

Register, August 8th, 1911.

MAWSON EXPEDITION.

Deputation to the Premier.

Government Asked for £5,000.

On Monday morning an influential deputation waited upon the Premier (Hon. J. Verran) and asked that the Government should make a donation of £5,000 towards the cost of the Mawson Expedition to the antarctic.

—Money Necessary.—

Mr. Smeaton, M.P., in introducing the deputation, said it was of a unique character. Dr. Mawson was organizing an expedition to the south pole for scientific purposes, and while his explorations and investigations would be of worldwide interest, they would be of special and practical value to Australia and Australians. (Applause). Enthusiasm accomplished much, but money was also very necessary. The deputation thought that the country of which Dr. Mawson was such a distinguished citizen was the country to which they should look for money to carry out the undertaking. Dr. Mawson had received much support in other parts, and the deputation asked that the Government should take its share in the burden. They were sharing in the honour, and should also share in the cost. He understood it was desired that the Government should grant £5,000, and the deputation had confidence in asking for that assistance. (Applause.)

—Vast Antarctic Territory.—

The Chief Justice (Sir Samuel Way) said the deputation was concerned with an object of local as well as of worldwide interest. The expedition would advance science throughout the globe, and particularly benefit the great dominions of Australia and New Zealand. Much attention had been given to the antarctic continent during the past 20 years, and the area had been proved to be greater than that of Europe and Australia put together. It was within nine days' steam of Hobart, and therefore close to our doors. Local interest in the antarctic had become acute through Dr. Scott's recent dash and Sir Ernest Shackleton's expedition, in which latter Dr. Mawson took such a definite and important share. Then there were at present German and Norwegian expeditions, Dr. Scott was renewing his effort, the Japanese too had their eyes on the south pole. Captain Peary (the discoverer of the north pole) was also casting a longing look in the direction of the antarctic. Dr. Mawson, with characteristic magnanimity, set himself aside from agitating his claim for support until Dr. Scott's efforts had been completed for his own expedition. But Dr. Mawson had let the world know that he was anxious that Australia and New Zealand should share in the honour of exploring the south polar regions, and he proposed to devote his attention to that portion of the shore of the Antarctic Ocean from Cape Adare to Gaussberg, a distance of about 1,500 or 2,000 miles. Only once had the foot of man trodden on that strip of country, and that was 70 years ago, when a French explorer was there. The expedition was of great scientific interest, and also of great practical value. It would benefit the meteorology of Australia, as a wireless telegraphy station would be established, and the farmers on the mainland would be thus the better enabled to know whether they were to expect periods of drought or abundant rain. They knew what fertilizers had done for South Australia, and it was possible that great deposits of guano would be found there. The geological conditions of Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand indicated that once those countries were connected by land with the antarctic continent, and possibly some of those present that day would live to see the time when Cornish miners who had gained practical experience on the peninsula and Broken Hill would be searching for the gold and other minerals which it was confidently held by Professor David would be found in the antarctic lands. (Hear, hear.) Sir Ernest Shackleton had traced coal deposits for many miles there, and perhaps the deposits would in time provide the fuel that would be used for the Australian fleet.

—“Set an Example.”—

Dr. Mawson's expedition had received generous support in England and elsewhere, and some of South Australia's own best-known citizens (including Mr. Barr Smith) had given handsome donations. Dr. Mawson had had a most distinguished career at the universities and in other ways, and was the right man to lead such an important expedition. He had all the requisite moral qualities, the priceless possession of youth, and the general courage and qualities for a leader. The value of the expedition had been recognised everywhere. It was estimated that it would cost £40,000, and of that one-half had already been expended. Dr. Mawson estimated that he would need another £20,000 to equip the ship, and he intended to obtain everything that he could in Australia. Professor David's estimate was that £30,000 was yet required. The expedition would extend over two years, and there would be 50 men—25 on the ship and 25 on land. To pinch them for supplies would be a disgrace to Australia. He was sure there was not a man or woman in South Australia but would feel ashamed if the expedition were allowed to go out in any sense meanly equipped, possibly in some way that the lives of the party would be endangered. It was the privilege of the Government of South Australia to set an example to the rest of the States in making a generous contribution. He confidently appealed to the Ministry for assistance, not economical, but generous, so as to ensure the success of the expedition and the wellbeing of those who were going out to reflect fame upon Australia, and win advantages in science and exploration. (Applause.)

—Commercial Support.—

Mr. G. H. Prosser (President of the Chamber of Commerce) said Dr. Mawson was expected to make discoveries which would be of great value to the commercial world, particularly coal and mineral deposits. He understood that it was the intention of the vessel to make a proper survey of that portion of the Southern Ocean which it would visit. In the interest of commerce generally he asked the Premier to favour the request.

—The Spirit of Enterprise.

Professor Henderson (University of Adelaide) said a fact which should carry weight in showing the confidence reposed in the project was that the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science had bestowed £1,000, a third of its total funds, to supporting Dr. Mawson. From historical research he had realized that those peoples who had gone ahead at different times were those who had enough spirit in themselves individually and nationally, to go just a little bit further than other peoples or individuals were prepared to go.

and to take a few more risks in a bold enterprise. The capacity in the British for going far afield for great enterprise was probably the most important consideration in the expansion of their Empire. Australia was a nation in the making, and such an expedition as that of Dr. Mawson to the antarctic would act on the heroic spirit of the people, and their spirit of enterprise, inspiring them to a high pitch of endeavour. They wanted something to stimulate the national mind, and to develop the resources of those parts of the world in which they were specially concerned.

—A Citizen of Adelaide.—

The Acting-Mayor (Ald. Bonython) supported the request on behalf of Adelaide, which was proud to regard Dr. Mawson as one of its citizens.

—Australia's Opportunity.—

Mr. A. W. Piper, K.C. (President of the South Australian section of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia) said that body had warmly endorsed the action of Dr. Mawson, and recommended the undertaking to the people for support. It had pointed out, among other things, that opportunity at present lay at the door of Australia, but might not do so for long. A State like South Australia, which owed so much to the spirit of exploration and adventure for its foundation and progress, would only be following out its duty in helping an expedition which was not going into a remote part of the world, but to a tract of territory which lay almost under the guardianship and at the door of their own continent. If Australia was to be a nation more than in name, the operations of its people must not be circumscribed by their own coastline.

Dr. Verco (President of the Royal Society) and Mr. E. C. Vardon (President of the South Australian Chamber of Manufacturers) also heartily supported the request.

—South Australia's Share of Credit.—

Dr. Mawson, who was cheered on rising, said if a huge new continent had suddenly risen from the Southern Ocean at no greater distance from Australia than one side of the Commonwealth was from another, Australians would be prompt to reconnoitre it. Antarctica was not a new

continent, but it might just as well have come to light yesterday, so little was it known. The part to which they were going was entirely new. It was, however, far too nearly connected with Australia to be allowed to remain a terra incognita to them any longer. He asked the Premier to assist in carrying out his project in the best possible way. It was right that the State to which personally he belonged, and which would get the lion's share of any credit which attached to the expedition, should be to the fore with equipping it. Even £5,000 was not 3d. a head on the population of the State. A substantial donation would first of all stamp the expedition as more South Australian, apart from the fact that he himself belonged to South Australia, and would immediately ensure grants being made by the sister States. The training which four South Australians who would accompany him would receive could surely be regarded as equivalent to £1,000 each to the State when their future worth was considered. Much commercially valuable material would be given to the museums of Australia. (Applause.)

—A Sympathetic Reply.—

The Premier said he had listened to the remarks of the speakers with the closest attention, but he had to be extremely cautious in his reply so as not to commit himself before consulting his colleagues. He appreciated Sir Samuel Way's remarks, and also those of Professor Henderson, and recognised that had it not been for science coming to our aid we would have been in a serious position. The world owed much to science, which would continue to be the revealer of life and those great laws not yet known to mankind. He did not believe there was anything more new in the world now than before, but science was revealing great dormant powers through the work and study of such men as Professor Henderson, Dr. Verco, and Dr. Mawson. He recognised that Dr. Mawson's was a great work, and he had full sympathy with it. (Hear, hear.) There was, indeed, much unknown, which it was their duty to know. Perhaps the land Dr. Mawson was going to explore would also be found to possess boundless producing powers. He was in entire sympathy with the expedition, and the request for help, and considered it a part of South Australia's duty to interest itself in the undertaking. (Hear, hear.) Those alive that day could get through life very well, but their trouble was to provide for those coming afterward. It would be a masterful step if through the expedition to Antarctica their State should become a bigger State, and hundreds of thousands of people should be brought out by this expedition. Some people referred to such things as being fads, but he held faddists were useful sometimes, and on occasions just as necessary as were agitators. Members of the deputation that morning were in a sense agitators. Dr. Mawson felt there was a great country to be explored, and the scientific and other gentlemen present felt the same in supporting him in his undertaking. He would bring their request before Cabinet that afternoon. He wished, however, that the request had been made two or three weeks earlier, before the estimates had been prepared. He would ask the Treasurer to give it most serious consideration and see what he could do to help the expedition. (Applause.)