

## THE OPENING

Roly Webb, President:

Welcome to Graham's Castle for the opening of the 1968 Conference of the Australian Speleological Federation.

We have here this morning the South Australian Minister for Lands, Mr. Brookman, who has honoured us with his presence to open the Conference. Without further ado I would like to introduce him Mr. Brookman.

Mr. Brookman:

Major Webb, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the invitation to this rather unorthodox, informal and obviously very cheerful gathering. I have opened a good many conferences and sometimes the formality is of such a heavyweight nature that you spend almost to lunchtime before anybody starts talking business. I have noticed this happens with Ministerial conferences probably more than any others, but here we have a group that I can see are obviously interested in their own subject and want to get straight on to it.

I do first of all want to congratulate you upon your interest and, as one of the State Ministers whose responsibility is conservation (not the only one, but as one of them) express my appreciation of the interest in conservation and the contribution that you make to this object. I notice that speleology is one of those subjects in which, I think, there are probably very few full-time professionals. You, as I understand it would all have some other major occupation and this is a private interest of yours so to speak.

This seems to me a very worthwhile way of approaching any sort of scientific research, and in fact probably all scientific research has its origins in some private endeavour. Talking amongst you I have gathered that there must be people with quite a lot of skills from a wide range of disciplines, and I can see how important it would be to have zoologists, botanists, geologists, and not forgetting surveyors, because after all, you do like to know where you're going and/or where you've been.

A point I would like to stress also with you is that as a Minister of conservation I am particularly gratified that you are doing this type of exploration work. You are doing

Opening

it in such a way that it will be recorded and that everything you find will be used in the way that it should be used. You will, I believe, by recording this information help the protection of caves from vandalism and general bad behaviour by tourists and other, well we'll say, odds and ends. You are inspired by the desire to be first in these places and I consider that that must be one of the most thrilling aspects of speleology.

You will appreciate that in conservation we have been thinking very largely of land conservation. We are a State which I think has a long way to go in proper conservation, or full development of conservation anyway. Other States may have their problems too, I believe they have, but we as a State do somewhat suffer by the easy access to most of our areas and we have suffered, I think, probably by over-developing settlement in past years. We are remedying this as fast as is possible to do within the limits of finance and other considerations but I do note that it's almost impossible to set down in figures just how much land should be set aside for conservation purposes. For instance, an area with a chain of mountains, we'll say the Rocky Mountains, which is not normally possible to develop for any other purpose, can be preserved for conservation with ease, and it adds very much to the general total of areas that are under conservation legislation. They now have in the United States an enormous area of conserved parks and other kinds of protected areas.

We are extending our areas very much - for instance, it might sound rather grand but we made the Simpson Desert National Park some few years ago and in doing so added many square miles to our total conserved areas. While nobody would pretend that there was perhaps as great a result as it would be adding conserved areas in places of high value land, nevertheless it is worth doing. We are adding to both our arid and to our wetter areas as much as we reasonably can.

I understand that one of your groups is going to Kangaroo Island; I believe you have three parties going to various parts of South Australia. As a member of the Board which controls the Flinders Chase I can say that you are very welcome there - we would like to see any authorised cave exploration, and the type of exploration that you do will add to the knowledge that we may have of Flinders Chase. You will find there a totally protected area and one which we feel is quite unique in some ways - it hasn't got rabbits and it hasn't got foxes, and apart from some few other pests like feral cats, you would find Flinders Chase would be relatively unspoiled.

Now I want to just say one more word about this cave exploration which seems to me apposite. That is that in a world where - well it is easy to be comfortable, it is pleasing to see people who are willing to go in for physical exertion and put up with discomfort and hardship because they have an interest in doing some exploration. You, I can see, do put up with quite a lot of hardship. Mr. Gartrell sent me the brochures, firstly I think, the report on Millamillang Cave and the other report upon the other caves on the Nullarbor Plains, and I can see just how difficult and exhausting cave exploration must be. After all its possible to do a lot of undersea exploration in a submarine, or go by air somewhere, but in this case, having got to the mouth of the cave there seems to be no known way of carrying gear, food and looking after yourselves except entirely by your own efforts, and I can just imagine that it would be very exhausting indeed. In fact I find it hard work getting up and down the wooden steps of the tourist cave at Kelly Hill on Kangaroo Island. If you've got to crawl down there and carry your own lights and gear it must be a good deal more difficult, but nevertheless very rewarding when you get there. And in that respect I suppose you feel just as triumphant when you get to the bottom of the cave as the mountaineer is when he gets to the top of the mountain. It's rather remarkable what a short distance man can go underground and it is only it seems in these limestone areas, of which we have plenty in Australia, it is only in these places where man can go underground any distance at all.

Now Mr. Chairman, I was talking to Mr. Gartrell and he told me that you would like to collect zoological specimens or fossils or any other specimens in the caves on Kangaroo Island and take them to the Museum for proper study. Now that is exactly what we would like you to do - there is absolutely no difficulty about that at all. We have had a policy which might be described as a little bit sticky in this matter, but that was a policy which applies to the general public and not to authorized expeditions, because obviously in many cases people don't know what they are picking up. If you are collecting specimens and they are being taken for proper study, well, that is the way that they ought to be used. The other thing is that as a result of your work you will increase the knowledge, for all time, of the caves which you are exploring, and because of that, you are making a serious contribution to scientific research in Australia.

I do hope that you are going to have a good holiday here and that you will find a rewarding expedition at the end of it.

Opening

I understand that there are some hard-done-by members of your group who can't go anywhere after these holidays but have to go back to work. But anyway I wish you luck and although I can't stay for the whole morning I would be appreciative if I could stay, (I've been invited) , for some of the proceedings for a little longer. I wish you luck, Happy New Year, and plenty of interest in the following out of speleology.

I now have much pleasure in declaring the 7th Biennial Conference of the Australian Speleological Federation open.

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