AUSTRALASIAN FEDERATION LEAGUE.

THE INAUGURAL MEETING.

An Enthusiastic Assemblage.

[From the South Australian Register, August 2, 1895.]

The Australasian Federation League of South Australia held its inaugural meeting in the Town Hall on Thursday, August 1, and a successful gathering is believed to have taken place. The accommodation on the main floor of the hall was fully taxed, the assemblage including, besides a large number of ladies, His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, the Chief Secretary, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, the Commissioner of Public Works, and numerous members of the Legislature. Mr. J. H. Symon, Q.C., President of the League, occupied the chair. The following gentlemen were on the platform:—Vice-Presidents, Sir R. C. Baker (President of the Legislative Council), Sir J. W. Downer, Q.O., M.P., Messrs. E. H. Bakewell, and C. Willcox; the President of the Australian Natives’ Association (Mr. J. T. Fitch, jun.), the President of the Chamber of Manufacturers (Mr. L. Grayson), the President of the Federated Employers’ Council (Mr. A. L. Harrold), the President of the National Defence League (Hon. J. J. Duncan, M.L.C), the President of the Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society (Mr. W. G. Gilbert, M.P.); members of the General Council, Rev. Dr. Jeffers, Councillor Bruce, Hon. D. M. Charleston, M.L.C, Mr. G. Ash, M.P.; Messrs. T. Soherk, M.P., and W. F. Stock; the Executive Committee, Messrs. W. J. Willcox, the Hon. Secretary of the Bimetallic League.}

Apologies for absence were received from Sir John Madden, President Victorian League, the Hon. Alfred Deakin, of Victoria, Mr. Justice Bundey (a Vice-President), Mr. Justice Bouaout, the Hons. C. C. Kingston (Premier), F. W. Holder (Treasurer), and Dr. Cookburn (Minister of Education), Sir Henry Ayers, Sir Thomas Elder, the Mayor of Adelaide, the President of the Trades and Labour Council, and Mayors of suburban towns.

The proceedings were begun by Mr. T. H. Jones, Mus. Bac., playing on the organ "The Song of Australia," "The watch on the Rhine," and "Rule Britannia." The CHAIRMAN said it was a happy inspiration on the part of the sub-committee to unite in one grand organ peal the three patriotic songs. The burst of music was at once the symbol and expression of the union, should he say rather the fusion of the people of this great continent? The League desired to fix the seal of completeness and perfection on that fusion. At the same time they desired that "Rule Britannia" should still be to Australians what it was to the dweller within the shadow of St. Paul's. (Applause.) It quickened the pulse, set the blood, and reminded us of the noble lineage and the illustrious descent to which we lay claim. We held as a priceless heritage the traditions and glory of our race—a heritage longed for the time when with one voice from end to end of this great continent we should be able to apply the sentiment which stirred their hearts. No more worthy object could assemble the citizens of any free country. (Hear, hear.) They were present to give the baptism of a successful issue. They of the League had put on their armour, and they did not intend to take it off until the good fight had been fought and the prize had been achieved. (Applause.)

But what was the prize? It was the noblest and the prize had been achieved. (Applause.) They did not prophesy the successful issue. They did not prophesy the great question was on the high road to a real advance. It was the first meeting of the kind that had ever been held in South Australia. It was to introduce a League established to promote this great end. (Applause.)

The word inaugurate was not a pleasant one. It was one of the least harmonious in the language. It came from the old Romans, with their College of augurs—soothsayers—who were said to be able to forecast future events. If therefore there was some element of divination in that which was inaugural then the meeting was a realized prophecy of succor. (Cheers.) They did not prophesy until they knew, and the did know that this great question was on the high road to a successful issue. They of the League had put on their armour, and they did not intend to take it off until the good fight had been fought and the prize had been achieved. (Applause.) But what was the prize? It was the noblest that had ever engaged the enterprise or the energy, or fired the patriotic ambition of Australians; it was, in one word, the making of a nation. It was that the whole of this vast continent—a nation, the whole of the Anglo-Saxon people of Australasia—should become one great and solid confederation, without a Custom House inside, throughout the length and breadth of its territory, and with freedom everywhere, equality everywhere, law and order everywhere, and peace everywhere. (Applause.) It was a perpetual League of
friendship and of power, which should bind together the scattered fragments of Australasia and present a homogenous whole to the astonished gaze—not only of Christendom, but of heathendom. The people of Asia should see it and wonder; the Caucasian should see it and rejoice. It would be as though a new planet swims within their ken. Abraham Lincoln—one of the greatest Presidents of the greatest Confederation the world had overseen—said at the dedication of the National Cemetry at Gettysburg these words—"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent—a new nation, conceived in liberty and educated to the proposition that all men are created equal." The League said to every fellow-citizen, not only in this colony, but in every colony in the group, every fellow-citizen under the Southern Cross—"Go and do likewise." Establish the Commonwealth of Australasia, and they would fill a space in the eye of civilization which it had not yet entered into the heart of man to conceive. Why was it that out of one common origin, sprung from that "happy breed of men" that little world, that "precious stone set in the silver sea," why was it that, speaking the same language, having the same love of liberty and the same hatred of oppression, alike devoted to the cardinal principles of free government, who was it that, and one people, and one industrial class, and under one flag? If we were one nation in so many essentials why were we not one nation politically? Surely we had acres enough? The Emperors of Germany and Austria, the King of Italy, and the President of the French Republic were mere Governors of provinces compared with the dominion over which the democracy of United Australia should rule. (Applause.) In population we numbered more than the United States when they federated, and as many or more than Canada when she federated. The volume of our trade and commerce had outgrown our divisions, and aspired to be the commerce of a great nation, and we had got into debt with the lordly audacity of half a dozen Emperors. (Laughter.) Why, then, this unnatural—he had almost said fratricidal condition of things which prevailed? Was it for that common weal to maintain for ever the unfortunate inter-colonial jealousies and rivalries of the past? So long as we were apart there must be a continual war of rivalry. It could not be otherwise. The struggle for existence between nations was governed by the cardinal principles of free government; it was comparatively slight, but with Asia it was paramount; and in the consideration of our foreign policy—if we had any—we must not treat with contempt these Powers who were so near to us and were so strong; but we must deal with them as Great Powers, and put ourselves in an equally great and strong position. (Applause.) Federate now, and we might drive to do so badly and in haste not federate well and at our leisure soon we might we driven to do so badly and in haste. Federation in a hurry for its remedies facilitated. (Hear, hear.) Law would be simplified, wealth instead of being hoarded up would be tempted to flow in vivifying streams. What might that not mean to this State, which we called the "precious stone set in the silver sea," why was it that, speaking the same language, hoarded up would be tempted to flow in the heart of man to conceive. Why was it that, speaking the same language, wealth instead of being hoarded up would be tempted to flow in the heart of man to conceive. Why was it that, speaking the same language, wealth instead of being hoarded up would be tempted to flow in the heart of man to conceive. Why was it that, speaking the same language, wealth instead of being hoarded up would be tempted to flow in the heart of man to conceive. Why was it that, speaking the same language, wealth instead of being hoarded up would be tempted to flow in the heart of man to conceive. Why was it that, speaking the same language, wealth instead of being hoarded up would be tempted to flow in the heart of man to conceive. Why was it that, speaking the same language, wealth instead of being hoarded up would be tempted to flow in the heart of man to conceive. Why was it that, speaking the same language, wealth instead of being hoarded up would be tempted to flow in the heart of man to conceive. 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Why was it that, speaking the same language, wealth instead of being hoarding...
thundering at our gates, and we would federate when perhaps it might be too late. Sometimes we forgot how long the subject of federation had been in the minds of the statesmen of these colonies in years gone by, and sometimes we did them less than justice in the estimation in which we held these great men. In 1857, immediately after the establishment of Victoria into a separate colony, a committee sat in that colony to consider the whole of these questions which were now moving Australasia, and in their report they declared that federation was an essential element in national prosperity, and the absence of it invited aggression from foreign enemies. The conclusions arrived at then were now being brought home to us by events which were happening in the East with a force and conclusiveness which we should be mad to resist. (Cheers.) In this great work we were not groping in the dark. We were not going to make any rash experiments in union without examples of success. We had sound principles and tried precedents to guide us. We had beacons of experience to warn us off from what was unsafe. The United Kingdom was long disunited. There was internal strife, constant warfare without union. Where would have been the bewildering prosperity of Great Britain if this state of things had continued? One and potent she has achieved, a marvellous measure heaped up and running over, of prosperity, opulence, and power. If separated now, with each kingdom torn with contention and discontent, could any one say her power would be the same? The most ardent Home Ruler professed to abhor separation. Here we had Home Rule and desired to superadd union. Australians, he believed, desired to speed the consummation. What a noble picture it would be when that consummation was reached—Great Britain, the centre of civilization, in the North; the Greater Britain, in its highest and best sense, the sun of civilization in the South. Did they want for examples? They had the example of that glorious federation of the United States—a New England indeed, with her seventy millions of people. They had Canada, with her astounding record of internal advancement. He did not wonder that that distinguished statesman, Sir George Grey, had dreamt of a vast confederation of all the English-speaking races. (Cheers.) Turning to foreign countries they found examples of the benefits of union in Germany—a gigantic confederation of 23 States and Italy. The foundations in Germany and Italy were set in blood; ours would be securely established in peace and goodwill. Mr. Playford, at the Conference of 1890, said that one great drawback to federation was that it was too unsafe, in the hands of politicians. He said, and very truly, that it was a people's question. There was one slight danger, and that was the very unanimity, the absence of controversy, that prevailed, and which was apt to cause a sort of benemolent apathy. The Hobart Conference declared federation to be the great and pressing question of Australian politics, and now what was wanted was action, and to secure it they must make the fate of members and Ministers depend upon their action. The cause then was momentous, the time was ripe, the unanimity was complete, why was it that there appeared to be plenty of motion but no substantial progress? When the destiny of a nation was involved standing still was a crime. The danger was that inaction might mean retrogression. Onward, then, in the path of progress, to the Hobart Conference that barred the way? Why should it? Why should not South Australia take the lead. (Cheers.) He was pleased that the Government had given notice of their intention to introduce the Enabling Bill. Mr. Reid had said that perhaps Parliaments were not the people's friends, but the League was. The Hobart Conference declared federation to be the great and pressing question. There was one slight danger, and the Hobart Conference declared federation to be the great and pressing question of Australian politics, and now what was wanted was action, and to secure it they must make the fate of members and Ministers
Come forth from the valley, come forth from the
of Harrow lately said that England owed her
lusty youth of South Australia. The Headmaster
children, for whom it meant careers, to believe in
influence was immense. They must teach their
for the vindication of public morality. Their
women of South Australia. To them they looked
and maidens, to advance the cause. Its
appealed to the men and women, to young men
a divided country into a great empire? They
Australia—a nation whose corner-stone would be
merged into the perfect national life of United
happy augury it would be if within her reign we
was coeval with the reign of the Queen. What a
federate in the calm of peace. Our provincial life
destiny were no less stirring. They wanted to
federate in calm and peace. (Applause.) There
was something in the pomp of glorious war that
stirred the blood, but the triumphs of peace and
the pageant of a great people marching to its
destiny were no less stirring. They wanted to
federate in the calm of peace. Our national
life was coeval with the reign of the Queen. What a
happy augury it would be if within her reign we
merged into the perfect national life of United
Australia—a nation whose corner-stone would be
perpetual freedom. (Cheers.) Shall we, then, make
a divided country into a great empire? They
appealed to the men and women, to young men
and maidens, to advance the cause. Its
foundations must rest on morality, honour, and
justice. Therefore they especially appealed to the
women of South Australia. To them they looked
for the vindication of public morality. Their
influence was immense. They must teach their
children, for whom it meant careers, to believe in
federation. The destiny was more for our
children than ourselves. They appealed to the
home of South Australia. The Headmaster of
Harrod lately said that England owed her
Empire more to her sports than to her studies.
tried, then, put your shoulders to the wheel—
Come forth from the valley, come forth from
the hill, Come forth from the workshop, the mine, and the
mill.
From pleasure or slumber, from study or play, Come
forth in your myriad to aid us to-day; There's a word to
be spoken, a dead to be done. A truth to be uttered, a
cause to be won. Come forth in your myriad! come
forth every one! Come, youths, in your vigour; come,
men in your prime; Come, age, with experience,
fresh, gather'd from time; Come, workers! you're
welcome; code, thinkers, you must;
Thick as the clouds in the midsummer dust, Or the
waves of the sea gleaming bright in the sun! There's a
truth to be told, and a cause to be won; Come forth in
your myriad, come forth every one.
Men and women of South Australia, con-
ccluded Mr. Symon, we call upon you to
come and help us. We beseech you to help
yourselves, and your children, and your
children's children. Under the banner of high
resolve and lofty patriotism we fear no failure.
At no distant date we shall hear the earthquake
voice of victory—a victory of union over
disunion, a victory of all that is great and
national over all that is petty and
provincial, a victory which shall fulfil our
highest aspirations, and which, under the
blessing of God, who is the God of Peace as
well as the God of Battles, shall open to
us a material future of radiant promise, and
shall at once strengthen the moral fibre
and add to the splendour and glory of our
race. (Great cheering.) He said the committee
had drawn up in the form of a resolution a
sentiment, which they hoped the meeting
would adopt. It was—
That in order to promote the present and future
prosperity of the Australasian Colonies their
federation on a Broad basis of justice and honour is
imperative, that the time is ripe for such a
federation, and that we pledge ourselves to do all in
our power to secure it.
Mrs. T. H. Jones rendered "Home, sweet
home," in a charming manner.
Sit R. C. Baker, speaking to the resolution,
said if he had wished he could not have spoken
the same as of view as the Chairman had
done in such eloquent and burning words. His
endeavour would be to remove some of the
misconceptions which had retarded
the progress of the federation movement.
From the aspect of outside nations federation
was the most complete union that we could
have. From an internal aspect federation
gave the most complete home rule to the
constituent States — (applause) — and that
was one of its greatest excellences. So far as
outside nations were concerned a federation
showed an undivided front, and so far as the
internal States were concerned federation gave
the greatest freedom of action to the people of
individual States. When the people of
Australia thoroughly understood what
federation meant he believed they would
ardently desire it, because it was only
by federal union that we could retain our
present great powers of local self-government.
The first essential of a federal government was
a bicameral system of two Houses of Parlia-
ment—one House being elected to represent
the people as a concrete nationality and the
other House being elected to represent the
State as States. In the National House the
people elected their representatives as if they
belonged to one individual nation. In the
Senate or States House each sovereign State
elected an equal number of representatives as a
State. But really both these Houses were the
people's Houses. It was quite possible and
quite consistent with the fundamental ideas
of the federation that both Houses should be
elected by universal suffrage—one House being
elected by the people of the State by universal
suffrage, or whatever qualification they liked,
and the other House being elected by
the people as a whole as a nationality.
The object of that form of election
of the two Houses was to protect the
interests of the State Governments to provide
that there should not be in time to come a
consolidation. No South Australian would
want this colony to be swamped or over-
whelmed by larger and more populous colo-
nies. It was curious to find that some of
those gentlemen who rejoiced in calling them-
seMs democratic—a blessed word supposed to
sanctify everything it touched—(laughter)—
objected to giving the Senate equal power to
that given to the House of Representatives,
but the fact was the Senate was the democratic House. It represented the State rights and represented the government by the people for the people, while the other House represented the consolidation idea or concentration. The Senate represented decentralisation. (Applause.) The second essential element was a dual citizenship. Each citizen was a citizen as it were of two States—of the federation and of the State. Each citizen of Adelaide was a dual citizen, for he had to obey laws of the State in which he lived as well as the by-laws of the city. That was the germ of the idea, only in the federation it was extended. The third essential element was that there should be a division of powers—certain powers being delegated to the Federal Governments and certain to the State Governments. Each Government, though, having paramount authority to deal with the matters referred to it, and the sharper the line was drawn the less clashing and confusion. The fourth essential element was that the Federal Government must have power to raise its own revenue, must have an executive and a judiciary. These four elements constituted a federal form of government, and it was on these lines that the Sydney Convention Bill was based. He had no sympathy with those who said that they would not federate on the lines of the Sydney Convention. The matters in dispute in that Bill were only matters of detail. While not desiring to underrate the sentimental aspect, we were a practical people, and our pockets were the first consideration in this great question. (Applause.) He enumerated some twenty positive gains from federation. We should gain by intercolonial free trade. We had suffered for a long time in this colony from the evils of federation. We should gain by federation. We should gain by the Sydney Commonwealth Bill, would only pay £9,291 per annum for the privilege of being a State in the federation. The population of this colony was about one-tenth of the whole, and if she paid one-tenth, or about £54,000, of the total paid by the whole of the colonies, this colony would save more than the £54,000 by the consolidation of the public debt. In concluding an address lasting nearly an hour Sir Richard said:—

Write on your doors the saying wise and old,
Be bold, be bold, and everywhere be bold.
Be not too bold, yet better the excess Than the defect, better the more than less.
Better like Hector on the Hold to die Than, like the perfumed Paris, run and by.

They should say with the American statesman—

I march with no party, I march with no flag;
That does not keep step with the Union.

(Cheers.)

Mr. O. Taeuber sang, and was much appreciated.

The motion was carried, the audience rising and giving three cheers for federation.

[ to a common Australian tariff. The Imperial Government carried a scheme in both Houses, but the majorities were such and the arguments against it were such that they dropped it. Taking the population of South Australia in 1890 and the official returns of revenue and expenditure, South Australia, under the Sydney Commonwealth Bill, would only pay £9,291 per annum for the privilege of being a State in the federation. The population of this colony was about one-tenth of the whole, and if she paid one-tenth, or about £54,000, of the total paid by the whole of the colonies, this colony would save more than the £54,000 by the consolidation of the public debt. In concluding an address lasting nearly an hour Sir Richard said:—

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[ to a common Australian tariff. The Imperial Government carried a scheme in both Houses, but the majorities were such and the arguments against it were such that they dropped it. Taking the population of South Australia in 1890 and the official returns of revenue and expenditure, South Australia, under the Sydney Commonwealth Bill, would only pay £9,291 per annum for the privilege of being a State in the federation. The population of this colony was about one-tenth of the whole, and if she paid one-tenth, or about £54,000, of the total paid by the whole of the colonies, this colony would save more than the £54,000 by the consolidation of the public debt. In concluding an address lasting nearly an hour Sir Richard said:—

Write on your doors the saying wise and old,
Be bold, be bold, and everywhere be bold.
Be not too bold, yet better the excess Than the defect, better the more than less.
Better like Hector on the Hold to die Than, like the perfumed Paris, run and by.

They should say with the American statesman—

I march with no party, I march with no flag;
That does not keep step with the Union.

(Cheers.)

Mr. O. Taeuber sang, and was much appreciated.

The motion was carried, the audience rising and giving three cheers for federation.

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