

1901.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

No. 2.

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FRIDAY, 10TH MAY, 1901.

1. The House met pursuant to adjournment.—Mr. Speaker took the Chair.
2. MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL BY THE USHER OF THE SENATE.—The following Message was delivered by the Usher of the Senate :—

MR. SPEAKER,

His Excellency the Governor-General desires the immediate attendance of the House of Representatives in the Chamber of the Senate.

Accordingly Mr. Speaker with the House went to attend His Excellency :—And having returned—

3. ACTS INTERPRETATION BILL.—Mr. Deakin moved, That leave be given to bring in a Bill for the Interpretation of Acts of Parliament and for Shortening their Language.
Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.
Mr. Deakin then brought up a Bill intituled "*A Bill for the Interpretation of Acts of Parliament and for Shortening their Language,*" and moved, That it be now read a first time.
Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.—Bill read a first time, ordered to be printed, and read a second time on Tuesday, 21st May instant.
4. HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH.—Mr. Speaker reported that the House had this day attended His Excellency the Governor-General in the Senate Chamber, when His Excellency was pleased to make a Speech to both Houses of Parliament, of which Mr. Speaker said he had, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy, which he read to the House, as follows :—

GENTLEMEN OF THE SENATE AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES :

As the first Australian Parliament, you have been honoured with the presence of His Royal Highness the Duke of Cornwall and York as His Majesty's High Commissioner. Your labours will be watched with interest throughout the civilized world. The ceremony of yesterday marks a triumphant culmination of prolonged and strenuous endeavour for the attainment of the national representation essential to the progress of Australia.

The inauguration of the Commonwealth in January was conducted in Sydney with a splendour worthy of the spirit of union animating the citizens of every part of Australia. It is now that the people so joined ordain the initiation in Melbourne of legislation which, there is reason to trust, will go far to realize the high hopes of the founders of Union.

The Act constituting this Commonwealth was among the last great measures that received the assent of Her late Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria. Few indeed are the subjects of His Majesty King Edward who, in their grief for the Nation's loss of his beloved mother, fail to derive some solace from the fact that she was spared to witness so great a step in the extension of free institutions, and in the consolidation of Her Empire.

The Commission which was opened yesterday enabled His Royal Highness the Duke of Cornwall and York graciously to deliver to you a memorable speech, containing a message from the King to his subjects in Australia—a message which demonstrates alike his pride in his sovereignty over the Commonwealth, and his strong resolve to follow in the path of the august ruler whom he succeeds.

The duty laid on your Governor-General is one of great honour and distinction, but it is a work of the highest responsibility to preside over the early achievements of the Australian people in the wide development and just government of the great charge now first committed to their care.

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You will be called on to deal with a number of legislative proposals of the highest importance. In the first place, it will be necessary to submit to you measures for setting in motion the machinery of the Constitution, and for adapting to their new condition the great Departments, recently transferred, of Defence, Customs and Excise, and Posts and Telegraphs.

You will be asked to constitute a High Court of Australia, with an extensive Appellate and Federal Jurisdiction. It is hoped that the character of this Court will be so eminent, and its powers so comprehensive, that its decisions will be accepted as final by the great majority of litigants.

A Bill will be introduced to create a Commission for the execution and maintenance of the provisions of the Constitution relating to Trade and Commerce. It is intended to confer wide powers, judicial and administrative, on this body, so that in the exercise of its authority the interests of each State may be secured, consistently with those of the people of the Commonwealth as a whole.

A Bill to regulate the Public Service of the Federation will be submitted. The merits of the laws of the several States in this regard have been given due weight in the preparation of this measure, which my Advisers trust you will find just in its appreciation of good conduct and ability, and careful to secure the best and most economical results to the public.

Steps have already been taken to cope with the difficult matter of selecting the Federal Territory, within which the Capital of the Commonwealth is to be built; and in this task no longer time will be occupied than is necessary for the exercise of good judgment in the choice of an area which, it is hoped, will be of a size ample for all public requirements, and of which the climate, accessibility, and natural beauty will give promise of a seat of Government worthy of the new nation.

Bills for the firm restriction of the immigration of Asiatics and for the diminution and gradual abolition of the introduction of labour from the South Sea Islands will be laid before you.

Measures are also in preparation to provide for Conciliation and Arbitration in cases of Industrial Disputes extending beyond the limits of any one State, for the placing of Patents and Inventions under one uniform administration throughout the Commonwealth, and for the grant of an uniform franchise in all Federal Elections by the adoption of Adult Suffrage.

Some time must elapse before the financial conditions of the Commonwealth will admit of provision being made for Old-age Pensions. It is, however, the desire of my Ministers to deal with the subject as soon as practicable.

As soon as the necessary data have been collected, Bills will be prepared relating to Banking, and providing for uniformity in the laws regulating Federal Elections. Navigation, Shipping, and Quarantine are among the subjects of proposed legislation, and consideration is being given to the best means of taking over, converting, renewing, or consolidating the Public Debts of States.

GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES :

Estimates of Expenditure will be submitted to you in due course, and will be economical. They will, however, safeguard the efficiency of the services of the Commonwealth.

GENTLEMEN OF THE SENATE AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES :

The fiscal proposals of any Federal Government must be largely dependent on the financial exigencies of the States. The adoption of the existing Tariff of any one of these States is impracticable, and would be unjust. To secure a reasonably sufficient return of surplus revenue to each State, so as fairly to observe the intention of the Constitution, while avoiding the unnecessary destruction of sources of employment, is a work which prohibits a rigid adherence to fiscal theories.

Revenue must, of course, be the first consideration; but existing Tariffs have, in all the States, given rise to industries many of which are so substantial that my Advisers consider that any policy tending to destroy them is inadmissible. A Tariff which gives fair consideration to these factors must necessarily operate protectively as well as for the production of revenue.

The relations of the Commonwealth with the Islands of the Pacific have been occupying the earnest attention of Ministers, who have taken such steps as seem to them prudent for the protection of Australian interests in this regard, without in any sense embarrassing the international relations of His Majesty's Government.

The question of the construction of a Railway connecting with these eastern communities the vast and hitherto isolated State of Western Australia has been under consideration. Examinations of the country intervening between the railway systems of South and Western Australia are now in progress, together with other inquiries. It is hoped that they may result in showing that the undertaking is justifiable.

Isolation was the chief obstacle to the early adoption of the Constitution by Western Australia, until the hope of closer connexion influenced the people of the West to risk the threatened perils of that political union of the Continent which their vote at the Referendum did much to complete.

No doubt the project of railway connexion between the Northern Territory and the Southern States will before long assume great public importance. A proposal made by the Government of South Australia for the surrender by that State, and the acceptance by the Commonwealth, of the Northern Territory is under careful consideration.

As soon as practicable after the necessary Act has been passed, means will be taken for the judicious strengthening of the Defence of the Commonwealth. Extravagant expenditure will be avoided, and reliance will be placed, to the fullest reasonable extent, in our citizen soldiery. It is confidently hoped that the services of a most able and distinguished officer will be secured for the supreme Military command.

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As soon as practicable, the postal and telegraphic rates of the several States will be assimilated, and, when the finances of the Commonwealth admit, an uniform and, if possible, universal Penny Postage rate will be established.

The legislation which I have outlined may not, of course, be entirely carried into effect in a single Session. Your labours will be prolonged if only the most urgent of the proposals of Ministers are to occupy your attention.

Intercolonial Free Trade will be established in the very act of imposing a Federal Tariff, and my Ministers bespeak for their fiscal proposals your devoted attention in the present Session.

Every effort will, with your generous assistance, be made to carry the urgent measures named into law.

As a very great portion of Australia has been visited with abundant rains, there is reason to hope that the country generally will be blest with a prosperous season, leading to an increase in commercial and industrial activity.

In leaving you now to your grave responsibilities, I earnestly hope that, under Divine guidance, your patriotic labours in a memorable Session will deserve and earn the gratitude of the Australian people.

5. ADDRESS IN REPLY TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S SPEECH.—Mr. Barton moved, That a Select Committee, consisting of Mr. W. H. Groom, Mr. T. T. Ewing, Sir J. Langdon Bonython, and Mr. R. A. Crouch, be appointed to prepare an Address in Reply to the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor-General on opening this First Session of the first Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. W. H. Groom having brought up the Address prepared by the Committee, the same was read by the Clerk, as follows:—

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY—

We, the House of Representatives of The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, in Parliament assembled, beg to express our loyalty to our Most Gracious Sovereign, and to thank Your Excellency for the gracious Speech which you have been pleased to address to Parliament.

Mr. Barton moved, That the consideration of the Address in Reply to the Governor-General's Speech as read by the Clerk stand an Order of the Day for Tuesday, 21st May instant.

Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Ordered—That the debate take precedence of all other business.

6. DRAFT STANDING ORDERS.—Mr. Barton laid upon the Table a copy of Draft Standing Orders relative to Public Business, for provisional use.

Ordered to lie on the Table and to be printed.

7. ADJOURNMENT.—Mr. Barton moved, That the House, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday, 21st May instant, at four o'clock.

Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. Barton moved, That the House do now adjourn.

Question—put and resolved in the affirmative.

And then the House, at twenty-two minutes to twelve o'clock, adjourned until Tuesday, 21st May instant, at four o'clock.

GEORGE H. JENKINS,
Clerk of the House of Representatives.