



## A MODEST MEMBER

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### **Tie me kangaroo down, sport?**

For many months Mavis has been urging me to take up the cause of the kangaroo. She knows that public opinion is all on the side of the kangaroo for several reasons.

Many of these are excellent, and I wouldn't quarrel with one of them. But there is also a lot of silly sentiment about the subject.

For instance, some people say that the kangaroo is the national emblem so should be sacred.

Others say that kangaroos have such a pretty way of holding their front paws and are "so sweet."

And again, so many of our people live in the cities — this must be awful for them, but because of what they have to endure they feel that they should be able to see kangaroos bouncing about whenever they want to.

This would make these poor people feel natural and normal again.

And lastly, a lot of shrewd business men realise that kangaroos are good for attracting tourists, particularly from overseas.

So they feel that Fred should keep kangaroos in large numbers so that tourists could be encouraged to come here to be milked.

So it is clear to Mavis that, with all this sympathy on the side of kangaroos, I should urge the Government to prohibit their "slaughter."

"There would be lots of votes in it, dear," she sighed.

Fred saw things differently. He has many kangaroos on his place. Strangely enough, he doesn't hate them although they often damage his fences and water troughs.

And after a nasty accident one night, he knows that nothing takes up quite so much room in the front seat of a car as a kangaroo which has suddenly come through the windscreen.

He doesn't hate them — they are fascinating beggars. But all the same, he doesn't want too many of them.

So when he heard last year that the Government had appointed a parliamentary committee to inquire into their conservation, he had a sinking feeling that a lot of "do-gooding" politicians were going to pound around the country with handkerchiefs to their eyes, gathering votes by the bucketful.

They would present a report that would place the kangaroo on a pedestal and Fred in the bankruptcy court.

Well, the committee has now presented its report. Mavis is a bit disappointed because it doesn't make her cry as much as she had hoped.

But she has been interested to learn that there is no danger of the extinction of any kangaroo species, at least, not on the mainland.

And she was very impressed when she was told that there are now probably more kangaroos in Australia than when the white man came because he has supplied water in arid areas and so kangaroos can now graze there.

She was also interested to learn that kangaroos, if not controlled, will breed up until they have eaten the country out. So some would die of starvation if some weren't killed.

Fred read the report with great interest and increasing respect. He said to me in a puzzled way:

I didn't think members of Parliament would have enough sense to write such a sensible report.

They must be quite reasonable people really, not like they sound on the radio. And the report was short too, and used short, simple words.

I could understand it all. Why don't politicians behave like that all the time?

I didn't have an answer to that. Eccles says that he finds that politicians are quite sensible, except when they talk politics!

The committee recommends that kangaroos continue to be killed under a controlled program.

When they are killed, it is silly not to use the carcasses, so these are sent overseas, packed in tins and sold as pet food. That sounds sensible.

But kangaroos can only be exported as live animals if they are going to a zoo in another country. This is to ensure that they get as good a home as possible in their new country.

Yet if you were to give a kangaroo the choice between being killed and packed in a tin and exported in that way, or being exported live, under controlled conditions, at least while he was travelling, then I think he would take a chance on the latter.

We do the same with galahs.

We are allowed to shoot them if they are eating our crops, but we can't export them alive on a padded perch in a gilded cage because it is thought to be cruel to galahs.

Some galahs talk quite well. Fred says we should ask one of them what he thinks about it!