

DEPARTMENT OF SUPPLY AND DEVELOPMENT.339 Swinerton Street,
MELBOURNE. C.I.

29th July, 1949.

FROM THE SECRETARY:

And so "J.K." has retired. Formally, there has come to an end fifty-one years of an official life which he made the instrument of a rare imagination, a tireless energy, a stubborn but subtle will, and a first-class brain. I think that more than any Public Servant of this country, he influenced the industrial development of Australia, broadly and intimately. Events helped him but like all who have achieved much he foresaw the events, and whilst many of his fellows lived from day to day he prepared himself for the things which were beyond the ken of others. He had - and still has - the adventuring qualities of a small boy. Huckleberry Finn abroad in the Public Service! It brought him censure, reproof, suspicion here and there on occasions throughout his career, but ever he nourished his vision and relied on the years ahead for vindication. At the full height of his powers he plunged into the demands of the 1939-45 War. No Huckleberry Finn here! The boy was a man - and the man was a buccaneer. But the buccaneer built; and in the building he clung tenaciously to dreams that he dreamed as a young man when he visited America. Dreams of industry moving inland from the coast, factories growing up on broad acres. He saw many of them materialise.

Looking back over his career, his fortunes have see-sawed. From the time the intrepid boy - his school education by force of circumstances finished at eleven years of age - entered the Postal Department as a telegraph messenger, until the late nineteen twenties he made rapid advancement along a path which he had hewn for himself, overcoming difficulties, always thinking decades ahead, mastering every technique which his forethought suggested, observing every current event and storing away in a prodigious memory every lesson to be drawn from them.

Came a period of stand-still, in which his active spirit fretted but yet bided its time with a disciplined patience. Officialdom was suspicious; he was thinking beyond it.

Then War broke in 1939 and again his stocks soared - though not immediately. But the fruits of an unusual mind were there for the gathering and the harvest was needed badly. He came into his own and none again questioned the eminence he attained. The threads he wove trailed through many sections of the community; and

and discriminating reader; a lover of good music which he can discuss with knowledge and taste; a student of poetry - a rare thing these days; and the wielder of a facile, lucid and vigorous pen.

In his favourite recreation, walking, it is characteristic of him that the challenge of heights and little known tracks in the forests drew him irresistibly. That has been the keynote of his official life. He wanted always to know what was round the bend of the road or what it felt like on the top of the highest peak.

As I write, I have for material before me a formidable list of dates and achievements in Mr. Jensen's career. I hesitate to list them like a catalogue, for excellent though they be, they are a skeleton - the dry bones. They need to be clothed with the flesh and blood and invested with the spirit of the man to do him justice. I should love to do it but this News-Letter would not suffice.

But let us look at some of them. From Junior Messenger in the Ordnance Branch of the Defence Department in 1900 to Officer-in-Charge of the Central Registry of the whole Department in 1906 was rapid advancement. Twenty-two years of age and already a competent stores accountant. A spare time course of mechanical and electrical engineering at the Working Men's College in 1908 was evidence of that prescience of things to come which he showed throughout his career. Two years later we find him on the high seas to America, selected as Accountant to the Small-Arms Factory (just being established) to study business methods and accountancy at the Armament Works of Pratt and Whitney. He returned with the then novel card system of accounting. From June, 1911, until November, 1914, he resided at Lithgow as the Factory Accountant.

But there were more plans afoot with the outbreak of War and he returned to Central Administration. In October, 1917, he was appointed Secretary to the Arsenal Committee and soon we find him once again in America and then England. Australia did not see him again until the end of 1921. But he had managed to sandwich in his third visit to U.S.A., before returning to his native land.

It was during this period abroad that he purchased the munitions plant in the United Kingdom which was later to serve Australia so well. He toured the country and in scattered factories bought 1600 machines estimated in value at £670,000. The actual purchase price was £170,000!

^{Ammunition}
Small-Arms Factory was expanding. Cordite manufacture was well established. To take charge of all this as a munitions unit, the Munitions Supply Board had been set up and Mr. Jensen now became its Secretary. The following year, he became Chairman of the Contract Board as well. In 1937 he was appointed Controller of Munitions Supply and from then until 1939, he urged with great vigour many far-seeing steps to make Australia ready to meet the second but greatest of the national challenges which was already looming on the horizon. Bren gun manufacture, the preliminaries to the organisation of industry to take its share of gun and ammunition production, factory accounting on a commercial basis ... These were activities which he shared with others, of course, but to those acquainted with his daring methods and adventurous mind, one can credit him with a very substantial - and oft-times - stormy part.

In 1938 he received the honour of Officer of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.).

The establishment by the Government of the Department of Supply and Development in 1939 was a far-reaching step in organisation and development for war production. Mr. Jensen became Assistant Secretary (Factory Administration). In a few months we were at war and the new and sparsely staffed Department was subjected to considerable strain. In 1940, the Ministry of Munitions was formed with Mr. Essington Lewis as Director-General. The later part which Mr. Jensen played in this famous partnership is now well known. But his share in its establishment of the Ministry as an efficient and organised machine, almost overnight, is known only to a few. Here was the occasion for which he had been preparing all his life. It had been a long apprenticeship, but years of thought and study had suggested the answers for nearly every eventuality. He produced to Mr. Essington Lewis a ready-made scheme. Production Directorates, Boards of Area Management, Materials Control, Finance Control, Labour Control and the names of the business men to fill the posts; all were there. The plan was adopted.

What a partnership this was! It changed the incidence of employment in Australia for ever. It dared and achieved. Imagination, cheerfulness, coolness, daring the two men shared in common. This was J.E.'s greatest period. He lived life to the full in those six years and he often lived dangerously. He juggled with millions, but he left national assets. In the turmoil of war,

the unique opportunity provided by the millions of pounds in his grasp to promote decentralisation of industry and population, to leave behind capacity and skill which would provide opportunities for Australia's sons and daughters hitherto denied them.

In 1941, the Department of Supply and Development split into three Departments and Mr. Jensen became the Permanent Head of one of them; the Department of Munitions.

Most of you know the rest of the story. There is no need to reel off the figures of expenditure, staff, factories built You will find that in the war history of the Department. And you know also the part which Mr. Jensen played. His work had the quality of statesman, diplomat and leader. In 1943, the Government recognised this when it established the Secondary Industries Commission, and appointed him Chairman. This was almost a crushing burden allied to his war activities, but he was obviously the man and he accepted. As to what the Commission achieved you can see in official reports. Or you may inquire in Secondary Industry itself. It was another outstanding success. And it was so, because its Chairman dealt in realities. Drawing on his now vast store of experience and knowledge he was able always to isolate the realities, and though he still had his dreams, he had severer tests for them in this task.

The latest call by the Government upon him fits into the pattern of his life. Population and development are synonymous terms. And so, though he has left us he is still with us. But even when the time comes for him to withdraw from that activity, he will still be with us, and we with him, because he has one quality of which I have not spoken, but which is the one I like best to remember - the quality of friendship. He is tenacious in clinging to old associations, old friends - many of them very humbly placed in the community. And this is his best quality, the complete lack of self-consciousness in recognising and admitting the claims of old friends.

Not a modest man. Indeed a boaster, but with the quality of boasting of St. Paul. He is something better; a humble man because a truly religious one. And that, too, makes him cheerful with a boyish love of fun and jokes.

And so, "J.K." may your retirement be full of all the things you