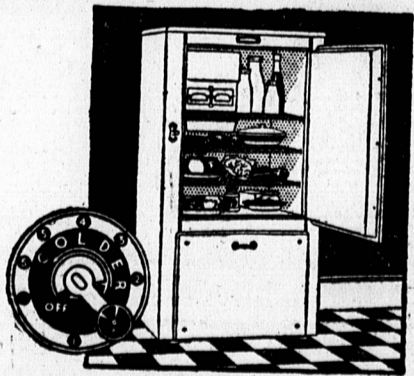
BRUNSWICK RADIO

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AUSTRALIAN ISSUES BEFORE ELECTORATE

Conflict Of Federal And State Systems Of Industrial Legis- lation Is Dominant Note In Election Campaign Which Concludes Oct. 12.

CANBERRA, Australia, Oct. 7.—(By The Canadian Press)—Economists have long been shaking their heads in concern for the economic welfare of Australia. Ever-soaring wages with consequent increased costs of production and decreased spending power, falling values of wool, and a spell of drought years which have seriously curtailed the wheat yield, have produced the requisite set of circumstances to cause the country seriously to think. The British Economic Mission of 1929, headed by Sir Arthur Duckham, very temperately told the people of Australia, in effect that Nature's bounteous gifts can be discounted by false standards of economics, among which the conflict of Federal and State systems of industrial legislation was mentioned as the most damaging.

This conflict is the dominant note in the election campaign which concludes with polling on Oct. 12th. The Government of Premier Stanley M. Bruce is solidly behind the principle of turning Labor arbitration back to the states; the strong Labor Opposition is bitterly opposed to abolition of the Federal labor court.

Premier Bruce, leader of the Nationalists, better described as the Anti-Socialists, allied with the Country or Farmers Party, has long seen the need for an overhaul of the industrial system. Undoubtedly the comments of the Economic Mission steered his resolve to grasp the nettle. Either the Federal Government must have wider powers in the field of industrial arbitration to prevent the serious and stupid overlapping of its court's awards by the dissonant awards of the separate Industrial Courts of the six States, or the Commonwealth must reduce its control to the two great industries really all-Australian in their incidence—shipping and transport.

Before the World War, and since, Rt. Hon. W. M. Hughes, first Socialist, now Independent Nationalist, had, either as Attorney-General or Prime Minister, sought increased industrial legislative powers from the electorate, and had several times been rebuffed. Mr. Bruce has since had the same experience. It has been Australia's misfortune that the State Legislatures—many think that with the advent of Federation they should have been reduced to something akin to glorified County Councils—have persisted in pressing for State Rights. The same set of Federal voters, balloting in their State units sided with the "State Righters" and rejected the Commonwealth's invitation to give it increased domain. Mr. Bruce this year, with the economic outlook worse than ever, tried the last expedient of seeking the consent of the State Premiers to the change. Once more a rebuff, and he came down with his Bill for the Commonwealth to restrict its arbitration ambit to the shipping and transport industries.

It was defeated and the government forced from power.

Mr. Hughes has been the champion of arbitration and conciliation; but he has been largely responsible for the principle having been vitiated. During the war, when Australia had an unpleasant crop of industrial troubles, Mr. Hughes, armed with wartime license, called industrial conferences to arrange settlements which might have been left to the Arbitration Court. Mr. Hughes encouraged the unions to think that around conference tables they could drive hard bargains impossible of achievement in the sterner atmosphere of a legal tribunal. This led to persistent flouting of the authority of the Court. Extremists have been encouraged to win control of the unions and exploit the lethargy of the bulk of their members to the damaging disadvantage of Australia. Again, the prestige of the Federal Court has been undermined by the facility with which a genuinely Federal union could, as it invariably did, go to each of the six State courts, get six separate awards, choose what was best in each of them, ignore the rest, and in the long run bring the whole principle of arbitration into contempt.

Mr. Bruce's bill gave Mr. Hughes the opportunity he had long awaited. He had never concealed his antipathy to the Cambridge Blue who won honors on the battlefield, came home wounded, and, to his own great surprise, found himself wafted into politics as a Nationalist under the banner of Mr. Hughes. A cabinet shuffle

was ordained and Mr. Bruce, man of big business, became Treasurer in the Hughes Ministry. The farmers demanded and won a share of the administrative cake, and not long afterward it was decided that Mr. Hughes should relinquish the privilege of cutting it. He was literally forced to retire. Mr. Bruce became head of a two-party ministry (Nationalists and Country party) and Mr. Hughes passed into relative obscurity. Only a few months before he had received his Anglo-Australian testimonial of \$125,000 for his wartime services.

But Mr. Hughes loves politics and a fight. He became the carping critic of the Coalition government's policy, and several times seriously embarrassed it to the open joy of Labor. Now he has vigorously stepped forward in defense of the federal court and demanded that the country be consulted as to whether the child Arbitration shall be boarded out to the states. Though elected as a Nationalist, Mr. Hughes voted against the government's bill and with three colleagues and the Labor opposition overthrew the government. Some of Mr. Bruce's supporters found it easier to follow Mr. Hughes' espousal of the electorate's prerogative, and Mr. Bruce found himself in a minority of one.

Labor, in magnanimity inspired by hope of success, is not opposing Mr. Hughes in North Sydney. As everybody expected, the Nationalists have confronted him with a strong official candidate and forced him to stand as an independent. Mr. Bruce could have set the seal on his political career by personally taking up Mr. Hughes' challenge in North Sydney. Such a course would have given the Nationalist campaign the impetus and inspiration it now lacks.

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