

There is plenty of good, cheap bacon about—and people like it. Unless they did, foreign exporters would not “flood the market.” Nor can they rig prices against the shopper for, as this advertisement makes clear, competition between them is extremely keen. That is why prices are knocked down to rock bottom. The conclusion

is obvious: it is *too much home produced bacon* which is adding to the Treasury bill. The Government should be “common-sensible” and reduce its own costs by withdrawing support from home pig producers, and reduce the cost of living by admitting bacon duty free. This *is* politics and it *is* commonsense.

THE EGG AND US

This article by the recently appointed honorary secretary of the New South Wales Free Trade and Land Values League is reprinted with acknowledgments from the League's journal "The Standard"

An enthralling drama is being played out to its bitter end in Sydney. Dramatis personae are Transport Workers' Union led by its secretary (Mr. Platt), the N.S.W. Egg Board (all “goodies”) and a certain chain store organisation (the “baddy”). “Bit” players are the egg producers and, in the crowded background scenes, rather distantly, the consumers.

The Egg Board controls the market of all N.S.W. eggs. The chain store proposed to sell eggs at a price lower than that fixed by the Board and was refused supplies, so it is importing eggs from Victoria—600 miles by road—which it retails cheaper than the local oval article.

This has raised the ire of Mr. Platt who has whipped up support on the N.S.W. Labour Council, a Union body, for a case against the store and its cheaper eggs “dumped” from Victoria. Chief reason given is that some of its members have sunk money into special trucks wherewith to deliver eggs to Sydney shops under contract to the Egg Board.

It is claimed that by using the services of interstate carriers to fetch eggs from Victoria the store is jeopardising the livelihoods of these home-town boys, with possible loss of equities in their waggons bought under hire purchase. Mr. Platt also champions the cause of local egg farmers and small shopkeepers who, he prophesies, will be forced out of business unless the rot be curbed.

The Egg Board, be it known, fixes the prices of locally laid eggs at a figure sufficiently high to balance losses on eggs exported overseas—not “dumped,” mind you, like Victorian eggs in Sydney! For this and other reasons the Egg Board is a “goody”; the other “goodies” perceive that self-abnegation and charity is above vulgar criticism, and raise no objections to this feeding of the poor foreigner cheaply.

But certain leader-writers possessed of coarser feelings have gleefully seized upon this “blatant” inconsistency and “let themselves go.” After all “consistency is only the hobgoblin of small minds”! These scribes have gone on to castigate the Board for usurping the powers of Parliament by dictating prices. But for some not obscure reason re-sale price maintenance by other monopolies is overlooked: doubtless the daily newspapers, do not want disaffection among their own sellers whose wares they restrict. (They harbour no hobgoblins!)

Anyway the press is very angry at the Unions (and the Board) for asking, nay commanding, their members and consumers generally to shun the cheaper and take to their bosoms the dearer egg. For, indeed, there is going to be no free breakfast table—and no hanky-panky. A black ban on the offending stores by Union carriers is now imposed and a boycott proclaimed.

One paper presents the president of the Progressive Housewives as countering all this by counselling her members to ban Board eggs in ALL SHOPS until by process of attrition and “egging up” the Board turns a mellow yellow and drops prices.

Our readers will not be surprised at all this blast and counterblast, and tongue-in-cheek nonsense. It is only the settled policy of protectionism attaining its appointed apotheosis of absurdity when everybody, or nearly everybody, is protected. They will recognise egg farmers as just another lot of its victims who in turn have accepted protection for themselves under the tutelage of a Board and all its bureaucratic paraphernalia. Everybody wants to be on par with his protected suppliers. Even Mr. Platt has cited the farmers' high costs.

Lastly we come to the impossible land prices which gobble up any benefit for producers brought about by shielding by Boards—if indeed any are benefited.

Carriers, Union members and all, are likewise the victims of protectionism. They pay too much for their trucks and accessories in our tariffed and sales-taxed Australia Felix.

Also, it is rumoured that some have bought their little monopolies—Egg Board contracts—for fair sized sums. So, like land-values with the farmers, this capitalisation thus tops off the mountain of costs, and all supported by the broad backs of the real workers. So it goes . . .

Such, dear readers, are the clues. Work this egg business out for yourself! Mr. Platt is not mad (libel laws aside!) It is just that he lives in this blighted half-world of protectionism and capitalisation of privilege (the same) where each miserable, blinded producer-consumer has come to regard the other as rogue or lunatic, or both. —H.I.

Postscript from Victoria. “The Victoria Egg Board is costing the egg producer at least 9d. per dozen to market his eggs. This whilst the farmer is working round the clock, and the army of well-paid officials of the Board work a 40-hour week. It simply does not make sense.”—Garnet Lording in the *Melbourne Age*, April 17.