

# **The Struggle for Union**

## **Episodes in the Movement for Australian Federation.**

**Wise, B R Bernard Ringrose (1858-1916)**

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The Lone Hand  
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# **[Part 1: August 1912]**

**Lone Hand**

**August 1 1912**

## I. Tenterfield and After.

TENTERFIELD is a border town between New South Wales and Queensland, perched upon the Dividing Range which runs from Carpentaria to Cape Howe. From its altitude it seems to overlook Australia, and is free, by reason of its situation, from provincial prejudice. It was a natural minaret from which to sound the call that stirred with life the dry bones of the Island Continent.

On October 24, 1889, Sir Henry Parkes, keeping his intention secret from his colleagues and the press, journeyed to Brisbane to consult with the leaders of both parties(*a*) as to the expediency of taking some definite step towards the closer union of the Australian Colonies. Melbourne, from its greater importance, would have been a more natural destination; but a confidential correspondence with Mr. Gillies(*b*) had shown that nothing could be hoped for from an interview with the Victorian Ministers; while there was a special reason for preferring Queensland, since General Edwards, in his recently published Report upon Australian Defence, had emphasised the strategical importance of Thursday Island. Before starting on his journey Sir Henry Parkes had renewed his overtures to Mr. Gillies, who had replied very coldly on October 22.

Mr. Gillies and Sir Henry Parkes—each in his different way a matchless Parliamentarian—were as opposite in temperament as they were unlike in appearance. The one was a “pawky” Scotchman, without imagination or enthusiasm, short, chubby, round-faced, with little, twinkling eyes, and a thin, rapid and precise utterance. The other was big and hirsute, with the face and sleepy eyes of an old lion; deliberate in speech and movement, yet possessed of daemonic eloquence and power when roused. Unmethodical and impatient of detail, he dreamt dreams and saw visions, which self-confidence and an ambition that was without pettiness, prompted him to translate into realities. No men were less suited to work together; and but for the tactful Deakin, who was a friend of both, incompatibility between them might have shipwrecked the Federal movement at its outset.

(*a*) Mr. Boyd Morehead was Premier at the time; and Sir Samuel Griffith leader of the Opposition.

(*b*) Then Premier of Victoria. Mr. Deakin was in his Ministry.

For the moment Sir Henry Parkes, encouraged by his reception by the Queensland Ministers, went upon his course, unheeding Mr. Gillies. Reaching Tenterfield, upon his return journey, on October 24, he made

there the great speech that heralded the dawn of the Federal era, which he himself was destined never to behold. Among his audience was the English novelist David Christie Murray, whose description has the greater value because the meeting was not reported fully in the press:—

"It was my good fortune to be present at that now famous meeting at Tenterfield at which Sir Henry Parkes chose to make his pronunciamiento with regard to Federation, and I shall not readily forget the enthusiasm his speech evoked. His utterance was plain, straightforward and convincing, and the speaker's sterling belief in the greatness of his theme and the propitious character of the hour was strikingly evident. The excellent choice of words, the masterly elaboration of phrases which were obviously moulded whilst he stood there upon his feet, were in some contrast to the manner of his utterance. The voice was a little veiled by fatigue and age. The massive shoulders were a little bowed; but the huge head, with its streaming wave of silver hair and beard, was held as erect as ever. The rough homely features were as eloquent as the words he spoke, and the instinct of a natural fighting man lit up the ancient warrior's eye. The mere aspect and manner would have been remarkable to a stranger anywhere; but there, where for the first time the voice of an authoritative statesman gave soul and utterance to the aspirations of a people, it was truly memorable, and not without a touch of sublimity."<sup>\*</sup>

Sir Henry Parkes put the question at once upon the highest plane, by insisting that the "time had come for the creation on the Australian Continent of an Australian Government, as distinct from a local Government; and an Australian Parliament, as distinct from a local Parliament." He pointed out that the Australians were nearly equal in number to the Americans when they formed the great Commonwealth of the United States: "And surely what the Americans had done by war the Australians could bring about in peace?" The material reasons that he urged were the necessity for Federal Defence and for a uniform gauge upon the railways. Next he dealt with the method by which these national benefits might be attained. "Some," he said, "had suggested a Council, but they must take broader and more powerful action. They must appoint a Convention of leading men from all the colonies—delegates appointed by the authority of the Parliaments. This Convention would have to devise the Constitution which would be necessary for bringing into existence a Federal Government, with a Federal Parliament, for the conduct of great national undertakings. The only argument which could be advanced in opposition was that the time had not come, and they must remain isolated colonies. He believed, however, that the time had come. In the words of Brunton Stephens, the Queensland poet:—

Not yet her day. How long "not yet"? . . .

There comes the flush of violet!  
And heavenward faces, all aflame  
    With sanguine imminence of morn,  
Wait but the sun-kiss to proclaim  
    The Day of the Dominion born.

Lapse of years has not weakened the force of his appeal, which was at once a declaration of faith, lifting Federation above the dust of party politics, and an armory of arguments which still hold good. Sir Henry, after sketching the framework of a Federal Constitution, much as it is to-day, struck the same note in the conclusion of his speech: "*The thing will have to be done, and to put it off will only make the difficulties greater which stand in the way.*"

This, indeed, is the final answer to critics of the Commonwealth: Had union been delayed ten years, in all human probability it could not have been effected except under the pressure of a foreign enemy. Federation has been justified as much by the prevention of evils as by its direct benefits.

\* *The Cockney Columbus, 1898. Page 277.*

## II. Critics and Difficulties.

The Tenterfield speech marks the beginning of a new era in the Federal movement. The desire for union, which had floated before men's minds as a vague aspiration, took from this day a definite shape in practical politics.

The occasion, indeed, was remarkably propitious. General Edwards' exposure of the defenceless position of Australia against attack had caused widespread uneasiness; and it happened that nothing else of interest distracted public attention. The political field was clear of the old party issues, and the tide of public opinion was at the dead ebb. The opportunity had come and the man! But was the man in earnest; or was he merely raising a new cry for electioneering purposes, or to his vanity? This was the the question canvassed in every colony—a question which has not yet been resolved in favor of Sir Henry Parkes in the popular opinion of Australia.

The gist of the charge is that Sir Henry Parkes, in preparing to make a fresh start in the Federal movement, was ignoring the Federal Council from pique and vanity. It was remembered that he had himself proposed the establishment of this body, at a Conference of Premiers in 1882, yet had refused to join it when it was constituted upon his own lines in 1885. The machinery of this Council was sufficient, it was urged, to create a Federal army; and if other action were desired in the common interests, the Council could obtain extended powers. All that was required now was the adhesion of New South Wales to this nucleus of a Federal Parliament! A fresh start was not needed by the Colonies; although it might extricate Sir Henry Parkes from a false position to his own glorification!

Reading the Tenterfield speech by the light of later knowledge, it is plain that Sir Henry Parkes anticipated these criticisms, which, indeed, had been expressed with undiplomatic frankness in the letters of Mr. Gillies. The first of these, which has been made public, is dated August 12, 1889,<sup>(c)</sup> and was written in reply to two letters from Sir Henry Parkes, which are not known to the writer, but which are described by Mr. Gillies as containing "a proposal to create a Federal Parliament of Australia . . . with supreme authority—on the lines of the Dominion of Canada." To Mr. Gillies this seemed chimerical and unnecessary. "I wish," he wrote, "I could see any present prospect of bringing this about," and he suggests as a better alternative that New South Wales should join the Federal Council. "If that were brought about, there is much that could be done for Australia's advantage. In the first place, we will be united; in the second place, we could proceed to consider several important questions which must be dealt

with shortly, and which would well come within the province of the Council to deal with,” and he suggests “defence” and “the best settlement of the West Australian difficulty.” [West Australia was then a Crown Colony, and the Colonial Office was raising a question as to the reservation of some of the Crown lands, when Responsible Government should have been granted.] He then reminds Sir Henry Parkes that “steps are being taken by the various Legislatures of the colonies represented in the Federal Council(*d*) to secure an increase in the number of its members that will not only give more effective representation, but will also add weight to its deliberations.” “Then,” he points out, “it will assume a more representative character, and might be clothed by the special authority of the various Legislatures with power to deal with the proposals of the larger Federation.” He concludes with a personal appeal to Sir Henry Parkes to join the Federal Council, and thus “remove the Federal barrier which has been created by the isolation of New South Wales.” . . . “New South Wales,” he reminds Sir Henry Parkes, “did put her hand to the plough and did draw back. It is for you to put your hand to the plough and not to draw back . . . What you refuse to do to-day someone else will do to-morrow, and I shall be pleased to see you take the pride of place.”

Sir Henry Parkes does not seem to have replied to this communication; but, on October 15, he addressed a circular telegram to the several Premiers, suggesting a conference to consider General Edwards' report; to which Mr. Gillies, in reply, again urged that any conference which ignored the Federal Council would be “barren of results”; and that, as the Federal Council had power to deal with Australian Defence, “to create a new Federal body to deal with defence alone would certainly seem strange, and outside Australia would not increase Australia's prestige.” He added, with a touch of sarcasm, that only the attitude of New South Wales caused “a divided instead of a united Australia,” which could be brought about “at once, instead of being postponed to a future day and to other men,” if only Sir Henry Parkes would join the Council.

The other Premiers advised in similar terms; and these replies reflected the public opinion of the other colonies.

Sir Henry Parkes, alone of Australia's public men, would have persisted in his larger scheme in the face of such discouragements. Such courage is the measure of a statesman, which posterity can estimate better than contemporaries.

Yet, formidable as were the criticisms which Sir Henry Parkes' proposals met with from the other Premiers, they rested upon a misapprehension appointed by the Ministers of New South Wales, which is not uncommon between neighboring States even to-day. For the opposition to the Federal Council

came not (as the Premiers believed) from Sir Henry Parkes, but from the people of New South Wales, guided by their Press; and in this instance it would be difficult to deny the correctness of the popular instinct.

The Federal Council, which was a non-elective body composed of two representatives of each participating colony appointed by the Ministers of the day, met biennially in Hobart and was charged with legislative power over important matters of common concern.<sup>(e)</sup> It had, however, no power of taxation and no executive authority, so that its measures could never equal its pretensions. Indeed, any vigorous exercise of its powers by such a body could not fail to cause conflicts, which might discredit the idea of union altogether; so that it seemed to many that to give the Federal Council the great accession of strength, which would have followed from the adhesion of New South Wales, would be likely to create a new obstacle to union, rather than to further it. "I am convinced," wrote Sir Henry Parkes a few days later, giving expression to these misgivings, "that the Federal Council is wrongly based. It is impossible for any body constitutionally feebler than the Colonial Parliaments to stand any strain in legislation against any strong public feeling in any one of them." That Sir Henry Parkes did not perceive the validity of these objections in 1881 may reflect upon his judgment; but that he should express them in 1889 will not justify to posterity the charge of insincerity which his contemporaries brought against him. Certainly no one who lived in Sydney at that time can entertain a doubt but that Sir Henry Parkes expressed the opinion of New South Wales, and that even his great influence could not have brought that colony into the Federal Council.

Nevertheless New South Wales—although not suspicious, like other colonies, of Sir Henry Parkes' fresh start—was not free from the misgivings which held back her neighbours. These arose from the peculiar condition of her politics, and exercised such an influence in the later stages of the struggle that explanation becomes necessary.

(c) Parlt. Papers, Leg. Ass., N.S.W., Dec. 19, 1889.

(d) The colonies which took part in the Federal Council were Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia.

(e) The Council had original legislative powers over:—

1. The relation of Australia with the islands of the Pacific.
2. The prevention of the influx of criminals.
3. Fisheries in Australian waters beyond territorial limits.
4. The service of process.
5. The enforcement of judgments beyond the limits of a colony.

It had also derivative legislative power over:— (1) Defence; (2) Quarantine; (3) Patent Law; (4) Copyright; (5) Bills of Exchange; (6) Marriage and Divorce; (7) Naturalisation; (8) Other matters which any two or more colonies might agree to refer to it.

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# **[Part 2: September 1912]**

**Lone Hand**

**September 2, 1912**

### **III. Hesitations and Misgivings.**

To us of a later time the argument of the Tenterfield speech proves itself. That eleven years should have passed before it carried conviction to the people of N.S.W. evidences a strength of provincial prejudice difficult now to comprehend; but which, if Union had been delayed much longer, must have exposed Australia to the risk of civil war, after the fashion of the South American Republics. Sneer as Sir Henry Parkes' critics might at his appeal to sentiment, only the sentiment of goodwill could unite the discordant elements of the Australian continent; and the difficulties in the way of union could not be overcome until men learnt to look at them as Australians, and not only as the citizens of a colony. Nor was local patriotism the only chilling influence which affected the reception of the Tenterfield proposals. That they should have been put forward by Sir Henry Parkes was a stumbling block to many even of the friends of Union. Thus cross currents of opinion swayed the federal movement from the outset, and affected the coming struggle at every stage.

Sir Henry Parkes had appealed to Australians that the demon of party spirit should be exorcised from the Federal movement. But a man of his experience could not have expected a response. The leader of a party who propounds a new policy will certainly be criticised by his opponents from their own standpoint; and, if the time chosen for the new departure coincide with the waning fortunes of his party, the motives of the leader will most certainly be suspected. It happened that in 1889 Sir Henry Parkes appeared to be losing influence both in and out of Parliament.

As a Parliamentarian ranking with Peel, Gladstone and Sir John A. Macdonald, his strength lay in an almost intuitive perception of constitutional fitness according to the underlying principles of Responsible Government. Like Sir John Robertson—with whom for twenty years (except for two brief intervals) he had shared the government in alternation—he aimed at moulding our Parliament after the model of Great Britain. It is true that performance often fell short of the ideal, because the conditions of a young country do not favor a system which presupposes considerable reticence and magnanimity and depends for its success upon a nice balance between what is lawful and what is expedient. Yet, on the whole, under the influence of these rival leaders Parliamentary usages were held in great respect, and constitutionalism was in the ascendant. The general election of 1880, which was as notable in its consequences as the entry of the Labor party into politics eleven years later, changed the spirit of the Legislature, replacing the veterans who had been trained in the

English respect for tradition by younger men of Australian birth for whom the word “unconstitutional” possessed no terrors.<sup>(1)</sup> The new men came into power three years later (1883) under Sir Alexander Stuart, after a general election had scattered the remnant of the Parkes-Robertson coalition; and although Sir Henry Parkes regained office in 1887 upon the issue of Free-trade or Protection, he never regained his former supremacy. In Parliament he was as a voice crying in the wilderness to younger men who regarded his constitutionalism as pedantry. In the constituencies he had antagonised the Catholics by his Education Act; while a new generation of voters had grown up—many of them recent immigrants—who knew nothing of his ancient fame. By the end of 1889 it was manifest that his Government was tottering; and that Protectionists were the growing party. The General Election held earlier in the year had given the Free-traders only a majority of two; and eager aspirants to office were calculating already the date of their migration to the Government benches.

The general perception of these facts explains the charge of insincerity which proved in the other colonies, as in New South Wales, to be most hampering to the Federal leader. “Impossible,” it was argued, “that so astute a politician as Sir Henry Parkes should not see the writing on the wall; and what was more likely to stave off defeat than the confusion of his opponents by a new issue?”

That these misgivings did not unite the New South Wales Parliamentary Opposition against Federation was due to the influence of Mr. Barton, who thus performed the first of his great services to the cause of Union.

Mr. Barton, whose judicial temperament had been matured by a three-years' occupancy of the Speaker's Chair, was at this time breaking with his early attachment to the doctrines of Free-trade, to which, like most of his generation, he had given an unreflecting adherence. Although counted among the Protectionists, because he had been Attorney-General in the short administration of Mr. Dibbs (January, 1889-March, 1889), the fervor of his Australian patriotism was stronger than his fiscal leanings. The day after the Tenterfield speech he wrote a warm letter of congratulation to Sir Henry Parkes, and a week later (November 3) made a public and unequivocal declaration in favor of Federation at a meeting of the Australian Natives' Association. From this time forward Mr. Barton was Sir Henry Parkes' first lieutenant in the Federal struggle, until the old man upon his death-bed entrusted him with the succession to the leadership. Those Protectionists, who, like the late Mr. J. P. Garvan, put Union before Party, followed Mr. Barton's lead at once; but the majority adhered at this time to their official leader, Mr. Dibbs, some out of loyalty and some from a genuine belief that Federation was a stalking horse against Protection.

In the other colonies, the press and the politicians, although uninfluenced by the party spirit of New South Wales politics, showed an even greater mistrust of the sincerity of Sir Henry Parkes. It was recalled that he had refused to bring New South Wales into the Federal Council, although he had himself proposed at the Conference of Premiers in 1880 the resolution that led to its creation three years later; and the apparent inconsistency of his present attitude was attributed to a vain-glorious desire to take no part in any Federal movement of which he was not the leader. Echoes of these charges may be heard even at the present time; and the belief that they rest on fact still lingers among those who did not understand Parkes; although those who, like Mr. Deakin and Sir Samuel Way, could penetrate beneath the surface, never gave them credence.

That Sir Henry had changed his opinion of the Federal Council is undoubtedly true. But many good reasons may be advanced why a statesman who had believed in 1881 that such a Council would make Union easier, should have come to the conclusion, in 1883, that it was in reality an obstacle to Union. And it is certain that not even the great influence of Sir Henry Parkes could have induced New South Wales at any time to join the Federal Council. The charge that he was actuated by vanity, like all aspersion of motives, is more difficult to meet. That Sir Henry Parkes was vain no one who knew him will deny. But this was not the fatuous and destructive vanity which stands in the way of self-knowledge, but the harmless vanity of an intensely sympathetic nature which, having been crushed by harsh treatment in youth, sought in later years assurances from others that his work was good. No visitor at his home will forget the almost childish happiness with which he showed the autographs and letters of distinguished persons whom he had met or corresponded with. But in this there was no vulgar self-assertion; but a conscious pride that the self-taught Warwickshire peasant, living in a remote and small community, was recognised as an equal by the best spirits of his age. This conscious pride is heard in all his greater utterances. "I was thinking," he once said to a friend after reading G. W. Russell's life of Gladstone, "of a comparison between Mr. Gladstone's life and my own. When he was at Eton preparing himself for Oxford, enjoying the advantages of good education, with plenty of money, and being trained in every way for his future position as a statesman, I was working at a rope-walk at fourpence a day, and suffered such cruel treatment that I was knocked down with a crowbar, and did not recover my senses for half an hour. From the rope-walk I went to labor in a brick-yard, where I was again brutally used; and when Mr. Gladstone was at Oxford I was breaking stones on the Queen's highway, with hardly enough clothing to protect me

from the cold.”

That Sir Henry Parkes had a noble ambition to consummate himself the Union of Australia, which for nearly forty years he had done his utmost to promote, may be conceded to his detractors. But that he was actuated by any mean considerations of vanity in seizing with statesmanlike promptitude the opportunity, which circumstances offered, of broadening the basis of the Federal Union, will not be admitted by anyone who studies closely the considerations which governed his line of conduct on this critical occasion. It is significant that his sincerity was never doubted by his close associates, and that those who made the charge were unacquainted with his character.

We may return, after this digression, to our narrative of the effect of the Tenterfield speech upon public opinion in New South Wales.

The Government or Free-trade party was split at once by the same division as the Protectionist; and with more reason, because of the probabilities that a common Australian tariff, which would be the first fruits of Federation, would reflect the Protectionist views of the other colonies rather than the Free-trade views of New South Wales.

Mr. McMillan, the Colonial Treasurer, a spokesman for the soft-goods houses, which at that time dominated Sydney politics—(the nick-name “Calico Jimmy” then given by the Protectionists to the Free-traders recalls that the late Mr. Jamieson, head of Prince, Ogg & Co., was then the leading spirit of his party)—voiced these misgivings on the day after the Tenterfield speech. “Federation” (he said at a meeting at Waverley), “would be intolerable except upon the basis of Free-trade with the whole world.”<sup>(2)</sup> The party as a whole, however, refrained from public disapproval; some of its members from a robust faith in the triumph of their views in the wider arena of the Federal Parliament, and others because they refused to put free imports above the Union of Australia.

Thus, neither Free-traders nor Protectionists were able to take a united stand either for or against Federation.

A more formidable opposition, however, than that of any political party came from the old colonists, whose intense local patriotism refused to recognise the equal status of the other colonies with the mother colony of New South Wales; and at the back of whose minds lurked the fear that Federation was a step towards a separation from the Empire. Mr. Froude has reported a conversation with Mr. Dalley in 1885, in which the latter explained that his unwillingness to further Federation was due to his misgiving as to its ultimate goal. As the struggle proceeded, local prejudice rather than Imperial sentiment became the driving force of the provincial opposition; but it would be unfair not to recognise that this provincialism

always had a better side, or to blame its advocates unduly, because they did not perceive at once that Nationalism, which makes Union possible on equal terms, and not Colonialism, which implies the domination of an inferior, gives the only sound basis of the Imperial tie.

The leader of the Colonial party—nicknamed later the “Geebung” party—was that picturesque personality of the past, Sir John Robertson, of whom it is as hard to convey a true impression to a later generation as it was for a contemporary, who had not come under the spell of the enchanter, to appreciate the adoration of his friends. In 1889 he had retired from active politics; but his long experience of affairs and keen insight into character made him still the political oracle of a large circle, while his chivalrous loyalty (he once resigned office rather than vote to condemn a supporter for political corruption) attached with the closest ties all who came under his influence. His presence was strikingly handsome: the features clear-cut: flowing white hair and agile figure; while a natural gift of profanity and an uncompromising directness of speech, expressed in husky tones (he had no palate), have enriched our annals with many pleasant anecdotes. Nurtured in the traditions of Colonialism, his outlook from New South Wales was towards Great Britain; while, having spent his life in the service of the Mother Colony, the separation from her of Victoria and Queensland, and the claim put forward by the former for the Riverina, remained in his memory as unforgivable ingratitude. At first he refused to treat Sir Henry Parkes' proposals as intended sincerity — Federation was just “Sir Henry's fad.” Later, when speaking to a young follower, he asked: “Why should we — well close our gates to all the world in order to trade with those — fellows across the Murray, who produce just the same as we do; and all they can send us is — cabbages?<sup>(3)</sup> Mr. Charles Lyne recalls in his *Life of Sir Henry Parkes* another characteristic, though bowdlerised outburst: “The Governors—they send out boys now—are supporting Parkes! The fools! They think there will be Imperial Federation; and they will find a United States of Australia and separation. Then, see, if Federation should come about, what a howl there will be when the seat of Government is removed to Melbourne, as it certainly will be.”

It is only by realising that such utterances, which were the germ of many articles and speeches in later years, expressed sincere convictions, in language which was generally approved, that posterity will understand why the inevitable Union of Australia was delayed so long, and only achieved imperfectly after eleven years of bitter contest. Naturally, Sir John Robertson became the leader of the Anti-Federalists, and the Reform Club their headquarters.<sup>(4)</sup> Thence came the impulse and direction—later through

Mr. J. H. Want, Sir John's devoted political son—to those strangely assorted allies who, as this narrative will tell, all but succeeded in preventing Union. They were defeated by men of all parties, who heard the call of a larger patriotism, and perceived that with the Tenterfield speech a new spirit had been born into public life.

(1) See Parkes' *Fifty Years*, Vol. 2, page 39.

(2) *S. M. Herald*, Oct. 25, 1889.

(3) To Sir John Robertson Victoria was always “the cabbage garden.”

(4) Sir John Robertson was President of the Reform Club. At an annual meeting, when the accounts disclosed a deficit, he told the members “they must drink the — Club out of debt.” Next year there was a credit balance! Sir Henry Parkes never belonged to a Club.

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## **[Part 3: October 1912]**

**Lone Hand**

**October 1 1912**

## IV.

### The Campaign.

IT had been agreed between the Parliaments of the several colonies that the Convention Bill should be submitted to a popular vote, for acceptance or rejection as a whole, on 3rd June, 1898. Like all compromises, the Bill was not entirely satisfactory to any section of the public; but while the Federalists were ready to accept it, with its imperfections, for the sake of Union, the "Antis," indifferent or hostile to Union, saw nothing in the Bill but what was bad.

The opposition to the Bill came from the Labor party and the wealthy classes—the two extremes—the former objecting to the Constitutional clauses, the latter taking alarm both at these and the financial. The Constitution which gave manhood suffrage, an Elective Second Chamber and responsible Government, and which empowered the Governor, on the advice of his Ministers, to dissolve both Houses, was not, one would think, to be condemned justly as "undemocratic." But the Labor party in 1898—it is curious to recall this now—objected to the equal representation of States in the Senate as destructive of "majority rule." Its members either would not, or could not, see that equal representation was a practical necessity of any form of Union; and that, in the unlikely event of a combination of the small colonies against the large, which was the bug-bear of the Labor speakers, the deadlock provisions provided ample security for the latter.

The wealthy classes, the other party to this strange alliance, opposed the Bill on other grounds. Some denounced it as too democratic: others predicted that it would ruin Sydney by encouraging the trade of other ports: while all were afraid of an increase in taxation.

Gradually the opposition centred round the financial clauses of the Bill; which certainly were not of a nature to recommend themselves to unfriendly critics. Where they were precise they were clumsy, and alarming where they were indefinite. The problem of Federal finance was, indeed, insoluble unless the debts and railways had been taken over—without experience of the new conditions, which would arise after the adoption of Intercolonial Free-trade. The clauses in the Bill, therefore, were only makeshifts, and left much to the good sense of the Federal Parliament, which Federalists were prepared to trust. Fortunately, although the statisticians and financial experts in every colony condemned these proposals, their unanimity was the less terrifying because each foretold the exaltation of the other colonies upon the ruin of his own, and no two were

agreed upon the causes of the coming disaster or the methods of escape!

The controversy became thus largely one of arithmetic. The Federalists, fixing their attention upon the "new" expense of Federation, i.e., upon the cost of the services and departments which Federation would call into existence, urged that the price of Union would not be more than 2s. 6d. per head, "about a shilling less than it costs to register a dog," an estimate which, it may be remarked, was not exceeded until the year 1910. The "Antis," on the other hand, after making several estimates, which varied with the audacity of the calculator, finally settled upon 22s. 6d. per head as the increase of taxation due to Federation, arriving at this sum by taking into account the expected increase in the tariff and omitting to deduct the cost of such transferred services as the Post Office, Customs or Defence. This was the figure adopted finally by Mr. Reid in his campaign against the Bill, until the result of the General Election convinced him that the statisticians were in error, and that, for the sake of Union, New South Wales could accept safely the financial proposals, which, as Chairman of the Financial Committee, he had himself proposed at the Convention, and denounced in New South Wales a few weeks later as "intolerable"!

Controversial arithmetic, however, was not the only weapon of the "Antis" who made their strongest appeal to local prejudice. The position of New South Wales was such that, from the extent and variety of her resources, of all the colonies she could afford best to stand alone. Her people believed in Freetrade, and Federation meant a certain raising of the tariff, while it was not perceived that an increase of Custom duties was inevitable in any event, when the revenue from loans and the sale of public lands came to an end. By ignoring the future and looking only to the present circumstances of the colony it was easy for the "Antis" to draw misleading comparisons between the financial condition of New South Wales and that of the other colonies. In no colony was it easier for ignorance to arouse local Patriotism or malice to excite provincial jealousies. Speakers and writers exhausted themselves in lamentations over "the sacrifices" which were demanded of the Mother Colony, and in denunciation of her avaricious neighbors. The Attorney-General, Mr. Want, described his fellow Australians across the Murray as "wolves" and "thieves." Mr. Reid compared them more elaborately to "spielers," who, were working the "confidence trick" upon the unsuspecting innocence of New South Wales. The press organ of the "Antis," the **Daily Telegraph**, wrote in its leading articles that the Victorians were "only united by the common instinct of loot in the desire to plunder New South Wales." So true is it that quarrels between kinsmen are always the most bitter. The **Daily Telegraph** indeed, under the direction of Mr. L. J. Brient, fought the

battle of provincialism with a vigor and ability without a parallel in the history of Australian journalism. Its Proprietors exhausted the resources of the printer's art in pictorial and literary descriptions of the unsuspected risks of Union, and despatched on the eve of the poll to every elector in the colony—in those days newspapers went free through the post—a terrifying supplement, containing a collection of these awful prognostications, which so worked upon the fears of country voters, whom the Federalists could not reach, that outside of Sydney and the suburbs the Bill failed to obtain a majority.

The campaign upon the Federal side was conducted with equal zeal, if with less acerbity. The leaders of the movement, whose position assured a report of their utterances, spoke in almost every town in the Colony; while the solid propaganda work was done by the Federal Leagues which had been formed in every electorate. Australia owes much to the self-sacrifice of hundreds of young men, who, as members of these Leagues, without reward or publicity, devoted time and energy to developing the spirit of Australian patriotism.

## **"YES—NO."**

AFTER his return to Sydney, when the Convention was over, Mr. Reid preserved a studied reticence about the Bill, which was the more marked because he was not usually uncommunicative, and all the other delegates, except Mr. Lyne, who was waiting for Mr. Reid had defined their attitude in press interviews. At length Mr. Barton, who knew no more than anyone else of the reasons for Mr. Reid's silence, but believed that he had promised to support the Bill, determined to wait no longer for his lead; and summoned a meeting in the Town Hall on March 24, 1898 at which he gave an account of his stewardship, a dignified, powerful and lucid exposition of the clauses of the Bill, and an exposition of the misapprehensions of its opponents, trenchantly but without bitterness or partisanship. The speech was a worthy opening of the great campaign.

Mr. Reid followed on March 28th, with a meeting in the same place. Still unconscious of his intentions, all the leading Federalists took seats upon his platform, and the great hall was packed with an expectant and enthusiastic crowd. It was remembered afterward that, before the meeting opened, Reid showed signs of nervousness, probably for the first time in his life. The speech is remarkable not only because the dramatic inconsequences of its conclusion added the word "Yes—No" to the public political vocabulary of the English language, but because of its revelation of the incapacity even of the ablest of the anti-Federalists to "rise to the

height of a great argument." The inspiration of the Federalists was a passionate faith in Union and an intense patriotism which lifted them above themselves and carried conviction to their hearer. It is conceivable that the supporters of "State rights" should have glowed with an equally disinterested fervor in resisting what they deemed to be attacks upon their cherished liberties; but it is certain that their favorite arguments were calculations of self-interest and an assumption of bad faith in the citizens of the other colonies. Mr. Reid's speech—which cannot be analysed in the space at my disposal—was an unsparing condemnation of every clause in the Bill to which objections had been raised, and a half-hearted approbation of the few others about which there was no difference of opinion. Nevertheless he concluded with a dramatic declaration that, in spite of all his criticisms and objections, he personally could not be "a deserter to the cause," and would vote for the Bill himself, although he would not recommend anyone to follow his example. This speaking against the Bill and voting in its favor gave rise to the term "Yes—No," which hereafter became attached irrevocably to Mr. Reid.

It cannot be difficult, even at this distance of time, to picture the effect of such a speech upon the minds of men, on either side, already tense for the struggle! The Federalists saw only that, under the specious guise of judicial fairness, Mr. Reid had marshalled nearly every argument which the opponents of the Bill had urged in favor of its rejection; and that the measure was damned more effectively by his faint praise than by the most acute criticism! The Antis, on the other hand, while welcoming the speech, asked with amazement: "How it was possible for the Premier of the Colony to vote in favor of a Bill which his own arguments had torn to ribbons, damned beyond redemption, and shown to be rotten and unfair?"<sup>(1)</sup> The puzzled public felt inclined to accept the cruel suggestion of the **Daily Telegraph** that Mr. Reid had taken two perorations with him to the meeting, intending to use either as events suggested, and that, carried away by the temporary enthusiasm of his audience, he had spoken the wrong one by mistake! His action, as one exasperated "Anti" wrote in the pungent paper war which followed was like the juryman who should announce to his fellows after their retirement: "Convention Bill is a sad rascal, and obviously guilty. But, as one of your number, I shall vote for his acquittal!"

Three days later (March 31) Mr. Want resigned the position in the Ministry in order that he "might have perfect freedom of action in opposing the Bill"<sup>(2)</sup> ; and Mr. Reid became Attorney-General as well as Treasurer. This arrangement suggested the existence of an understanding between the ex-Minister and his chief, which was far from reassuring to the Federalists!

After the Bill had failed to pass by the statutory majority, Mr. Want resumed his old place in the Cabinet.

Mr. Reid spoke again twice upon the Bill—at Goulburn, on May 12, and at Newcastle, on May 26—but except on these occasions held aloof from the campaign. Each of these speeches is a crescendo of condemnation. The criticisms became more unsparing, and the merits less conspicuous; so the wonder grew that he could vote for such measure! The arguments in each were the same that: "equal representation had destroyed majority rule"; that the settlement of the River question was "not a broad recognition of the rights of New South Wales"; that the financial clauses imposed "great sacrifices" upon New South Wales; that the Commonwealth would be extravagant, and that a "limit should be placed upon its expenditure"; that the abstention of Queensland "made the position of New South Wales so much worse"; that "if he had not been so deeply committed to the Federal movement" he would have brought it to an end; that the Braddon clause was "an abominable blot upon the Bill"; that the smaller colonies would "swamp New South Wales"; and there would be "a general scramble that would lead to log-rolling," and "a combination of the smaller States to get better terms out of the larger ones"; that the Bill was so bad that he himself had often felt "he would like to have left the Convention."

Nevertheless, he would not advise that the Bill should be rejected!

### **The Third of June**

THE fateful third of June broke dull and overcast, threatening the rain, for which the "Antis" hoped, because it would reduce the poll;<sup>(3)</sup> but before eleven o'clock the sun had broken through the clouds—an omen of success. All that was possible to win the necessary 80,000 votes had been done already by Mr. Barton and his friends, although few of us hoped for success. Therefore it was rather as a relief to nervous tension than from any need to stir enthusiasm that the day was spent in driving round the polling booths. At seven o'clock we were to meet at the Empire Hotel where some seventy of the more active workers in the campaign dined together in a room facing the office of **The Sydney Morning Herald**, outside of which the results of the poll were displayed as they arrived. Before half-past seven the city and suburban returns showed 52,000 in favor of and 51,000 against the Bill. Those who feared that a small poll in Sydney would prevent the 80,000 began to gain heart. Suddenly the totals jumped to 59,000 For and 58,000 Against; and when Mr. Barton rose to respond to the toast of his health the board showed the Federalists to be 64,000 and 1100 ahead. Speeches were also made by Messrs. O'Connor, Wise, Walker

and See. The note of all as the same warning against discouragement in the event of a defeat and a determination, whatever the result, to sink all party difference, until Union was accomplished.

Suddenly a roar, as of a multitude drawing breath together, rose from the streets below and bursts of hysterical cheering drowned the speaker's voice. Someone at the window shouted 80,284; and for twenty golden minutes we believed that Union had been won. Emotion was too tense for speech. Men wept silently for joy.

When at length Mr. Barton appeared at the window, the dense crowd, which filled Hunter-street as far as Castlereagh-street and stretched along Pitt-street for 200 yards, burst into fresh enthusiasm and demanded speeches. In succession Mr. Barton, Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Wise spoke some broken sentences of gratitude and pride.

We had hardly retaken our seats, listening to Mr. Barton's final words, when Mr. Samuel Cook—the aloof and imperturbable manager of the **Sydney Morning Herald**—entered the room, and pressed towards the chairman with trouble and anxiety upon his face. Everyone knew, even before Mr. Barton could announce the fatal news, that some error had been made and that the 80,000 limit had not been reached.<sup>(4)</sup>

The disappointment was crushing; but it could not cancel the experience through which we had just lived. The thrill of exultation and pride in the birth of a new nation, and the sense of sudden gain in political stature, which thousands experienced in those happy but mistaken moments had given a foretaste of what Federation when it came would mean, and was the impulse which carried us forward to the final victory. Yet the emotion was not one of partisan triumph, but the sense that a stage in our national growth had been reached and passed.

The erroneous figures posted by the **Sydney Morning Herald** were copied on the board of the Hotel Australia where Mr. Reid was watching the results. On reading them he left the hotel without a word to anyone; and was discovered later, after much searching, by a reporter of the **Daily Telegraph** asleep in a box at Theatre Royal! On learning the result, he joined the leaders of the Anti-Bill party in a public demonstration outside the office of that newspaper and, after a dramatic reconciliation with Mr. Want in sight of the crowd below, he offered his congratulations to N.S.W. for rejecting his advice to vote for the Bill! Mr. Want's speech on this occasion was characteristic. Going further than Mr. Reid he looked to the future. "You have been told", he said, "by those people who support this Bill that you cannot have another Convention; but I want you to watch these gentlemen. I say again watch them. The very men who are now telling you there cannot be another Convention will be among the first to

start out and boom another Bill. You will find that these men who have been booming this fraud and sham will be in the front ranks of those who will be starting to-morrow to try and run another monkey show."

A week later Mr. Reid restored Mr. Want to the office of Attorney-General, which he had kept open for him since his resignation.

(1) Extract from interview with Mr. Want.

(2) The correspondence between Mr. Want and Mr. Reid is Published in the **Daily Telegraph** of April 5. Reference should be made also to an interview with Mr want, which appeared in the same paper on April 4.

(3) By an arrangement between the Premiers came to at the instance of Mr. Reid in 1895, each Colony had passed Enabling Acts to constitute an elective Federal Convention to frame a Constitution, and providing that the Bill so framed should be submitted to a popular vote for acceptance or rejection. Apologists for Mr. Reid have said that no definite agreement was made as to the minimum number of affirmative votes which should be deemed sufficient to carry the Bill. The first Enabling Act which was passed by N.S.W. fixed the minimum at 50,000 and the other Colonies adopted the same minimum proportionally to their respective populations. In 1908 the provincialists in the N.S.W. Parliament introduced a Bill requiring an absolute majority of all electors on the rolls of affirmative voters. As this would have required an affirmative vote of 139,000 out of a total of 278,000 it was clearly unattainable. Mr. Reid, in committee, suggested that the minimum should be raised to 80,000, which was agreed to Mr. Reid then voted against the third reading of the Bill. Federalists condemned his action as a breach of faith with the other Colonies. It was described by the **Sydney Morning Herald** in a leading article as "a loading of the dice against Union."

"Antis," or "Anti-Billites," was the name given to the opponents of the Bill.

(4) It turned out that some of the larger returns had been duplicated.

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## **[Part 4: November 1912]**

**Lone Hand** November 1, 1912

## June 3 to the General Election

DURING the lull which followed the excitement of the Referendum, both parties were manoeuvring for position. The policy of the Federalists was to sit still<sup>(1)</sup>. They had a majority and no official responsibility. Of what use for men to propound a policy that Mr. Reid might both condemn and cap?

Mr. Reid, as Premier, was in a more difficult position. True, he had voted with the majority in favor of the Bill, but, after the vote, he had praised the "wisdom" of the people in rejecting it, thus applauding them for following, not his example, but his exhortations. A general election, too, was imminent, and his party was divided in opinion. A few of the more influential members (i.e., Bruce Smith, McMillan, Pulsford and Walker) were whole-hearted Federalists, but the majority still put Free-trade before Union. The Labor party also, on whose support Mr. Reid had relied for five years, was unfavorable at this time to any Federal Union which recognised the equality of the Federating States.

The situation, however, did not permit of inaction, because the Act, under which the Referendum had been taken, had expired, so that unless the expressed wish of Australia was to be thwarted, the Federal movement had to start afresh.

In this situation, when circumstances had, as it were, proclaimed an armistice, many plain citizens inquired—and a suspicion lingers even now that the implied reproach was justified—"Why should not Mr. Barton and Mr. Reid work together for their common end?"

The **Daily Telegraph**, perhaps not quite disinterestedly, formulated this opinion later (June 28), in a striking leader, headed "Scuffling on the Steps of the Temple" (a reminiscence of Burke's phrase, which Mr. Barton had used with such effect in his controversy with Mr. Wise in 1893). "It would seem that Mr. Barton is afraid of being superseded in the Federal leadership by Mr. Reid, that Mr. Reid is afraid of his status as Premier being over-shadowed by Mr. Barton's Federal supremacy, and Mr. Lyne afraid of his leadership being extinguished by either or both." But to argue thus was to ignore facts. Rightly or wrongly—and this is the key to the political history of the time—Federalists had such an ineradicable mistrust of Mr. Reid, that, even had he wished it, co-operation between himself and Mr. Barton was impossible. This is no place for a dispassionate discussion of Mr. Reid's conduct—that would be to write the history of the colony since 1889—and it may be the verdict of history that, if patriotism had prevailed over personal considerations, there would have been no contest

about leadership. But, at the time, this mistrust existed, and could not have been overcome; so that it appeared to Federalists that on the contest as to leadership depended the future of Federation. If Mr. Reid won—it was remote and unknown. If Mr. Barton won, it was immediate and on the lines of the Convention Bill<sup>(2)</sup> .

Nor were Mr. Reid's speeches and actions during the interval between June 3 and the general election calculated to allay these suspicions. His first step, when the result of the voting had been ascertained officially, was to send a Circular Despatch (June 7) to the Premiers of the other colonies, inviting them to a conference in order "to consider certain changes in the Bill to make it more acceptable to New South Wales." The large majorities in favor of the Bill in the other States were ignored, while a reference to New South Wales suggested that the majority of 5000 was non-existent. "The Government sees no prospect of the acceptance in N. S. Wales of the Convention Bill at any stage." No indication was given of the amendments Mr. Reid desired, nor of the procedure by which they might be made; and from the unconciliatory tone of the Despatch one can hardly avoid the suspicion, which the **Sydney Morning Herald** expressed without reserve. The Premiers showed in their replies that this was their view also. Mr. Kingston answered first (June 8) with characteristic directness.

"Hitherto we have most loyally co-operated with you, despite discouraging alterations in the Hobart agreement and of the Federal Enabling Act, to which alterations we were no part; but we must definitely decline to participate in an attempt to reject the Constitution, which has been accepted by the direct votes of the majorities of the people of all the Federal States, and to substitute another more favorable to one State, and in respect to which it is not even suggested that the people shall be afforded an opportunity of voting. (June 8.)

Sir Edward Braddon's reply for Tasmania was equally uncompromising. "Holding that the Premiers have neither the right nor the power to amend the Constitution passed by the people at the Referendum in any way, I necessarily resent most strongly the proposal to alter the Bill in matters of substance."

Sir George Turner's answer was more conciliatory in form, although, perhaps, of all the answers, it was the most embarrassing. He simply inquired what amendments Mr. Reid proposed to make! He received no reply! Mr. Byrnes—whose early death was a calamity—having seen copies of these answers—replied on behalf of Queensland, that "a Conference would be sheer waste of time when the other Premiers did not admit the necessity of making alterations in substance in the Convention Bill."

On receipt of these replies Mr. Reid fulfilled an engagement to speak in

the South Coast district, which had been postponed during the pendency of the negotiations. During this tour and later, in Parliament, Mr. Reid, insisting upon his claim to be a true Federalist, re-affirmed his determination to obtain amendments; and accompanied his demand for a Conference with studied insults to the other Premiers and truculent declarations that discussion would be fruitless unless things went all one way. "I am not surprised," he said at Milton (June 11) "that they [the other colonies] voted for the Bill. They have never had such a good thing offered them in all their history. If these Premiers think it will be well to wait and see whether the coming N. S. Wales elections will return a number of members who will put that Bill through in its present shape, I do not see that anyone can blame them for it, because you see they got so very near it. When they get near a good thing it is terribly cruel, you know, if you do not give it them."

For his part, "now that he was relieved from giving the Bill a show" (he had explained earlier in his speech that he voted for the Bill "in order to give it a chance, because if he had voted against it the whole cause of Federation would have been wrecked") the other Premiers would find that he would "insist upon substantial alterations, and was just the same old George Houston Reid again, who would be just as frank, just as blunt as anyone else."

"If these were the sentiments of a true Federalist, the language was extremely infelicitous, while their repetition at Moruya next day precluded the excuse of hasty utterance. Nor could they be explained as a mere error of judgment, arising out of a misunderstanding of the situation. For no one had shown a clearer appreciation of the practical necessities of the case than Mr. Reid himself, when he described, in his first speech at the Adelaide Convention, the spirit in which the problems of Federation ought to be approached and dealt with.

When we deal with the broad constitutional principles which are to be placed in the Federal Constitution we must absolutely lay aside any thought of our local politics, or our varying degrees of development, the numbers of our population or the extent of our influence. We must absolutely forget our boundaries, bringing a common judgment and conscience to bear upon these matters, because what is expected of us is not that we shall make a good bargain, but that we shall bring into existence a system of government which will prove equal to the varying conditions of the future, whether of adversity or prosperity, of peace or war. I bring my own mind into this matter absolutely upon these lines. (March 30, 1897.)

It was not until after the General Election had destroyed his majority that Mr. Reid appeared to Federalists to "bring his mind into the subject on these lines." Up to the hour of his defeat he seemed to be still balancing

between two opposites, as a Federalist talking of a Conference as a Provincialist denouncing the rapacity of his invited guests and stirring up ill will by appeals to prejudice. That course (so the motive of it was interpreted by his opponents at the time) might enable Mr. Reid to control the Federal movement in any eventuality, but it did not incline men, to whom Federation was the supreme object of their lives, to ally themselves with one who apparently regarded it as a subordinate issue of local politics. The attitude of the Federalists was described very accurately at the time in a leader in the **Sydney Morning Herald** (June 27):-

Two conditions are absolutely essential to the success of a Conference. One is that the work should be in the hands not of the enemies of Union but of its friends. The aim is that those to whom it is confided should have the confidence of true Federalists, not only in this colony, but in the other colonies also. How far these conditions are met by the party led by Mr. Barton, Mr. O'Connor, Mr. Wise, and how far by that led by Mr. Reid, Mr. Want, and an outside organisation led by Sir George Dibbs, will be one of the questions submitted to the people for decision at the General Election.

Mr. Reid's actions during this interval were as ambiguous as his speeches. None was more significant to Federalists than his reconciliation with Mr. Want, which took place on June 16 at a banquet given to Mr. Reid by his constituents.

Since Sir John Robertson, whose political son he was, there has been no more attractive figure in the politics of New South Wales than Mr. J. E. Want, K.C. Not educated in the book sense of the word, he had greater natural ability than any man I have met. Forceful, bluff, acute, he read men instantly; and, acquainted with all sides of life he was popular, yet always himself, in every circle. Loyal to his friends, he was a good hater, so that personal predilections often swayed his weak political convictions. His hostility to Federation was consistent and undisguised. He was frankly, and by instinct, the leader of the "Geebungs," whose belief in the predominance of Sydney was the very core of his political being.

Mr. Want had been opposed consistently to any form of Federal Union. "I would sooner," he said in the Legislative Assembly in 1891, "see almost anything than see the hydra-headed monster called Federation basking in all its constitutional beastliness in this bright and sunny land. I am in absolute opposition to any question of Federation at all without regard to what the Bill may contain." From this position he never wavered. "I am" (he said in the Legislative Council on July 21, 1897) "an anti-Federalist pure and simple. I am the recognised opponent of Federation. I might almost be called the arch-destroying angel of Federation." True to these convictions he had resigned his office of Attorney-General in Mr.

Reid's Ministry in May 1898, in order that he might have greater freedom to attack the Bill, for which his Chief was voting. And of all the speakers during the Referendum Campaign none had been so violent in attacks upon the other colonies, who were dubbed by him on various occasions as "thieves" and "wolves." Even after June 3 he had protested against any attempt to revive Federation, and had declared a week later that there ought to be no Federation with Tasmania or Western Australia. Yet, on June 17, not having modified any of these views, Mr. Want resumed his office as Attorney-General in Mr. Reid's Federal Ministry. Even the **Daily Telegraph**, knowing as all men knew, the strength of Mr. Want's character, felt constrained to say that the Ministry had rejoined Mr. Want, not Mr. Want the Ministry. So that Federalists may be excused for having seen more significance in this action than in the professions of the Milton speech.

Thus Federalists and Reidites drew wider apart, and the opening of Parliament only gave an opportunity to emphasise the divergence. After a session of three weeks, Parliament was dissolved, and the great contest began which was to decide the fate of Federation. The drama was now day by day, through much confusion and bewilderment, approaching its climax.

Mr. Barton, who conducted the campaign with the latent energy of an indolent man, elected to oppose Mr. Reid in the King Division. Like Mr. Reid he was prepared to seek amendments in the Convention Bill; but, while the former would "demand" and "insist," Mr. Barton would "negotiate" with the other colonies without whose concurrence no progress could be made. He made his position clear in an interview (June 20), which contrasts the two positions: "The door is not closed for negotiations; provided," he added, "that they were not, upon the stand-and-deliver terms of Claude Duval, but upon terms to which all the colonies can consent with honor." To him: "The practical questions of the hour were (1) Whether we should Federate as early as possible upon the most reasonable terms to be obtained; (2) Whether we should leave the achievement of this great result to hands stained with repudiation and double-dealing, as well as to an alliance between a professed Federalist [Mr. Reid] and one who disputed with him the ancient honor of being the 'arch-enemy' of Federation [Mr. Want]; or (3) Whether we should leave the conduct of our national movement in the hands of those whose earnestness and sincerity are beyond doubt."

Mr. Reid, however, was too shrewd a tactician to let the battle turn upon the rival policies of Mr. Barton and himself regarding Federation. Skilfully recognising that party cries retain their influence long after they have lost

their significance, he charged Mr. Barton and his friends with using their Federal sentiments as a disguise for an assault upon Freetrade; and, by this device, seconded ably by the **Daily Telegraph**, he persuaded many voters that Mr. Barton's accession to power would mean the dropping of Federation and the imposition of a local Protective tariff. Nevertheless, the elections showed a great increase of Federal strength; and Mr. Reid's majority fell from thirty-seven to two, and three of his Ministers lost their seats. Mr. Reid accepted the new situation with his usual promptitude, and immediately professed his willingness to "negotiate" with the other colonies without insisting upon an irreducible minimum in his demands. He also made a further concession to the Federal party by agreeing that at the next submission of the Constitution to a mass vote the statutory minimum should be abolished and an actual majority prevail. Nor did he propose to alter the Bounty clauses, and he declared that "for the sake of Union he was prepared to accept the financial system embodied in the Bill." Thus the Federalists, although defeated at the polls, had carried their way in four essential points—negotiations were to be opened with the other colonies; the Bounty bogey had been laid for ever; the financial clauses were admitted to be the best which were procurable at the time; and, most important of all, no legislative trick would stultify the votes of the majority of the people at the next Referendum.

Mr. Reid met the other Premiers at Melbourne on January 31, 1899, and proved most conciliatory. He agreed to adopt the financial clauses; accepted the retention of the Braddon clause for ten years; and agreed that the first Parliament should meet in Melbourne on consideration that the capital should be fixed in New South Wales, but at a distance of not less than 100 miles from Sydney. The only important alteration in the Bill was the substitution of a provision requiring that at the joint sitting of the two Houses an absolute majority of members should prevail instead of the three-fifths majority which Mr. Reid had advocated previously. This action, while it infuriated the opponents of Federation, did not materially improve Mr. Reid's position with the Federal Party. It was considered, however, safer to keep him in office until the Bill was carried, and until the second Referendum the Federalists voted on his side. Indeed, the danger from the local Parliament had passed. The tide of Federal feeling was setting irresistibly against the politicians, because the movement itself had taken charge. The people had become Federalists even without knowing why. Those to whose labors this change of feeling was due naturally did not care to scrutinise too closely the nature of the proposed alterations in the old Bill or the conduct which made these necessary. It was enough for them that these promoted agreement; and, if also they furnished an excuse

for a departure from untenable positions, no friend of Union would deprecate them upon that account.

(1) It is easy to see now that the failure to attain the statutory minimum was not altogether disadvantageous to the Federal cause. Federation would have been the issue of the General Election in any event, because the Bill must have gone back to Parliament, in order to be forwarded to London for Imperial confirmation. Had the 80,000 votes been reached, disguised enemies of Union might have won seats by professing a vague respect for the will of the majority, who, after their election, would have found a hundred plausible reasons for delaying the passage of the Bill. As matters stood, there was a plain issue in the repeal of the Amending Enabling Act, which no candidate could shirk.

(2) Neither calculation proved correct. Mr. Reid was returned with so small and discordant a majority that the Federalist group held the balance of votes, which they cast for Mr. Reid so long as Federation was in danger, and used to put him out directly it was safe.

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