

Federation Through the Eyes of a South Australian Model Parliament*

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The following article, which derives from research for the Department of the Senate's centenary of federation publication 'A Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate', examines the contribution made to the federation debate by South Australia's leading turn-of-the-century model parliament.

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century South Australia was characterized by an impressive amount of civic activity. Among the many unusual, and still largely unexplored, manifestations of such activity were model parliaments. Regarded as much more than amateur debating societies (and different in nature from assemblies like Adelaide's Parliamentary Club of the early 1870s), mock parliaments were widely acknowledged as providing essential training for aspiring politicians. They were also valuable forums for the expression of opinion on major political, economic and social issues of the day. Few such institutions exemplified the model parliament ideal better than the 'Union Parliament' of the South Australian Literary Societies' Union, one of many mock parliaments in South Australia at that time.

The origins of the Union Parliament lay in the ideals and activities of the South Australian Literary Societies' Union which had been formed in 1883 following a public speaking competition in the Adelaide Town Hall between the members of city and suburban literary societies. So successful was the event that nineteen of the twenty-seven societies in the metropolis (with a total membership of 1334 eager young men), agreed on 21 August 1883 to form the South Australian Literary Societies' Union. The Union went on to broaden the scope of its activities, by publishing monthly *The Literary Societies' Journal*; by pioneering educational reforms such as the introduction of evening classes at the University of Adelaide; by organizing literary competitions, debating tournaments and reading clubs for men and women who were members of

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associated societies; and by presiding over its most influential brainchild, the Union Parliament. Oddly, in a colony in the vanguard of women's suffrage, women were never admitted to membership of the Union Parliament.

The Union represented 'a connecting-bond ... of a thoroughly practical character' that made possible 'mutual intercourse by means of which "iron sharpeneth iron" through the promotion of debate and short-paper tournaments'.¹ 'In literary societies,' as the Union's 1899 Year Book emphasized, 'education in South Australia has a valuable ally, for while our schools, colleges, and university furnish to the young life the valuable dowry of knowledge, it remains for literary societies to provide the opportunity for the development of this endowment'.² Literary Society members clearly regarded competition as the mainspring of human advancement and, with a commendable morality, also thought of it as a check 'to the complacency that prevails where self-satisfaction is indulged, which produces stagnation or worse'.³

The Union's emphasis on the importance of education and a competitive spirit was fully realized in the proceedings of its Union Parliament. The Parliament met for the first time on 17 April 1884 'to debate the political ideas of the day' and with the aim of becoming 'not only an exercising ground for rhetorical practice, but a real factor in moulding public opinion on questions of national importance'.⁴ This assembly of young enthusiasts keen to understand the rites of democracy consisted of one hundred members, the Union's twenty-one societies each electing one member of Parliament for every ten of its members.⁵ Eighty-three members attended its inaugural meeting, at which a six-man Ministry and a Speaker⁶ were elected, a Clerk of the Parliament appointed, a Constitution devised, and sitting times determined (the second and fourth Thursdays of each month, commencing in April and concluding no later than December). A six-member 'House Committee' was also formed to manage parliamentary business. The Standing Orders of South Australia's House of Assembly governed the operations of the Parliament, which met for most of its life in the Oddfellows' Hall in central Adelaide. A Hansard record of proceedings was kept, albeit in summary and not verbatim form, along with comprehensive and well-designed Notice Papers, Votes and Proceedings, Gazettes and Ministerial Policy Statements.⁷ The

¹ H.T. Burgess (ed.) *The Cyclopaedia of South Australia*, Vol. II, The Cyclopaedia Company, Adelaide, 1909, p. 161.

² *The South Australian Literary Societies' Union Year Book, 1899*, p. 5 (henceforth *Year Book*).

³ Burgess, op. cit., p. 161.

⁴ *Year Book 1884*, pp. 7, 42.

⁵ They were a colourful, broadly representative group, which included the Adelphian Society, the North Adelaide Baptist Young Men's Society, and the Unitarian Mutual Improvement Association.

⁶ UP (Union Parliament) Rule No 12 stated: 'The Speaker need not be a member of the House, but must be a member of one of the associated Societies.' Such was the case with W.C. Calder (1825–1905), Speaker, 1884–94, and initially also with G.F. Hussey (1852–1935), the first Clerk of the UP, its Speaker, 1894–1918, later an MUP (Member of the Union Parliament).

⁷ The records of the Union Parliament are held in the Mortlock Library, State Library of South Australia.

parliamentary machinery also included, at various times, a Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Government and Opposition Whips, and a Deputy Speaker and Chairman of Committees. Its modest place of meeting and the youth of most of its members aside, the Union Parliament might easily have passed for the real thing. The citizens of Adelaide who attended Union Parliament debates as onlookers seemed to take at least part of the proceedings seriously, but perhaps not as seriously as the Union Parliamentarians took themselves.

As the *Cyclopedia of South Australia* later pointed out, ‘the cultivation of debating power, familiarity with Parliamentary forms and usages, and acquaintance with the Parliamentary Standing Orders [were] of immense service’⁸ to Union Parliamentarians, many of whom later entered colonial, state or federal politics. Ten members of the first Union Parliament were destined for colonial or state political careers, nine in South Australia and one in New South Wales. Three out of the ten also entered federal politics, one as a senator, the other two serving in the House of Representatives.⁹ The Union Parliament’s first Premier, John Greeley Jenkins, dubbed a ‘political acrobat’ by one of his critics, was to become Premier of South Australia. Union Parliament attendance during 1884 averaged sixty members over sixteen meetings, eleven seats were declared vacant for non-attendance, eleven members resigned, two being re-elected, and five bills were introduced.

The subject of federation figured in Union Parliament proceedings from the start. No issue, not even the much debated ones of women’s suffrage and the payment of members of Parliament, was discussed as vigorously or at such length by these keen and serious (albeit bogus) members of Parliament as was the federation of Australia’s six colonies. Since the idea was first mooted in the mid-nineteenth century, most South Australians had favoured some form of federal compact. Uneasy about recent regional activity by Germany and France, representatives of Australia’s six colonies met in Sydney in late 1883 to devise means of dealing with important matters of common concern such as defence, an initiative which resulted in the establishment of the Federal Council of Australasia in 1885. At the opening of the Union Parliament on 8 May 1884, the Rev. W. Roby Fletcher, who, as Vice-President of the South Australian Literary Societies’ Union acted as ‘Governor’, told ‘Honorable Gentlemen of the Union Parliament’ that ‘it is a matter for regret that the labors of the recent convention, held in Sydney, in reference to federation have as yet resulted in no direct benefit. My Government will use every opportunity to work in harmony with the Governments of the other colonies, with the aim of arriving at a compact and federal union’.¹⁰

⁸ Burgess, op. cit., p. 162.

⁹ T.H. Brooker, D.J. (later Sir David) Gordon, E.W. Hawker, J.G. Jenkins, E. (later Sir Edward) Lucas, C.R. Morris, W.D. Ponder, T.H. Smeaton, J. Vardon and H. Willis.

¹⁰ *Year Book 1885*, p. 66. Each issue of the South Australian Literary Societies’ Union *Year Book* contained a detailed summary of the previous year’s Union Parliament proceedings.

The forms and subjects of Union Parliament debate closely mirrored those of ‘real’
Parliaments as this extract from its Hansard illustrates.

Union Parliament Hansard, 17 July 1890 (looseleaf)
Mortlock Library, State Library of South Australia

On 22 May 1884, T.H. Smeaton (Caledonian Literary Club: Yatala),¹¹ indicated his intention to ask the ‘Premier’, J.G. Jenkins (Adelaide Literary Society: Sturt), to ‘inform the House if any definite policy has been formed on the question of a Federation of Australian colonies?’¹² Jenkins, perhaps unsure of the mood of the House, and because he disagreed with recent developments, prevaricated and the debate was stalled. A.W. Piper (Adelaide Literary Society: Albert), remained unimpressed by Jenkins’s hesitancy, stressing that ‘the secret diplomacy of the Government respecting the Federation policy was unnecessary, and only an excuse’.¹³ Jenkins was sceptical of the decisions of the Sydney meeting, arguing that ‘the popular will would be overruled by the proposed tribunal [Federal Council] of ten members’. He considered also that it had failed to address the major obstacle to a federal union, ‘the assimilation of the tariffs’.¹⁴ In an attempt to steal a march on the champions of the Federal Council, Jenkins successfully moved a motion ‘that an address be presented to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, praying Her Majesty to cause to be introduced into the Imperial Parliament a “Colonial Enabling Federation Bill”’.¹⁵

Support for federation at this time was strong, but usually qualified. J.C. Genders (Adelaide Literary Society: Gladstone), although he believed that ‘we should be stirring in this matter at once’, nevertheless favoured a gradual approach whereby ‘federation in our defences and other matters would pave the way for complete federation’.¹⁶ On 23 October 1884, Genders successfully moved ‘that in the opinion of this House it is desirable that the Governments of the other colonies should be immediately communicated with upon the necessity for a Federal Defence Force’.¹⁷ Encouraged by the example of the United States and Canada, several members also favoured the adoption of ‘a more comprehensive constitution’¹⁸ to underpin the federal union. Most members supported the approach taken by the Federal Council. By 1888, when South Australia at last joined the Federal Council—she was to remain a member until 1890—most Union Parliament members favoured federation, although differences of opinion persisted about the detail. The ‘Governor’, Dr Allan Campbell,¹⁹ had made clear in his opening speech to the Union Parliament on 26 April 1888 that ‘my Government will take the necessary steps to have this colony represented in the Federal Council of Australasia’.²⁰ On 2 August 1888, Union Parliamentarians voted that members of

¹¹ ‘Caledonian Literary Club’ refers to the literary society which had elected Smeaton and ‘Yatala’ to the district he represented.

¹² *UP Notice Paper*, 22 May 1884, p. 1.

¹³ *UP Hansard*, 22 May 1884, p. 3.

¹⁴ *UP Hansard*, 13 November 1884, p. 2.

¹⁵ *Year Book 1885*, p. 69.

¹⁶ *UP Hansard*, 23 October 1884, p. 1.

¹⁷ *Year Book 1885*, p. 69.

¹⁸ *UP Hansard*, 13 November 1884, p. 2.

¹⁹ Dr A. Campbell (1836–1898); a SA MLC (Member of the Legislative Council), 1878–98.

²⁰ *Year Book 1889*, p. 75.

Parliament, not the electors, should choose Federal Council representatives.²¹ Opening the sixth Union Parliament on 25 April 1889, Dr Campbell was able to report that ‘at the Federal Council, held in Hobart early this year ... the deliberations ... were characterised by an increased amount of united feeling and federal sentiment’.²²

A resolution advocating an early federal union was adopted at the Australasian Federation Conference held in Melbourne in February 1890. Later that year the South Australian Literary Societies’ Union expressed its support for this developing ‘Federal Sentiment’, which was reflected in ‘a growing desire for uniformity, if not unification’ on the part of the Australian colonies, by agreeing to participate in an ‘Intercolonial Debate Tournament’.²³ Three members of the Union Parliament represented South Australia at the first debating tournament, held in Melbourne in June 1891. The New South Wales team, led by W.A. Holman, later Premier of New South Wales, argued that proposals for federation were ‘at the present juncture out of place and premature’. South Australia’s representatives, however, ‘maintained that in all essentials of the body politic ... Australians were already one, and federation was the desire of the people’.²⁴ On 24 April 1890, Dr Campbell told Union Parliamentarians that ‘my Government notes with satisfaction the greatly increased interest now being taken in the question of Federation ... and will do their utmost to bring about this, which they consider a most desirable and beneficial state of things’.²⁵

In a major debate on ‘Australian Federation’ in July 1890, the ‘Premier’, J.C. Hamp (St Andrew’s Literary Association: West Torrens), moved a successful motion that the Union Parliament elect by ballot seven of its members to attend a ‘National Australasian Convention’ to consider and report upon a scheme for a ‘Federal Constitution of the Australian Colonies’. Hamp feared that ‘unless federation came we would have civil war sooner or later,’ considering that ‘the jealousy between Victoria and New South Wales did not require much kindling to result in this’. He insisted on ‘the federal compact’ being ‘a rigid one’ that would be difficult to tamper with let alone reconstitute. While not ruling out Privy Council appeals, Hamp was a strong advocate of ‘a Supreme Federal Court’. W. Guthrie (Unley Mutual Improvement Society: Barossa), convinced that federation was too important a subject to be a party matter, favoured a federal union on the grounds that it would strengthen the English-speaking peoples in this part of the globe. He was also alarmed by German and French colonisation in the region, a threat considered by Hamp to be a ‘myth’. For Guthrie, the greatest obstacle to federation remained ‘the unreliability of the New South Wales Premier [Sir Henry Parkes]’. Guthrie was certain that ‘there was intelligence enough now in the colonies to mark out a satisfactory plan of federation. There was ample reason for us to unite, and to rise and strive to bring it about’. The ‘Chief Secretary’, A.E. Norman (Hindmarsh Young Men’s

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 78.

²² *Year Book 1890*, p. 71.

²³ *ibid.*, pp. 5, 6.

²⁴ *Year Book 1891*, pp. 79, 80.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 67.

Society: Gumeracha), saw an important potential role for the Union Parliament in fostering greater informal discussion of federation, one similar to that performed by the Federal Council of Australasia, which was itself ‘something like an Australian Union Parliament’. An opponent of parochialism in the federation debate, he argued that ‘we must go to this [1891] convention untrammelled, and with a true federal spirit’. In a more concrete vein, Norman advocated, for the new Australia, the appointment of governments by the Parliament or the Governor-General; the nomination of Governors by the Crown, the method of electing Lieutenant-Governors to be decided upon by the colonies. Norman concluded with a flourish that ‘we enjoy the fullest liberty of any nation under the sun, and have escaped the license, to a certain extent, of the Americans’. He was convinced that if the colonies federated, ‘we shall call forth the admiration of the civilized world ... May we not be proud to say, “I am an Australian”’.²⁶

The decision by the National Australasian Convention, which met in Sydney in March and April 1891, to adopt a draft bill to constitute a Commonwealth of Australia, provided a further opportunity for spirited debate on the federal cause in the make-believe political arena of the Union Parliament. On 4 June 1891, W. Guthrie, now ‘Premier’, proposed that a consultative process be instituted in the colony to divine South Australians’ views of the Bill, one designed to take greater account of public opinion than the machinery of the Sydney Convention had permitted. He argued that the province of South Australia should be divided into four electoral districts, each to return five members, who would then consider the Bill in detail, and determine whether or not South Australia ought to join the federal union. H.J. Milne (Hindmarsh Young Men’s Society: Wallaroo), recommended that another ‘intercolonial convention’ be held, to allow colonial Parliaments to put forward fresh amendments to the Bill. He also moved, unsuccessfully, ‘that with a view of obtaining public opinion on this Bill, the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Manufactures, the Employers’ Union, the Trades and Labour Council, and the Farmers’ Association, be asked to give evidence before a [Union Parliament] select committee’. Following impassioned discussion and complex deliberations focussing on the representativeness of existing convention arrangements, the Parliament finally endorsed the idea of a convention to examine the Bill. It also agreed that each convention delegate should receive thirty pounds for his services. On 16 July 1891, the Union Parliament resolved ‘that this House approves generally of the proposed Bill for the constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia’.²⁷

One matter raised in June and July 1891 during the Union Parliament debates on the resolutions of the Sydney Convention was to become a central and recurring subject of parliamentary discussion. It concerned the role of the proposed Senate, which G. Jenkins (Parkside Literary Society: Stanley), believed should have co-ordinate powers with the House of Representatives, to allow the smaller colonies, handicapped by inadequate representation in the ‘Lower House’, an effective voice in the governance of the federal union.²⁸ At the Melbourne intercolonial debate tournament the previous month, Union Parliamentarians had expressed their concern that, although ‘each colony would be

²⁶ *UP Hansard*, 17 July 1890, pp. 29, 31.

²⁷ *Year Book 1892*, pp. 91–93.

²⁸ *UP Hansard*, 2 July 1891, p. 47.

represented on the population basis in the House of Representatives ... if the representation on the Senate were not equal there would be a danger of the separate States losing their individuality and sovereignty'.²⁹ By now the Presidents, as well as the Vice-Presidents, of the South Australian Literary Societies' Union performed the role of Governor and opened parliamentary proceedings. On 21 April 1892, the task fell to the Union President, J.G. Jenkins, then a minister in the SA government, who declared in his opening speech that 'as the Parliament of this province has not yet decided in what manner the Draft Bill for the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia should be dealt with, you will be asked to reaffirm the resolution passed by the last Union Parliament, referring the Bill to a local convention for consideration'.³⁰

There was clearly disquiet in the Union Parliament and the community about what was perceived as the unrepresentative nature of convention arrangements. A gathering of colonial Premiers in Hobart in January and February 1895 may have relieved this concern. It approved a draft enabling bill which gave stronger emphasis to the popular election of Federal Convention members than had hitherto been the case. Two of the ten South Australian delegates elected in March 1897 to another national convention to devise a Federal constitution were the prominent South Australian lawyer-politicians, Patrick McMahon Glynn and Josiah Symon, Presidents of the South Australian Literary Societies' Union in 1895 and 1898 respectively.

Opening the twelfth Union Parliament as 'Governor' on 2 May 1895, Glynn made it clear that 'believing Federation of the Australasian Colonies to be desirable, resolutions bearing thereon will be placed before you at an early date'. The Union Parliament, after what was perhaps a token delay to indicate its independence of the Crown, at last took the vice-regal hint on 13 June, and resolved that 'steps should be at once taken to deal with the question [of federation] on the lines of the draft Bill prepared at the Hobart Conference of Premiers'.³¹ Throughout the 1890s the question of federation was also debated keenly by the colony's other model parliaments, particularly those at Mount Gambier (fifty-two members) and Gawler.

Serving South Australian politicians always attended, and, true to form, made speeches at the opening of each Union Parliament. C.C. Kingston, Premier of South Australia, 1893–99, and South Australia's leading federationist, 'regretted that in his political training he had not [had] the advantages which [Union Parliamentarians] possessed'.³² J.H. Gordon³³ was impressed by the 'sham-fighting and manoeuvring ... earnestness and method' displayed by Union Parliamentarians. T.H. Brooker, a member of the first Union Parliament, 'felt like a schoolboy returning to the schoolhouse'. J.V. O'Loghlin³⁴

²⁹ *Year Book 1891*, p. 80.

³⁰ *Year Book 1893*, p. 69.

³¹ *Year Book 1897*, p. 123.

³² *Year Book 1892*, p. 89.

³³ J.H. (later Sir John) Gordon (1850–1923); a SA MLC, 1888–92, 1893–1903.

³⁴ J.V. O'Loghlin (1852–1925); a SA MLC, 1888–1902, MHA (Member of the House of Assembly), 1910–12. A senator for SA 1907, 1913–20 and 1923–25.

praised institutions like the Union Parliament, not only as ‘splendid training grounds’ for would-be politicians, but because ‘they also exerted an educational influence upon constituencies, which was very important, as an intelligent Parliament could only be a reflex of intelligent constituencies’.³⁵ A number of Union Parliamentarians later made names for themselves in public life.³⁶

At the first session of the Australasian Federal Convention which took place in Adelaide in March and April 1897, members adopted a draft constitution for the proposed federal union based on that of 1891. It was amended at the second session held in Sydney in September 1897. The Union Parliament followed events closely and debated the ‘Commonwealth Bill’ at considerable length. On 10 June 1897, a motion by the ‘Premier’, W.G. Auld (Rose Park Literary Society), that a nine-member committee be appointed to examine the Bill, was agreed to.³⁷ Few substantive recommendations appeared in the two reports of this ‘Drafting Committee’, a committee clearly inspired by those which had played an integral part in the deliberations of the Adelaide Convention. Patrick McMahon Glynn and J.H. (later Sir Josiah) Symon, presidents of the South Australian Literary Societies Union in 1895 and 1898, were among the SA representatives at the Convention, Symon serving as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Both were later members of the first federal parliament. The most interesting Union Parliament intervention in relation to the ‘Commonwealth Bill’ was made by S.B. Hunt (Rose Park Literary Society). Hunt’s proposal, similar to one put forward by Glynn at the Adelaide Convention, was that the words ‘invoking Divine guidance’ be inserted in the Bill’s preamble. Hunt’s words were accepted and his motion successful.³⁸ Although the spirit of Glynn’s proposal was taken up, his form of words—‘invoking Divine Providence’—was rejected after robust debate in favour of ‘humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God’.³⁹

In Melbourne from January to March 1898, at the Federal Convention’s third session, a ‘Draft of a Bill to Constitute the Commonwealth of Australia’ was adopted for enactment by the British Parliament. It was also decided to allow a popular vote on the decision. On 28 April 1898, Symon, as ‘Governor’ of the Union Parliament, assured members in his opening speech that ‘no effort will be spared to ensure an intelligent vote being given’. Union Parliamentarians signalled their approval of the ‘Commonwealth Bill’ on the voices on 26 May 1898.⁴⁰

³⁵ *Year Book 1893*, pp. 71–72. Kingston spoke on 23 April 1891. Gordon, Brooker and O’Loughlin’s comments were made on 21 April 1892.

³⁶ For example, E.A. Anstey, E.L. Batchelor, B. Benny, E.E. Cleland, W.J. Denny, H.R. Homburg, R. Homburg, A. Poynton and J.H. Vaughan.

³⁷ *Year Book 1898*, pp. 57–58.

³⁸ *Year Book 1898*, pp. 59–60.

³⁹ *Official Record of the Debates of the Australasian Federal Convention*, 22 April 1897, pp. 1184–86, 1188–89; Sir Robert Garran, *Prosper the Commonwealth*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1958, p. 113. As Garran put it: ‘The Convention was sympathetic in principle with Glynn’s appeal, but critical of his form of words.’

⁴⁰ *Year Book 1899*, pp. 68–69.

Voting for the Bill at popular referenda later that year was strong, especially in South Australia, although progress was delayed by insufficient support in New South Wales. The impasse created by the uncertainty of New South Wales electors was resolved at a Premiers' Conference and by the further amendment of the Bill in January and February 1899. Sir Charles Todd, 'Governor' in 1899, told Union Parliamentarians on 27 April that the Bill, soon to be re-submitted, this time successfully, to a referendum, enjoyed 'the cordial and active support of my Ministers, [who] trust that Federation will shortly be accomplished,' while on 31 August 1899, the Union Parliament resolved 'that an address be forwarded for presentation to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, praying that Her Majesty may be pleased to cause a measure to be submitted to the Imperial Parliament to give effect to the Federal Constitution of Australasia'.⁴¹ Like most such addresses devised by Union Parliamentarians this was almost certainly consigned to the wastepaper basket. In the event, the 'Commonwealth Bill' creating Australia received the Royal Assent on 9 July 1900, and the new nation came into being on 1 January 1901.

The issue of federation had provided a great fillip to Union Parliament membership, which stood at 104 in 1899, the highest number since 1893. This ensured that there were many voices to debate an issue which came to assume great importance to the Union and state parliaments: future South Australian electoral and voting arrangements under the new Commonwealth. The opening shot was fired by the ubiquitous J.G. Jenkins, now South Australia's Chief Secretary. As acting 'Governor', in the absence through illness of the 'Governor', Dr E.C. Stirling, Jenkins told members on 10 May 1900 that 'on the accomplishment of Federation you will be asked to consider the advisability of altering the electoral districts for both Houses, with a view of reducing the number of representatives. In that event you will be asked to reduce the salaries of [Union Parliament] Ministers and members'.⁴² The first part of this proposal was more welcome to Union Parliamentarians than the second. In July and August 1900 Union Parliament members debated several measures initiated by the 'Premier', F.W. Richards (Maughan Church Literary Society), regarding South Australia's electoral and voting arrangements as a state of the approaching Commonwealth. Most controversial of these was the proposal 'that the whole of the Province be one electorate for the election of members of the Federal House of Representatives, and that the Hare-Spence system of effective proportional voting be adopted in elections for both Federal Houses of Parliament'.⁴³ Union Parliamentarians debated the proposal keenly on this occasion, and, as in the state Parliament, controversy continued for years over 'Hare-Spence', the South Australian reformer Catherine Helen Spence's modified version of Thomas Hare's proportional representation system, which was aimed at securing better representation for minorities. Miss Spence, an unsuccessful Federal Convention candidate in 1897, campaigned in vain in 1899 and 1900 for the introduction of 'effective voting' (a form of proportional representation) in federal elections. Her supporters persisted, most notably the former Union Parliament member, Howard

⁴¹ *Year Book 1900*, pp. 69, 74.

⁴² *Year Book 1901*, p. 67.

⁴³ *Year Book 1901*, pp. 69–74.

Vaughan, who drafted South Australia's first proportional representation bill in 1902. It was rejected annually by South Australia's Parliament eight times.

On 9 May 1901, the Duke of York (later King George V) opened the first Commonwealth Parliament in Melbourne. That evening in Adelaide, at its first meeting for the month, the Union Parliament's House Committee presented its report on future parliamentary discussion of 'Federal legislation'. The Committee recommended that the Union Parliament be conducted as a 'State House', on the grounds that the Parliament was better able to deal with state concerns than federal ones. W.L. (later Sir Lennon) Raws (Flinders Street Baptist Literary Society), dissented, arguing that the Union Parliament should be conducted as a 'Federal House', the discussion of federal matters being of 'supreme importance'. Perhaps emboldened by the achievement of federation, J.T. Kirkman (Pirie Street Literary Society), took the opportunity to move 'that an address be presented to His Majesty King Edward VII, praying His Majesty to allow the Constitution of the State of South Australia to be so amended as to give its people the power of electing their own Governor'.⁴⁴

Federation had come to pass and the great attention accorded the subject by the Union Parliament over the preceding seventeen years reflected well on its members. There was clearly considerable interest in and support for federation among Union Parliamentarians. Did they see themselves, however, as contributing very much that was original to the federation debate, or were they content with merely reaffirming the persuasive and widely-accepted pro-federation sentiments of leading colonial advocates of a federal union, particularly those such as Symon and Glynn, who were powers in the Literary Societies' Union? Did most of them agree with J.C. Hamp, who was convinced that 'the wisdom of statesmen', rather than the vision of electors, was the main force behind federation? Or, like W. Guthrie, did they believe that voters were much more interested in, and informed about, the subject than Hamp would concede?⁴⁵ Union Parliament records, notably its Hansards, suggest that the majority of Union Parliamentarians, who came from all stations in life, favoured federation well before the mass enthusiasm for a federal compact began gathering final momentum. In this, rather than just repeating or echoing the opinions of the colony's leading pro-federation public men, they were assuredly representative of the majority of South Australian voters, who, as early as the mid-1880s, strongly supported moves towards federation. From the early 1890s Union Parliamentarians were also intent on securing greater public involvement in the federation process.

⁴⁴ *UP Votes and Proceedings*, 9 May 1901, p. 7–8.

⁴⁵ *UP Hansard*, 17 July 1890, pp. 29, 31.

On 9 May 1901, the Duke of York opened the first Commonwealth Parliament in Melbourne. That evening, at its first meeting for the month, the Union Parliament House Committee presented its report—reproduced in the above *Votes and Proceedings*—on whether the Parliament should conduct itself in future as a ‘Federal’ or a ‘State’ House.

The matter was listed for debate in the above *Notice Paper* a fortnight later.

Union Parliament Votes and Proceedings, 9 May 1901 and *Notice Paper*, 23 May 1901 (looseleaf)
Mortlock Library, State Library of South Australia

The fortunes of the Union Parliament continued to prosper after federation. On 14 July 1904, one hundred and sixty-three past and present members of the Union Parliament celebrated its coming of age at a dinner in the banqueting room of the Adelaide Town Hall, in the presence of South Australia's Governor, Sir George Le Hunte. His Excellency presided over a gathering which included most of the luminaries of Union Parliament history. Among those present were J.G. Jenkins, Premier of South Australia since 1901, and W.B. Propsting, a Member of the Union Parliament in the mid-1880s, who had resigned three days before as Premier of Tasmania. Despite some setbacks, such as a serious decline in membership in the mid-1910s, the institution appeared to adapt inventively to new times. Constitutional arrangements and electoral matters remained of great interest to Union Parliament members. The 'Ministerial Policy' statement of the thirty-second Union Parliament's reformist ministry listed the following legislative proposals under the heading 'Constitutional Reform': (a) Elective Ministries, (b) Dual Vote for Legislative Council, (c) Compulsory Enrolment, (d) One Electoral Roll for Commonwealth and State.⁴⁶ There is no evidence that its members regretted the creation of an Australian Commonwealth.

The proceedings of the Union Parliament, which until the First World War had resembled those of a colonial Parliament during the heyday of responsible government, were increasingly characterized by over-serious debates between conservatives and reformers. The days of Union Parliament smoking socials, Torrens River cruises, billiards tournaments and card evenings were long past. A Labor Government, led by C.S. McHugh,⁴⁷ took office for the first time in the Union Parliament on 25 September 1918. Its more radical policies—'to democratise the Upper House with a view to its ultimate abolition'⁴⁸—were much criticised by, among other conservative members, the young George McLeay⁴⁹ (St Andrew's Literary Association). The end for the Union Parliament came very suddenly. Whether this was caused by the social changes resulting from the First World War, or by a conservative boycott of the now Labor-dominated Parliament, is unclear. Only eleven members, representing eight societies, attended its final meeting on 30 October 1918. The last Union Parliament Notice Paper, dated 20 November 1918, had already been printed, but its contents were never debated. An admirable example of participative democracy, which flourished during a period when civic pride and public virtue were valued more highly than they are today, an institution very much of its time thus passed into history.

⁴⁶ *UP, Ministerial Policy Statement*, 17 June 1915, p. 13.

⁴⁷ C.S. McHugh (1887–1927); a Senator for SA, 1923–27. McHugh was one of a number of members elected by Union Parliamentarians, rather than by literary societies, a practice introduced in the early 1910s.

⁴⁸ *UP Votes and Proceedings*, 25 September 1918, p. 21.

⁴⁹ G. McLeay (1894–1955); a Senator for SA, 1935–47, 1950–55.