

I met two important scientists in Canberra during that visit whom I had not known before: Professor Ted Ringwood, the inventor of 'Synrock' and Dr Susan Bambrick, Senior Lecturer in Economics, both of the Australian National University, ANU. Ringwood had the simple, but brilliant idea that highly radioactive waste products should be enclosed in his invention, synthetic rock. The waste would then be sufficiently inert to be deposited safely for a very long time, not unlike the uranium isotopes which had been preserved over a period of 1800 million years in the natural Oklo reactor in Gabon. [See Title 263]. I subsequently never heard of any large scale use of synrock, nor did I hear any arguments or read of any reasons why synrock was unsuitable for the purpose for which it was invented.

Dr Bambrick was, at the time I met her, an expert in the economics of Australian mineral products and their exports, and I invited her to contribute her views about her field of research. She wrote the article during the following year when she was a Fulbright Scholar in residence at Pennsylvania State College; and it was published in September 1984, ISR 9/3. I considered it an excellent interdisciplinary contribution, dealing with economics, politics, export controls and environmental protection.

Canberra has always been a great attraction for me, being Australia's Federal Capital and 'Science City'. Apart from housing the Premier Research University of Australia, ANU, it also has the hemispherical home of the Australian National Academy, whose Fellows proudly place FAA behind their name, equivalent to FRS in the scientific hierarchy. The central administration of CSIRO, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, is also located in Canberra, from where its many research laboratories throughout the whole country are guided and supported.

During my not infrequent visits since 1945 to Canberra, Australia's Federal Capital, I made many good friends among the Australian élite of science, particularly Arthur Birch, one-time President of the Academy, Tony Barnett, Guy Gresford, Paul Wild, Jim Rendell and Phil Law, all Fellows of the Academy. I had also known and talked with Sir Gustav Nossal, Sir Ernest Titterton and Sir Otto Frankel as well as the following Foundation Members of the Academy, Ian Clunies-Ross, Hedley Marston, Sir Douglas Mawson and Sir Mark Oliphant. Alas, only a few if any of them are still alive.

I remember Oliphant showing me his giant homopolar generator which I never understood. On my first visit to Australia, Hedley Marston entertained my wife and me to lunch and in his kitchen demonstrated how an Australian prepares a pineapple with four strokes of a great knife. For us, fresh from rationed England, it was a shocking waste, but did we enjoy it!