

Melbourne, Monday, 2nd May.

Dear Mr. Spencer,

The weather continues to be perfect from our point of view if not from that of the pastoralists and farmers, and since Easter the daily revenue increases have been £231, £319, £451, £393, £544 and £205. For the year up to and including yesterday (Sunday) we are now £7,812 ahead.

I was glad to get your note from Colombo this morning and to learn that you all had a pleasant trip from Fremantle and that in particular the Chairman was revelling in the deck sports. Who makes "the book" with him? He will be missing Cr. Gray in that respect. I note also that "a life on the rolling deep" still possesses no attractions for him.

The O'Meara-Eakins appeals are giving us a tremendous amount of work, though that is a detail compared to the worry and anxiety involved. We called Mr. Slater in on Friday last, and he heartily approved of the advice tendered by Mr. Krcrouse. Later in the day, at an informal meeting of the members of the Board, the advice of both lawyers to give an "unqualified assurance" that the alteration in the titles "did not, does not, and will not affect their seniority, status, or future prospects," was acted upon, with the addendum that if the appeals are proceeded with that letter will be produced to the Appeal Board. Both lawyers pointed out that the danger point is the fact that your memo. intimating the changes to the officers was represented as a resolution of the Board, whereas it was a decision of the Finance Committee which did not go either before the Works Committee or the Board. So far as the Board is concerned, they emphasised, O'Meara's title is Chief Draughtsman, and the fact that it was altered by the Finance Committee without informing either the Works or the Board is capable of the sinister interpretation given by the appellants, viz., that something more than a mere convenient designation was intended. Cass was brought down before that meeting, and gave one of those dreadful wriggling, evasive, contradictory exhibitions with which you are familiar. Yet, if the appeals go on, he is our main witness! As Cr. Park remarked, Gorman will tear him to pieces. Just in case O'Meara and Eakins resolve to go on, we have briefed Mr. Herring, K.C., and there is to be another conference to-day. It was after 6 o'clock again on Friday before I got away, and on Saturday I worked straight on until after 3 o'clock. This prolonged strain and worry is beginning to tell on both Mr. Warner and I. Mr. Warner has had nasty sick headaches for two or three days, while on Thursday afternoon I had a dizzy turn which almost was a faint. Fortunately I grabbed the Deputy Chairman's chair, and he seized me, led me out and after dosing me with brandy made me sit between the open windows and the door for half an hour. I got a fright, but please don't mention this to the Chairman or to my mother when you see her. I am feeling much better this morning. With 12 hours in bed each evening since Friday, that very uncomfortable dizzy feeling has passed.

We had a cheery message from Sir Stephen Morell from Adelaide. All was well, so far, and we all hope that complete freedom from all business, combined with the perfect rest which you can have on a ship if you so desire, will in a large measure restore his health. My neighbour suffers from the same complaint. He is a retired Federal servant, who married one of old Carrs daughters, and treats his occasional fits of unconsciousness with splendid unconcern. "I am," he said yesterday to me, "all right when I come out of them; I am only waiting for the day when I fail to come out!" I suppose that it the best attitude to adopt, if you can, but personally I hate the thought of going out of the sunshine of this earth, even though I believe that life on earth is not the end of that entity which is the essential me.

Tuesday, 3rd May.

The appeals were to have been heard to-day, but yesterday we got another letter stating that the appellants would accept the assurance provided that it was made a resolution of the Board, with the addition that the seniority in the Per. Way Branch was Cass, O'Meara, Eakins and Bell. We replied that that was a fresh demand, and would have to be considered by the Board. In those circumstances, it was suggested that the hearing of the appeals might be postponed so as to give the Board the opportunity of considering the letter. Later in the day we were informed that the appeals had been adjourned until Tuesday, 10th May.

McGlashan has been dipping his beak into the flowing bowl so frequently, and was looking so much like a hobo, that he has been dismissed. No appointment has yet been made. Last month saw the revenue from golf, tennis and putting at Wattle Park go up to over £200. From golf alone we drew £191.

It is funny to think that you will be passing Ushant to-day. I hope the Bay was in its kindest mood for the Chairman. We have been so very busy that it seems just like yesterday since you left, and yet five weeks have gone, and your period of well-earned leisure is almost at an end. However, I hope that you will have a few days first of all with Mrs. Spencer and Faith and with your sisters. Mrs. Spencer will no doubt have indulged in an orgy of shopping since she landed, and in this regard she has the envy of Betty. Will you please remember Betty and I to her and Faith? My remembrances to the Chairman and Mrs. Bell, and with all good wishes to yourself, believe me,

Yours sincerely,

P.S.--No finality yet with "Radio Times." Archie Whyte warns us to "beware," alleging that the concern hasn't a penny. But the bitter rivalry between the "Radio Times" and the "Listener-in" makes one a tiny bit suspicious that the advice may not be so disinterested as it is represented to be.

Wednesday, 4th May,

I closed this letter yesterday remembering that the air mail went on Tuesdays. That was wrong. Thursday is the day. We had another long sitting yesterday with Mr. Krcrouse over the appeal--6.10 p.m. before it ended. The result was as before. The Board is not going to be told by any of its employees what resolution it should pass. It is quite willing to give the assurance mentioned in the second par. of the preceding page and pay out of pocket expenses, but no more. So at the moment it looks as if the appeals will go on. Then Master Gorman will be in his element. Like Cr. Park, I shudder to think what he will do to Cass!

The Board dealt with Mr. Monnbourgh as it did with Ellis, though one cannot imagine two more dissimilar cases--the one a drunken sot for years, sacked on the Thursday and his widow getting a substantial sum the next; and Mr. Monsbourgh, an officer whose death was undoubtedly hastened by his devotion to the interests of the Board.

Monday, 9th April. *May*

We met at 2 o'clock on Thursday, and naturally I assumed that I would get out in plenty of time to get this letter off. Instead of that we finished up after 6 o'clock, and in the hurry of business I forgot to go out and get the letter off. Eventually it was after 7 before I drove Cr. Gray home. On the advice of Mr. Herring, the Board passed a resolution that the alterations in the titles did not, does not and will not affect the seniority, rank or grade of O'Meara and Eakins, but declined to incorporate the names of the four officers in the resolution, which was the latter part of the demand. To-morrow, we hope, will see the matter finished, because that resolution does what the appellants asked us to do in the first place. If, however, the P.M. decides to call all the evidence the case may well last two or three days. Herring, Krcrouse and Slater seem to think that the production of our letter giving that resolution is our best bet. They won't go so far as to assure us that it will come off, but it represents the only chance we have of finishing the case right at the start.

Mr. Warner and I are both feeling top-hole now, and with this appeal out of the road, and the "Radio Times" business adjusted, we shall be thoroughly comfortable. On Thursday the Board came to a final decision with Bett, telling him that he could have the agreement arranged provided he paid six months rent in advance. He came up when the Board was sitting, and I was instructed to tell him. He at once proposed a quarter's rent in advance. On reporting that, I was told to tell him that that six months rent in advance was the Board's last word. He went away, but returned at 6.40, and the Deputy Chairman and Cr. Gray dealt with him firmly. Mr. Slater is now drawing up the lease.

The weather has turned bitterly cold all at once, and on Thursday there were a couple of feet of snow at Warburton, Marysville, Wood's Point, etc., three weeks in advance of the average first fall. Alix rang me up from Sydney on Friday to say that she had got a cable from New Zealand from Roddy telling her that he was coming back on the Waratea and not to go home. She explained that she thought it meant that Roddy wanted to get married right away. I insisted that she must give her employers reasonable notice, and that all that I would do would be to ask Mr. Gahan for an extension of leave so as to enable her to meet Roddy on Friday. Mr. Gahan was very nice agreed at once to the extra leave, and said that he recognised that Alix, engaged to a sailor lad, whose movements could not be known in advance, was in a wholly different position from a young lady whose fiance was in a shor billet. In these circumstances, and especially in view of the highly efficient and willing service Alix had given, he would be prepared if the necessity arose to waive the fortnight's notice she would otherwise have to give. Naturally, his remarks about Alix pleased me very much. There is just the chance, then, that shortly after this letter reaches you our famil circle will have been broken. Louise is up at Warburton for a holiday, so as Bill from a home-staying point of view is a total loss, Betty and I are just now practically where we started!

I do hope our Chairman is liking England in Spring, and that he will like Scotland even more when he gets to it. My old team, East Fife, had a great triumph a fortnight ago; it won the Scottish Cup, the first time the Cup has been won by a team in the Second Division, although the English Cup has been secured several times by teams in that category. Remember me to him, please, and to Mrs. Bell, and with affectionate regards to yourself believe me,