

**Biographical Sketch.**

**Mr. V. L. SOLOMON, M.P.**



V. L. SOLOMON, Esq., M.P.

MR. VAIBEN LOUIS SOLOMON, M.P., is a son of the late Hon. Judah Moss Solomon, M.L.C., who for many years was a member of the Legislature of this colony, and Mayor of the City of Adelaide from 1869 to 1870. Mr. V. L. Solomon was born in Waymouth Street, Adelaide, in May, 1853, and educated at the late Mr. J. L. Young's Educational Institution in this city, and at the Scotch College, Melbourne. Mr. Solomon spent many years in the Northern Territory, conducted the *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, and was a prominent worker for the advancement of the place, being connected with almost every institution in the chief town of the Northern half of the Province. About eight years ago Mr. Solomon travelled through the colonies lecturing against the immigration of Chinese, and his views on the independence of the Northern Territory, and on labor and other questions, as affecting the Territory, are most pronounced. Mr. Solomon was returned to the Assembly to represent the Northern Territory in 1890, and has represented that district ever since. When a resolution was passed in 1891 in favor of the appointment of a Government Whip, the choice of the Playford Government fell upon Mr. Solomon, and he continued in that office until the Ministry was defeated on a motion of no-confidence moved by Mr. Holder. When the Downer Ministry took office a few months later, Mr. Solomon was again appointed to the position, and he was subsequently asked to join the Government, but he declined. Mr. Solomon has taken a prominent part in all important political questions of the day, and has specially advocated the establishment of the free interchange of colonial products and manufactures.

## AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION.

To the Electors of South Australia.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—In addressing you upon the subject of Australian Federation, I am deeply impressed with the importance of the various questions to be dealt with, and feel that their consideration requires and merits the very closest study.

The brief space at my disposal will not permit more than a passing glance at the history of the Federal movement, and it would, in my opinion, be unwise to waste precious time upon this portion of the subject, or in a review of the Constitutions of America, Canada, and Switzerland, which have been so frequently referred to and quoted. I will therefore be satisfied with giving you merely a condensed outline of the Federation movement, and devote the rest of this address to dealing with the draft bill to constitute the Commonwealth of Australia, which was agreed upon by the Convention held at Sydney in April, 1891, and the most important provisions of that measure. My reason for adopting this course is because I feel satisfied that the draft bill alluded to WILL FORM THE BASIS OF THE TERMS OF FEDERATION, which will be considered at the forthcoming Convention.

The first practical step towards Federation may fairly be considered to have been the Conference held in Melbourne in 1890, when a resolution was agreed to affirming the desirability of a Union under the Crown.

Subsequently in 1891 the National Australian Convention was held at Sydney; South Australia being represented by the Hons. R. C. Baker, J. H. Gordon, J. C. Bray, C. C. Kingston, J. A. Cockburn, and T. Playford, and Sir John Downer. After six weeks most careful consideration, a draft Bill to constitute the Commonwealth of Australia was adopted, and whatever adverse criticism may be levelled at some of the provisions of that measure, everyone must admit that the delegates from our own colony, and their colleagues from the adjoining colonies, deserve our best thanks for the intelligent manner in which the important question was dealt with, the spirit of compromise shown by them, and the kindly and tolerant tone adopted throughout the debates.

The first resolutions submitted to the Convention by Sir Henry Parkes and agreed to, were as follows:—

That in order to establish and secure an enduring foundation for the structure of a Federal Government, the principles embodied in the resolutions following be agreed to:—

- (1) That the powers and privileges and territorial rights of the several existing colonies shall remain intact, except in respect to such surrenders as may be agreed upon as necessary and incidental to the power and authority of the National Federal Government.
- (2) No new state shall be formed by separation from another state, nor shall any state be formed by the junction of two or more states or parts of states, without the consent of the Legislatures of the states concerned, as well as of the Federal Parliament.
- (3) That the trade and intercourse between the Federated colonies, whether by means of land carriage or coastal navigation, shall be absolutely free.
- (4) That the power and authority to impose customs duties and duties of excise upon goods the subject of customs duties, and to offer bounties, shall be exclusively lodged in the Federal Government and Parliament, subject to such disposal of the revenues thence derived as shall be agreed upon.
- (5) That the military and naval defence of Australia shall be entrusted to Federal forces, under one command.
- (6) That provision should be made in the Federal Constitution which will enable each State to make such amendments in its Constitution as may be necessary for the purposes of the Federation.

Subject to these and other necessary conditions, this Convention approves of the framing of a Federal Constitution, which shall establish—

- (1) A Parliament, to consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives, the former consisting of an equal number of members from each colony, to be elected by a system which shall provide for the periodical retirement of one-third of the members, so securing to the body itself a perpetual existence combined with definite responsibility to the electors, the latter to be elected by districts formed on a population basis, and to possess the sole power of originating all Bills appropriating revenue or imposing taxation.
- (2) A Judiciary, consisting of a Federal Supreme Court, which shall constitute a High Court of Appeal for Australia.
- (3) An Executive, consisting of a Governor-General, and such

persons as may from time to time be appointed as his advisers.

These resolutions having been approved as a basis, a draft bill was prepared by a committee appointed for that purpose, and submitted to the Convention. After careful consideration, long debate, and some amendment, the draft bill was adopted, and was subsequently considered by both branches of the South Australian Legislature.

Before proceeding to discuss the details of the bill, I think it will be well to deal with the general question of Australian Federation and its desirability, and in this connection I will first ask the following questions:—(1) Is Federation desirable? (2) Has its desirability been agreed upon by the people of South Australia?

There is little doubt in my mind that the majority of thoughtful people in the colony *are favorable to Federation*, and although it must be admitted that the subject has not been as fully discussed and understood as its importance warrants, there is a strong feeling in the minds of the people that Federation, upon wise and equitable lines, will tend to the commercial and social advancement of the whole of the colonies, *increase of their wealth and power*, and *decrease of the taxation burdens* of the people.

If the electors of South Australia are favorable to this first proposition, **THAT FEDERATION IS DESIRABLE**, it only remains for them to put their best intelligence to work to consider the terms upon which the proposed union should be entered into, and in deciding upon the important questions involved, due consideration must be given, not only to what is best for South Australia, but what is best, from a broader and more liberal standpoint, for the whole of Australia.

No union is possible, unless from the very outset each colony is prepared to meet the others in the most liberal spirit, and so long as their individual independence is conserved and protected, to give and take in turn, in order to accomplish this object.

The Draft Commonwealth Bill, the provisions of which I now propose to submit for your consideration, will probably only form the ground work of a more perfect measure, which after consideration by the Federal Convention about to be elected, will be submitted to the Parliaments of the colonies interested. That many of the details of that measure will undergo material alteration there is little doubt, and I cannot too earnestly impress upon the electors of South Australia the utmost importance of choosing representatives who will bring the best intelligence to the work of preparing a Bill for their consideration, which, whilst conserving the interests of our own colony, will form a solid foundation upon which an enduring Federal Constitution will be built. The importance of this question demands that it should be considered fairly and calmly, untrammelled by party politics.

As all sections of the community are deeply interested in the terms of the proposed union, it seems to me both wise and just that the best talent of the most clear-headed men in the colony should be chosen for the work. Men who can and will fight for a Federal Bill which will protect the best interests of South Australia, and meet with the approval of the whole of the people of the Federating Colonies.

It will be little use to choose delegates who represent the opinions of one section of the community only; such a course might be flattering to the section represented, but the victory would be indeed an empty one, and the ultimate result to delay the accomplishment of Federation.

The duty now placed in the hands of the electors of South Australia is the important one of selecting ten delegates to meet the chosen representatives of the other colonies, and to draft a scheme for Australian Federation, which will be fair and just to all the colonies concerned; not a light task, but one which will exercise all the best intelligence of those chosen, and in order that you may more fully appreciate the nature of the work, I will now proceed to the discussion of the draft Bill agreed upon in 1891.

The preamble of the draft bill sets forth that certain colonies therein named have agreed to unite in one **FEDERAL COMMONWEALTH UNDER THE CROWN**, and upon this point I think there can be little difference of opinion, for although we sometimes hear suggestions of "Cutting the painter," I am pleased to think that the great majority of Australians feel proud of their connection with Great Britain, and ungrudgingly recognise her fostering care and protection, under which the colonies of Australasia have made such marvellous progress. Recognising this view of the position, the members of the last Convention agreed to the first provision that the Legislative powers of the Commonwealth should be vested in a **FEDERAL PARLIAMENT**, which should consist of **HER MAJESTY, A SENATE**, and a **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**, and following the custom which has obtained in the whole of the Australian colonies, provided that the Queen should appoint a Governor-General as Her representative.

There was some debate upon this point, and an amendment by Sir George Grey, who sought to place the appointment of the Governor-General of the Commonwealth in the hands of the people, was negatived by 35 votes to 3, those voting for the amendment being the Hons. Dr Cockburn and C. C. Kingston.

After a careful consideration of the manner in which the elective principle works in the United States, and of the debt of gratitude due by Australia to the mother country, I am of opinion that the decision to leave the appointment of the Governor-General in the hands of Her Majesty was a wise one.

After a number of clauses relating to the opening and dissolution of Parliament, and other formal details, the Bill proceeds to deal with the constitution of the Parliament, which is to consist of a Senate composed of eight members for each of the Federating States, and a House of Representatives, to be elected on a population basis, each State having one representative for every 30,000 of its population.

Dealing with the Senate first, it is provided that the members shall be chosen by the Houses of Parliament of the several States; shall hold office for a term of six years, except in the case of the first Senate, half the members of which shall retire at the expiration of three years.

You will agree with me I think, that the provision for the equal representation of each State in the Senate, is a wise and just one; and I think you will also agree that the election of Senators should be placed in the hands of the people, and not in that of the Parliaments of the day. You will recognise that the clause in the draft bill is a dangerous one, and that it might probably result in the election of the whole of the Senators by the strongest party in Parliament, to represent only one section of the community, instead of the interests of the whole colony.

To make my meaning more clear, let us imagine for one moment that a Federal Bill has been agreed upon, and the duty of electing eight Senators to represent South Australia devolved upon the present Parliament. I do not think there would be much difficulty in prophesying what the result of such an election would be, and although it might be highly satisfactory to the supporters of the present Government, it would not be so to the general body of electors of the colony. If, on the other hand, a more Conservative party held the reins of Government, and had the dominant power in the Legislature, the result of the selection of Senators by such a Parliament would be equally unsatisfactory to the more Democratic sections of the community. I am, therefore, in favor of the election of the Senators by the **WHOLE OF THE ELECTORS OF THE PROVINCE** on the basis of adult suffrage.

The only qualifications provided for a Senator in the draft bill are—1st, that he must be 30 years of age; 2nd, be entitled to vote in some State for the election of members of the House of Representatives; 3rd, must have been resident for five years within the limits of the Commonwealth; 4th, must be a natural born subject of the Queen, or naturalized in Great Britain or one of the colonies.

The House of Representatives will, according to the draft bill, be composed of members elected for three years by the States, each State being entitled to return **ONE MEMBER FOR EVERY 30,000 OF ITS POPULATION**, provided only that in the case of any colony, until the number of its people is such as to entitle it to four representatives, such State shall have four. The qualification

of electors for the House of Representatives being the same as the qualification of electors of the more numerous House of Parliament of the State.

Under these provisions I find that in the event of the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania, and Western Australia agreeing to federate, New South Wales would be entitled to return 42 members, Victoria 39, Queensland 15, South Australia 11, Western Australia 4, and Tasmania 5; that would give 81 members to Victoria and New South Wales combined, whilst the other four colonies would only return 35. This form of representation on a population basis seems to me eminently UNSATISFACTORY, for although the numerical strength of the two neighboring colonies is entitled to reasonable representation, such a predominance of voting power **IN THE HOUSE WHICH WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE LEVYING OF TAXATION AND THE EXPENDITURE OF REVENUE**, would be extremely dangerous.

I admit at once that Victoria and New South Wales are justly entitled to return a larger number of members to the popular House than the other colonies, but I would suggest a sliding scale, which, in my opinion, would be more equitable to all the colonies concerned. MY PROPOSAL is that each colony should have a right to return six members for the first 100,000 of the population, three members for the second 100,000, two members for the third 100,000, and one member for every additional 100,000. Upon this basis, New South Wales and Victoria would return 20 members each, Queensland 12 members, South Australia 11 members, Tasmania 6 members, and Western Australia 6 members, so that even under this scheme Victoria and New South Wales combined, would return 40 members as against 35 for the remaining four colonies. I fully anticipate that Victoria and New South Wales will make a strong effort to retain the number of representatives stipulated for in the draft bill, but I confidently affirm that the scale of representation I have suggested is a much more equitable one. In regard to the qualification of members of the House of Representatives, the draft Bill provides that the candidate shall be an elector in some State, of the full age of 21 years, have been resident for three years within the limits of the Commonwealth, and be a natural born or naturalized subject of Her Majesty.

I now come to the most important provisions of the bill adopted by the last Federal Convention, namely, the **POWERS WHICH IT IS PROPOSED SHOULD BE GIVEN OVER BY THE STATES OR COLONIES TO THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENT**, the most important of which are as follows :—

First in importance, I consider, the control of the regulation of trade and commerce, imposition of uniform customs duties and establishment of freetrade between the colonies. In this connec-

tion, the various colonies have to consider the advantages and disadvantages which may arise from the assimilation of the tariffs, and the establishment of intercolonial freetrade. I HAVE FOR MANY YEARS EARNESTLY ADVOCATED THE REMOVAL OF THE VEXATIOUS BORDER DUTIES UPON THE PRODUCTS AND MANUFACTURES OF THE VARIOUS COLONIES, and although I can conceive that some degree of hardship may at first be felt by a few producers and manufacturers, I believe that the immense benefit to the many will far outweigh the consideration of such cases.

The results of a uniform tariff against the outside world, and freetrade across the imaginary border lines of our colonies cannot well be estimated, and when we consider the limited market provided by South Australia's 360,000 population, and compare it with the market of the whole of the Australian Colonies with their population of three and a half millions of people, it must be admitted that the opening of such enlarged outlets for our produce and manufactures will lead to increased general prosperity.

Under our present system, barriers have been erected which tend to check enterprise, hamper trade, and foster the cultivation of unsuitable industries; let these barriers be removed, and each colony will be able to produce and manufacture the products best suited to its soil, climate, and natural conditions, FINDING AN UNLIMITED MARKET OUTSIDE OF ITS OWN BORDERS, FREE FROM THE PARALYSING INFLUENCES OF HOSTILE BORDER DUTIES. The establishment of a uniform tariff against the outside world will, in my opinion, render it unnecessary to lock up such immense sums as are now virtually sunk in stocks of similar foreign products and manufactures, and will enable the volume of trade of the whole of the colonies to be conducted with considerably smaller working capital. To the uninitiated this may not appear to be a very important point, but to those who are well versed in commercial business, the immense saving in interest will be at once apparent. I do not imagine that Intercolonial freetrade will be brought about immediately, but I feel assured that there can be no Federation of a useful or lasting nature until the unnatural barriers to Intercolonial Commerce have been removed.

It is further proposed to give the Federal Government power to raise money by any other system of taxation, but I feel satisfied that such a power **MUST BE CAREFULLY SAFEGUARDED**, and, perhaps, limited to the raising of revenue in times of urgency, for defence, or other similar Federal purposes.

If it is decided that the Federal Parliament should take over the whole of the revenue from customs, it will, as pointed out at the recent Convention, have control of from seven to eight millions of money; while the expenditure on other public departments, which it is proposed to hand over to the Federal Parliament, will only

amount to about £2,500,000, so that there would be, roughly, about £5,000,000 surplus to hand back to the contributing colonies. This question of giving such an immense revenue to the Federal Parliament has been debated by the most able men in the colonies. Some of them have urged that it would be better to establish a uniform tariff, and permit each colony to still collect its customs revenue, and to pay their proportion of the cost of Federal Government according to their population. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that **THIS SYSTEM HAS BEEN TRIED IN OTHER COUNTRIES, AND FAILED**, and that, if we are to have Federation, we must commence by fully trusting the Federal Parliament.

Another suggestion in reference to dealing with this surplus revenue is that the Federal Parliament should take over a portion, or the whole, of the bonded debt of each colony, and pay the interest thereon from the surplus customs revenue.

I am inclined to think that a modification of the latter suggestion would perhaps be the simplest mode of dealing with this somewhat difficult question, and, as it is contemplated by those who are most strongly in favour of Federation, that the whole of the national debt of the Federating colonies should be dealt with by the Federal Parliament, with a view to its consolidation, and the consequent saving of a large amount of interest, I feel sure that this proposal will meet with considerable favour. According to statistics for the year 1894-5, the indebtedness of the six colonies was as follows:— New South Wales, £56,451,369; Queensland, £31,873,934; South Australia, £22,304,332; Tasmania, £7,414,345; Victoria, £46,939,328; Western Australia, £3,992,681, or a total of £168,975,989.

The nominal rate of interest at present being paid by the colonies for their existing loans ranges from 3·78 per cent. in the colony of New South Wales to 4·04 per cent. in the colony of South Australia, the average rate being approximately 3·75 per cent. I think it may be confidently estimated that the Federal Parliament would by conversion of the existing debt of £169,000,000, in round figures, be easily able to effect a saving of  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. interest or about £845,000 per annum, a sum which would go a long way towards lightening the burden of taxation. In estimating this small saving of  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., I think we would be allowing a very fair margin to make up for the premiums that would have to be paid to secure a conversion of the loan at a comparatively early date.

The Post and Telegraph Service is another branch which it is proposed to hand over to the Federal Parliament, and on this question I would prefer to hear fuller discussion before expressing a definite opinion. At first glance it appears to me that the only advantage to be gained by placing it under the Federal Parliament would be that the Transcontinental Telegraph line, which has cost

South Australia such an immense sum of money, and from which the whole of the colonies reap equal benefits without contributing to South Australia's expenditure on construction, would be handed over to the Federal Parliament, and this colony would be reimbursed for its outlay.

The Military and Naval defence of Australia will also be placed in the hands of the Federal Parliament, and by this means a greater degree of efficiency will be attained in both branches of the service, and a large saving made in the cost of maintenance. I do not consider that Australia has much to fear from foreign enemies, but while I see no necessity for the establishment of an expensive navy and standing army, I think that it is wise for the whole of the defences to be placed in the hands of one administrative power.

Navigation and Shipping, Beacons and Ocean Lighthouses, and Quarantine are all to be controlled by the Federal Parliament. Currency, Coinage and Legal Tender, the Incorporation of Banks and issue of paper money will also be handed to the same authority, and I think there can be little doubt that the need of a uniform system in dealing with the incorporation of banks and controlling their business, has been amply demonstrated during the past few disastrous years.

The law relating to Copyrights, Patents, Trade Marks, and Naturalization of Aliens, will also benefit by being handed over to the same authority; all these matters require bringing into line, especially those which deal with protective Patents and Naturalization.

It is also proposed that the Federal Parliament shall have the control of all railways, with respect to transport, for the purposes of the Commonwealth, that is to say, that in case of war they would have the right to use the railways of all the colonies for defence purposes. It has also been suggested that with a view of preventing a continuance of a cut-throat policy of differential rates in rival states or colonies, that the Commonwealth shall take over **THE WHOLE OF THE RAILWAY SYSTEMS**, and it has been pointed out in this connection that the benefits of free interchange, which would be obtained by the abolition of intercolonial customs, might be materially interfered with, if not absolutely nullified, by the continuance of unfair differential tariffs on the railways.

This question of nationalising the whole of the railways requires most serious thought, and a careful analysis of the railway accounts of each colony. I find by the statistics that the railways of the six colonies of Australia (10,891 miles in length) have cost £112,293,221, of which £107,568,378 has been paid for out of loan money, carrying an annual payment of interest amounting to £4,286,603, while the nett earnings of the railways only amount to £3,272,642. Thus you will see that the working of the railways involves A LOSS OF

A MILLION STERLING PER ANNUM in round numbers. The working expenses amount to £4,579,806, but it is extremely probable that if the whole of the lines were under one careful administration, a substantial saving might be effected. I think I am therefore justified in waiting for further information before advocating the nationalization of our railways.

LAST, but not least, the Bill deals with the appointment of a Federal Court of Appeal, the decision of which will be final. I need hardly point out that the establishment of such a tribunal will prevent the costly and vexatious appeals to the Privy Council.

Another important question, which it is proposed to delegate to the Federal Parliament, is the control of river navigation, and I hardly think there can be any doubt as to the desirableness of referring such a delicate and difficult question to the Parliament of the Commonwealth.

The framing of laws to deal with the question of the admission of undesirable emigrants to Australia is also very wisely placed in the hands of the Federal Parliament. At present we have restrictive legislation in reference to the Chinese, and it is, in my opinion, equally important that the Federal Parliament *should have power to enact uniform legislation to prevent the influx of other undesirable people.*

I have now touched upon the main points involved in the proposed Federation, the most important, in my opinion, being:—1ST. The constitution of the Parliament of the Commonwealth. 2ND. The representation of the States, and their manner of election. 3RD. The powers which it is proposed to vest in the Parliament of the Commonwealth.

As to the constitution of the Parliament, it is based partly on the American Constitution and partly on existing Australian Constitutions, the best portions of each having been adopted, and I think the result is satisfactory; at any rate, it forms the groundwork of a sufficiently elastic Federation to leave room for its improvement in years to come.

The most important question to us, as South Australians, is THE JUST AND EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION OF EACH COLONY in the Parliament of the Commonwealth, WITHOUT WHICH FEDERATION HAD BETTER BE LEFT ALONE. Now, let us look at this question in relation to the powers which it is proposed to hand over to the Federal Parliament. The proposed representation in the Senate by eight members from each colony SEEMS PERFECTLY FAIR, but this will entirely depend upon the amount of power given to the Senate. I have already expressed my opinion that the constitution of the House of Representatives proposed in the draft Bill, gives too great a predominance to Victoria and New South Wales, MORE ESPECIALLY AS THE RIGHT TO INTRODUCE AND

AMEND MONEY BILLS is entirely retained by the House of Representatives, the Senate having only the right to veto money bills or suggest amendment. The importance of this question cannot be overestimated, for however much we may be inclined to trust the neighboring colonies in questions of smaller moment, we should have every safeguard in dealing with the questions of taxation and expenditure of revenue. There are two ways in which the interests of the smaller colonies, in regard to financial questions, can be protected—the first is to give the Senate equal powers with the House of Representatives in dealing with money bills, the other is to increase the representation of the smaller colonies in the House of Representatives. I have now dealt with the subject of Federation from its most important standpoints. I have gone somewhat into detail, because I desire to put all the information possible before the electors, with the hope of arousing a genuine interest in the Federation question, and discussion, which must prove of educational value. We are not now engaged upon the work of framing a Federal Constitution—that you will have to leave to your representatives, and after they have dealt with it, and the measure, which they prepare, has been thrashed out in your Parliament, you will then have an opportunity of saying whether you will accept the scheme of Federation offered, or reject it. In concluding, I would like to point out to you once more (1st) that the question is one which should not be mixed up with party politics: (2nd) that your representatives, whoever they may be, cannot be bound down to any special line of action, as it is certain that they will have to give and take in matters of detail. It remains for you to choose men who you think are fitted for the work of framing a Constitution for your approval. I will only add that if I am fortunate enough to be chosen as one of your representatives, the work entrusted to me will have my most earnest and careful thought, and while endeavoring to assist in framing a Constitution of which Australians may be proud, I will not forget to safeguard the best interests of South Australia, my native land.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

V. L. SOLOMON.

Adelaide, February 1st, 1897.

NOTE.—ELECTORS ARE PARTICULARLY REQUESTED TO NOTE THAT THEY MUST VOTE FOR TEN CANDIDATES, AND NO MORE OR LESS, OR THEIR VOTE WILL BE INFORMAL.