

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH
OF AUSTRALIA.

EMPIRE PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

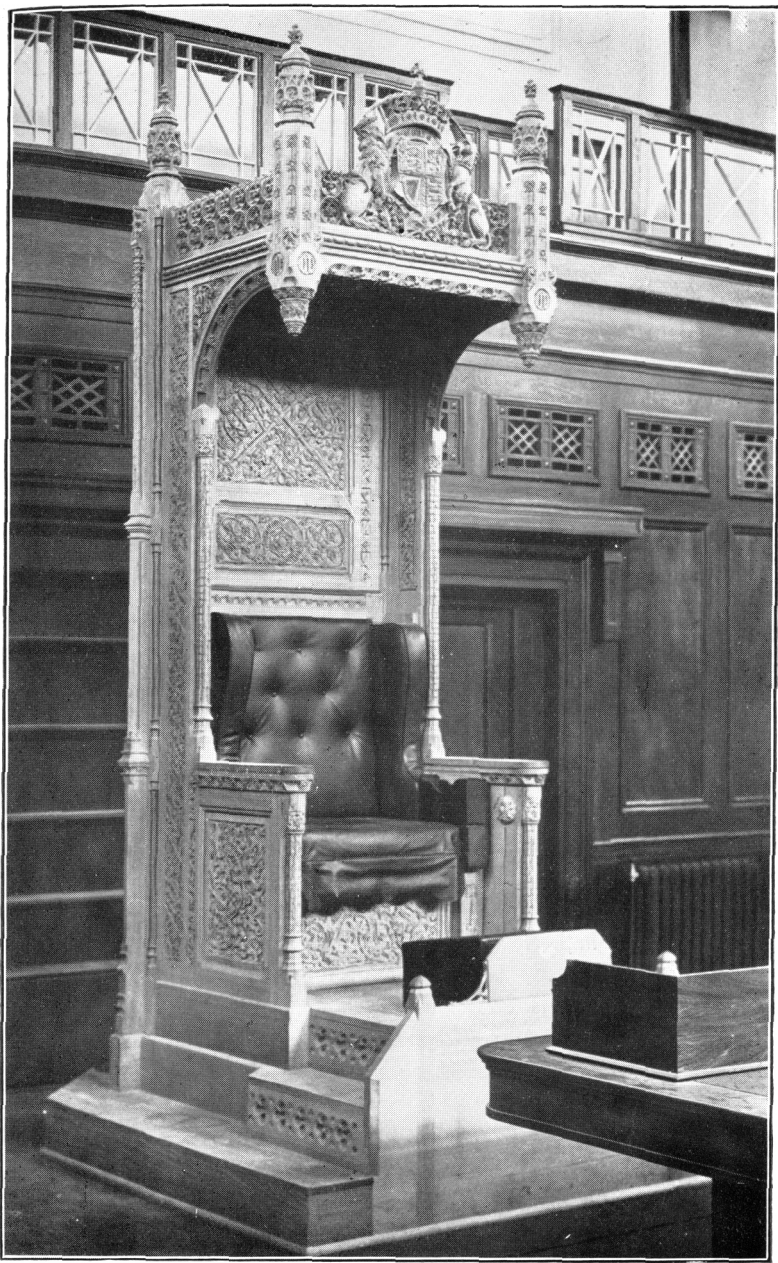
Report of the Proceedings on
the occasion of the Presentation,
at Canberra, of the Speaker's
Chair, 11th October, 1926.

By AUTHORITY :
H. J. GREEN, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

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SPEAKER'S CHAIR,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, CANBERRA.

PRESENTED, ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED KINGDOM BRANCH OF THE EMPIRE
PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION, BY THE MARQUESS OF SALISBURY, K.G.,
AT CANBERRA, 11th OCTOBER, 1926.

The Chair and the beautiful replica are from the design of Pugin, who was responsible for so much of the fine woodwork of the British Houses of Parliament.

In the replica for the Australian Commonwealth House of Representatives the original chair has been carefully reproduced and is a faithful copy of the original work. Many photographs, plaster casts and other details have been taken and faithfully followed. The foliated canopy, the intricate carvings and mouldings, and the graceful pinnacles and pendants are fine examples of the carver's art. The Royal Arms which surmount the canopy are carved in old oak taken from the roof of Westminster Hall (1399). The back of the chair contains many delicately worked linen-fold panels, each with the monogram "V.R." and the wreath and intertwined cord. The hinged flaps are of oak from Nelson's flagship, H.M.S. *Victory* (Trafalgar, 21st October, 1805).

On the folded ribbon, amidst the ornate carving on the right side of the chair, is inscribed "*Manus Justa Nardus Memor et Fidelis Mens Conscia Recti*," and on the reverse jamb, "*Nec Prece nec Pretio Libertas in Legibus Hostis Honori Invidia Laus Deo*." (The hand that deals justly is a sweet-smelling ointment. A heedful and faithful mind is conscious of righteousness. [Justice is influenced] neither by entreaties nor gifts. Liberty lies in the laws. Envy is the enemy of honour. Praise be to God.)

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS AT PARLIAMENT
HOUSE, CANBERRA, 11TH OCTOBER, 1926, ON THE
OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE
SPEAKER'S CHAIR TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BY THE UNITED KINGDOM BRANCH
OF THE EMPIRE PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION.

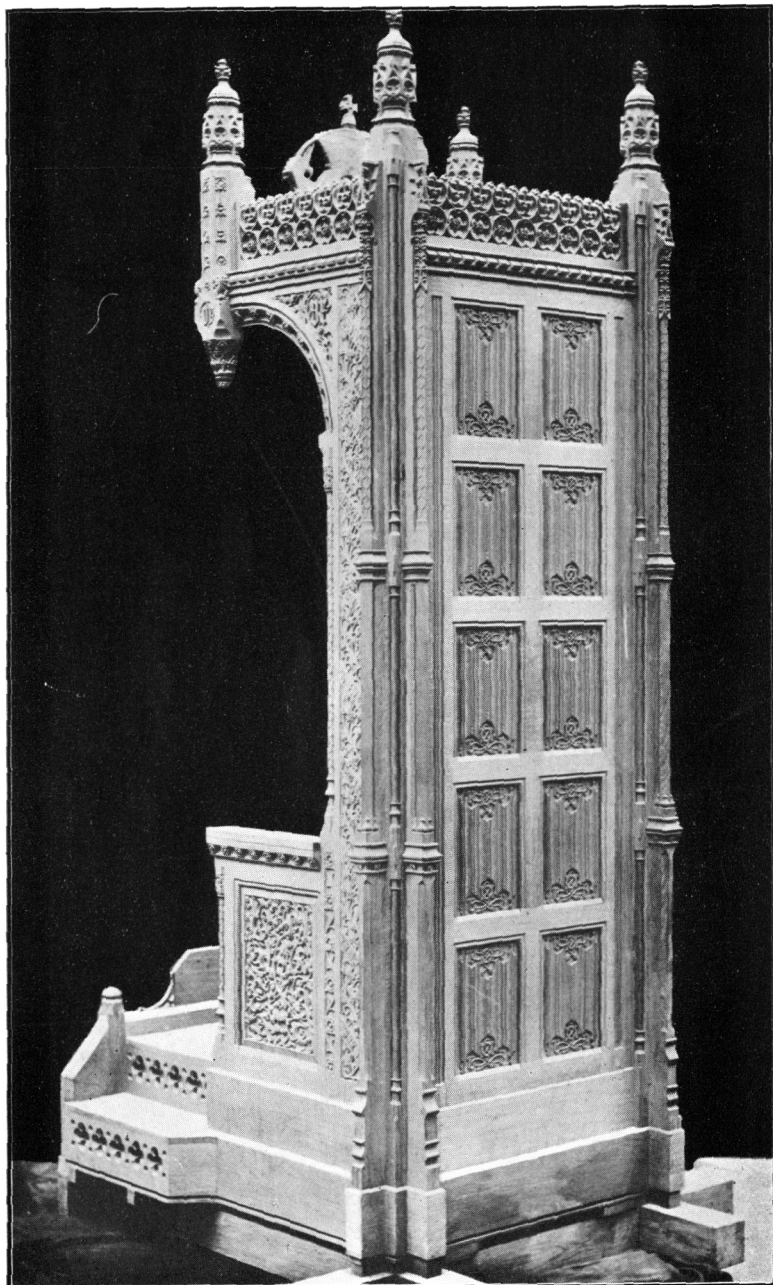


The joint Presidents of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association (Senator the Hon. John Newlands, C.B.E. (President of the Senate), and the Hon. Sir Littleton Groom, K.C.M.G., K.C. (Speaker of the House of Representatives)) presided. The gathering included members of the Overseas Delegations, members of the Commonwealth of Australia Branch, the Federal Capital Commission, and representatives of official and civic activities within the Federal Capital Territory.

The Hon. Sir LITTLETON GROOM, opening the proceedings, said :—

My Lord, Members of the Visiting Delegations, ladies and gentlemen.—On behalf of the members of the Commonwealth of Australia Branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association, we extend to you a very hearty welcome to our Federal City, and particularly to what is to be our future home. This is not the first occasion upon which a delegation from the United Kingdom Branch has visited us, but we are honoured in this instance by the company of members of, not only the parent branch, but also branches throughout the whole of His Majesty's Dominions.

We have met to witness a most interesting ceremony, and it is my privilege to perform the conventional duty of introducing the speakers who will participate in it. I have much pleasure in inviting the Rt. Hon. the Marquess of Salisbury to address you. He bears a name that is honoured in the annals of the British Empire, and we may truthfully say that he has added lustre to it.



SPEAKER'S CHAIR (BACK PORTION).

The MARQUESS OF SALISBURY (Chairman of the Overseas Delegates).—In responding, with no small amount of diffidence, to the invitation which you, Mr. Speaker, have so kindly extended to me, I think it fitting that, as a humble colleague of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, I should, at the outset, read a letter which he has addressed to me in regard to the present ceremony. He writes :—

“ On the occasion of the presentation of the Speaker’s Chair, and the Parliamentary Conference at Canberra, I would like you to convey to our colleagues in the Parliament of the Australian Commonwealth, and to the representatives of all other Parliaments of the Empire gathered together for the first meeting held in the new Federal Parliament House, the best wishes of myself and my Government.

I feel that this first meeting in the new House is of a historic character, not only on account of the presentation of the Chair, which will, I hope, be a symbol for all time of the goodwill of Members in the Parliament of Westminster for Members in the Parliament of the Australian Commonwealth, but because of the valuable interchange of views which should result from the informal discussions amongst members of all parties in all Parliaments.

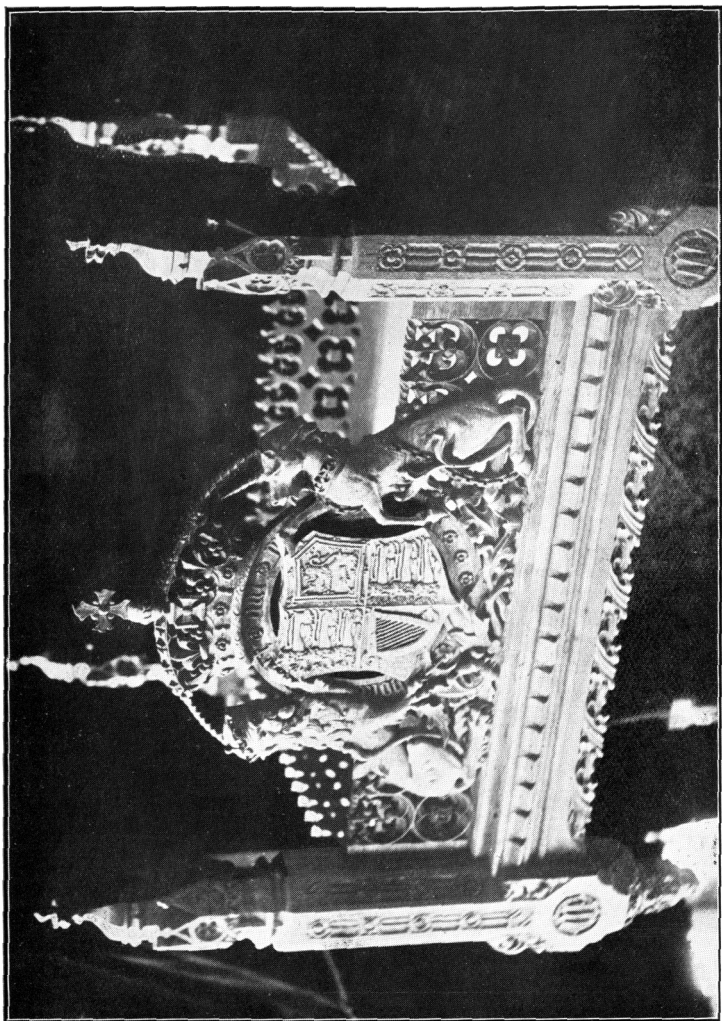
With every good wish,

I remain, yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) STANLEY BALDWIN.”

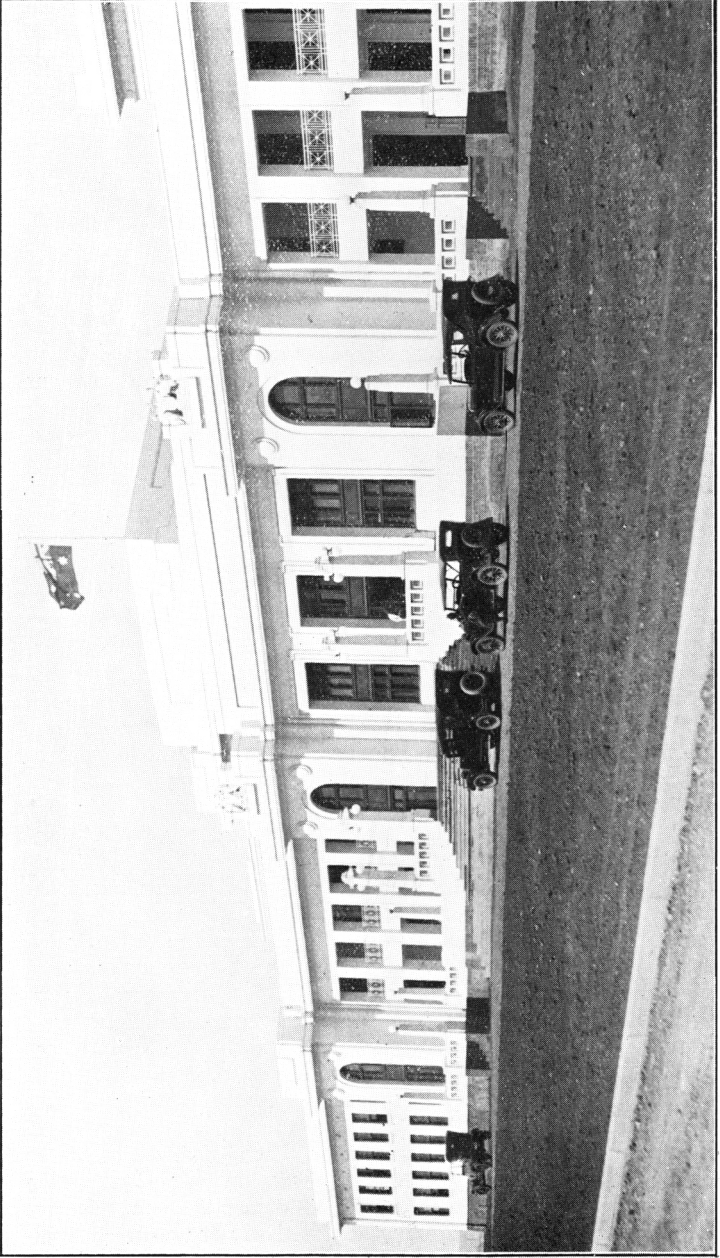
For the moment I divest myself of the high honour of the Chairmanship of the Empire Parliamentary Delegation which has been conferred upon me, and on behalf of the United Kingdom Branch of the Association offer to you, as representing the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, the Speaker’s Chair. In doing so, I feel that my position is somewhat singular. This is a Chair for the House of Representatives ; but I am not a Representative. I am a member of the Upper House, which sits in, shall I say, not a representative capacity, in the Old Land, and I am called upon to stand here on behalf of my co-delegates from the British House of Commons, any one of whom would be better fitted than I to make this presentation. I can only plead, Sir, on my own behalf, that I have been in Parliament for no less than 40 years, and that seventeen of those years were spent in the House of Commons itself. In the circumstances, therefore, my colleagues of the House of Commons will, perhaps, forgive me.

This is, indeed, a most notable occasion. This gift, to a modern Parliament, representing a community which has a great future, is from the House of Commons and the House of Lords, whose roots stretch back into the far distant past. Even the material of which the chair is composed speaks of some of the greatest moments of



SPEAKER'S CHAIR (COAT OF ARMS).

British history. It will remind you of a glorious period in British history when a great hero of the sea added lustre to British arms, and you will be reminded by it also of an old building, representing in the highest degree the triumph of British art, which stands in the historic setting of Westminster, and has been the scene of many mighty events in our annals. Since this Chair, in its material, and in its significance as a gift to the Parliament of the Commonwealth, is a personification of our institutions in the Old Country, I may be allowed to say a word or two upon that subject. We are told that democracy is on its trial, and that representative institutions are no longer fitted for the age in which we live. Mr. Speaker, it is possible that representative institutions, as we know them in the Empire to-day, do not suit other countries. After all, they are a British conception. They are an accurate representation of the British conception of government, and they fit us and, may I say, our children, as the skin fits a human being. They have grown with our growth; they have adapted themselves to our successive experiences. They are English of the English, British of the British, and I am never surprised when I hear that foreigners cannot manage them. Indeed, they are a splendid example of the genius of our race—a living organism, changing, of course, but changing within certain limits which maintain their great traditions. Much of the practice which governs them is unwritten. As every member of Parliament here, to whatever branch of the legislature he belongs, will recognize, it is not only the Standing Orders which govern us, but a great traditional practice. The whole is subject to the influence and government of what is called the feeling of the House, which is supreme, and, in its very essence, depends upon public opinion. It represents public opinion. It is the embodiment of the opinion of the electors, and the public opinion of the elected, and the principles for which it stands can be properly applied only in a spirit of loyalty to the institutions to which we belong, and of consideration for the minority. That is the very essence of our Parliamentary institutions. Every Minister in office remembers that some day he must be in Opposition, and every Leader in Opposition hopes that some day he will be in office. The consideration which those reflections import is responsible for the high courtesy which characterizes the proceedings of our Houses of Parliament. Everything in England—everything in Britain—everything in our great self-governing dominions depends upon the majority and the influence of public opinion. Ministers are in office to represent, not their own views, but those of their supporters, and the growing practice of which I have spoken, adapting itself to the needs of the moment, is of intense value to a great community. It is not well to be too precise. There are always reserve powers in our Constitution which can be used when public opinion demands them. I have tried to sketch, in a few words, what this living organism—this all-powerful Parliament—is. I know it is governed sometimes by



FEDERAL PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA (FRONT ENTRANCE).

party spirit. Of that I am not ashamed; I myself have always been a party man. But ranged alongside that party spirit there must be, if the institution is to succeed, a sense of deep responsibility, a determination to make the institution work, and a high regard for what the interests of Parliament and the country demand. If we work in that spirit, then the symbol, which in a moment I shall unveil before you, will stand for all time as the embodiment of the ordered Government of a great people, and as an example to the rest of the world of what the political traditions and administrative genius of the British people can accomplish.

I have here, Mr. Speaker, a roll upon which are recorded the names of those who have joined in making the present which I am about to unveil, and I hope it will be accepted by you, Sir, on behalf of the Parliament, as a record. I have only, in conclusion, to express my humble thanks for the kindly attention with which you have listened to me, and our profound appreciation of the welcome—the “brotherly” welcome, if I may use the phrase—which you have afforded us. I can assure you that, to the last days of our lives, we shall recollect with gratitude the kindness of the people and Parliament of Australia.

The Marquess of Salisbury having unveiled the Chair, the Speaker of the House of Representatives (the Hon. Sir LITTLETON GROOM) then delivered the following address:—

My Lord and Members of the United Kingdom Branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association.—The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia accepts most gratefully and with pride the magnificent gift which you have presented. It will long be treasured by the people of Australia as one of their most sacred historic possessions. It stands here as a connecting link between the great mother of Parliaments and the free Parliament of the great Commonwealth of Australia, as emblematic of Parliamentary Government, and of our Parliamentary institutions. If there is one gift for which civilization has to be thankful to our nation, it is the gift of a model of a free Parliamentary institution. The mother of Parliaments has presented that gift to all the great Dominions across the seas, and we here recognize that, in our legislature, we have a free people exercising its sovereign power through a well-known institution for the purpose of securing freedom, liberty, and justice amongst the citizens of the Commonwealth. To-day, in your presence, we desire to express our grateful recognition of this great inheritance.

This Chair also stands for the authority of Parliament, for its honour and for its dignity. Be assured that this presentation will inspire us all as members with the desire to worthily maintain the traditions of that great Parliament across the seas. We do not forget that in a Chair like this, for a long period of time, a line of

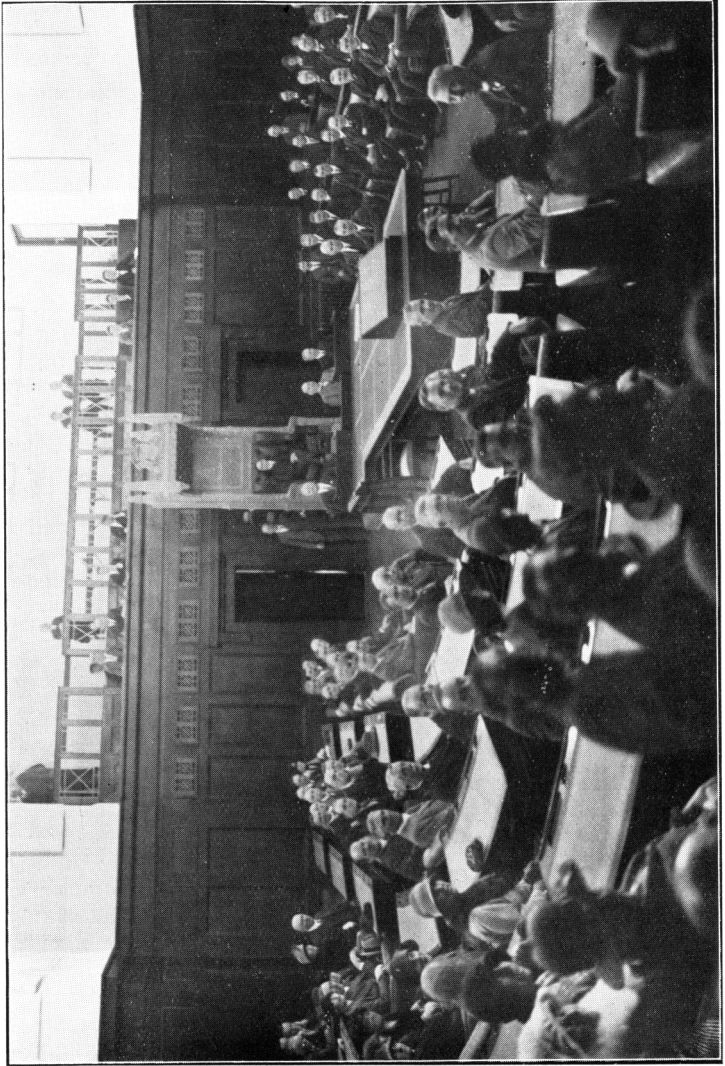


DELEGATES OF EMPIRE PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION AND VISITING FEDERAL MEMBERS.

illustrious men has presided over the destinies of the House of Commons. They have preserved its sacred privileges, and secured freedom of speech and liberty to all its component members. Their precedents are accepted as rulings, binding all through the British Empire, wherever Parliamentary institutions exist, and by preserving these precedents and, following them, we have been able to secure that full-matured deliberation of measures combined with freedom of discussion that is absolutely essential for the making of sound laws and the maintenance of a great nation. We are grateful to that line of speakers for their fine traditions, and this Chair will ever be a reminder to us of their grand work.

It speaks also, from the historic associations connected with it, of the great statesmen who have spoken and offered their views before such a chair in the mother of Parliaments. We in this land are ever grateful to those statesmen, great men of the past, who by their wisdom, judgment, and foresight have rendered it possible to build up this Empire on the stable foundations of self-governing communities. We are not forgetful of our historic past. We know, as far as we are concerned in Australia, that the history of our people does not begin from the date of the occupation of this continent by the British. For the proper understanding of our very existence, and what rights and privileges we possess, we have to go back to that island across the seas. We study these rights and privileges and take pride in them, deriving inspiration from them for the building up of the Greater Britain across the seas. We gratefully acknowledge to you our indebtedness to our Motherland. When we gaze upon this Chair we shall be ever mindful of those traditions, and will be careful that Australia will derive from this Chair in this building fresh inspirations to enable us to follow in the steps of your great land. Not only with admiration shall we look upon this Chair, but with deep-rooted affection and goodwill.

This is a unique ceremony. We are about to commence the enactment of national legislation in our own home here in Canberra, where, we hope, free from the dominating influence of any State, to express the will of the Australian people, so that our laws may reflect the matured judgment of the whole of the citizens of the Commonwealth of Australia. We are a new country facing new conditions, necessarily taking a new outlook upon things. We are adapting old principles to new conditions. Our eyes are still turned towards the seas regarding the history of our own race, hoping that, by the guidance of the wisdom and experience of statesmen of the past, we, too, may temper our actions in the future so that we may develop a greater nation here in the Commonwealth of Australia. We rejoice that this is an occasion when all parts of His Majesty's Dominions are here to express their goodwill to us. We all are here in the spirit of unity. By the personal touch we have been privileged to enjoy the grip of the hand of true fellowship. May we henceforth



DELEGATES AND FEDERAL MEMBERS ASSEMBLED IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES' CHAMBER.

cherish the vision of that brotherhood, of the great commonwealth of nations, realizing our ideal, so that it may be an organization for the maintenance of the peace of the world, and the promotion of the material and spiritual welfare of all peoples. We thank you for this gift. It will be dear to us because it is from the hands of you whom we know to be members of each of the parties of the House of Commons, who have sent us some of their most capable representatives. We feel honoured by your visit, and I hope, Sir, when you return, you will tell your colleagues in both Houses how truly grateful we are for this magnificent and historic gift, and that you will also convey to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom our appreciation of the kind wishes conveyed in his most welcome letter.

The Hon. EARLE PAGE (Acting Prime Minister).—On behalf of the people, the Parliament and the Government of Australia, I tender to the Members of the United Kingdom Branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association our thanks for the gift of this Speaker's Chair, which is to grace the National Parliament in its own permanent home here in Canberra. We are deeply sensible of the honour which has been done us by the visit of the leader of the Delegation which is presenting this chair—a man who not only has rendered notable service to the Empire, but comes of a family whose distinguished services have been valuable to the nation for hundreds of years. The people of Australia very deeply appreciate this practical expression of interest, on the part of the British Parliament, in the establishment of the Federal Capital of Australia. Next year we are to have a further demonstration of that interest in this venture of ours when their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York will come to Australia to open the first sitting of the Parliament, in this its permanent home, just as 26 years before His Most Gracious Majesty the King opened the first session of the Federal Parliament which was then housed in its temporary quarters in Melbourne.

We feel that the establishment of this national capital will do much to promote an all-Australian sentiment. It will teach us to think more and more of Australia as a united whole, and also to foster a more intense Australian patriotism. We deeply appreciate this gift to the Australian Parliament from the mother of Parliaments—a gift to the future, as well as to the present legislators of Australia. The Chair will be a fitting and abiding reminder of the loving bond of unity between the British people and this Parliament, and, in fact, the Parliaments throughout the whole of the British Empire. There is no doubt that the sentiment which binds the Empire is founded largely on the kinship of blood, but, to a very large extent, it is due also to the Parliamentary institutions throughout the Empire. These institutions, which sprang from the British people, whose emblem is really in the Chair you have presented to us, stand for the security of the people in all those matters that affect the liberty, freedom, and welfare of the nation.

The material of which the Chair is constructed, quite apart from its beautiful workmanship, makes it of special interest to us. Part of its wood, we understand, has been drawn from Westminster, from the mother of Parliaments itself. It will be to us always a reminder of the wisdom of the statesmen of that great Parliament, and the eloquence of its orators. It will bring vividly to our recollection the illustrious Speakers who have presided over the House of Commons, and have there shown, as the noble Marquess has said, how well Parliamentary institutions work in English-speaking countries.

Another part of the material of the Chair comes, we understand, from H.M.S. *Victory*, Lord Nelson's flagship at Trafalgar. Its wood is of special interest to us. The sight of British oak, drawn from that source, will not only remind us always of the steadfast character of the British people, in prosperity or adversity, but also of the national victory of Trafalgar, as the outcome of which the Empire has had undisputed supremacy of the seas for the last century and a quarter. That was really the factor which permitted the sound and safe development of the various colonies established by Britain throughout the world, permitted the growth of our nationhood, and made possible the formation of the great British commonwealth of nations, which is now becoming a most potent factor in the prosperity and progress of the world. We feel that a Chair, drawn from such sources, will afford inspiration to our statesmen, and assist us to build up gradually a tradition which will be not unworthy of those with which the mother of Parliaments endowed us at the beginning of our national existence. I have much pleasure, Mr. Speaker, in moving a very hearty vote of thanks to the United Kingdom Branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association for this gift to the Australian Parliament and to the Australian people.

Mr. M. CHARLTON (Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives).—I have very much pleasure in seconding the motion which has just been moved by the Hon. the Acting Prime Minister (Dr. Earle Page). It is true, as Mr. Speaker said, that this is a unique occasion. It is unique not only because this is the first ceremony that has taken place in the new home of the Commonwealth Parliament, but also because we have gathered here in the Federal Territory more representatives of the Empire Parliaments than have ever before met in conference. I am very pleased that we have the delegates with us, and that they have been able personally to present to the Australian Parliament this beautiful Chair, which you, Sir, at present adorn.

While listening to those who have preceded me it occurred to me that the description of the British Parliament, as the mother of Parliaments, is most apt. So far as our own Parliament is concerned, every time a difference of opinion arises on a question of procedure, it is debated upon both sides of the House, and then

you, Mr. Speaker, promptly quote *May* to us, and rule accordingly. That is the beginning and the end of the matter. The relationship of the several portions of the Empire may be likened to that of the members of a family with each other and with their mother. When a member of a family is about to set up a home for himself or herself, the mother will present him or her with some token of affection and goodwill. That gift, whatever it may be, is always regarded by the recipient as the most valuable in his or her home. Members of the Federal Parliament, and may I go further and say the people of Australia, will realize that this Chair, the gift of our Mother across the sea, indicates that, although thousands of miles separate us, she *does not forget us in Australia*. Nothing could have been presented to this Parliament which would better convey to us the goodwill of the members of the British Parliament. The gift of this replica of the Speaker's Chair in the House of Commons, by Members of the United Kingdom Branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association, will evoke the admiration of every Australian citizen. I hope that when the delegates return to their homes, after what we all trust will be a pleasant sojourn here, they will take with them a wider understanding of our problems in Australia, and that the free and frank exchange of views will be followed by a solution of some of the difficulties that confront us. I would ask them also to carry back to their colleagues, in the House of Commons, the appreciation and sincere thanks of every Member of the Australian Parliament, and of the citizens of Australia for their magnificent gift.

Sir LITTLETON GROOM.—I am going to ask those present *to break away from Parliamentary tradition and to carry the motion in an extra-Parliamentary way*. An additional advantage will accrue from that procedure in that it will enable Australian citizens, who are not Members of Parliament, and who are with us to-day, to join in the adoption of the motion.

The motion was carried by acclamation.

The rendering of the National Anthem concluded the proceedings.