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Director of agriculture retires

Department of Agriculture, Western Australia

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Mr. George Kingston Baron Hay, M.C., B.Sc. (Agric.), Director of Agriculture of Western Australia since 1951, retired on September 2, bringing to a close a brilliant career in the Department of Agriculture which commenced 38 years ago.

The son of a Methodist minister, Mr. Baron Hay was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1895. He was educated in England and at the age of 18, landed at Albany, Western Australia, and became a pupil at the Narrogin Farm school.

In 1915 he was one of the only two students enrolled at the Faculty of Agriculture in the University of Western Australia which then occupied premises in Irwin Street. Later in the year his studies were interrupted when he enlisted in the 51st Battalion, A.I.F.

He gained commissioned rank and was awarded the Military Cross in France in 1917, retiring at the conclusion of hostilities with the rank of lieutenant.

After graduating as Bachelor of Science (Agric.), he joined the Department of Agriculture in 1922 and served as an Agricultural Adviser for seven years, at first in the wheat and sheep and then in the dairying areas.

He became Superintendent of Dairying in 1930 and was promoted to Under-Secretary for Agriculture in 1941. In 1948 he was seconded to the Chairmanship of the Land Settlement Board and in 1951 he became Director of Agriculture.

Mr. Baron Hay was Australian delegate to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation at Geneva in 1947, and is a past-president of the West Australian Institute of Agricultural Science. He represented the State on the Standing Committee on Agriculture for 20 years and was chairman or member of nine other committees dealing with agriculture or agricultural products where his practical outlook was of great value.

He travelled extensively throughout the State to gain first hand appreciation of the problems affecting agriculture and the best way the Department could assist.

It was while he was Under-Secretary and Director that the change from exploitation, to building up of the soil was stressed by the passing of the Soil Conservation Acts and the extension of ley farming. He realised the economy of the State depended on primary production but that the business of marketing, handling and processing played an important role in the final return to the State and the producer. Because of this he encouraged agriculturalists and marketing interests to join together on committees for promotion, research and orderly marketing.

He married Dr. Vera Cook, M.B., B.S. (Melb.), and has two sons one of whom has studied engineering and the other medicine.
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