

(No. 46.)



1900.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

CONFERENCES OF PREMIERS:

SYDNEY, JANUARY, AND MELBOURNE, APRIL, 1900.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.

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CONFERENCE OF PREMIERS HELD IN SYDNEY,
JANUARY, 1900.

(REPORT OF.)

CONFERENCE OF PREMIERS, AT THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
CHAMBER.

SYDNEY, 24 JANUARY, 1900.

(2.30 P.M.)

THE undermentioned Premiers of the Colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania, were present, viz. :—

<i>New South Wales</i> ...	The Honourable W. J. LYNE, M.P.
<i>Victoria</i>	The Honourable ALLAN McLEAN, M.P.
<i>South Australia</i>	The Honourable F. W. HOLDER, M.P.
<i>Queensland</i>	The Honourable ROBERT PHILP, M.P.
<i>Tasmania</i>	The Honourable NEIL ELLIOTT LEWIS, M.P.

It was proposed by the Honourable Allan McLean, and unanimously resolved, that the Honourable W. J. Lyne be the Chairman, and Mr. Alex. C. Budge, Clerk of the Executive Council, the Secretary to the Conference.

The Chairman drew the attention of the Conference to the business to be brought before them, and submitted the following subjects, viz. :—

1. Appointment, &c., of Federal Delegates to visit England,
2. Appointment of Provincial Governors under Commonwealth.
3. Question of residence of Governor-General.
4. Proposals of Eastern Extension Telegraph Company.
5. New Guinea question.
6. Federal Rifle Team for England.
7. Bubonic Plague.
8. Fremantle as a Port of Call.
9. Western Australia's adherence to Commonwealth Bill.
10. Selection of an Agent-General to represent Australian Colonies at Berne Postal Union Festival.

The Conference proceeded to consider the subject of the appointment of

FEDERAL DELEGATES TO VISIT ENGLAND,

when, after general discussion, it was resolved that the further consideration be postponed until to-morrow.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS UNDER THE COMMONWEALTH.

The Conference, having fully considered the subject, is of opinion (a) that a reduction in salaries now given to Governors should be made; (b) that the appointments should, as at present, be vested in the Imperial Government; (c) that Governors should not be expected to supplement their salaries from their private means.

RESIDENCE OF GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

The Conference resolved that as the Governor-General will not be appointed as Governor of any one Colony, and as the Government Houses in Sydney and Melbourne have been offered, no action was necessary.

NEW GUINEA QUESTION.

After full discussion, and as New South Wales would not agree to pay compensation to the Syndicate without Parliamentary sanction (Victoria only agreeing to pay if New South Wales did), the matter dropped.

FEDERAL RIFLE TEAM.

The Conference resolved that, in view of the large number of troops sent to South Africa, and now serving there, no steps should be taken during the present year to send a Federal Rifle Team to compete at Bisley.

The Conference adjourned at 6.15, and resumed at 8.15 o'clock.

The Right Honourable Sir John Forrest, P.C., Premier of West Australia, here joined the Conference, but did not take part in any matters concerning Federation.

FREMANTLE AS A PORT OF CALL.

The Right Honourable Sir John Forrest brought this subject before the Conference, and explained the steps that had led up to the question, when, after deliberation, the further consideration was postponed until to-morrow.

The Conference adjourned at 10.30 P.M. until 11 o'clock to-morrow.

THURSDAY, 25 JANUARY, 1900.

The Conference having met at 11 o'clock, resumed consideration of the subject of mail steamers calling at Fremantle, and, after deliberation, resolved :

“ That this Conference of Premiers is unable to agree to any extension of the period of transit as asked for by the Mail Companies ”

STATISTICIANS: MEETING OF, AND CENSUS.

The Conference, having fully considered the question, agreed to the following Resolutions :—

“ That it is desirable that a Census be taken in each Colony during the year 1901, and that a Conference of Statists be held at an early date, not later than 20th proximo, to make all arrangements for carrying out the same.”

“ At such Conference the Statists shall also prepare and publish a Return showing how many members each original State shall be entitled to in the House of Representatives, and that the Return be prepared upon the basis appended hereto.”

Appendix.

The method of computing the populations of the several Colonies to be adopted by the Statisticians to be as follows :—“ The record of births and deaths, as well as of arrivals by sea, shall be taken as correct when certified to by the Statistician of the Colony to which they refer, but the number of departures by sea shall be subject to correction. The amount of correction to be ascertained by adding the number of births and of arrivals during the ten years 1881–1891 to the population actually ascertained in 1881, and from the number so arrived at, the number of deaths and of recorded departures shall be subtracted, and the remainder compared with the actual population ascertained in 1891. If the population, as estimated in the foregoing manner, be found to exceed the true population, the excess shall be taken to be the departures unrecorded during the ten years 1881–1891; and in estimating the population at the close of 1899, it shall be assumed that there has been the same proportion of unrecorded departures to the recorded departures since 1891, as there was in the ten years 1881 to 1891.

BUBONIC PLAGUE.

The Conference resolved that when suspicious cases arose, as had recently been reported in Adelaide and Sydney, every precaution should be taken in each of the Colonies to prevent the disease spreading, and when any particular case was diagnosed as the true plague, each Colony should adopt such measures as might be deemed advisable to deal with the disease, and immediately advise all the other Colonies on the subject.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S ADHERANCE TO COMMONWEALTH BILL.

This matter was fully discussed, but no action was determined.

SELECTION OF AN AGENT-GENERAL TO REPRESENT AUSTRALIAN COLONIES AT BERNE
POSTAL UNION FESTIVAL.

After discussion the Agent-General for South Australia was appointed.

APPOINTMENT OF FEDERAL DELEGATES TO VISIT ENGLAND.

The Conference having deliberated, resolved—

“That, in compliance with the request contained in the despatch received from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that delegates from the Australian colonies should be sent to England to explain and give assistance when the Australian Commonwealth Bill comes before the Imperial Parliament, this Conference is of opinion that each colony should appoint a delegate, and that such delegate, when appointed, should represent all the federating colonies in unitedly urging the passage of the Bill through the Imperial Parliament without amendment, and in explaining any legal or constitutional questions that may arise.”

Mr. Lyne desired to place on record his opinion that a delegation, consisting of Mr. Barton and Mr. Deakin, would be preferable.

The Conference also agreed to the following instructions for the guidance of the Delegates :—

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the Delegates who may be sent to London in relation to the Commonwealth Bill should emphasise the following facts :—

- (a.) That a Bill was originally drafted and discussed by representatives of all the Australian Colonies in 1891.
- (b.) That in 1897 a Convention was specially elected by the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania, and included also representatives of Western Australia. That this Convention sat in Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne, and debated, amended, re-drafted, and finally adopted the Bill after many weeks of labour.
- (c.) That, later on, the Premiers of the Colonies named and the Premier of Queensland made certain further amendments in the Bill, which was then, by parliamentary authority, by statute, referred to the votes of the electors of the Colonies, with the exception of Western Australia.
- (d.) That in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and Tasmania, the Draft Bill was approved by a large majority of the voters, the total votes being 374,681 for, and 144,355 against.

Federal Polling, 1898 and 1899.

		1898.	1899.
New South Wales...	{ For	71,595	107,420
	{ Against.....	66,228	82,741
Queensland.....	{ For	35,181
	{ Against.....	...	28,965
Victoria	{ For	100,520	152,635
	{ Against.....	22,099	9,804
Tasmania	{ For	11,746	13,437
	{ Against.....	2689	791
South Australia.....	{ For	35,800	65,990
	{ Against.....	17,320	17,053

F. and O.E.

- (e.) The Legislatures of the Colonies whose votes had approved the Bill, then remitted the draft to the Imperial Authorities, praying for its passing by the Imperial Parliament.

That, in view of these facts, the Imperial Government and Parliament be respectfully urged to pass the Bill so carefully drawn and considered, and finally adopted by the people without any amendment.

THE NEW HEBRIDES.

The Conference agreed that a telegram in the following terms be forwarded to the Secretary of State for the Colonies :—

Reported in press cables that French newspapers insist on the necessity of settling the fate of the New Hebrides ; also alleging that Australian opposition to French annexation of the group has greatly diminished. Conference of Australian Premiers now in Session at Sydney inform you that Australian opposition to French annexation has in no way diminished, and, without wishing to embarrass the Imperial Government at the present juncture, express an earnest hope that no steps will be taken to give France greater control unless Australasian Governments first consulted.

DEATH OF H.H. THE DUKE OF TECK.

The Conference resolved that a telegram in the following terms be forwarded to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies by His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor:—

Will be glad if you will kindly convey the deep sympathy of the Premiers of Australia and Tasmania in Conference assembled to Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York, in her great affliction.

The Conference adjourned at 10.30 P.M. until Saturday at 10.30 A.M.

SATURDAY, 27 JANUARY, 1900.

The Conference assembled at 10.30 A.M., and entered upon the discussion of the proposals of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, when, after full consideration, the Honourable J. W. Holder proposed the following motion, viz. :—

“That the proposals of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company for a Cape-Australian cable be accepted with the following qualifications:—

- (a.) The suggestion of Mr. Chamberlain to be agreed to.
- (b.) The right to open local offices to be exercised only on the laying of the Pacific Cable.
- (c.) No exemption from Customs duties to apply except to Telegraph instruments, cables, and chemicals.
- (d.) Sites in Perth, Fremantle, Adelaide, and Glenelg, to be subject to satisfactory arrangements approved by the Governments of Western Australia and South Australia.
- (e.) The Roebuck Bay Cable not to be closed. The Postmasters-General to arrange details subject to these provisions.”

A majority of Premiers were in favour of the above Motion, but the Premiers of Victoria and Queensland having expressed a desire to obtain further information, it was unanimously agreed to postpone the final decision for a few days, and the Premiers of Victoria and Queensland to communicate with the President, who will thereupon record and notify to the Secretary of State the decision arrived at.

The business being ended, the Conference, on the Motion of the Premier of Victoria, seconded by the Premier of Queensland, thanked the Honourable William John Lyne for his valuable services as Chairman.

Mr. A. C. Budge was also thanked for his services as Secretary, and the Conference adjourned *sine die*.

WILLIAM JOHN LYNE, *Chairman*.

ALEX. C. BUDGE, *Secretary*.

CONFERENCE OF PREMIERS, HELD IN MELBOURNE,
APRIL, 1900.

(MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF.)

CONFERENCE OF PREMIERS, HELD AT MELBOURNE
IN APRIL, 1900.

Minutes of Proceedings.

THURSDAY, 19 APRIL, 1900.

THE Conference met at the Executive Council Chamber, Melbourne, on Thursday, 19th April, 1900, at 10·25 A.M.

Present :

The Honourable W. J. LYNE, M.P., Premier of New South Wales ;
The Honourable A. McLEAN, M.P., Premier of Victoria ;
The Honourable F. W. HOLDER, M.P., Premier of South Australia ;
The Honourable R. PHILP, M.P., Premier of Queensland ;
The Honourable N. E. LEWIS, M.P., Premier of Tasmania.

Resolved—That the Honourable A. McLean, Premier of Victoria, be Chairman of the Conference ; and that Mr. R. S. Rogers, Secretary to the Premier of Victoria, be Secretary to the Conference.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA BILL.

The Conference proceeded to consider the matter of the Commonwealth of Australia Bill.

Telegrams were read from the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies and from the Australian Delegates in London as to the position of the Bill and as to certain proposed amendments.

A telegram was read from the Right Honourable Sir John Forrest, K.C.M.G., Premier of Western Australia, with regard to the alterations desired by that Colony. A telegram from the Honourable A. P. Matheson, of Western Australia, to the Honourable F. W. Holder, relative to the subject, was also read.

After discussion, the Chairman was requested to telegraph to the Australian Delegates in London for certain information ; also to move His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria to telegraph to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for permission to publish the Colonial Office telegraphic despatches of 5th April (two) and of 16th and 17th April, 1900.

Resolved, That the further consideration of the subject be postponed until to-morrow.

The Conference then, at 4·50 P.M., adjourned until 10·30 A.M. on the following day.

FRIDAY, 20 APRIL, 1900.

The Conference met, pursuant to adjournment, at 10·30 a.m.

Present : All the Members.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA BILL.

Telegrams were received from the Western Australian Federal League and from the Australian Natives' Association, Perth, relative to the amendments desired by Western Australia, and the inclusion of that Colony in the Federation.

As no reply had been received to the telegram sent to the Australian Delegates in London, the sitting of the Conference was suspended until 3·45 p.m. On resuming at that hour, the Chairman stated that still no reply had come to hand.

The Conference, at 3·55 p.m., adjourned until 10·30 a.m. next day.

SATURDAY, 21 APRIL, 1900.

The Conference met, pursuant to adjournment, at 10·30 a.m.

Present: All the Members except the Hon. N. E. Lewis, Premier of Tasmania.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA BILL.

Telegrams were received as follows, viz. :—

From the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, agreeing to the publication of the Colonial Office telegraphic despatches if the Premiers saw no objection to that course.

From Mr. J. T. Walker, Chairman of a public meeting held in Sydney, relative to the Privy Council Appeal question.

From President of Chamber of Manufactures, Perth, as to amendments desired by Western Australia.

From the President of the Eastern Gold-fields Reform League, Kalgoorlie, respecting the position of Western Australia.

CENSUS.

Resolved—That the date selected by the recent Conference of Statisticians for taking of the Census in the Australasian Colonies be adhered to.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA BILL.

The information asked for having been received from the Australian Delegates in London, the Conference deliberated until 4·30 P.M., when it adjourned until 7·30 P.M.

On resuming at 7·30 P.M., the Conference further deliberated, and finally adopted the following telegram for transmission to the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the Chairman was requested to move His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria to telegraph accordingly, viz. :—

The Premiers of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and Tasmania, in Conference assembled, having given full consideration to the despatches from the Secretary of State for the Colonies respecting suggested Amendments in the Commonwealth Bill, reply :—

1. While they fully recognise the feeling of the Imperial Government that vigilance on their part is essential in the interests of all parts of the Empire, and also the importance of securing the inclusion of Western Australia in the Federation from the first, they cannot forget that by the Enabling Acts, and in pursuance of them—

(a.) The framing of the Federal Constitution was expressly intrusted to the Convention of Representatives specially elected by the people for the purpose in all the Colonies except Queensland and Western Australia; and that the final acceptance or rejection of the Constitution, when framed, was also remitted to the people.

(b.) The question as to appeals was, *inter alia*, considered by the Convention in Adelaide, and no appeal to the Privy Council was allowed. During the visit of the Premiers to England, at the Jubilee, the matter was referred to by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who urged reconsideration. It was accordingly reconsidered at the meeting of the Convention in Melbourne, and resolved in the opposite direction to the decision in Adelaide. Later, the matter was again discussed, and the compromise now in the Bill agreed to. It was yet again debated in the Premiers' Conference prior to the last referendum, and no alteration was made in the form of the Bill. The vote was then taken, and the Bill was adopted by a large majority of the electors.

(c.) The Commonwealth Bill belongs, therefore, in a very special sense, to the people of Australia, whose only mandate to Governments and Parliaments is to seek its enactment by the Imperial Parliament in the form in which it was adopted by the people.

2. The Premiers believe that the appeal clause, as framed, could not work injuriously to any part of the Empire, although the proposed new Court of Appeal would, doubtless, present attractions to the people of Australia.

3. The only alternatives suggested in the despatches are t—(1) Amendment of the Bill, and (2) postponement of its consideration. Of these two, the Premiers do not hesitate to say that the latter course would be much more objectionable to Australians generally even than the former.

4. Without disputing the constitutional power of the Imperial Parliament to amend the Bill on its own responsibility, the Premiers respectfully urge that the voice of the Australian people, given on the Bill as it stands, should receive that favourable consideration which such a weighty referendum demands. The Premiers do not consider themselves as having authority to accept any amendments. They hope that the Colony of Western Australia, whose representatives assisted to frame the Bill, and in the Convention almost unanimously agreed to Clause 95, may be urged to accept it as it stands. They think that the Bill already sufficiently provides for the admission of New Zealand.

All business being concluded, it was resolved, upon the Motion of the Hon. W. J. Lyne, seconded by the Hon. F. W. Holder, that the thanks of the Conference be accorded to the Hon. A. M'Lean for his services as Chairman, and to Mr. R. S. Rogers for his services as Secretary.

The Chairman then, at 9 P.M., declared the Conference closed.

A. M'LEAN, *Chairman*.

ROBERT S. ROGERS, *Secretary*.