

From Our Special Correspondent:
Alfred Deakin's letters to the
London Morning Post



Volume 12: 1912–14

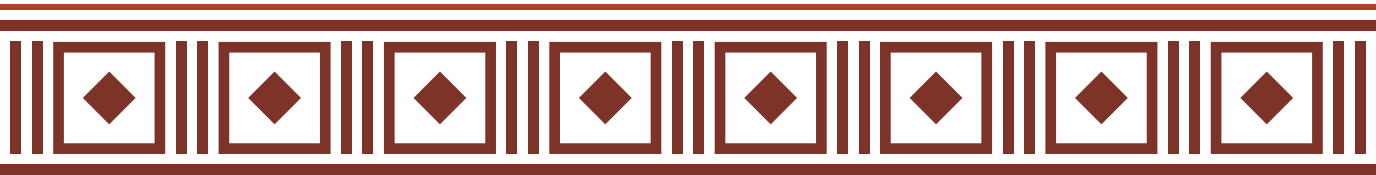
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London Morning Post

— Volume 12 —

1912–14



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Front cover: *Advance Australia*: postcard of Alfred Deakin with selected flora and fauna of Australia and a composite coat of arms, printed between 1903 and 1910.

(National Library of Australia, nla.obj-153093943)



Portrait of Alfred Deakin after a party meeting and retirement plan, 22 January 1913, photograph, *The Argus*.

(Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia, MS 1540, 19-7, nla.obj-226157761)

Acknowledgements

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The Fisher Ministry, 29 April 1910 to 24 June 1913, photograph, National Library of Australia, nla.obj-136659193

Photograph of the first Liberal Cabinet: PM Glynn, Sir John Forrest, Joseph Cook, LE Groom, WH Irvine, JH McColl, ED Millen, A Wynne, JS Clemens and WH Kelly, Personal Papers of Prime Minister Cook, National Archives of Australia, M3798, 1

The Cook Ministry, 24 June 1913 to 17 September 1914, Australian War Memorial, Accession No. A02818

The Fisher Ministry, 17 September 1914 to 20 October 1915, Australian War Memorial, A02819

Alfred Deakin at Point Lonsdale, posing for a portrait by AT Woodward, 1910, Brookes family, Alfred Deakin Photographic Collection, Deakin University, <http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30006291>

Introduction to the series

In January 1901, the London *Morning Post* newspaper published ‘The Australian Union’, the first piece from its new ‘Special Correspondent’. Dated ‘Sydney, Nov. 29’, the article offered the *Post*’s readers an intimate, engaging and remarkably well informed commentary on Australia on the eve of Federation. The anonymous correspondent was Alfred Deakin who had, only two days before the article’s publication, been appointed the first Attorney-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

A leading federalist, Deakin dominated national politics until 1910, serving as Prime Minister no less than three times (September 1903–April 1904, July 1905–November 1908 and June 1909–April 1910) before finally leaving politics in May 1913. Throughout this period, he continued to write as the *Morning Post*’s correspondent on Australian affairs, offering purportedly ‘frank commentaries ... on Australian politics and politicians, including himself’.¹

Deakin had been introduced to the *Morning Post*’s proprietor, Algernon Borthwick, Baron Glenesk, and editor, James Nicol Dunn, when in London from March to May 1900 to help smooth the passage of the *Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act* through the British Parliament.² It was a happy meeting of minds. Lord Glenesk was considering ‘the appointment of a regular Australian Correspondent, now that the new federation ... was about to be inaugurated’.³ Deakin, for his part, had long lamented the ‘absolute though innocent ignorance’ in England of the ‘aspirations of the colonies’, its press chronicling ‘very little regarding the colonies save cricket matches and other like matters, while the colonial press was full of information regarding every political or social movement of the mother country’.⁴

The terms of engagement were subsequently brokered by Philip Mennell, Deakin’s friend and the contributing editor of the *British Australasian and New Zealand Mail*. In November 1900, Deakin, who had worked as a journalist at *The Age* before entering the Victorian Parliament, accepted Glenesk’s invitation to contribute a weekly letter on Australian affairs for £500 a year.⁵ His appointment was formally confirmed in March 1901.⁶

While the arrangement was originally to last a year, Deakin continued to write for the *Morning Post* until the end of 1914, notwithstanding the concerns of its editor that the first letter ‘was a little too straight in its hits’ at NSW Premier William Lyne:

I know that in the colonies and in America plain speaking about public men is the rule. Here we are more accustomed to diplomatic phrases, our golden rule being that no matter how severely you attack a man you should so express it that you could dine with him immediately afterwards ...

What is wanted is admirably expressed in your private letter—that you should enable Englishmen to follow political material & social development all over Australia in a general way so as gradually to bring them in touch with that part of the Empire.⁷

Evidently the *Morning Post* quickly applied itself to the task of ensuring that diplomacy prevailed, for in May 1901 Menzell wrote to Deakin complaining:

I do not believe in your being a curbed force. What people here want to know is Australian opinion, not Australian opinion as manufactured and interpreted to suit the M.P.⁸

Menzell went so far as to recommend Deakin find another outlet for his letters.⁹ However, Deakin did not act on this advice and his letters appeared in the *Morning Post* (generally) weekly until August 1911, tapering then to one every three weeks.¹⁰ Over this period, some 600 letters, amounting to around one million words of commentary on contemporary Australian life and politics were published, variously titled ‘The Australian Union’, ‘The New Commonwealth’, ‘Federated Australia’ and ‘the Commonwealth of Australia’.¹¹ It is worth noting that, between 1904 and 1905, Deakin also wrote anonymous monthly feature articles for the *National Review*. Both papers had an Australian readership.

Deakin took pains to ensure that knowledge of his role as ‘special correspondent’ was limited to a small circle in Australia and London. This tight group included Thomas Bavin, a future NSW Premier and former Private Secretary to both Deakin and Edmund Barton. Bavin collaborated in the writing of the letters between 1907 and 1911.¹² The letters generally bore a Sydney dateline, and adopted a Sydney, Free-trade, point of view (‘our city’, ‘our Premier’);¹³ and included criticism of Deakin himself and of his policies. They were ‘often written, as is apparent when we know the authorship, with a certain ironical enjoyment’.¹⁴ Deakin adopted a pseudonym (‘Andrew Oliver’) and sometimes a cypher for his cables to the *Post*.¹⁵ Necessary precautions were also taken in posting the letters, one of his daughters recalling she was at times asked to ‘address an envelope to the *Morning Post* and to post it, with strict injunctions to secrecy’.¹⁶ Deakin seemed to relish such elaborate machinations, writing in 1907:

The situation is fit for fiction rather than real life and that is one of its attractions though its responsibilities are hazardous in the extreme.¹⁷

Remarkably, the arrangement remained private for several years after his death. Deakin's authorship of the letters was finally revealed in 1923 by Walter Murdoch in *Alfred Deakin: a sketch*.¹⁸

While the remuneration would have been a welcome addition to his income as a Member of Parliament and minister, Deakin claimed a two-fold motivation for his role as special correspondent:

I write always for a double purpose.—First to inform English readers of the inner meaning of Australian politics so far as it can be told now and in that way.—Next as a series of notes for study of the origin and growth of the Commonwealth in its earliest years.—Not a big book, but a short and simple summary of its facts and lessons.¹⁹

Similarly, writing to Fabian Ware (then the *Morning Post's* editor) in 1909, Deakin declared

The Australian letters in the M.P. may have all possible defects but however numerous they are no one who wished to write the history of our last 8 years can go elsewhere for a continuous record.²⁰

Deakin's letters to the *Morning Post* paint a broad canvas of Australian life and experience in the early years of Federation, ranging widely from drought, railways and tariffs to defence, imperial politics, and white Australia. At their heart, however, they are commentaries on Australian politics and political leaders—including himself²¹—and the shifting fortunes of the Protectionist, Free Trade and Labour movements.²² The letters chart the course of early Commonwealth governments and parliaments as they '[put] into actual operation the intricate provisions of the Constitution'²³ and build the new nation.

Deakin seemed untroubled by the conflict of interest intrinsic to what is truly 'one of the most extraordinary episodes in the history of journalism'.²⁴ His biographer and editor La Nauze, having grappled with the motivation for, and the propriety of, this anonymous journalism,²⁵ concludes, plangently, that historians would regard it as 'in some degree an improper activity for a man holding responsible office for much of the time':²⁶

An English reader would have been made aware of Reid's political skill and platform ability, but would have been led to mistrust him. He would have seen Watson as a remarkable man of great integrity ... but he would constantly have been reminded of the perils of 'machine-politics' and of the extreme aims of the 'ultras'. The Australian Correspondent often criticised Mr Deakin's party ... but he never gave the impression that the country was or would be better served by its rivals.²⁷

Notes on the text

A complete edition of Deakin's *Morning Post* has been long awaited.²⁸ JA La Nauze's 1968 work *Federated Australia* presented a selection of extracts from the letters appearing in the *Morning Post* between 1901 and 1910, ending with the defeat of the third Deakin Government in April that year.²⁹

Once complete, this multi-volume series and epublication will present, without notes, the complete collection of letters published in the *Morning Post* between 1901 and 1914.

The text has been transcribed from newspaper microfilm as none of Deakin's original manuscripts have survived.³⁰ Original headlines and subheadings written by *Morning Post* editors have been retained, as have, generally, spelling, punctuation, capitalisation and other accidentals. Obvious misprints and misspellings have been corrected silently.

The letters are organised chronologically by date of writing. Two dates are provided for each letter, the first being the date of writing, the second that of its publication in the *Morning Post*. Where a letter has been published with an incorrect date of writing, the corrected dates are inserted in square brackets on the basis of the list of published Letters in Appendix II of La Nauze's edition.³¹

Endnotes

- ¹ JA La Nauze in the Introduction to his selected edition of the letters to the *Morning Post*. (A Deakin, *Federated Australia: selections from letters to the Morning Post 1900–1910*, JA La Nauze, ed, Cambridge University Press, Carlton, 1968, p. ix.)
- ² *Federated Australia*, *ibid.*, p. vii.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. viii. See also: JA La Nauze, 'Alfred Deakin and the *Morning Post*', *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, 6(24), May 1955, pp. 361–75, and JA La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin: a biography*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1965, volume 2, pp. 347–61.
- ⁴ 'Banquet to the Colonial Delegates', *The Argus*, 25 May 1887, p. 5.
- ⁵ Philip Mennell cable to Alfred Deakin, NLA MS 1540/7/8–10.
- ⁶ E Peacock letter to Alfred Deakin, NLA MS 1540/7/14.
- ⁷ J Nicol Dunn letter to Alfred Deakin, NLA MS 1540/7/12–13.
- ⁸ Philip Mennell letter to Alfred Deakin, 10 and 26 May 1901, NLA MS 1540/1/613–16, quoted in J Brett, *The enigmatic Mr Deakin*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2017, p. 252.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ *Federated Australia*, *op. cit.*, p. viii.
- ¹¹ 'Alfred Deakin and the *Morning Post*', *op. cit.*, p. 361, 373.
- ¹² *Federated Australia*, *op. cit.*, p. viii.
- ¹³ 'Alfred Deakin and the *Morning Post*', *op. cit.*, p. 369.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ J Nicol Dunn to Alfred Deakin, NLA MS 1540/7/14.
- ¹⁶ Brett, *op. cit.*, p. 242.
- ¹⁷ Quoted in *Federated Australia*, *op. cit.*, p. x.
- ¹⁸ W Murdoch, *Alfred Deakin: a sketch*, Constable & Co. Ltd, Sydney, 1923, p. 252.
- ¹⁹ Alfred Deakin to Richard Jebb, 29 May 1907, quoted in *Alfred Deakin: a biography*, *op. cit.*, volume 2, p. 353.
- ²⁰ Alfred Deakin to F Ware, 4 January 1909, NLA MS 1540/7/45–48, quoted *ibid.*, p. 358.
- ²¹ *Morning Post* editor J Nicol Dunn had at the outset urged Deakin not to put himself 'too much in the background' but, rather, to 'mention [his] own part in affairs as fully as any other body's'. J Nicol Dunn to Alfred Deakin, NLA MS 1540/7/12–13.
- ²² *Federated Australia*, *op. cit.*, p. ix.
- ²³ H Tennyson, 'Prorogation', Senate, *Debates*, 22 October 1903, pp. 6436–37.
- ²⁴ *Alfred Deakin: a biography*, *op. cit.*, volume 1, p. 199.
- ²⁵ *Federated Australia*, *op. cit.*, pp. ix–xii; *Alfred Deakin: a biography*, *op. cit.*, volume 2, pp. 360–61.
- ²⁶ *Federated Australia*, *op. cit.*, p. x.
- ²⁷ *Alfred Deakin: a biography*, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

²⁸ *Federated Australia*, op. cit., p. xv.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 297–99.

— 1912 —



The Fisher Ministry, 29 April 1910 to 24 June 1913

(National Library of Australia, nla.obj-136659193)

Top row (L–R): Ernest Alfred Roberts (SA), Minister without portfolio; Senator Edward Findley (Vic), Minister without portfolio; Charles Edward Frazer (WA), Postmaster-General; Josiah Thomas (NSW), Minister for External Affairs; Francis Gwynne Tudor (Vic), Minister for Trade and Customs

Middle row (L–R): King O'Malley (Tas), Minister for Home Affairs; William Morris Hughes (NSW), Attorney-General; Senator Gregor McGregor (SA), Vice-President of the Executive Council; Egerton Lee Batchelor (SA), Minister for External Affairs (to 8/10/1911); Senator George Foster Pearce (WA), Minister for Defence

Bottom: Andrew Fisher (Qld), Prime Minister and Treasurer

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

LABOUR DOMINATION.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Jan. 16 1912; Feb. 26 1912.

Democracy, south of the Line at all events, has to accept responsibility both for its legitimate and illegitimate offspring as soon as they arrive. When the Constitution of the Commonwealth was drafted by the elect of our politicians, none of its authors foresaw full parental obligations. When the people in every State accepted the scheme prepared by their chosen leaders they gave no indication of expectations at all resembling the actual outcome to-day. Yet a majority of those who federated Australia upon a basis of self-government making the smallest departure possible from British principles, as interpreted up to 1900, have since sanctioned departures from those principles of a most drastic character at the instigation of Labour Socialists. It is true that they have recently refused to forsake those principles altogether, for that is what their acceptance of the Referendum proposals last year would have implied. But we shall have to face the same issue again in April, 1913, if not before, when it is to be forced down our throats at any cost if the Caucus can get its way. More than that, we now find ourselves, ten years after Federation, subject to a new Government for which there is no provision whatever in the Constitution we so recently adopted. We find Federal Ministers sitting in a novel Cabinet, chosen for them by groups outside Parliament, sitting as a Cabinet in secret, and obeying the behests of men who represent only one class, and accept the dictation of the class organisation to which they all belong. The government of Australia has been taken out of the hands of the King's Ministers, and the future policy of its Parliament has been framed outside Parliament by Trades Union delegates. The political destiny of our people has been determined for them by a handful of private citizens, many of them hitherto unknown and most of them militant extremists, aiming at a social revolution through the ballot-box.

THE HOBART CONFERENCE.

Naturally in such circumstances the **Labour Conference** sitting last week at Hobart has occupied the foremost position in public attention. As the real ruling force of a political party, at present absolute master of both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament and of the governing Chambers in three of our six States, it is well entitled

to that pride of place. As the master of our masters even its peculiar methods and the absence of qualifications conspicuous in many of its members cannot detract from its undoubted importance. One visible change merits notice. On this occasion there were fewer of our legislators among the delegates than at any preceding Conference. The change was intentional, and is likely to be pressed further. A jealousy both of Ministers and members who absorb the available limelight at gatherings of this kind although they have Parliament all to themselves is becoming articulate in the Leagues which return those Ministers and members, and who resent being overshadowed by those whom they elevate upon their shoulders. Concerned with policy and policy alone, the ultras cannot but observe that those whom they have elected think first of their seats and then of their portfolios, or prospects of portfolios, to the exclusion or at the expense of the radical remedies they are expected to prescribe in season or out of season. At Hobart members and ex-members still ruled the roast. They dared not moderate or postpone the renewed conflict at the Referendum, from which they were left no escape. But they watered down, modified, or postponed almost everything else, to the great dissatisfaction of the extremists, who consider that they have been already baulked too long. Although in a minority, these supply the driving force of the whole movement. The persistent cry of "Forward" comes from the more aggressive Socialists, who will not allow their aims to be postponed to the political convenience of any fellow emissaries. These, already salaried as administrators or legislators, are anxious to keep those aims in the background as long as they dare.

AN ASSEMBLY OF NONDESCRIPTS.

To realise what this Conference means one must remember that to begin with, of the thirty-six men, six from each State elected to promulgate the party platform for the next three years, there were not half-a-dozen at Hobart whose careers have been sufficiently distinguished to make their names known outside their own States. It would be safe to say of more than half the remainder that they were not known until now outside their own Unions, even in the States in which they reside. The extremely curt *official report* of the proceedings of the Conference, which is all that the public obtained, carefully edited throughout, and as a rule merely recording the results of each vote, leaves these as it found them, mere names. Yet these unknowns make the majorities and shape the policy that will govern the Labour Party until 1915. It is, therefore, this nondescript, ill-equipped, in a sense anonymous, gathering that rules one of the largest, richest, and most attractive regions of the earth. Our citizens legally possess self-government, though the bulk of them either do not exercise their rights at all or do not trouble to use them discriminately. They are content to allow their rights and privileges to become the sport of Conferences, consisting mainly of untrained irresponsibles, often the nominees of cliques in minor organisations.

If our municipal affairs alone were dealt with in this fashion the situation would be pathetically ludicrous. That our national and State Governments and Legislatures should be subject to such an assemblage, exercising authority over all the scope of all their policies, affords a spectacle exhibiting, perhaps, the most amazing perversion of democratic ideals yet witnessed on this planet.

SPLIT AMONG SUPPORTERS OF THE CAUCUS.

So much for the Conference, as such, a phenomenon more significant than all its works and prolifically suggestive. Among its resolutions there is one of immediate and threatening importance, which at the same time stands paramount, owing to its explicit and challenging defiance, both of its opponents and of its own dissentients within its gates. The disastrous defeat of the aggressive policy embodied in the proposals submitted at the Referendum nine months ago is still bitterly resented, both because it expressed the public antagonism to revolutionary amendments of our national Constitution, fatal alike to efficient legislation or administration by the State Parliaments, and also because it equipped the Federal power for entering upon wholesale Socialistic interferences and undertakings. A further and keener grievance was that the hitherto well-disciplined army of biddable Labour electors then proved to be no longer one and indivisible. Certain sections of the supporters of the Caucus, particularly in this State, abstained from voting, while some few were daring enough to vote according to their consciences and against their Deputies. These, however, are all the more determined to become and remain the masters. So we find that at all hazards and at all costs that battle is to be fought over again. The little coterie running the official machinery of the party is mostly drawn from the *Australian Workers' Union*, a rich and domineering body that already tyrannises over our three great eastern States. It has now decided that in no circumstances will it permit any section of its following to exercise an independent judgment upon questions of public policy. Through its many paid agents this coterie already controls the great mass of its own members and their allies, who are well content to take instructions from headquarters. The ultras are rallied behind it to a man. The coming daily newspaper, soon to be published in Sydney under Mr. *J.C. Watson's* able management, will be the mouthpiece of these "whole-hoggers". It will be a serious matter for any Labour man, and a very serious matter for any Unionist, who dares to differ with the despotic clique thus armed and entrenched in the citadel of the party's strength. The strong minorities in New South Wales at the Referendum, including almost every member of our existing State Labour Cabinet, and independent-minded men everywhere, who realised that there was no gain to democracy from the creation of a centralised

Federal despotism in Melbourne or Canberra, are now to be forced under the yoke. But although this gratification of their revenge counts for a good deal with the irreconcilables, there is also a general realisation of the effect upon the military discipline now enforced of any wavering in face of the foe at this juncture.

DEMANDS OF THE LABOUR PARTY.

So far the Labour Party affects never to have withdrawn or modified any of its aims or demands. Some have been gradually transformed, or in a very few instances practically abandoned; but altogether these have not meant much loss or concession. As a rule, the amendments have implied only a change of route to the Socialist goal. But in this instance there is to be no parleying. The flag run up to the masthead at Hobart over the *Amendments of the Constitution of 1911* is that of “no surrender”. Nothing is to be withdrawn; nothing modified; every item of the demands driven despotically through the Federal Parliament in 1910, and defeated at the hustings in 1911, is to be resubmitted; divided, it is true, to permit the electors a right of choice, contemptuously refused last year, but not altered otherwise in a single particular. The Conference in Hobart dictates to every Caucus, through every Caucus to every league and union, and through them to every Labour voter in the Commonwealth, issuing a peremptory mandate, to disobey which will mean expulsion and penalisation. Each and all of them must demand the two Bills, the whole Bills, and nothing but the Bills, lately rejected by the country by a majority of a quarter of a million votes. In effect, therefore, the Conference has formally adopted for the party as a whole the desperate expedient of staking its all upon the hazard of the next Federal Election. Its formal anti-unification motion meant nothing. Should the Caucus succeed, the whole field of Australian legislation will lie at its feet. We shall have “Socialism in our time”; we shall see the States sub-divided into provinces with their local affairs controlled by County Councils. Defeat, on the other hand, will leave the Federalists and Nationalists free to solidify their strength in preparation for a fresh campaign three years after. Looking back, one sees how inevitably the present situation has arisen, and at the same time how critical is the stage at which we have arrived, and in which so much is at stake.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

STATE CONFERENCES.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Feb. 6 1912; Mar. 29 1912.

Long prior to any Union of the Colonies of Australia there were occasional conferences of State Ministries. They assemble at irregular intervals to this day and are likely to continue, but their nature has greatly changed since 1901. These meetings were and are made as pleasant as possible for their visitors by the inviting State. They invariably pass resolutions, many of them high sounding and full of promise; but as a rule most of them drift out of sight. Frequently there are friendly understandings in minor matters that prove practically serviceable. In the Eighties of the last century an endeavour was made to substitute a permanent Federal Council representing all our State Ministries and Oppositions. This was intended to serve as a stepping stone for a more complete Federation, but was paralysed from the outset by the refusal of Sir *Henry Parkes*, then Premier of this State, to take any part in it. Probably its one contribution to the movement for a National Union was that its creation forced his hand and hastened the assembling of the first National Convention of 1891. When, owing in part to the lean years following, the Constitution then prepared was not proceeded with, the conferences continued. As a rule they were rendered nugatory by the fact that there was no sufficient compelling motive to unity of unchanging Cabinets upon matters of most importance. Their demonstration of this fact was probably their contribution to the movement which became irresistible when after three years' fighting, from 1897 to 1899, a final vote in favour of Union was attained. Unfortunately, Sir Henry Parkes had not survived to witness the victory.

GROWTH OF THE LABOUR PARTY.

Then, unexpectedly, our conferences of Premiers, far from ceasing with Federation, acquired a new momentum. An anti-Federal reaction, led by this State, which culminated in open antagonism under Sir *Joseph Carruthers*, aggravated by the disastrous drought of the opening years of the century, presented an opportunity for rallying all the discontents against the new Legislature and the new Government of Australia. For some years this strife assisted to divide the bulk of our baby nation, already angrily taking sides upon the fiscal question. There were other sources of

strife, due to a collision between the Radical elements in the Federal Parliament, headed by the late Mr. Kingston, and their opponents, who found in Sir William McMillan one of their staunchest captains. The State Premiers, supported by their principal colleagues, met frequently, carrying resolutions, criticising and protesting against the policy of the Barton and Deakin Governments. It was during the first ten years of internecine strife, and largely because there were half a dozen Cabinets in the Treasury benches during the period, that the Liberal Party, divided against itself, steadily lost ground. Meanwhile the Labour Party, voting on either side as circumstances invited, grew, until the election of 1910 placed it in absolute supremacy. Owing to our very defective electoral system they captured every Senate seat vacated, although on the total suffrages recorded they were barely entitled to one more than half the number. It was during this decade that Labour Ministers began to appear at the conferences of the States, dividing them on new lines, and in a new fashion. This year one-half of the States' Governments are under caucus control, and but for the absence of the South Australian Premier and his colleagues, who are fighting for their lives against the Liberal Opposition under Mr. Peake, there would have been a tie upon a number of questions. For the first time in our history, therefore, a conference of this kind has been conducted with a new division between two equal parties, whose differences are of quite another character to those with which we have been familiar in these gatherings hitherto. Labour, if not yet conquering all things, is making a determined effort to do so in Australia.

DISAGREEMENT ON IMPORTANT ISSUES.

Of course at Melbourne last week differences of opinion on such matters as a ruling on a railway gauge for Australia, the interests chargeable on the value of transferred properties, and a requisition to the Federal Government to provide assisted passages for 25,000 immigrants each year were not dwelt upon. All were content to accept the decision of the majority present. The several Ministries will act in accord in these regards, if their Legislatures approve, as they probably will. These agreements are themselves sufficient to justify the holding of this Conference, and will commend its members to their several constituencies. On two issues, much the most important, there was a disagreement. So far, the two sets of Labour representatives, Federal and State, are not bound, and are not likely to obtain the support of their parties, so the two other compromises approved the majority. Mr. Holman, our Attorney-General, took a decidedly different line to that adopted by the Hobart Labour Conference, though this body is the final authority, by whose decisions every Labour man is tied hand and foot. But his proposition was radically altered by the Liberal majority, so as to become immensely reduced in scope. The proposals submitted at the last Referendum, which are to be resubmitted at the next, would have endowed the

Federal Parliament with complete authority over the domestic commerce of each and every State, including their roads, their railways, and all the business transactions of their citizens. Mr. Holman strongly resents, and resists, these extensions, on the sound ground that they are “radical and revolutionary changes”, so detrimental to the States as to render it hardly worth their while to carry on. It would “practically leave all vital questions outside the hands of the State Parliaments”. This bold and uncompromising statement is utterly irreconcilable with the Hobart platform, to which Mr. Holman must either bow the knee or else leave his party. Putting the personal issue aside, there remain the serious concessions which he and his Premier, Mr. McGowen, seem prepared to make towards the Hobart demands, but which the Victorian, Queensland, and Tasmanian Governments refuse and condemn. They would allow the Federal Parliament to prevent and settle all industrial disputes, whether within a State or extending beyond it; but the majority insisted that those within State borders should continue wholly under local control. Mr. Holman intended that an industrial award could be applied by the Federal Arbitration Court over the whole or any part of the Commonwealth; but this was restricted by the majority to cases in which a State tribunal has made an award, or in which no State authority has been established over such matters. He would hand over all interstate monopolies to the tender mercies of the Central Legislature. But the Conference held that only those should be dealt with which were declared by the High Court to be in restraint of trade or commerce, to the detriment of the public or other outside monopolies, involving unfair competition in an industry carried on in different States. After this a “New Protection” Clause, drafted by Mr. Holman, granting the Commonwealth special power of taxation over all protected industries, and power to fix prices for their products, was struck out. Altogether he falls far short of the Labour dictators, who emitted their ukase from Hobart, but goes far beyond what the Liberal Cabinets of the states are prepared to concede. Incidentally this attitude makes the present position of our State Attorney-General as a Labour Minister decidedly critical, if not impossible. It leaves the position of the Liberal majority exactly in accord with its well-considered attitude on the last Referendum.

THE STATES’ SAVINGS BANKS.

Bit by bit we are discovering the design at the back of Mr. Fisher’s mind when he dealt so generally with his proposed Commonwealth Bank, and in an even more illusory fashion with its financial foundations. His project of launching this institution with a capital of a million was ridiculed by the Opposition. Only by degrees was he obliged to let it be known that his intention was to commandeer the present deposits of all the States’ Savings Banks in order to supply his deficiency.

These are to be so overshadowed by the new Bank and its Savings Branch that he thinks the State depositors will be tempted to transfer their balances at once to his new venture. His course for trying the experiment might have been more clear if there had been no State Cabinets composed of Labour men. He would have despoiled the Liberal Cabinets with much pleasure. But he was also either unaware of or else ignored the fact that the Savings Bank deposits have been and are being regularly employed in every State by the local Administration for purposes of local development. The agricultural demand for these funds is increasing. To deprive the States, and their new settlers, who are particularly dependent upon loans from this source, would be in the highest degree unwise and unfair. It would certainly be resented. Hence Mr. Fisher's present dilemma and the frequent private conferences he has had with the three Labour Premiers. Their positions will be made intolerable if his project is pursued. Our Premier, Mr. McGowen, bluntly said that it "puts up a Czar with absolute power" over the resources of the States. Mr. Fisher's offer at first was that the States' Savings Banks might retain 75 per cent. of their receipts while he should receive the balance, both sharing in all expenses and profits. The Premiers replied offering under protest to yield the share of their receipts he required providing he did not compete with them through a Federal savings branch. This offer was promptly declined, whereupon the majority of the Premiers under pressure agreed to concede him 25 per cent. subject to the States obtaining "an equitable share in the management of the Bank". In the meantime, of course, the Governments not under Caucus control are making fresh concessions to their Savings Bank customers, preparing for a campaign of competition all over their constituencies. A duel of this kind will be deplorable. Since the same people will be proprietors and clients both of the Federal and or the States' Savings Banks, a rivalry of this nature can only cost us increased expenses without any increased gains. This unscrupulous raid of one of our Cabinets upon the domains of its associate Cabinets at the cost of the taxpayers who have to finance both is typical of the whole policy of the Labour Party. Mohammedans are not more fanatically disdainful of all outside the Koran than our Caucus is of any practice, institution, or doctrine outside the sacred "platform" just revised and reissued from Hobart. Its insistence upon another Referendum alters profoundly the whole political situation.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

STRIKES AT BRISBANE.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Feb. 27 1912; Apr. 5 1912.

Thoughtful Australians realise the gravity of the present epidemic of industrial outbreaks in England and the possible paralysis of your social life by a gigantic coal strike. A struggle, perhaps national, perhaps international, seems impending, the loss and cost of which would be incalculable, and under such conditions your readers will naturally follow with deeper interest than heretofore the same spirit of unrest in remote and self-centred Australia manifesting itself in similar attempts to seize by violence the reins of government from the Government. The excesses from which you now suffer are being quoted as precedents on this side of the globe to incite the dominating influences in the Labour Leagues to aim at attaining their revolutionary ends, no matter what the cost to their followers or to the community. Our Brisbane strike began ostensibly on the ground that the conductors of the tramways in that city were not allowed to wear the badges of their Union while on duty, because of the discrimination that would then be made against their non-Unionist comrades. They would have been made the targets for insults, and perhaps assaults at the hands of the belligerent fanatics at the tail of their party. There have been the inevitable consequences elsewhere. A general application had been made to the Arbitration Court that could have embraced the issue as to the badges, but for unexplained reasons the Union was not willing even to wait for its decision. They found forty-three other Unions reckless enough to plunge into a conflict, in which they had no direct or business interest, simply as a class war. They began confident of almost instant victory. How could the Tramway Company, or the **Employers' Union**, or both, resist demands backed by forty-four massed Unions? Their refusal to work, though forty-three of them had no grievance, would put the capital city of Queensland, with all its trade, its shipping, and, as they at first believed, its railways also, so absolutely under the control of the insurgents that they could dictate their own terms. In this faith, and while an appeal to the Court was still open, they all struck work. Crowded meetings of bitterly angry and arrogant men wildly cheered the leaders, who promised their rash followers an immediate triumph.

REPRESSION OF DISORDER.

The Queensland Government found itself at once face to face with a complete stoppage of business, the city streets blocked with excited and sometimes bellicose crowds, occupied in public demonstrations of a magnitude beyond the control of the police, and rapidly diminishing stores of food. The Unionists relied upon the living needs of the community and their own organised numbers to make and keep them absolute masters of the situation. In these straits Mr. Denham, the Premier, naturally appealed to our Prime Minister, under a mandatory clause of the Constitution, which requires the Commonwealth, on the application of the Government of a State to protect it, *inter alia*, "against domestic violence". Mr. Fisher and his Cabinet curtly declined to do their duty. He refused to accord to Brisbane in its distress either the protection of the National Militia or the military. He personally and publicly subscribed to the funds needed for the strike. This was the critical moment. The transport trade of Brisbane by sea was blocked; that by rail was in jeopardy; the factories were idle; the shops were nearly all closed. The police did their duty well, but were utterly insufficient in numbers and especially weak in mounted men. But the Government realised the situation and saved it by appealing to the country for volunteer mounted constables, by forbidding processions and public meetings in the streets, and by warning railwaymen and other State servants of the penalties against disloyalty. All these precautions were wise and necessary. But by far the most potent factor in deciding the battle – for such, in truth, it had become – was the arrival by forced marches of tired but gallant men on weary horses, who rallied resolutely behind the Government. Their efficiency and courage acted like a tonic on the whole community. The railwaymen decided to save their situations by remaining at their posts. The Government printers pleaded to get back to work. Shipping transport was gradually recommenced. The factories, opening again, gladly employed all men offering. There was no preference to Unionists. Then the leaders of the men offered to parley, and submitted propositions. Their offers were politely declined. The country was behind the horsemen who had hastened to the capital. Special constables, mounted and on foot, patrolled the streets. Order was gradually restored. Then, at the eleventh hour, since the appeal to violence and intimidation had failed, the Arbitration Court was invoked. Mr. Justice Higgins, its President, summoned to Melbourne Mr. Badger, the manager of the Brisbane Tramways, who had refused to allow the badges. But the Judge's informal endeavours to bring about a settlement proved fruitless. The sturdy men from the back blocks patrolling the streets of Brisbane ruled the situation, because they visibly represented, and, in fact, expressed, the indignation of the general public and of the country, at the outrage upon law and order instituted by reckless demagogues. Unhappily, these were supported by a Prime

Minister and Cabinet after their own hearts. The Federal Cabinet marched, in effect, at the head of the strikers. It was hostile to the State Government. Mr. Denham and his colleagues have remained impartial as to the tramway dispute, concerning themselves only with the protection of their citizens against riot and famine. They have not taken sides; hence Australia as well as Queensland is with them.

LABOUR DEFEAT IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

It would be easy for a critic of the Labour Party to dwell upon the fact that ever since our very defective system of election permitted Labour to capture the Commonwealth Parliament in 1910 we have suffered from an unending series of trade disputes, very costly to all concerned in them and very burdensome to the community. The Trade Union vote, according to the figures is about one-fifth of the whole, so that, obviously its main strength comes from sympathisers not in its ranks, or from sections, such as the Irish Catholics, who in some States have grievances of their own. But it would be quite a misapprehension to assume that we shall always have to face strikes, or can find even one voter in ten willing to provoke strife or social disorder. Probably the number is not one in fifty, and even then the aggressive impulse is usually due to a want of appreciation of the true facts of the dispute to which they have allowed themselves to be committed, or to its consequences upon the community. The organisation of the Labour Party, though democratic in form, is passing under clique control to such an extent that in each State a handful of officials are masters of its decisions. A dozen of them at the centre can deflect its movement throughout Australia, practically at their pleasure. The machine has outgrown the capacity of its members to control it. The forty-four Trade Unions in Brisbane, if polled honestly and with the secrecy of the ballot, would never have struck. This general axiom is well illustrated by the crushing defeat sustained by the South Australian Labour Caucus three weeks since in a battle entirely of their own creation. They chose their own time to precipitate a general election, they chose their own ground from which to appeal to their supporters, and went confidently to the ballot. Their defeat was crushing. Their programme, as ambitious, vague, and full of promises as ever, easily retained all the metropolitan constituencies. But in the country they gained only one seat, while they lost seven, so that in the Assembly the Liberal Party, which went to the polls four members behind them, is now installed in office, with an assured majority of eight in a House of forty-two. According to our State Labour Minister, Mr. Griffith, the defeat is due to the Brisbane strike. The Federal Labour Minister, Mr. O'Malley, is convinced that it is owing to the unending series of strikes since the Fisher Cabinet was formed, that its decline is becoming indisputable. That there is much more than a substratum of truth in these confessions is beyond dispute. On the other hand, the chief wirepullers of the movement, in or

out of Parliament, foster strikes, because some of them are Communists, eager to shatter the social structure in order to rebuild it on their own plan. Their associates fear to resist or combine against them, so at the periodical elections, within the party, the small section of extremists, always pulling together, sooner or later carries the day. In order to obtain unanimity in the party, "discipline" has been enforced with rigour. It always will be the pretext for the despotism of the ultras. They reap salaries and promotions, while the moderates always pay the bill of costs out of their own earnings.

POSITION IN OTHER STATES.

Of our six State Administrations, only two now remain under the Caucus, and in both instances the mistakes of their political predecessors and present opponents, rather than their own merits, are responsible for their being in office. In Western Australia, though much vexed by the strikes among their supporters, particularly in the railway department, the Scaddan Cabinet appears for the present to be firmly seated in the saddle. In this State we have opened a new session, in which the Speaker, Mr. Willis, still contrived to make himself the central figure. His conduct is now under challenge by a set motion, the vote upon which, like that levelled at the McGowen Ministry last week, will merely repeat the Ministerial majority then registered. For all that, there is marked dissatisfaction among the Labour members with the extraordinary tactics adopted by the Chair. Then, again, despite the reproaches of Mr. J.C. Watson and others, the McGowen Cabinet has declined to keep its pledge to submit itself to the electors without further delay. Having at last seized the reins, our Labour Ministers are resolved to hold on as long as possible. They evidently dread the risk of an appeal to the country. What they fear is that they have lost public confidence, and would lose office. They are in power to-day because the country had wearied of their rivals. Now, suspecting that it has wearied of them, they prefer to break their promise to dissolve rather than face the electors.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

WHAT CAUCUS RULE MEANS. TYRANNY OF LABOUR UNIONS.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Mar. 20 1912; May 3 1912.

Looking ahead, it is evident that the elections in Queensland and Tasmania are about to attract more attention than any other incidents in the Commonwealth. Both States possess Liberal Governments well prepared to defend their policies, and with good prospects of success. Yet the last Federal vote marked a decided victory for the Labour Caucus, and raised the expectations of its followers to the highest pitch. The reaction was not immediate, since Western Australia also very soon after passed for the second time into their hands. No doubt the half-hearted fashion in which a majority of the well-to-do citizens and working classes faced the ballot-box in 1910 greatly contributed to these successes, but there was also a distinct secession to the Labour ranks of a section that resolved to give that party every chance to prove its mettle. Probably none of them intended to give the Caucus an absolute majority of both Houses, which could not be shaken off in the Senate for six years. But that was the effect of the emotional trust they displayed. Since then these waverers have had an opportunity of seeing a merely Labour policy put into effect. More than this, they have beheld the Federal Labour Administration put to the test. Brisbane was taken possession of by angry crowds of strikers. They were intent upon forcing their will upon its Tramway Company, punishing the general community without discrimination, in order to coerce directors and shareholders who were content to await and bound to accept the decision of the Arbitration Court. The suffering citizens could not be safeguarded by the metropolitan police, who were outnumbered and overpowered by the mob. The Labour *Prime Minister* was appealed to for succour, but the appeal was vain. Under somewhat similar circumstances the Adelaide streets had been surrendered to the mob by the State Labour Cabinet a few months before. Such hurtful experiences struck home, especially affecting the considerable section of our people who pay little heed, as a rule, to public affairs. The Mount Lyell strike in Tasmania had taught the islanders a similar lesson of the consequences of Labour tyranny. Out of their practical experience all our electors have now learned something of what Caucus rule means. The Victorian and South Australian polls have

proved the sincerity of their indignation. The expectation is that Queensland and Tasmania will do the same and for the same reason.

PREY TO FAMINE AND RIOT.

Undoubtedly Mr. Denham, the Premier of the great Northern State, has done well to forego the short session, in which it was intended to arrive at some settlement of the disagreement between the two Chambers in respect of the Liquor Bill before going to the country. That measure becomes a minor issue now. A paltry difference between an employer and his employees, already submitted to the Federal Arbitration Court for peaceful settlement, has been made an excuse for a civil war, which “brought thousands to the verge of starvation”, and threatened to destroy for some time “the seaborne trade of Brisbane”. More serious still, continues the Premier: “The city, defrauded by the Commonwealth Government of that protection which the Constitution guaranteed ... would have been a prey to famine and riot ... and would probably be in ruins to-day but for the alacrity and courage of the citizen force, seconded by the splendid efforts of the regular police”. Yet every one of the score of representatives of Labour in the local Legislature “encouraged the forces of disorder, condemned, in the strongest terms at their command, the efforts of the civil authorities to defend liberty, and assailed with the coarsest invectives those who came forward to take up the duty the Commonwealth declined to perform”. To meet such men in Parliament until they had been obliged to face their constituents was, in Mr. Denham’s opinion, absurd. Hence his appeal to the country is now upon “the question of questions: Does Queensland value her free institutions and reprimand those who would destroy them?” An answer will be given on April 27, and it is to be hoped in a decisive manner.

CAUCUS POLICY.

In Tasmania a situation almost identical is really disguised in the addresses to the electors delivered by both parties. Sir Elliott Lewis, speaking as Premier, dwelt upon the nearest and homeliest necessities of the people, of land settlement, of closer settlement, of advances to settlers, of orchard holdings, of immigration, of roads, tramways, and railways constructed as far as the present condition of the local finances will permit. The end and aim of his policy is to multiply freeholders and improve the revenue by the better utilisation of the resources of the island. It has long been, and will always remain, a great pleasure resort and sanatorium. Mr. Earle, the local Labour leader, pointedly distinguishes the attitude of his party from that of the Ministry. He passed as lightly as possible over the antagonism of the Caucus to

the sale of the fee simple in any circumstances, and its refusal to assist to increase the attractions offered to British or other newcomers. His chief anxiety now is to reform the Constitution and to legislate for industrial conditions, though he did not define the distance, if any, he proposes to go beyond the Wages Boards Act recently passed by the present Ministry. Evidently it is for tactical reasons that both leaders avoided the real issue. This is in essence precisely the same in Tasmania as it is in Queensland. The Mount Lyell strike afforded another flagrant illustration of the reckless tyranny which the Labour Unions recently endeavoured to reassert at the expense of the shareholders in the great mines on the west coast. The dispute in itself was no less trumpetry in pretext than that which served as an excuse at Brisbane; so trumpetry that the local engine drivers were with difficulty, and only for a short time, coerced into deserting their posts. A large number of the best miners were driven elsewhere, while the townships in the vicinity, and all their tradespeople, none of whom had any responsibility for the strike, were heavily penalised. Finally, the men had to return to work, without having attained any one of the several objects for which they struck, and sought to seize by force. Though rather tacitly than aggressively, the local Labour representatives were all obliged to countenance and defend the strike. Not one word in defence of it, or of their action, is to be found in Mr. Earle's policy speech to the electors in reply to the Premier. Hence the issue, on a smaller scale and under less violent stress, is the same in both States. The Caucus policy everywhere in Australia against freehold tenure, against encouraging immigration, and against industrial equities, is, therefore, once more formally submitted to our people in the North and in the South, in the second largest and in the smallest of our communities.

SOWING SOCIALISTIC SEED.

In New South Wales the political horizon is little, if any, clearer. The disturbances in Parliament are less frequent, Mr. Willis more mildly dictatorial, the Opposition less unduly sensitive to his aberrations. The public, still lethargic, exhibits a little more interest in current developments. Their attention is caught by the Government's Bill raising the salaries of members from £300 to £500 a year. The Attorney-General, Mr. Holman, would go higher. He considers £1,000 a year a fair remuneration for his fellows. Presumably, the fact that Federal legislators receive £600 prevents him from having his way. Outside his own party the proposal is certain to be unpopular. Administratively, too, the Cabinet is in hot water. The Messrs. Hoskins, of Lithgow, have launched a formidable suit against the Government, claiming £150,000 as damages. The Railway Minister is openly at war with his Chief Commissioner in respect to the powers vested in that officer by statute. The Premier as Treasurer publicly reprobates that officer's recent requisition for the immediate importation of 45 locomotives of the heaviest class. In the meantime the project of connecting our

north-western railways with those of Queensland, making at the same time from its line to Camooweal an extension to the State's western border, where it can be met by a prolongation of the Port Darwin line to Pine Creek, is being publicly approved both by Federal and New South Wales Ministers. It is alleged that these and other novel proposals are being flaunted before the public in order to divert their attention, if possible, from the blunders and confusion in which the Labour Party and its leaders are finding themselves. Certainly the project to establish State iron and steel works, which has been approved in a preliminary way by the Labour majority in our Assembly, will require and receive close public attention. The estimates furnished so far are of the crudest. Ministers predict that a plant costing about £1,000,000 would be needed merely to supply the needs of our own Government departments, particularly the railways. Outside critics allege that several millions would be necessary for that purpose. Moreover, if all other States are to be catered for, Ministers confess that the wages bill alone would amount to £1,300,000 per annum. Taking this admission by itself, it is clear that their plan really involves the nationalisation of the whole iron and steel industry in Australia, and with that the command of most other industries, too. Placards of this character suggest that the Cabinet is preparing for another General Election by launching measures which it cannot hope to pass into law. Its reputation as a State Socialist administration is to be put beyond all cavil by bold sketches of future schemes of annexation. These are being supported in the meantime by annexations of fragments here and there, such as our State brickmaking works and other minor ventures, which are still lacking in any trustworthy justification by results. And in this way the Socialistic seed is being sown by way of preparation for our next General Election.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PRESS AND POLITICS.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Apr. 9 1912; May 20 1912.

The State Parliament having closed our State Press, as usual, has sat in judgment upon its record. The verdict, again as usual, censures the Ministry in particular and both Houses in general. Rarely is there anything but hyper-criticism, even for members of their own way of thinking. Under such conditions it is not surprising that the present Opposition loses credit and support from those who are inclined to be its friends, while the Caucus Party loses little or nothing from the censures of their avowed antagonists. The smallness of the polling at our elections is one of the perpetual causes of complaint in our daily papers, though their own tactics are largely to blame for the lack of interest which leads to that result. The fervid appeals made during the few weeks before a General Election cannot make up for the steady flow of adverse criticism during the preceding months. Unless the average citizen has been stirred sufficiently to induce him to take some personal interest in the contest on polling day, he ignores the ballot box. On the other hand, however dolorous or deprecatory may have been the assaults made upon the Caucus, or the members of the Labour Leagues employed in its service, who are run as candidates, for their shortcomings in Parliament or unfitness to enter it, the Labour vote, as a rule, is not diminished. All the maledictions fall upon deaf ears; so much so, that it is a recommendation to most Labour candidates if they are pursued by the non-Labour papers with special animosity. Whether this attitude of our Press is justified in any and what proportion is a difficult question demanding a fuller consideration of the circumstances than can be undertaken. But the fact remains that if our anti-Caucus Press were anything like as considerate towards its allies as the Caucus Press shows itself in all circumstances to the nominees of the Caucus, there would be no McGowen Government in office to-day and no prospect for its policy. Moreover, our State Legislature would then be secure against the attacks of the unificationists, already dominant in the Federal Caucus, and eager for annexations at the coming Referendum. Our local Governments, whether Caucus or anti-Caucus, will receive short shrift whenever their crumbling entrenchments can be rushed. Our present Ministry, of which Mr. Holman and Mr. Beeby are intellectually the chiefs, is, to its credit, standing firmly against most of the encroachments that Mr. Fisher is compelled to father. But given

a continuance of our present newspaper policy they, too, will be swept away by the more reckless creatures of their own Caucus.

LEGISLATORS' EMOLUMENTS.

Though the general political outlook is discouraging, both in the Federal and State spheres, so far as New South Wales is concerned, and though our industrial affairs are still sadly unsettled, the abounding prosperity of Sydney and, indeed, of the whole State, continues unimpaired. Whenever the tide of prosperity turns there will be a day of reckoning for our public, as well as our private, affairs. During the session the extraordinary conduct of the Speaker, Mr. Willis, always supported, though often reluctantly, by the Caucus, for its own sake, and without regard to the precedents established, has immensely increased the difficulties of the situation. Yet, apart from this, Ministers are responsible for some important legislation, which in itself would have sufficed to create a public upheaval under less confused conditions, or in less thriving times. It was a serious step for members to attempt to increase their own salaries without authority from their constituents, and at the same time endeavour to endow themselves with a far larger authority than they now possess, to punish censorious critics in the Press or on the platform, who might soon be denouncing their liberality to themselves. These are certainly daring departures. Whatever may be urged on behalf of the new demand upon the public purse, defiantly made by its custodians in their own interest, it comes rather oddly from a Labour Cabinet and Labour members. Most of them prior to their entrance into public life received for much more trying exertion less than half the sum they are now paid, without reckoning the many other advantages and prospects they now enjoy. The emoluments of our legislators might well be enlarged, the principles of payment having been adopted, if the results of their debates were more practical and their motives less personal. But when this raid is coupled with a demand for the resuscitation of the very extensive ancient powers still possessed by the House of Commons, but rarely or never used there, in order to gag our critics and silence comment, it is impossible to evade the conclusion that members are placing their own interests above those of the country. A number of those sitting in Opposition share the responsibility for the proposed increase of salaries, and a few for failing to challenge the policy of reprisals against the Press. But the Government, which lately undertook to face the country before exercising its authority further, since it could not show a good title to its place at the helm, and then discarded its own pledges to the public on a mere quibble, has no possible justification, either for its latest breaches of faith in such circumstances or for fresh attempts to turn its own back-sliding to its own advantage. Nor is that the end of its intrigues.

ACTION OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Though “alarums and excursions” have signalised the whole session in the Assembly at every stage, the real duel has been between the Ministerial majority in that House and the Opposition majority in the Legislative Council. In order to induce the latter to accept unpalatable proposals, the Caucus “lay low” during the whole session, reiterating its promise not to make fresh appointments to the nominee Chamber. The day after prorogation it added ten Labour men to its minority there, thus doubling its strength where it was weakest. The shriek of protest against this strong step has its justification in the fact that the small Caucus majority in the Assembly was gained after the promise of a dissolution. The Cabinet would probably have been compelled to face the country then if there had been any prospect at that time of its subsequent campaign or this autocratic action. Taking all things into consideration, the Council has acted with judgment in rejecting the Additional Salaries Bill and the Bill amalgamating the existing Savings Bank under independent trustees with the State Savings Bank directly under Government control, and passing the Arbitration Bill only after radical amendments. It is true that preference to Unionists has been conditionally conceded, much to the disgust of the *Daily Telegraph*, but this is to be confined first to cases in which other claims are equal, while next the Court of Arbitration may cancel the privilege if a large section of the Union affected at any time instigates or takes part in a strike, or if a smaller number of its members instigate or aid a strike it may suspend the declaration authorising any preferences for such period as it may deem just. So limited, the concession seems justified as an experiment, as is the grant of authority to the Minister to constitute Conciliation Committees in any callings employing over 500 men except coal and metalliferous mining. The existing optional registration of Unions which allowed an unregistered Union to strike has been repealed by the Council. This in itself constitutes a valuable restriction upon those lawless Labour bodies who are always most eager to insist that they shall remain their own masters while binding their employers by arbitrary statutes within rigid lines. The principle of arbitration is almost unanimously approved in Australia, and, though it must be confessed that as yet its provisions are inadequate and in some cases inequitable, the Legislative Council has acted wisely in recognising that the best course is to amend and perfect the law so as to enable industrial peace to be maintained as far as possible at present.

ANOTHER LAND BILL EXPECTED.

The Land question is always with us, and more and more frequently is the Labour panacea being pushed to the front. The Federal Cabinet has decided that the whole of the enormous Northern Territory shall be dealt with only under lease. In order

to sweeten the pill all kinds of concessions and encouragements are offered to induce settlers to face the trying circumstances surrounding the utilisation of the undeveloped resources of a huge semi-tropical country with only one railway and practically no present population. It was because of Mr. Nielsen's ardent advocacy of this policy for our State that he forfeited his seat as Minister of Lands in the McGowen Cabinet. His successor, Mr. Beeby, has modified the rigour of the former scheme to some extent, but he, too, relies upon receiving offers for large and small tracts of rented land, adding three new tenures for homestead, settlement, and irrigation farms. Upon this project Mr. Wade descended with all his weight a few weeks ago, and still continues his assaults – based on the latest returns available. To him the Premier, with the help of his colleague, has made a recriminatory rejoinder. It is evident that yet another Land Bill must be expected next session, and that this is one of the measures upon which the Cabinet may decide to go to the country. In the meantime, some test of public feeling towards our rival parties will be afforded by a vacancy in the Federal Parliament for a New South Wales constituency. This has been created by the acceptance of a place in the Legislative Council and in the McGowen Cabinet by Mr. Hall, a Labour representative who is understood to have resented his omission from the Fisher Government. A Labour candidate has not yet been chosen. On the other hand, the Federal Opposition has found a capable fighting man, whose zeal so frequently outruns his discretion that his success is doubtful. Still, the voting for such a country constituency of considerable extent should be interesting as a clue to other electorates, though at present the Labour vote is swollen by the men employed upon large public works within its borders. The State Land Bill is, therefore, less likely to dominate the issue, though the farmers can hardly ignore the fact that it follows as closely as that of Mr. Thomas the leasing creed which, because of its antagonism to any ownership of the freehold, the Caucus, State and Federal, supports with all its energies. The poll should also throw some light on the prospects of Mr. Beeby's Bill promised for the next session. It is to be regretted that the candidatures may obscure the verdict in these great issues.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

TRADE UNION DESPOTISM. TRIUMPH OF FREE LABOUR.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, May 1 1912; Jun. 4 1912.

To say that public attention has been rivetted upon the contest just concluded in Queensland would not convey an adequate conception of the intensity of interest which it has evoked for weeks past all over the Commonwealth. As for politicians, they have discussed nothing else. The "Labour" Party, or, as it is now more appropriately entitled, the "Illiberal Party", has been profoundly stirred to its depths. Its more intelligent members realise that their comrades in Queensland have criminally blundered; some of our Ministers have, in effect, said so in this State. Indeed, almost all but the Brisbane clique, who are solely responsible for the revolutionary outbreak, are now satisfied that it was indefensible. None the less, the rigorous discipline of the Leagues has conquered their anger and their candour. Their members have rallied to the standard, though it has been trailed in the dust. They have fought against a Government which did no more than its duty in resisting their violent assaults upon liberty and order, not only with torrents of misrepresentation, but with vindictive fury, and the energy of despair. The vote polled for their candidates included thousands of sympathisers whose devotion to the causes to which they are pledged overcame their scruples and their disgust. It also included still a large number of credulous working people throughout the State who accepted the story of the strike riots published the party papers in all good faith. Their losses at the poll were from among the very considerable section of our voters that has never joined their ranks, but yields a sympathetic support to their specious proposals for remedying both real and imaginary social evils. They must have retained a number of these. Read in the light of these conditions, the vote recorded last Saturday becomes most significant of the trend of Queensland opinion.

TRADE UNION TYRANNY.

It must be recollected that the strike was not casual, was not justified, and was not manly. It was premeditated, based upon a flagrant falsehood, and conducted with

brutal rigour. The majority of the tramway employees were Unionists, whose only grievance was that they were not allowed to wear a Union badge while on duty. Had this been conceded, the minority of free employees would have been singled out for insult, and exposed to molestation, because they were marked out as non-Unionists. The whole question had been submitted to the Arbitration Court by the Trade Union concerned since October, 1911, by the solicitors of the Union. But this important fact was unknown by the tramway men, or most of them, and when cited in February last, was emphatically denied by the Federal member for Brisbane, Mr. **Finlayson**, M.P., supported by a Federal colleague, Mr. **Brennan**, M.P., who was the principal of the legal firm in charge of the case. The strike was caused by no other question whatever except the refusal of the badge. Neither wages, nor hours, nor the conditions of labour were at stake. Yet even when the deceit practised upon the men had been discovered, when it became known that the question at issue was already before the Arbitration Court, and when the strike became obviously unnecessary and unjustifiable, the Unionist Committee refused to permit the unfortunate men to return to work, and kept them in subjection by threats. It must be borne in mind that the tramway men were not the only strikers. They had the support of forty-two other Trade Unions, who struck in their cause. The contest became one between Trade Unions and the rest of the community. The intention was to make the employment of any non-Unionists in any calling impossible, and to place in the hands of the Union Committee absolute control of all employers and of all employees in Brisbane.

MOB LAW.

It will be remembered that the strikers made themselves mob masters of the city for two or three days. According to the boast of its leader, Mr. **Coyne**, M.L.A., during that period not a loaf of bread could be bought in Brisbane without his permit. Shops, restaurants, butchers, bakers, milkmen, and ice-makers were compelled to close their shops and to cease supplying their customers. Yet the only men actually injured were one regular policeman and one volunteer policeman engaged in maintaining order. The only shot fired was from an Unionist pistol at a police officer on duty. A dynamite bomb was placed on the tramline by the strikers which would have cost many lives if it had not been removed in time. Nothing but the rally of independent citizens, especially from the country, saved the situation. They reinforced the police, after Mr. **Fisher's** refusal to make the local military available for the protection of life and property, saving the capital of the State from serious outrage, and its people from suffering and danger. The collapse of the strikers was absolute. Mr. Justice **Higgins** having heard the case of the tramway men, granted them the right to wear their Union badge on the Brisbane Tramways, no matter what the consequences might be. But when this happened there was not a single Unionist left

in the employment of the company. They had struck, owing to the misrepresentations and despotism of their leaders, and had remained out long enough to allow all their places to be filled by non-Unionists. No industrial revolt relying upon violence could come to a more humiliating or more fitting conclusion.

“OUR UNIONS RIGHT OR WRONG”.

Mr. **Bowman**, the leader of the Queensland Labour Party, accepted full responsibility for the strike, though the actual captain during the struggle was Mr. Coyne, M.L.A., one of his colleagues. But owing to ill-health the former was compelled to limit his exertions, and the stress of active work involved in managing the party machine absorbed the latter. Owing to these circumstances the danger to the strikers not only brought Mr. Fisher into the field but into the front rank of the battle, until at last he was, in fact and in title, the leader of a revolt, reckless and ruthless to the last degree. It cannot be said that his speeches were in any way framed or phrased so as to promote a peaceable settlement, or that they contributed anything to justify or explain the civil war provoked by the Trade Unions. Except that he endorsed, defended, and commended the strike, he added nothing to the situation. He had refused the aid of the small federal force in Brisbane constitutionally applied for by the **State Premier**, and he now added the prestige of his office as Prime Minister and of his position as leader of the Federal Labour Party to the cause of the rioters. The fact that the outbreak had been based upon a falsehood and sought to be enforced by the capture of the streets and control of the metropolis in order to starve its citizens into surrender imposed no restraints upon his action and little restraint upon his language. It is possible that he had no choice in the matter, and that he could not have regained his seat if he had dared to declare for peace; but, in any case, the weight of his support satisfied many of the doubting that their duty was to repeat the cry, “Our Unions right or wrong”. He has received the plaudits of the strikers for the assistance he gave, and will no doubt receive the condemnation of his fellow Queenslanders, thousands of whom suffered though in no way connected with the tramway dispute or either side. As for the thousands who were dragooned into fighting for a Union label already before the Court and soon after acquired without any difficulty or help from the strife, their votes seem to have been cast submissively for the very men who used them mercilessly for their own purposes. They are now bearing the burdens imposed by a prolonged cessation of work and earnings. Further, a General Election has been forced on the State out of its due time by the ineptitude and duplicity of their chiefs. Yet such is their fidelity and such their dread of reprisals if they had faltered that they voted last Saturday as solidly and as steadily as ever.

NO SURRENDER TO MOB RULE.

The Denham Government has demonstrated its intention to govern through Parliament, and its determination not to yield to mob rule. It has forced the half-dozen independents in the Assembly to join the Ministerial ranks and to sever themselves permanently from the party of violence and anarchy. It has secured another three years for the peaceful development of the immense and magnificent resources of this great State, which has just gained, owing to the rapidity of its growth, an additional representative in the Commonwealth House of Representatives. But it has not broken the organisation of the Trade Unionists and their Syndicalist allies; it has not freed working men and women from the class tyranny to which they are subject; it has not placed Brisbane above the danger of another absolutely wilful and unjustifiable strike. Moreover, the movements now in progress for linking up all the large organisations of workers, skilled and unskilled, in the various States are steadily accomplishing their end. The arena for industrial warfare is being steadily widened. Except so far as the gravity of the situation and the area of future strikes have been increased, there is no new assurance against similar outbreaks. We can only rely upon the greater deliberation probable because of the greater scale upon which industrial struggles will be carried on. Our experience in the northern State seems to be only partially reflected in our most southern State, Tasmania, though the first count of the votes leaves the Liberal Government in power after a General Election which has been thoroughly well fought out in a quiet way. The proportional system has undoubtedly contributed to the stability of public affairs in the island, it has increased both the responsibilities and the interest of the electors, and has not discovered any serious grounds for complaint. The Liberals use it freely and often irrespective of party. But here, too, the serried legions of the Labour Party, impervious to political argument, fanatical in their reliance upon shibboleths, repeated with wearisome iteration, and pursuing cloudy ideals, adhere to each and all of their representatives, good, bad or indifferent just as the Caucus bade them. They may gain two seats by these tactics. It is true that they are still the most moderate of all the factions in Australia who follow their leaders almost without question and always without hesitation, but at the same time they tread the same slippery road by the same perilous precipices. The Liberals now control the State Legislatures of four out of the six Australian States. The West Australian General Election is far ahead. In our own State the test will be next applied, and probably before the close of the year. This will be the crucial struggle preceding the convulsion of the Commonwealth, due in 1913.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

DISCIPLINE OF THE CAUCUS. FEATURES OF FEDERAL POLITICS.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, May 21 1912; Jun. 29 1912.

Australia's Parliaments, all seven of them, are now in recess. Comparatively speaking politics are either dead or deadily dull for the time being. It is the calm before the storm. Soon, and perhaps too soon, like seven megaphones, our Legislatures will fill the air with re-echoing tumult. Already the Federal Cabinet in Melbourne is girding up its loins preparatory to facing its third and last session prior to confronting the electors next year. The fact that Mr. Fisher finds it advisable to assure the public that he is entirely satisfied with his Party's prospects is sufficient to show that he feels the need of keeping up the courage of his followers. This has been distinctly damped by the too frank confession of one of his supporters in Victoria that the Federal Labour Party is marching straight to its Sedan. Apparently that State is witnessing a decided slump in the stocks of its illiberal League, whose members were deeply pledged to a forward Protectionist policy two years ago. So plain is this that there are persistent rumours of Tariff Amendments of a sweeping character to be tendered this year. They would be in the hope of regaining some of the ground lost by the deliberate refusal of the Cabinet to keep the extravagant promises of higher duties made by its Minister of Customs and his Victorian comrades. Still, the fact is that most of the increases sought would be opposed by some of the Caucus candidates of 1910 and by others already prepared to offer themselves in 1913. On the other hand, the bulk of the Liberal members from this State are either hostile or indifferent to most of the alterations demanded by Australian industries, whether those of the country or those of the town. For instance, the present contest for Werriwa lies between two Federal nominees, one Liberal the other Labour, both of whom prefer to evade the fiscal issue as far as is possible. Probably as many of our legislators are taking part in this election as have ever been enlisted to visit a single constituency, and yet it would be incorrect to say that either as to the fiscal or any other issue it is provoking any exceptional interest in the voters. Their verdict will certainly be the subject of many perorations and prophecies after the event whoever succeeds. No doubt the vote polled will afford a fair measure of the interest felt. But if our fellow citizens within its borders accept

any special responsibility to their country for their choice they have so far contrived to conceal it in a very decorous fashion. Apparently Federal politics at present fail to appeal to the country districts of New South Wales.

CAUCUS-MADE POLICY.

Our State politics, too, seem to remain in an old rut – Mr. McGowen, most uninspiring of Premiers, and Mr. Wade, most pertinaciously and plaintively indignant of Opposition leaders, continue their duel without arriving at any positive result. Mr. Wade's attacks are direct and deliberate, Mr. McGowen's replies mainly irrelevant, except when he speaks from a brief apparently prepared for him by his abler colleagues. Mr. Holman and Mr. Beeby cast him into the shade whenever they come before the public, and with good reason, because they have something to say. In Victoria, the Premier, Mr. Murray, having realised that he is out of place as head of the State Administration, has actually resigned in favour of his junior, Mr. Watt. Possessing the energy and initiative necessary for a party leader this young politician has long been second in command. During his chief's recent visit to England he gave sufficient proof of his quality. Mr. Murray remains in the Cabinet, holding the second place which he formerly filled under Mr. Bent. The new session will open, therefore, under more favourable auspices for the Liberals. Still, the change for the better will not stifle all the unrest created by the late Premier's *laizzez faire* policy. The fact that the Labour members in Melbourne remain in a hopeless minority is another possible cause of unrest and intrigue. A similar condition of parties obtains in Brisbane, for even there Mr. Denham's sweeping victory in the constituencies has not heralded a condition of affairs altogether free from friction. Even such a triumph as his implies a programme of remedial legislative work constituting in itself a heavy burden. From the Labour Opposition he can hope for nothing but disorder and delay. The gratitude and regard of the public constitute his chief reward. In South Australia the new Liberal Government commences under favourable conditions, but also under a load of legislative obligations that must evoke for Mr. Peake the sympathy needed also by Mr. Denham. Both have decisive majorities in both Houses, but since these consist of what we call "Liberals", Ministers have to meet and to satisfy an abundance of independent criticism. This makes their burdens far more serious than those lightly borne by the Caucus in our States. That body dictates to Ministries its ready-made policy and to members their votes. The machine is master of both. All Labour members are tied hand and foot to an elaborate party platform, shaped and authorised by conferences in which nowadays they themselves have very little representation and no power.

THE MIXING OF VOTES.

The Tasmanian Ministry has been placed in an awkward position by the neglect of its supporters to vote the ticket and nothing but the ticket. Instead of a working majority of three to which it was entitled by the voting for its principal candidates, Sir [Elliott Lewis](#) will find himself, after electing a Speaker, with only a majority of one. The Labour Leagues polled every vote they could influence for their nominees, and apparently without any exceptions. Some Liberal electors on the other hand mixed their votes, and hence the prospects of difficulties in the Hobart Assembly. The gratifying feature of the contest is the advance in the total vote recorded, about 75 per cent. of those on the poll having done their duty. The Liberals owing to their improved organisation added 50 per cent. to their former total in 1910. The Labour Leagues added something over 10 per cent. If the system of proportional voting had not been in force the Government would have had a large majority in the Houses. Proportional voting would have given Ministers a majority of four, if their supporters had not indulged in cross-voting. The rigorous discipline of the Caucus permits no such variations or any personal judgments. Its opponents, the Liberals, vote as they think fit. Hence the present confusion in a State in which 40,000 voters are Liberals and 33,000 pledged to Labour irrespective of the character or capacity of its nominees. In Western Australia the Legislative Council elections display similar divagations among its citizens who enjoy a very extensive franchise for their Second Chamber. The result appears quite indecisive. This State, like New South Wales, is under Caucus control in the working Chamber, though in ours the majority is small and in Western Australia very large. The last dissolution there was followed by a breakaway at the election parallel to that which swept the polls for the Federal Houses two years ago, largely sentimental in character and mixed in motive. The recent Council elections in the West discover a counter reaction, it is true, but only against the extravagances approved in 1910. It is still probable that the [Scaddan](#) Administration would obtain a sufficient though considerably smaller majority if the Assembly went to the country at once. It is not at all certain what the response would be here if Mr. McGowen chose to challenge our electorates to-day. There is a prospect of his doing so towards the close of the year, the reason for which is to be found in some divergences between the views that he and our local Labour members hold and those which govern Mr. Fisher and his associates in the Federal House. The West Australians are not affected in this fashion, and hence that State is still likely to return a Caucus majority at any early appeal.

CONFIDENCE OF LIBERALS.

The outstanding features of Federal politics to-day are the growing and already overgrown confidence of the Liberals in their capacity to obtain a working majority in the House of Representatives, and a substantial minority in the Senate, let the appeal come when it may. They are to be excused for this hopefulness since, say what they will, the attitude and tactics of Mr. Fisher and his following imply a decidedly pessimistic outlook. Apparently the Caucus realises that though it may pull down the majority against the Referendum proposals of 1911 taken as a whole, they can hardly hope to carry more than a fraction of them next year, even though these are to be subdivided so as to allow the people a discretion denied to them last year. A beating on most, if not all, of the constitutional changes is likely to carry with it in many places a defeat of the Labour candidates committed to a wholesale adoption of all the sweeping alterations submitted. The Caucus expects, and with good reason, to retain its majority in the Senate, since, though only a few thousand votes ahead in 1910, Labour then acquired and holds till 1916 the whole eighteen seats vacated. Starting the next Parliament with half the Senate already in its hands, and the certainty of retaining at least some of the eighteen about to be vacated – for instance, those of Western Australia – the Caucus can put an effective brake upon all Liberal legislation that reaches the Second Chamber after next April. This brings the double dissolution provided in the Constitution directly in view. By this the fortunes of the Commonwealth may be cast into the melting-pot again and then as a whole. The party successful in both Houses at a double dissolution would then enter into political possession of the whole of the Federal arena and all the Constitutional powers with which the National Parliament is or may be then endowed. The far-seeing among the Illiberal politicians are already looking forward to the several opportunities about to be presented to them of refastening their grip upon the National Legislature and Executive. Already the sanguine expectations of the Liberals in opposition are threatening them with surplus candidates likely to divide their vote. They still entertain a comfortable reliance upon majorities which may not find their way to the polls. The alarm in the ranks of Labour will strengthen its efforts to hold its present vantage ground. The rosy expectations of the mixed company of many shades of opinion under the Opposition banner seem likely to tell against its polling next year.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

FIGHT AGAINST THE LABOUR LEGIONS.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Jun. 12 1912; Jul. 29 1912.

Australia's seven law-making machines begin work this month or next. Recesses are ending, sessions are about to commence. Our fourteen Legislative Chambers will resume their output, happy if by Christmas time their labours are ended. Most of them are young still, but in this State and in the Commonwealth this session will be the last prior to a General Election. Two of our three Labour majorities now in power will before long be put to the test. Judged by the results of the Werriwa elections, they will be lucky if they scrape through. Two years ago that constituency declared for the Caucus by a majority of over eighteen hundred. A few days since the count at a by-election showed a drop to a majority of three hundred and fifty. Nor was this a casual verdict. It expressed a deliberate decision of the residents of that remote district, agricultural, pastoral, and mining, carefully shepherded from year to year by the *Australian Workers' Union*, and much of it beyond the influence of the Sydney Press. Invaded from all quarters by organisers and speakers, its platforms were occupied almost nightly in all important centres. What proportion of the voters had stayed at home, despite these attractions, cannot be guessed, but there was a record poll of 75 per cent. of those on the roll, and a very narrow win for the official candidate of the *Fisher* Government. True, the last State contest, caused by the death of Mr. *Dacey*, a member of the *McGowen* Cabinet, resulted in the easy return of the Caucus nominee. This was reckoned a safe seat, but the fact that it continued as safe as ever must be borne in mind. Hence the confident expectations of the so-called Liberal Party in this State have up till now no sufficient justification.

Apparently the tide is slowly turning in its favour, and seats are likely to be won. The small majority by which Mr. McGowen, with the assistance of Mr. *Willis*, manages to retain the reins of power might easily disappear, but whether a good working majority can be found for Mr. *Wade* is more uncertain. Then in the Federal House there is a good deal of leeway to be made up before the Opposition minority becomes a majority. Besides, the solidarity of its party is still to seek. In Victoria especially it seems rent asunder between Free Trade dissentients and Protectionist stalwarts. The Australian tide can hardly become strong enough to put them really in power, even while lifting its leaders on to the Treasury benches.

THE INSURRECTION OF LABOUR.

The chief factor operating in the Commonwealth to-day has manifested itself in just such industrial revolts as you are still experiencing in England. The stages by which the insurrection of labour will some day emerge in the House of Commons may not follow in the same order as here, but that the conflict will make itself felt there before long is a general expectation among our citizens. The distance that separates us from Great Britain, great as it is, is not greater than the contrast between our numbers, areas, and situations. There is, perhaps, as wide, if not a wider, gulf between our politicians and political methods compared with yours. Still, the general drift seems the same and the ends are similar. Our Labour Congress has just declared for a six hours' day and five working days a week, which of itself implies an economic transformation whose consequences cannot yet be assessed. Considering the extent to which the output in all trades has already been lowered, although in nearly all of them wages have been raised, and noting the rise in the prices of both the absolute necessities and reasonable requirements of the working classes, one needs no explanation why the situation, nationally as well as industrially, is becoming serious.

Of course, your Parliament differs in its composition and character from ours in many respects, and particularly so in one way, which seems only partially realised. A large majority of your members are drawn from the cultured, professional, or leisured classes. In Legislatures such as we possess to-day those elements always constitute a small minority. The candidates of our political unions, which are only Trade Unions under another name, are practically all Unionists by training, and few of them possess more than a bare State school education. Most of them are chosen because of their Socialistic orthodoxy rather than for political knowledge or ability. The "Liberal" or "Conservative" candidates who oppose them are not really entitled to those party names in your sense. They represent the bulk of our citizens who are hostile to the coercive despotism exercised by a Caucus majority, which, however honest in character and well meaning in its general intentions, becomes, when thwarted, hopelessly partisan and tyrannical. These citizens, if well-to-do, are treated as conscienceless capitalists, or if well educated, as emissaries of wealth and monopoly. The drudgery of canvassing and the slavery imposed on our representatives repel men of independent minds or means, unless specially sensible of their duties to their country, or with a very strong inclination for public affairs. Under such conditions fighting the Caucus in the Commonwealth is at no time, and under no flag, an attractive task.

THE UNENSLAVED ELECTORS.

Our difficulty in New South Wales is that Mr. McGowen and his colleagues have behind them a very mixed body of supporters, most of these without more than ordinary ability or knowledge but recommended to their constituents by their docility. Any life or fire they possess is supplied by their party platform, with its illusory promises of over higher wages, ever cheaper goods, and ever shortening hours. Such tempting baits carry the crowd at elections, and keep Labour nominees in the Legislature, well paid according to their standards, and already seeking to be better paid. Meanwhile many of their constituents thrive on increased wages in the Government Service, or by means of strikes in private employ. Thus the same motive power drives both voters and those they elect on the same road, compelling them to sink all other personal ideals and conscientious differences. The programme elects the members, and the members keep on their knees to the programme. Among the unenslaved electors and their representatives a very different relation exists. A programme of independence in itself does not satisfy the Independents. Any truly Liberal policy leaves many Liberals dissatisfied unless it is submitted to them by candidates who possess exceptional knowledge or abilities, eloquence of their pattern, or special attractions of some kind. A Liberal campaign also lacks the assistance of the many disciples anxious to train themselves for candidature, who are to be found in every Trade Union and in every branch of it of any size.

Liberals have no such understudies, no such volunteers for platform work, no such corps of canvassers and unpaid assistants. Our Mr. Wade, sound in principle, well informed, but slow in method, appeals to the heads, and especially the hard heads, of business men and energetic farmers. He has no Elysium in prospect, or at all events never promises it. His recruits often lack enthusiasm, and nearly always lack impetus and training. No wonder he has an up-hill fight against the serried ranks of the Labour legions, whose discipline is rigorous and rigid from year's end to year's end. In the Commonwealth as a whole much the same state of things exists. The strong current of self-interest and class-interest always running on the side of the Leagues and Unions, prepared to promise anything, possible or impossible, sweeps everything and everyone before it. The same current affects a relatively small section of the unfettered electors, and operates on them only occasionally. They know too well the limits of political patronage and of industrial concessions, and the cost of any excesses attractive to the mass. The scales are, therefore, actually weighted against the Opposition at the ballot-box as a rule, though it probably commands a majority of seats, a majority on the rolls both in State and Commonwealth.

THE IMMIGRANT A DEADLY FOE.

Our Union Congress in Sydney was rendered notable by the reappearance of Mr. **Peter Bowling**, who was drummed out of it a year or two ago for the failure of his coal strike. After that he angrily co-operated with the foes of his party to some extent, though now he has found his way back into the fold and to a position almost as conspicuous as that he previously enjoyed. His return is the signal for a fresh attempt to create an organisation whose representatives must all be Trades Unionists and wage-earners, in no way identified with any other class. Farmers, for instance, are to be refused recognition. Exclusive authority is to be exercised, not through political associations, however extreme their announced policy, if they accept candidates outside the ranks of the Unions, or any of these who are not actually working Unionists. The direct representation of Labour is to be achieved through them, and through them alone. The objective is one grand organisation embracing so many tens of thousands of workers that it would be politically master of most, if not all, of the Governments of the Commonwealth. It hopes to capture their Legislatures, dictate their policies, and fill their Cabinets. In the meantime the deadliest foe of our prosperous and triumphant Unionists is the immigrant from the Mother Country, no matter how efficient and energetic. Indeed, the more capable he is the more he is dreaded.

So far the Unions here have done little or nothing to secure even a minimum working qualification for their members, but they have done all in their power to limit the number admitted and to establish a close corporation of highly-remunerated wage-earners. With the strike as a weapon, always available whenever the Courts refuse to command the employers to concede better terms, Mr. Bowling and his colleagues expect to thrive, at all events, for the time being. While the illusion lasts they mean to become and remain our political and industrial dictators. The Trades Hall machine is to commence by guillotining all the non-Unionist members so far maintaining and maintained by the political machine. Present legislation is to stand till the new machine gets into working order. When it does operate the universal strike is to make everything else easy and profitable for those who propose to control it. The sway exercised by the impracticable authors of this impossible plan of campaign over their "leaders" may be gathered from the comment of the Prime Minister upon the extraordinary project of six hours a day for five days a week. It was equivalent, in Mr. Fisher's opinion, to hitching their waggon to a star, and therefore a laudable ambition.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

THE CLASH OF PARTY STRIFE.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Jul. 2 1912; Aug. 6 1912.

The recess is over; our sessions, Federal and State, are just beginning. The clash and clang of Party strife echoes, and will continue to echo, from every corner of the Commonwealth for twelve months to come. In this State we have a double interest and a double risk. We are not only subjects of Mr. McGowen, but of Mr. Fisher, and both of the Parliaments which they preside over must go before the electors within a year. We are deeply concerned, and so are the two Administrations as to the particular times to be chosen for this ordeal. They are allies, and yet rivals. In each the head of the Government is overshadowed by the superior ability of his Attorney-General, but in each remains in command because he is less suspect and more easily understood by the average member and his average constituent of the Labour pattern. The anxiety obviously existing in both sets of our Caucus representatives, those who sit in the State and those returned to the Federal Legislature, has its humorous and also its serious side. The hesitancy of Mr. McGowen is obviously due to his doubts as to the prospects of his Commonwealth comrades of securing another three years' lease of office. It is just credible that he does not altogether desire that they should. Our Sydney soothsayers are naturally much exercised by possibilities of this nature. For instance, it is now quite evident that the policy of the Commonwealth Caucus is to capture as large a share as possible of the savings of Australia for the sake of and by means of its new bank just commencing operations in this city. Deeply resenting such an unbrotherly anti-Federal raid upon our local monetary resources, our Labour Cabinet and its following evince a certain grim satisfaction in the prospect of giving Mr. Fisher the backwash of their General Election campaign while escaping that which will follow his later appeal to our people. As the one State concerned in both dissolutions, we are naturally much more deeply stirred than any of our neighbours by these coming events already casting their shadows before. The political fate of this, the chief State of Australia, may be doubly sealed by the decisions of the electors, one probably late this year and the other about April next. It must be so if both verdicts are to the same effect. It is not yet certain what the event will be. Even our most courageous prophets admit that no present forecast can be trusted.

LIBERALS' AGGRESSIVE TACTICS.

Meanwhile the Federal session has opened in Melbourne with an instantaneous Opposition fusillade, promptly returned from the Ministerial front bench. Last year and the year before the Liberal minority faced the session with grim and dogged determination simply to put their case before the public clearly and register it completely. This was the extent of their aim. Defeat, inevitable, on every division was accepted with frigid equanimity. Having expressed and emphasised its dissents the party plodded steadily along a road of quiet resistance in forced acceptance of a hopeless situation and patiently biding its time. This year, though the numbers are the same, the scene, the prospects, and the tactics have suddenly changed. The Opposition sprang at once into the fray with a ringing and challenging warcry. The Government was ready for the assault, but bitterly resentful of the aggressive tactics. Especially did its champions resent the change in the *Leader of the Opposition*. Instead of attacking their position with jests and unhurried argument as of old he struck boldly and with ungloved hand at their most sensitive spots. Needless to add, his first lieutenant, Mr. *Cook*, who followed Mr. Fisher's defence, was much more bitterly contemptuous. Mr. *Hughes*, the lithest, brightest, and most meteoric debater of the Caucus, was at once upon his feet with an elaborately documented rejoinder. When this was concluded he turned much more gladly to impish jibes and mordant personages. The four leaders of the House were therefore heard and at length in succession. Senator *Millen's* brilliant attack on the Government in the Senate awaits reply until the vote of want of confidence is disposed of below. Most comprehensive in terms it affords foothold for full criticism of everything done or left undone by the Caucus and its Cabinet. The debate will last this week, and probably next week, too, for the Opposition is in earnest, and resolute to push its attack home. The alternative policy that it will hereafter submit to the country is being outlined more distinctly in the light of the present happenings under the blunders of our Labour Cabinets. Besides, it is being assisted by the threatening phenomenon of a Labourers' Union forming in our midst which excludes politicians from its ranks and Conciliation Courts from its methods. This body, already 30,000 strong, will rely upon strikes, and nothing but strikes, to accomplish its purposes. No wonder our political Unionists in Parliament look pale at such prospects, especially as they emerge at the opening of the two final and fighting sessions in Melbourne and Sydney, the first of which has opened so ominously.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR INDUSTRIAL UNREST.

The biting sarcasm which flavoured the first analyses of the *Governor-General's* speech gave way to a higher strain of argument and censure when the Opposition

Leader reached the kernel of his argument. Though Australia had devised more and better provisions for the peaceful settlement of industrial disputes than any other country in the world, our recent history remained more disturbed and disfigured by industrial strife and bitterness. The responsibility for this calamitous condition he placed upon the shoulders of Ministers, and particularly upon those of the Prime Minister, because of the open encouragement both by word and act which he gave to the recent inexcusable, dangerous, and fruitless strike in Brisbane. He went further still when he traced the Ministerial surrender to a fear of the labour extremists assembled in this city, who have publicly declared themselves in favour of forcible means of gaining their ends and against appeals to arbitration. The spirit of Syndicalism has become so much in the ascendant in Australia that Labour Ministers and members are being contemptuously warned against interfering in Unionist agitations. They may henceforth find themselves excluded from the governing bodies of Labour organisations. Political point was given to this alarming diagnosis of our industrial conditions by other Opposition speakers. They dwelt upon Mr. Fisher's unfortunate declarations of sympathy with the forty-three Unions in Brisbane. These struck in order to insist that tramway employees must be allowed to wear their Union badge while on duty, though this meant singling out for public notice and offensive imputations all non-Unionist in the company's employ. They did this while that very issue was before the Arbitration Court, included in the plaint lodged by the Tramway Employees' Union, though this fact was unknown and indeed publicly denied by their officers and political representatives. The grave risks to life and property in Brisbane, the heavy losses to thousands of its citizens, and to the producers whose perishable food supplies to and through the city were blocked and injured, culminated in a rising of dangerous proportions. It was only suppressed by very large additions to the police force and firm action. Yet during this defiance of the Arbitration Court, of the State and Federal Governments, and of the interests of tens of thousands of residents in Brisbane, who had no responsibility for either the industrial insurrection or its alleged cause, the Prime Minister openly associated himself with the outbreak.

SHARING OUT THE WORLD'S GOODS.

Mr. Fisher, in reply, defended his conduct and utterances with characteristically emotional appeals to his followers that were cheered to the echo. Mr. Hughes to the same effect, but in a wholly different fashion, upheld the sacred right of the downtrodden working man to do anything he pleased in order to obtain "social justice". Both leaders declared their entire dissatisfaction, not only with the present distribution of the world's goods, but with all proposed remedies now applied under discussion or in perspective. New devices are to be framed, aided by expedients yet

unknown, and after those still others, more drastic, but also only on trial, until the manual labourer receives his full share of those goods, that share being determined from time to time by himself. This promising doctrine seems to have been loudly applauded by Ministerial supporters, and to have been accepted by them as a complete answer to the criticisms of the Opposition front bench. But though this summary indicates the real trend of the debate, it is not yet over. The off-hand seizure of Brisbane by the forty-three Unions; their control of streets and of those who used them, and their submission only when the police, reinforced chiefly from the country districts by two thousand special constables, restored order, are facts beyond contradiction. The consequences of these stirring scenes continue to fascinate all speakers in the Federal House. Mr. Groom, a Queenslander, formerly Attorney-General in the second Deakin Government, and Mr. Finlayson, the Labour member for the city, presented their retrospects from widely differing points of view. The events chronicled constitute what is called "a record", since they represent an effort of organised Labour to capture a State capital, paralyse its industries, cut off its communications, and terrorise its citizens without a direct resort to physical force or positive coercion. It seemed to be a forerunner of a "general strike", which could operate in the same fashion, and with the same object, over any area, no matter how large, effecting a passive conquest for the time being of "all the means of production, distribution, and exchange". Yet it is this procedure by *force majeure* that obtains the public commendation of Mr. Fisher, Mr. Hughes, and their majorities in the National Parliament. It is on this seizure of the reins of government that the Federal Opposition, with excellent generalship, has concentrated its principal attack. Many other matters are also being reviewed, and with much heat in some cases. The list of general grievances against the Labour Government of unfulfilled obligations and of unsatisfied claims appears endless. Most of these are in themselves of local interest only. But the Brisbane strike, taken as typical of Labour aims and methods in Australia, and as expressing the policy of the Caucus, is still the real centre of interest, of alarm, and of attack in Parliament. It seems likely to remain so, and to retain public attention for some time to come.

THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH.

POWER OF THE CAUCUS. EXPERIMENTS IN SOCIALISM.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Jul. 23 1912; Aug. 31 1912.

Undoubtedly much the most important event to Australia is the continuance of welcome rains. Although the losses in some areas have been grave, our pastoralists and farmers as a whole have escaped lightly from a threatened catastrophe and are looking forward to a prosperous season. The next recent event of practical importance is the provision now being made for storing surplus waters over against dry seasons so as to permit of the regular watering of irrigated areas. The Burrenjack reservoir just opened in this State ranks not only as the greatest achievement of the kind on this Continent, but takes its place among the notable works of its class anywhere. Probably third place in public attention is due to the steady realisation of the *Kitchener scheme for universal service* throughout the Commonwealth. This is just entering upon its second year's development under satisfactory auspices. The extraordinary manner in which the Central Caucus of the Labour Party has swung the whole of its forces into line in support of this policy, despite the strong adverse prejudices of a great majority of its members a few years since, and the sullen distaste for its discipline still cherished by a considerable minority, is certainly a very remarkable feature of the present situation. With the Caucus in opposition instead of in office, a very different state of affairs would have been chronicled under any Liberal Government, no matter what its authority in Parliament. The eagerness of the Liberal Opposition to maintain its claim to all the responsibility for this great national departure acts as a constant spur to Mr. Fisher and Mr. Pearce. It also operates upon their followers when they evince any disposition to falter in their allegiance to a policy so foreign to their former aims. Mr. Fisher's refusal to take military precautions against the riot and disorder attendant upon the Brisbane strike continued to be the chief matter of debate on the Address in reply in the Federal House until its inevitable defeat by the Government-pledged majority. Even then and there the suppressed antagonism of the militant Unionists to the existence of any force capable of preventing them from paralysing traffic and business and starving the general community into submission to their demands was continually in evidence. Yet it may be fairly anticipated that

on the next occasion when some great industrial outbreak occurs the Ministry of the day, even if under Caucus control, will not again endeavour to evade its duties by equivocation and subterfuge. There will be a very proper desire to avoid either military display or political partisanship, but the community as a whole and in all its sections will be safeguarded against the heavy costs, losses, and risks involved in Queensland.

MINISTERIAL POLICY.

One of the principal assaults of the Opposition upon the Ministerial policy was directed against its method, or rather its want of method, in finance. The Budget speech next week will doubtless contain the Prime Minister's reply, since as Treasurer he has chief voice in shaping the policy of his Cabinet in this regard. Apparently one effect of Caucus selection and Caucus control of Ministers is to make each of them master in his own Department. The Cabinet has lost its authority, and so has the Prime Minister. The only appeal by or against a Minister appears to lie direct to the Caucus. At all events a purchase officially endorsed by Mr. Thomas when Postmaster-General, and approved by all his colleagues, has been set aside offhand by the Minister for Home Affairs, Mr. O'Malley. He boasted, in the course of a debate in which his action was challenged, that within his Department he, and he alone, was master. Obviously, therefore, in the highest sense of the term, the Caucus is the Ministry, and all its members taken together constitute the true Cabinet. To it any member can appeal, and its decision, whether it affects one or more departments, and one or more Ministers, is final and binding upon them all. Mr. Fisher having spoken before the heavy artillery of the Opposition had been brought to bear upon the financial portion of the vote of want of confidence, the replies made on his behalf were semi-officially undertaken by several members, most of them outside the Ministry, who were supplied with official papers. These curious divagations mark the odd fashion in which by means of new precedents the fundamental principles upon which Constitutional government has developed in the Mother Country and elsewhere are being set aside, quite cavalierly, simply to meet the convenience of the Caucus. The other charges relied upon by Mr. Fisher's opponents were based upon more familiar grounds, such as the partisan appointments of unqualified persons, because they had been serviceable members of Labour Leagues, and similar political peccadilloes, not unknown elsewhere. Naturally, the general effect of the whole debate was favourable to the critics rather than to the criticised. The Ministerial strike imbroglio has certainly not been explained away. So far as one can't judge the public verdict seems to be "not guilty of disloyalty, but don't do it again". The finances of the Commonwealth have also given occasion for a grave concern which has yet to be dispelled. There have been some distinct cases of jobbery sheeted home to the

Cabinet, and the suspicion exists that many others of a minor character have escaped exposure. The Opposition, on the whole, excelled their opponents in speaking power, and in the variety of their attacks, notwithstanding the astute elusiveness of Mr. Fisher, Mr. Hughes, and Mr. Thomas in their replies.

STATE LEGISLATURES.

The several State Legislatures already under way repeat in different fashions much the same experiences as those now occurring in the National Parliament. In Queensland the echoes of the recent strike do not appear to have been as loud as the recent reverberations in Melbourne. In Tasmania the new Cabinet has survived a fresh attack only by the casting vote of the Speaker. In Western Australia the Legislative Council has placed upon record a severe indictment of the Labour Ministry for its unauthorised disbursement from the public funds. In South Australia a dignified and promising programme of practical measures has been submitted, with every prospect of realisation. Victoria, now that Mr. Watt has taken the reins appears to be reawakening to the possibilities of the local situation. A Labour vote of censure has been promptly defeated, and an active policy of immigration is being pursued. Besides other courageous measures, a daring Bill authorising Commonwealth action against monopolies under conditions has been tabled. This, if accepted in all the States, would render unnecessary one of the principal proposals for increasing the Federal powers, which Mr. Hughes intends to send to the people again in the next referendum. The four States in which the Caucus is in Opposition, if they can be united in national matters upon a common policy, can do much to withstand the open ambition of the Federal Caucus to put the whole of them under their feet. In 1911, especially in this State, there was a decided break away, headed by Mr. Holman, from the Referendum proposals of Mr. Hughes. That is not likely to recur in 1913, since all our State Ministers seem to have been brought to heel by the Tasmanian Conference. Our Legislature has just opened with a flourish of figures Mr. McGowen demonstrating the ever-increasing prosperity of New South Wales and by Mr. Griffith intended to establish the success of his several experiences with State industrial enterprises. Day labour under officers is to replace the contract system everywhere, while the Government is to sell State manufactured bricks to the public at lower prices than those of private firms. The actual cost to the Treasury, of these experiments in Socialism is not yet available, but will undoubtedly be demanded by the public. In the meantime, it seems plain that our Cabinet is resolved to remain in office and to retain Mr. Willis in the Speaker's chair by conceding his demands for the overlordship of Parliament House and its officials. Our Liberal Opposition has held a successful Conference, and appears to be strengthening its hold upon the country slowly but surely.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.

In point of time Victoria has enjoyed a long lead in the development of agricultural production by means of irrigation, though, owing to the great financial crash in the early Nineties and the prolonged depression that followed, her financial losses were great. For this failure the inertia of her rural population was chiefly to blame. Even now, after twenty years' experience, it is only owing to the external impetus derived from the introduction of Americans accustomed to watering that they are waking up to the immense advantages to be derived, especially from "intense culture", with water always at call. In our own interior Sir Samuel McCaughey, M.L.C., has been irrigating for forty years to his own great advantage. He has been able to defy droughts, before which his market competitors went hopelessly down. It is his land that was acquired by Mr. Lee, a member of Mr. Wade's Government, and under its policy that the immense work at Burrenjack, of which the first and greatest portion has just been completed, was formally opened last week. Whether it is really *second in its dimensions only to the Assouan dam* in Egypt, it certainly is by far the greatest achievement of the kind in the Commonwealth. Mildura, probably the wealthiest and most progressive inland settlement in Australia, carries six thousand prosperous people on 12,000 acres of sandy soil, though without irrigation ten times that area would not yield a fraction of its results. The large level tract of Victoria, directly north of Melbourne, is gradually, but slowly, enlarging its regularly irrigated lands. Another 100,000 acres is being provided with water to meet the steady demand now existing, but unsatisfied by the 150,000 acres already supplied. These figures, however, look small beside those of Burrenjack, where the first instalment of the area commanded, just thrown open includes 300,000 acres of excellent irrigable country, with 700,000 acres more beside them, capable of being utilised without watering, in connection with the irrigated tract. There are farmers' applications already in for 470 out of the 500 blocks offered. The effect of their utilisation is expected to protect sixty million acres against most of the ravages of drought. Considering that the huge dam just completed will hold back the waters of the Murrumbidgee for forty miles along its course to an average depth of nearly 90ft., the calculation that the flood thus stored would more than fill Sydney Harbour affords a picturesque measure of the greatness of the engineering feat accomplished. An ultimate aim of the settlers will be a large output of high-quality fruit, but in the meantime butter, vegetables, bacon-curing, and small farming are confidently relied upon to yield large profits. The fact that many expert irrigators from the United States, after carefully studying the local prospects, are purchasing irrigated farms, both here and in Victoria, is probably the best evidence that our great investments in water storage are timely and wise.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

NEXT YEAR'S ELECTIONS. LABOUR MINISTRIES AND ECONOMY.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Aug. 12 1912; Sep. 27 1912.

The absolute dominance of the Labour Leagues in the Federal Parliament is being more ruthlessly exercised than ever since this is the last session of the present Federal Parliament. Although the familiar forms of debate and procedure are retained, there is less attempt to disguise the fact that the Trades Hall majorities of both Houses in Melbourne are not only in possession of despotic legislative and administrative powers, but are exercising them to the full in their sectional interest. They have next year's elections always in mind. Every step taken and every speech delivered has the electoral struggle in full view. All, or almost all, Labour representatives seem to keep nothing else in mind. The solidarity of the party has to be maintained at any cost. That of the leaders and of the political representatives behind them appears assured. That of the outside organisations, the Unions or bodies under other titles, all of them mere offshoots from the industrial Unions, is also marvellously maintained. Not that their internal proceedings are harmonious in every instance. Far from brotherly is their temper in many cases. Individual ambitions exist in all these bodies, as they do everywhere else. In addition, sundry sections of the ultras, impatient of the tardy, politic, temporising methods of their official leaders, are always carrying on underground campaigns within the party. Every now and then these become responsible for eruptions more or less visible to the general public. The approaching dissolution of the Federal Houses has for the time being suppressed these antagonisms in Melbourne. Still Mr. Fisher, conciliatory as he seeks to be, is now and then publicly taken to task for his efforts to explain away the extreme aims of his associates. Some of his colleagues, and particularly Mr. O'Malley, are openly rebuked and coerced into less tactless defiances of sound principles of administration. On the whole, however, the common danger, now not far ahead, operates both to stimulate the energies and sober the deportment of the bulk of the Federal Ministerial Party.

ILLIBERAL MINISTRY.

In this State the situation is much more complex. Our illiberal Ministry, which in point of ability is certainly not inferior to the Commonwealth Cabinet, and if it included Mr. J.C. Watson would greatly surpass that Cabinet, has a far more difficult row to hoe. Governing with an almost invisible majority in the House, dependent upon the freaks of a Speaker whose surrender made that majority possible, and with only a minority in the Legislative Council, its position from the first has been most precarious.

True, some blunders of the Liberal Opposition have helped Mr. Holman and Mr. Beeby to surmount a number of obstacles, but the persistent folly of their more extreme supporters has involved them in perpetual embarrassments. But after all they have survived, as Mr. Watson did in 1904, when the first Labour Administration of Australia, always in a minority, painfully and tactfully pursued its campaign until checkmated by the astuteness of Sir George Reid. Later, Mr. Watson had another opportunity almost in his grasp, and could possibly have fought his way into a coalition with the Liberals if his followers had been content to bide their time. When Labour members refused to honour his pledges to their allies, Mr. Watson retired from the Federal arena, only returning to it unhappily, when he had espoused the cause of the extremists who refused to follow his lead in 1906–7. According to present appearances Mr. Holman and Mr. Beeby are faced by similar perplexities in our State politics. Perhaps only the unfortunate experience of Mr. Watson warns them against following his former moderate course. Unfortunately they would find him to-day their most dangerous adversary, if they ventured to sacrifice their positions for their convictions. The tangle in which they are struggling has been once more brought before us by a supposed interchange of confidences, between them and a few old Liberals, notably Sir Joseph Carruthers and Mr. Gannon, at what has since been described as a chance meeting at a dinner in the House. A coalition of this kind appears to be absolutely impossible but the fact that it is even suggested tells its own tale. The anomalous attitude of the two Labour Ministers recognised as possessing “the brains of the Cabinet” could not be more strikingly illustrated at this juncture. Nor could the confusion in our State Legislature be more oddly exhibited than by the drawing of such sensational inferences. Apparently the Governor-General is to remain in possession of our Government House and to reside in it when he pleases on condition that the Federal Parliament pays full rent for his small, old-fashioned, admirably situated residence and part of its domain. Mr. Holman and Mr. Beeby seem to have obliged Mr. Fisher to accept these terms. This, however, is a very small victory for them if, as still appears certain, Mr. Hughes is able to compel them to surrender all the chief powers that New South Wales and our sister States possess to the Federal Parliament as their over-lord.

PROSPERITY OF AUSTRALIA.

The Commonwealth Budget has so far been discussed only in the Press, and there, of course, perfunctorily. It would need a long series of articles to deal with an outlay of over £20,000,000 a year, involving projects that must be continuously pursued for years before they are completed. The abounding prosperity of Australia has given, and promises to keep on giving, us a bumper revenue. The fact that during the three years terminating in June next over £10,000,000 has been provided from revenue for new works is in itself a sufficient indication of an overflowing Treasury. It is true that the Commonwealth has now a National Debt of over £6,000,000, due to its acceptance of South Australia's expenditure to date upon the Northern Territory, and a £400,000 investment in the purchase of a site for new offices in London. The most suggestive feature of the remaining outlay is that all the unspent receipts of the last two years are now allotted. Consequently, in the event of the appeal to the country being adverse to the Government, any new Administration will commence its career in entire dependence upon its then current receipts. The only surprise is the promise of an Inter-State Commission which the Liberal Party twice endeavoured to establish, but which the Caucus always resisted and condemned. A fear is that here again the desire of the Cabinet is to anticipate the action of their possible successors and to use the three well-paid appointments provided for in the Constitution as opportunities for patronage. The debate upon the Budget has been postponed in order to permit an outlay of nearly £3,000,000 for new works and buildings to be authorised, so as to permit of their being pressed on before the Budget as a whole is considered. After some demur this has been conceded, but when it appeared that the aim of the Government was to dispose off-hand of this relatively great sum which, with other disbursements, composed one-fifth of our annual receipts, the Opposition protested, though, of course, in vain. They managed, however, to catch a Ministerial Whip napping, with the result that there was a count out, and last Friday's sitting closing as usual at 4 p.m., the intention was defeated, greatly to the chagrin of the Caucus.

THE DAY LABOUR SYSTEM.

The principal subject of debate so far has been upon alleged abuses of the day labour system now in vogue, practically, on most Commonwealth undertakings. In this State, as in Western Australia, Labour Cabinets being in office, a similar policy has been pursued, and in both instances has provoked strong complaint. Although our Minister for Works, Mr. Griffith, has always been reckoned an extremist, and still claims to belong to the section devoted to day labour, his protests have been persistent against the perpetual friction engendered between his employees and the officers charged with the duty of getting a fair day's work from them for a full

day's pay, augmented by generous treatment during bad weather and on holidays. His outspoken censures of the frivolous character of their appeals for favours and immunities on the evident assumption that wage-earners by their political support of Labour candidates become entitled to a high remuneration not, whether they earn it have been frank and well-founded. But the Federal Minister for Works in Melbourne shows no such sense of his responsibilities. Troubles in connection with the works under his Department have been provoked by his evident willingness to secure support at the polls at the expense of the practical efficiency of his Department. Last week he attempted to justify the granting of preference to applicants for work if they were enrolled Unionists, whether they were competent or not. The Prime Minister was obliged during the same sitting to declare that preference to Unionists was only to be granted when their practical qualifications for the work to be done were equal to those of non-Unionist competitors. There is an uneasy feeling in the country that this rule is not being adhered to. The general outcome of the friction generated in Parliament by the challenges to the day labour system seems likely to increase the already high temperature of the debates in Melbourne, where the General Election next year is already treated as if close at hand.

LABOUR ILLIBERALS.

Naturally the situation is provocative of alarm to the Fisher Government, since in four out of the six States the Trades Unions are in a minority. In New South Wales they may be placed in a similar plight if the Opposition has some good luck and good management. The sweets of office are at least as palatable to Labour men, Federal or State, as to their independent opponents, while the class partisanship, political and industrial, of the Caucus nominees is always more pronounced. Suspicion throughout the Commonwealth is already aroused by the abolition of the "Postal Vote" accorded to electors who are invalided, and especially prized by wives who become mothers. Federal Ministers having taken away their votes are now offering them a maternity bonus of £5 as compensation. Experts in electioneering devices, constantly on the watch to enrol their own supporters or exclude those opposed, the organised political and trades unions, who really constitute one body, continue persistently at the work of registering and removing names from the rolls from year's end to year's end all over Australia. The fight, always fierce, is becoming intensified as the critical period for enrolment arrives. The polling being expected to establish a record, the question of questions now is whether the rolls will be reliable? Whether they will be packed or not? Of this much will be heard hereafter. But as already remarked, both in the Federal and in the States spheres the Labour illiberals are prepared for the worst. Mr. Fisher, during his term has received and authorised the spending of nearly £20,000,000 more than his predecessors enjoyed, including his loan of £700,000

from the Trust Funds. Mr. McGowen in less than two years has borrowed over £9,000,000, and spent practically every available penny of the largest State income on record. Economy and foresight are watchwords which find no favour in Labour Ministries.

THE COMMONWEALTH of AUSTRALIA.

MR. FISHER'S FINANCIAL STATEMENT. THE SUPPRESSION OF STRIKES.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Sep. 3 1912; Oct. 9 1912.

To keep tally of the party changes and policies of our seven bicameral Legislatures might well seem an impossible task and prove as a rule an unprofitable one. It has only been feasible to do so at all since the Labour Caucus conquered one side of the House in every Australian Parliament. Formerly each of the seven presented a separate set of political problems. To-day all variations of moment have disappeared. The Labour platform and party, each of them one and indivisible, are upheld by three Administrations: the Federal besides those of this State and of Western Australia. Four Oppositions in the remaining States fly the same flag against as many "Liberal" Governments. The latter derive their indisputable title to their name as much because of its applicability to their general principles as to their present situation. Freedom of action and largely freedom of speech are effectively forbidden to Labour Ministers and members. They must do exactly as the Caucus bids them. In the Legislatures or out of them they cannot call their souls their own. Compared with their shackles those of the Liberal Party may seem light as air, but they are growing in authority, owing to the necessity of giving a direct challenge to the principal Labour dogmas. In official choices of candidates and the adoption of official programmes necessary to secure uniformity of policy and avoid a split in the party the Liberals have been driven into adopting in a general way somewhat similar procedures. There is still a large measure of liberty, individual and collective, in our seven Liberal parties; but it is less than it was, and tends to decrease so far as its individual representatives are concerned. Any other course would weaken their organisations since Liberal electors are strongly tempted to differ from each other in their preferences for candidates. Under most of our existing systems of voting this is fatal to success. There, again, the Caucus insists upon retaining the present indefensible and illiberal system, because this imposes upon its followers a complete solidarity at the polls, by extinguishing all personal choice and discrimination. Labour voters are treated as pawns. The Caucus rules them despotically. Unwillingly but steadily Liberal voters are feeling the dangers of a practice which they distrust, but must in some measure obey if they are to hold

their own under present conditions. The endeavour to reconcile any extension of such methods with the independence of their supporters will impose a great strain.

MR. FISHER'S BUDGET.

In the Commonwealth Parliament the Caucus has its back against the wall. Not that it takes punishment quietly. On the contrary, it hits back bitterly. But the aggression comes from the Opposition. Its attacks on the Ministerial position are constant and spirited. Ministers appear to be making a poor defence. The critics so far are having the best of it. The more closely Mr. Fisher's Budget is scrutinised the more grave do its omissions and the more faulty its propositions appear. Indeed, we have not had in the old sense a "Budget" at all. Mr. Fisher, it is true, read out many tables of figures and totals, but he omitted almost all the collocations and interpretations necessary to make them even superficially intelligible. His two previous financial statements were equally incomplete, uncertain, and unsatisfactory, especially if measured by the standards already established by his predecessors Sir John Forrest and Sir George Turner. With an over-flowing Treasury, three record seasons one after another, creating a prosperity unparalleled even in Australia, and with all estimates of revenue exceeded, his statements last month were of the baldest, and his omissions even more serious than in his two previous financial statements. His provision for the future is inadequate, and, indeed, the future is in effect ignored. Member after member of the Opposition fell upon his straggling figures, demonstrating their inadequacy in themselves, and the absence of much indispensable information upon obligations of special importance. There was no reply from the Front Bench though the Attorney-General Mr. Hughes, attended for the purpose at the close of the debate. Not receiving the Chairman's call early in the evening, he declined to address the Committee later, probably because the daily papers would not then have reported him at length. The Budget debate, which had been one-sided from the first, closed, therefore, without any Ministerial elucidation of the many mysteries of which explanations had been demanded. The few speeches from the Labour benches were mainly occupied with the particular fads of speculative Labour theorists. They threw no light upon the mysteries of the Budget and included no reply to Opposition censures, which remain still unanswered, reminding us of gaps in the statement that apparently are not to be filled up. Whether this is to be taken as an intentional refusal to face the situation, or admit the oversights which the Treasurer is unwilling to confess, remains uncertain. No such attitude in any debate has been maintained except in Mr. Fisher's two preceding "Budgets". This is more notable for its insufficiency than they were. According to the criticism of competent authorities the present Caucus policy, so far as it can be construed from the very imperfect fragmentary comments of its supporters, if pursued as outlined, will land us with

a huge deficit by 1913–14. Certainly the existing situation has not been faced. Its problems are either ignored or evaded. After three years trifling the taking over of the State Debts has been deliberately abandoned without justification. The States, even those under Caucus control, have been exasperated by Mr. Fisher's raid upon their Savings Banks. Generally summing up, the financial situation has not been explained or justified, while the outlook for the immediate future to all competent critics who have studied the present Budget is utterly unsatisfactory.

THE SUGAR INDUSTRY.

The most important and interesting State session is that of Queensland. In the first place it has to face an attack by the Federal Ministry upon its great sugar industry. By virtue of a return of a bounty out of an Excise duty levied upon all sugar production, the Federal Cabinet possesses power to dictate the hours and wages of the employees upon the plantations and in the mills of the Northern State. So far, under a system of payment by results, the cane cutters have been earning very high wages. The rapidity with which they have worked has kept the mills going night and day. There has been no complaint by the cutters against the former system. Such mill difficulties as arose were settled some time ago. Mr. Fisher, a Queensland representative, is, of course, aware of these facts. Nevertheless, he feels bound to use the power possessed by his Executive to threaten one of the most valuable industries in that State. An escape may be found if the State agrees to forbid the employment of coloured labour either in the canefields or the mills. The present bounty and Excise system was framed to accomplish this, and in large measure succeeded. With that end attained through the State, the Commonwealth Ministry would find itself well rid of the whole business of supervision. In the meantime the Cabinet seems to be forcing this transfer on while desirous of retaining its present control in reserve until after the next election for political party reasons.

INDUSTRIAL PEACE.

But to Australia the most generally interesting legislative project is the daring and comprehensive Bill framed by Mr. Denham and his colleagues for the maintenance of industrial peace. With the great Brisbane strike still fresh in the memories of their public Ministers aim at making such another revolutionary outbreak impossible. An industrial tribunal of high standing is to be established with very wide powers of adjudication to suppress strikes and enforce agreements. In its complete form the measure will be worthy of close study. It is likely to represent the most advanced views of the Commonwealth, always excepting those of the militant Trade Unions.

While using the law whenever it is to their advantage, these desire to retain the power of forcibly penalising their fellow citizens so as to wring from them further concessions, however unwarranted or unjust. A milder measure of smaller scope but allied aim is before the South Australian Parliament, where the Adelaide strike is still remembered. In point of fact, industrial legislation has become a standing dish in every one of our Legislatures. Assuredly we are acquiring more experience and undertaking more experiments in this relation than any other country. We have not solved any one of its problems yet, but are boldly undertaking to face each new situation by one means or another until we become satisfied with some of the many devices now under test.

SELF-CONFIDENCE.

In this State, unfortunately, our Legislature is the sport of Mr. Willis. So much is our Ministry at his mercy that hitherto it has not dared to do more than defer to or attempt to mitigate his extravagances. However high the estimate of his admirers may be, and apparently he has some still, they have not a tithe of the confidence in him, nor, indeed, of the admiration for him which he has for himself. The extraordinary situation has made him. Our Government depends upon his vote. They must either endorse his actions, no matter how violent or unjust or simply ridiculous they may be, or else go to the country. They had recently laid their plans for deferring that trying experience for some months. Having surrendered all that their master, the Speaker, then required, Ministers felt secure in their seats at last. But they had reckoned without their political host, whose extraordinary mind appears to force him into the most extraordinary antics in order that public attention may be continuously occupied with his escapades. Ministers have already endured a great deal at his hands, including sundry public humiliations, but even they appear at present inclined to call a halt, rather than to render themselves absolutely puppets. But pitting himself against our *Daily Telegraph* Mr. Willis has afforded a further, but by no means final illustration of his determination to reduce the Press, as well as Parliament, to a complete subordination to his taste for sensational exhibitions and self-glorification. Probably Ministers will be compelled to curtail his power as Speaker over the Press Gallery. They will risk much if they make the venture and more if they refuse to face the situation.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE SCANDAL.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Sep. 24 1912; Nov. 9 1912.

The unity of the Labour Party throughout Australia is outwardly absolute and electorally triumphant. But it does not exclude domestic differences between its administrations, particularly where the Commonwealth and State spheres intersect. This is especially marked in the strained relations between our Cabinet and that of the Federal wing of the party, which are continually manifesting themselves in public. Mr. Beeby, whose authority to-day not only overshadows that of his Premier but even that of Mr. Holman, who occasionally plays the part of Acting Premier as if Mr. McGowen were absent from the country, bitterly complains of the unfederal raid upon our Savings Banks conducted by the new Commonwealth institution. Then, again, it was he who gallantly faced a large and hostile audience assembled in our Town Hall last week, which rallied to condemn the conduct of our Ministry, because of its making conditions with regard to the retention of the old Government House, so as to exclude our present Governor-General as well as his successors. This implied no reflection upon our present Governor-General, who was to retain the use of the building and its immediate surroundings during his term of office. But the State was to receive rent in return for this concession, a not unreasonable, though tardy and rather paltry, demand, which Mr. Fisher obstinately refused to recognise. Hence Lord Denman, popular as he has been in New South Wales, is forbidden to return to us because our two Labour Ministries cannot come to terms upon so small a matter as a temporary rent charge. The feeling of all sections outside the Labour Party is that a very churlish and inhospitable attitude has been adopted by both Cabinets. Mr. Beeby was refused a hearing at the Town Hall, and probably the Prime Minister would have been censured in a similar fashion if he had faced that gathering of highly-exasperated citizens. Since Government House was built long since at Imperial cost the demands of Mr. McGowen's Ministry, so far as Lord Denman was concerned, were evidently indefensible. So far as Mr. Fisher's Cabinet were implicated their refusal to find the paltry sum at stake was equally censurable. In view of the fact that the outcome of this squabble between two branches of the Labour Caucus seems likely to be the exclusion of future Governors-General from Sydney, the incident assumes a certain Federal importance. Their official headquarters

before long will be at Canberra, comparatively speaking close at hand. If under these conditions no residence is made available for them here, in the principal capital of the Commonwealth, an irresistible public movement will be generated to secure a proper recognition of his Majesty's representatives within our city's bounds.

PORT AUGUSTA TO KALGOORLIE RAILWAY.

The most notable incident in recent Australian history was the commencement of the railway from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie, connecting our Eastern systems already linked to each other with that of Western Australia, hitherto isolated. By its means transit will be provided for all travellers who dislike facing the weather of the Great Australian Bight. So far the resources of the country traversed, except the pastoral, are matters of speculation, not likely to contribute to its earnings to any notable extent for many years to come. Mining fields of promise along the routes within South Australia have not so far justified expectations, while in Western Australia the prospects sampled have not been any more encouraging. The line as authorised, therefore, is strategic and not economic in purpose. Its cost and maintenance must be debited to defence probably for many a year to come. Australia's earnestness and expenditure in that regard may be counted to her for righteousness, unless, indeed, owing to the time already lost the hour of trial arrives before the connection of east and west is completed. Our apprehensions in that regard are increased by others, due to the extraordinary methods adopted by the *Minister for Home Affairs*, by whose department the work of construction is to be undertaken; tenders from contractors have been invited. The intention is to complete the line by day labour employed at the expense of the Commonwealth under departmental supervision. Recent debates disclosed very unsatisfactory results in certain cases, when a similar method was adopted for placing underground the telephone lines in the city and suburbs of Melbourne. This was challenged by citizens, who observed the "Government strike" of the daily paid men apparently very anxious to prolong their profitable employment near to their homes. Then, again, the same Minister, Mr. O'Malley, in a spirit of good fellowship, has made a contract with the West Australian Labour Cabinet to buy from them the sleepers needed for the thousand miles of railway about to be constructed. The Jarrah timber, though of world-wide reputation for such purposes, has been put aside for Karri, another timber, which is to be treated by a new system. It is to be "Powellised" in order to be made impervious to "dry rot" or the attack of white ants. The Jarrah, of course, could have been treated in the same fashion. The Karri has been preferred because the State lands of Western Australia, upon which it grows, are the property of the State, while the Jarrah forests, or most of them, are in private hands at present. The inference drawn is that the interests of Australia in this great railway are to be impaired because the two Labour Ministries, Federal and State, are playing into

each other's hands for party reasons. Sir **John Forrest**, the first explorer to follow the line of this railway, and the first white man to cross the great unknown tract through which it will pass, attained the great object of his life's ambition when he saw the line for which he has so long striven actually commenced. He, too, protests against the hazards of the present Caucus plan of construction, being heartily supported by his colleague, Mr. **Hedges**, a contractor experienced in the building of such lines in Western Australia. But Federal Ministers for all that, insist upon taking unnecessary risks for the sake of their own party. They seem as generous to their West Australian comrades as they are niggardly to those of New South Wales.

PARLIAMENTARY SITUATION.

The Commonwealth Parliament continues to lead a strenuous life, yet the net result of its labours appears remarkably small. At this distance it is not easy to decide either the cause of the delays or their excuse. The time limit is being rigorously enforced, though there has been no set "stonewalling". The business transacted has not seemed specially important, and as a rule only thin Houses have faced the **Speaker**. The information current at this distance points to troubles within the Caucus, but no outward signs of anything of the kind are mentioned, and there is no leakage of news of the origins of any disputes. Outwardly all that is visible is a handful of Opposition members more or less quietly criticising whatever measures or matters the Ministry submit. Few of the Ministerialists remain in the Chamber, and few of them speak, and yet with no visible delays the business seems to drag. The Prime Minister himself is said to be usually absent from the Front Bench, generally buried in his own room. When he does appear he does not disguise his impatience; but nothing happens, and practically nothing very much has happened during the half of the session that has expired. Threats of sittings after Christmas are already heard. This in itself sums up the situation and brands it as a product of neglectful leadership. In our own State Legislature the position is not very dissimilar except that our Opposition not only makes many mistakes but apparently gains no ground in spite of the graver blunders of the McGowen Cabinet.

LEGISLATION IN OTHER STATES.

In Western Australia our other State Labour Cabinet has distinguished itself by allowing several of its Ministers to take up large areas of leasehold land near the new transcontinental railway line. Queensland has passed through its Assembly the most advanced industrial measure yet framed in Australia. This, after revision by the Council, should prove well worth the study of all who are interested in some of the

most important present-day problems of our social life. In South Australia steady progress is being achieved with practical measures which even a Labour Opposition appears unable to obstruct. In Tasmania, despite the fact that Mr. **Solomon**, the new Premier, has no larger majority than our Mr. McGowen, he seems to have rallied his forces sufficiently to tide over the period necessary for the Chambers to settle down to work. There are no scandals to record there. In Victoria the outlook is somewhat more perplexing owing to the illness of the Premier, Mr. **Watt**, and in part to the fact that the Labour Party being powerless in itself, there are temptations to discord among Ministerialists, especially those constituting what is called the "country party". An excellent set of useful measures are about to be dealt with, so that there is still a good prospect for business when Mr. Watt becomes able to resume the reins a few days hence. Though the recent storms occasioned floods in the northern parts of that State they have greatly improved the prospects of the farmers there as well as in New South Wales.

THE SUGAR COMMISSION.

Mr. Justice **Gordon**, of South Australia, has resigned the Presidency of the Sugar Commission on the grounds of ill-health. His place is now occupied by Professor **Jethro Brown**, of the Adelaide Ministry. The validity of the Commission has been challenged, and will come in due course before the High Courts. In the meantime Judge Gordon's retirement will not be questioned, and the appeal of the Sugar Company arouses no sympathy in the general community. Many business men consider it a blunder. The constitution and personnel of the Commission have been regarded with a good deal of suspicion from the first. The Sugar Company is placing itself in a similar position. However warrantable its action may seem, it suggests to the public that its directors have something to conceal. The Federal Government is passing a new measure upon which the Minister for **Customs** will attempt to regulate wages and hours in the sugar-cane fields. But it appears likely that before long State legislation in Queensland and New South Wales will safeguard white labour in the fields, thus enabling the Federal Bounty and Excise and the interference of the Commonwealth Cabinet to disappear. In the meantime, the Sugar Company's policy and practices will be thoroughly investigated.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

LABOUR PARTY AND THE HIGH COURT.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Oct. 15 1912; Nov. 23 1912.

The High Court of Australia may be fairly said to dominate the whole Commonwealth. Our National Parliament is confined to and governed by its interpretations of the Constitution. All our legislation is subject to its reading of that instrument. During the last few years the Court's authority has been appealed to with increasing frequency and upon most important issues. Since 1910, when the Labour Party, by relatively small majorities, captured both the Senate and the House of Representatives, its Caucus has naturally concentrated all its energies upon taking the fullest advantage of its commanding position. In 1911, with a light heart and copious funds, it launched a series of vital amendments of the Constitution, purposing to make full use of these extensions during the interval prior to the General Election of 1913. Badly beaten in that attack, the Caucus is now re-shaping its 1911 proposals for submission at that General Election in slightly different form. Meanwhile its newspapers and its members in our seven Parliaments are constantly bewailing the "rigidity" of the interpretations of Federal powers stoutly insisted upon by the majority of the High Court. Present expectations imply that additions are likely to be made, and perhaps soon, to the existing bench of five Judges. One of these, Mr. Justice *Higgins*, being President of the Arbitration Court, has little leisure to spare for hearing other appeals. The High Court lists of cases are always long. The burdens upon the Judges, heady from the first, are always growing. It will not be unreasonable to add to their number. At the same time evidently advantage may be taken of the occasion to strengthen the bench in such a fashion as to enable the three senior Judges to be overruled. Hitherto their word has been and has made the law. How long they will continue to make it is the problem.

CONSTITUTION OF THE COURT.

The Court, as constituted in 1903, had as its chief Sir *Samuel Griffith*, who while Premier of Queensland took a leading part in promoting federation, and as principal draftsman at the Sydney Convention shaped the first draft Constitution of the Commonwealth in 1891. Associated with him in that great task was his present

colleague Sir **Edmund Barton**, a former Attorney-General of New South Wales, the leader of the final Convention of 1897–8, and the first Prime Minister of the Commonwealth. Their junior, Mr. **R.E. O'Connor**, a distinguished member of the New South Wales Bar, and a former Solicitor-General of that State, was also prominently associated with the final drafting of the Commonwealth Constitution, and a member of the first Federal Cabinet. The High Court from the outset, as thus constituted, commanded public confidence and that of the legal profession. Its prestige steadily increased.

Sir Samuel Griffith's great reputation rapidly widened. The frankness of his expert criticism of counsel's arguments, the simplicity and directness with which he went to the root of the issues before him, coupled with his wide mastery, both of public affairs and of the law, dominated not only his colleagues but the public generally. With the increase of the Court's influence and business it became necessary in 1907 to add two more Judges. The then Attorney-General, Mr. **Isaacs**, and Mr. H.B. Higgins, both distinguished leaders of the Victorian Bar, were selected for the posts. Both had been politically allied with Radical principles in the Victorian and in the Federal Legislature, and it was not long before it became evident that they were adopting, each in his own way, new readings of the Federal Constitution.

VIEWS OF THE JUNIOR JUDGES.

The original Court consistently interpreted that Constitution as a charter containing all the positive endowments of power granted to the Federal Parliament. On the other hand, the two younger Judges appear to rely upon not only the specific terms of the Constitution as they stand, but upon further implications, so far as these may be necessary, to ensure the full sovereignty of the Federal Parliament. The Court is therefore on this view entitled to go farther in order to complete the scheme of government intended, but not actually authorised in the Constitution. That is at all events a general opinion as to the differences between the Judges tacitly adopted by the public, whatever in their professional language our men of the law may say to the contrary. Owing to the unfortunate illness of Mr. Justice O'Connor on a recent occasion, the Chief Justice was required to use his casting vote so as to enable his decision and that of Mr. Justice Barton to stand against the dissenting judgments of their two juniors. The Labour Government, being in power, and proposing to further extend its own powers by new constitutional amendments (intended to be submitted to the people in connection with the coming General Election next year), may think it necessary to ensure success by making additions to the High Court. The question, then, may be whether they can find barristers in the front rank prepared to adopt the view taken by Mr. Justice Isaacs and Mr. Justice Higgins. If they can,

they will have practically assured one great advance, quite irrespective of the fate of any amendments submitted to the Referendum. At all events, the Caucus appears to favour any "double banking" which their present majorities in Parliament will permit.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST TRUSTS.

The gulf that separates the original Court constituted by the first three Judges from the new attitude adopted by the two Victorian Judges has been illustrated in a most striking fashion in connection with a case that has commanded public attention throughout the whole Continent. The last Liberal Government originated proceedings against the coalmine owners of Newcastle, and the steamship owners trading along our coasts jointly, on the plea that by means of a mutual agreement as to the prices to be paid for coal at the mines, and also the prices at which it was sold to consumers in the several States, they had combined to the detriment of the general public for their own illegitimate profits. The evidence for the Crown was voluminous but general; upon none of the main facts submitted was there any conflict. The defendants stood simply on the defensive, admitting the facts proved, but denying their sufficiency and their own culpability. Mr. Justice Isaacs, with indefatigable energy, collated and interpreted the mass of data, dwelling upon the undisputed increases in prices charged by the "Vend", and drawing from the evidence as a whole an unhesitating conclusion that these increases were unwarrantable and injurious to the public. His finding and fines created a sensation only surpassed when with characteristic rapidity and lucidity the High Court on appeal promptly reversed the judgment. All that had been proved was that prices had been increased, but there was nothing to show that the increase was not legitimate. Some of the evidence of increases appeared to justify the plea that they were only reasonable and fair. In most instances there was nothing to prove whether they were equitable or not. The Crown, in a word, had not made out its case. Mr. Justice Isaacs had taken too much for granted. The sensation in the Labour ranks created by this case is now being exploited for all it is worth, and a good deal more, as proof of the necessity for wholesale amendments of the Constitution. These are likely to be re-submitted to Parliament within the next two or three weeks. The favourite bogies of the Labour Leagues, the wealthy trusts and combines who are supposed to be responsible for the poverty and the high prices all the world over, are now receiving all the lime-light that the Caucus agencies can shed upon them. Needless to add that the frequent increases in wages and reductions in the work done by wage-earners in their shorter hours are not taken into account. The Labour Unions and their Leagues are always ready with fresh demands for concessions, making the public their prey wherever they can. So do the trusts and combines. The two do not seldom play into each other's hands. The general public pays both bills.

FINANCIAL SITUATION.

The reported London flotation by our State **Treasurer** of a loan for £3,000,000 on good terms, though not yet authenticated, is helping to put him and his colleagues in good spirits. The news also invokes a good deal of jealousy throughout the Commonwealth, almost every State Cabinet being in want of funds. The price of money has been steadily rising for the last year, and bids fair to remain high. A policy of expansion is being pursued on every hand. The stringency, therefore, is most untimely, and already occasions a good deal of concern. The Federal Government has still a buoyant revenue, and its reckless commitments, though scathingly denounced by the Opposition, are being pursued regardless of consequences. The General Election is too near to permit the Cabinet to economise. Yet for the sake of the mere interest charge upon the value of our old Government House Mr. **Fisher** has decided that the **Governor-General** must forego his visits to Sydney for the future or find other Quarters. This meanness is emulated by the **McGowen** Cabinet. Smarting under what they consider Federal penuriousness, our Ministers insist upon their dues. Thus, out of a pitiful squabble between two Labour Cabinets, each too petty to allow the other to get the best of a bad bargain, there has arisen an exclusion of his Majesty's chief representative which looks almost as bad as an eviction.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

POSITION OF STATE GOVERNORS.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Nov. 6 1912; Dec. 24 1912.

Lord Chelmsford's entirely unexpected resignation has imparted a shock of unpleasant surprise to a public whose interest in the King's State representatives has been diminishing ever since Federation. Overshadowed by our Governors-General they have been relegated to a second place considerably removed from that which their Commonwealth colleague occupies. Still the section of the community brought into touch with our Governors realises their value to the States and to many of our institutions. This is particularly the case when we have been fortunate enough to obtain men like Sir Harry Rawson and Lord Chelmsford. Differing absolutely in character and manner, both have enjoyed a very real and independent appreciation from all who have known them. Even Mr. McGowen, our present Labour Premier, has been forced to employ terms of unstinted admiration and obligation to our present Governor, though the policy of the Caucus was, and probably still is, to abolish the office he now occupies as soon as it can. The bulk of its supporters never come into contact with his Majesty's representative, have no knowledge of his duties or influence, and hence slavishly accept the assertions of their equally ignorant local leaders that a Governor is merely an ornamental person restricted to ceremonial functions. Sir Gerald Strickland, formerly Governor of Tasmania and now of Western Australia, has at last obtained a recognition of his claims to become Governor of our Premier State. Unfortunately it seems clear that the decrease of the prestige of State Governors has added nothing to that enjoyed by our Governors-General. However energetic these may be in travel or able in fulfilling their duties, they meet but a small fraction of the citizens of the Commonwealth. They no longer appear to provoke even the curiosity of the masses. During the last few years, all visible causes only partially accounting for the change, there appears to have been a distinct dwindling of the Vice-regal importance of the highest post in Australia, as well as of the highest posts in the States.

PROBLEMS FOR MR. FISHER.

The Fisher Cabinet is seeking the consent of its Caucus to the very extensive alterations of our Constitution which it wishes to propose to the electors by Referendum next year. In the meantime the Federal Parliament has been kept employed, chiefly upon a Navigation Bill of great length and including a number of amendments more or less novel and drastic in character, of which they have confessed that the constitutionality is doubtful. Some of their supporters are strongly at issue with them upon several of these. Still, allowing for the grave faults of the measure as a whole, it ranks certainly among the longest and most comprehensive – being probably the most complete single Bill ever passed in any Parliament except that sitting at Westminster. But the chief problems for Mr. Fisher are those which have been due to his very peculiar financial operations, undertaken in face of warnings from the best authorities. Money is scarcer and dearer in Australia to-day than it has been for a number of years. It will probably become scarcer and dearer before long, and would have tended to some extent in that direction even if Mr. Fisher had pursued a more farseeing and less selfish policy. At present, having annexed some ten millions sterling by means of his seizure of the States' Note Issues and his establishment of a Commonwealth Bank, competing with our existing banks, he has been enabled to borrow from the moneys thus placed at his disposal. So far these funds are sufficing for his immediate needs, but the end of these benefactions, taken by force, is now in sight. There are heavy bills of his which will have to be met soon after the next election. In the present mood of our business men no assistance can be expected from them, while nearly every State Treasurer has been already antagonised by Mr. Fisher's inroads upon their revenues. His schemes for meeting the obligations he has incurred will not find favour with any sections of our people who are informed of the facts or able to judge the consequences of his proposals, since all of them are coloured by class bias. The Prime Minister's reliance must be placed on the handworkers and masses of the community, who have no sufficient grasp of the effect of his plans. Many of them suppose that the whole levy will fall upon the well-to-do instead of upon their shoulders. His maternity grant of a £5 note to every mother on the birth of a child is the last and most vaunted of his bids for the votes of the wage-earners. Judging by present appearances, he will find the cost of this gift, made indiscriminately and without sufficient safeguards, much heavier than he thought. This is but one illustration of the many difficulties into which his reckless temperament and want of business experience are plunging him, unless indeed he expects to be defeated at the polls, leaving his burden to be borne by the Federal Opposition.

EXCESSIVE EXPENDITURE.

In our own State a somewhat similar condition of affairs obtains, for our Labour Government is equally distinguished for its continuous and lavish increases of expenditure. Its administration, conducted with a truly Australian freedom of experiment, shows an increase of expenditure exceeding £3,000,000, and an abandonment of payments out of revenue into funds for constructing public works and encouraging closer settlement, which under Mr. Wade would have amounted to £600,000. The absorption of an accumulated surplus left by him that exceeded two and a quarter millions sterling has also to be noted. Altogether we are about £6,000,000 above the outlay found desirable by the late Government. Mr. Wade's health has induced him to take a trip to Eastern Asiatic ports. Mr. Wood, his first lieutenant, therefore, moved a vote of want of confidence by way of protest against the inordinate growth of our expenditure. Of course he was defeated, but public attention was called to the increasing burdens about to be imposed if this rate of outlay is continued. We owe £10,000,000 more than we did in 1909. Our recent London loan, reduced to comparatively small proportions, will cost us more than any assistance we have obtained in this fashion for many years. Altogether our expenditure in the last three years is £50,000,000. But the Labour legions take little or no heed of any extravagances, always sustained by the cheerful faith that, if they cannot evade the imposition of some fresh imposts on themselves, these burdens will be speedily transferred to other shoulders than theirs by some specious device. In such straits it is not to Mr. McGowen that they will look for leadership. Indeed, the significance of their recent action in associating Mr. Holman as joint head of the party emphasises the fact that before the next election we may expect a new Premier. Evidently there is to be a new policy, too, and that we have had already elaborated. It consists of a series of further concessions to Labour Unions and employees generally. It was announced by Mr. Holman himself in great detail last week.

It is Mr. Holman who goes to Melbourne to confer with the Federal Cabinet upon the proposals for amending the Constitution of the Commonwealth now in preparation under the sanction of the Caucus. Of his agreement with them we shall hear very soon. Apparently he feels the necessity for framing some new compromise to save his face, and enable Labour to present an united front in support of the Referendum amendments which he resisted in 1910. The responsibilities of his new office have already accomplished that transformation on his views. An appeal to the country will now follow, instead of preceding, that of the Federal Parliament. The "back-wash" of the Commonwealth contest will be accepted in order that these alterations of policy and procedure may be fully completed. He thus avoids making his new departure and the necessary recantations preceding it too obviously the price paid for his elevation to the highest post in the State, for which he possesses many qualifications.

A RAILWAY SLEEPER CONTRACT.

Of the other Labour Administration in Western Australia the same tale is to be told. It is outrunning the constable in finance, and wherever possible enlarging the field of Government intervention and employment for the benefit of its supporters. The bargain with its fellow Labour Administration in the Commonwealth for supplying to the latter all the sleepers required in the construction of the trans-Australian Railway connecting Adelaide through Port Augusta with the Kalgoorlie line to Perth has been and still is one of the chief subjects debated in the Federal Legislature. Owing to the prevalence of "dry rot" and the ravages of white ants all wooden sleepers on this tract are liable to suffer severely. It is claimed that when preserved by a chemical process called "Powellising" they can be rendered immune from any attacks. The actual experience cited in support of this allegation is small in quantity and unconvincing. The best timber available for this line is said to be jarrah, which is very abundant in the Western State. But the wood chosen is karri, and no sufficient reason has been given for preferring it. Probably the fact that the Labour Ministry of Western Australia has karri in plenty to sell to the Labour Ministry of the Commonwealth, but owns no jarrah, affords the simplest explanation available. Then, again, the fact that the karri supplied is to be cut and treated by employees of the State Administration in Perth commends the transaction to Labour partisans everywhere. Their ultimate goal can only be attained by the prohibition of private enterprise in all its forms; a contract of such dimensions is not to be permitted to pass into any hands except those of the Unionist employees of one or other of our Governments. Their range of appointments and of political influence is being enormously extended by public "deals" of this peculiar nature. The line itself, one of the greatest enterprises yet undertaken in Australia, is to be built by Unionist day labourers appointed by the Commonwealth Cabinet or by officers of its appointment acting under its control. It is anticipated that this may mean an extravagant increase in the outlay required. There will be no effective means of checking the cost of the work, since no tenders have been invited. Parliament will be obliged to depend upon estimates framed by officers, some of whom have already been publicly challenged on the ground of want of experience and as being chosen for party political reasons. In fact, this huge undertaking is obviously a "job".

THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH.

DESPOTISM OF LABOUR LEAGUES. RECASTING THE CONSTITUTION.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Nov. 26 1912; Jan. 7 1913.

The political event of the month and, indeed, of the year is a resubmission by the Caucus Government of sweeping proposals for the amendment of the Federal Constitution. If not the last Act of this session and of this Parliament, it will certainly be much the most memorable. In all essentials this is the same Act that was decisively rejected in 1911. According to present prospects it will, be rejected again six months hence. But it is upon its persistent advocacy of this measure that Caucus relies to bring its marshalled tens of thousands to the polls. So far these do not appear to be deeply excited or even much interested by their prospects. This is due partly to the fact that the measure contains no surprises, and partly to the distance of the date for registering the decision of the electors. At present a general lassitude appears to prevail in both camps. True, the Liberal Opposition is outwardly at all events, more united in Parliament than in 1910 when the first Referenda proposals were discussed. Otherwise its members seem no more energetic or spirited than they were then. They are seriously divided in three States, if not four, upon the selection of Senate candidates, and also in a few of the constituencies of the House of Representatives. Supposing these differences to be healed before long the party will present a solid front for the time being to its rigidly disciplined and dragooned opponents. But the battle will be decided at the polls of 1913, as it was by the unorganised moderate or middle section of the public whose swing over in 1910 gave the Labour Leagues their sweeping victory. Still, so far even these centres of active hostility to all restraint upon their mutinous methods appear slack by comparison with their feverish and impatient aggressiveness rather more than a year ago. A certain exhaustion is visible on both sides, almost as manifest in one camp as in the other. Yet there is plenty of time for each to rally before the final encounter of forces arrives. But for all that it is curious that the lassitude, in respect of legislation, should seem so general, not only outside Parliament but in it. Whether the strenuousness of the last two years has wearied all but the most active politicians and party organisers is an anxious question for both Mr. Fisher and Mr. Deakin, but particularly for Mr. Fisher and his allies, whose fortunes are staked upon the coming Referenda and General Election vote.

LABOUR TACTICS.

There is a good deal of evidence that implies the uneasiness of nearly all Federal Labour Ministers and members now that they are facing the ordeal of another endeavour to wreck the existing Constitution of the Commonwealth. They would much prefer to express their profound regret at the deplorable backwardness of the electors generally leading to last year's overwhelming negative, and then confine their endeavours to framing an amended up-to-date policy on other issues designed to catch votes with fresh baits. But the stalwarts of the local Leagues outbidding each other in extravagances have insisted upon having the defeated demands repeated. Labour members being absolutely dependent upon these bodies are obliged to submit, though with an ill grace, and to obey commands. The one surrender by the Caucus which could not be avoided was that of the former bracketing of four distinct and important amendments on a single ballot paper, so that the whole of them must have been either accepted or rejected at one and the same poll. Next year each is to be submitted separately to the judgment of the people. This is by far the most valuable result of the Liberal victories at the 1911 poll. Ministers do not conceal their dislike of this simple act of justice, but have not ventured even to express their hostility. Further fruits of their defeat are to be found in the exemption of State railways from Federal control, except in respect of Inter-State and foreign goods, and so far as the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes among their employees are concerned, as well as by some elaboration in the form of other questions. Substantially, therefore, the original issues remain to be voted upon this time separately, and probably in or about May next. Then once more the vital question whether all our Federal Constitutions are to go into the melting-pot or not will be submitted to some two and a half million voters. These will also select the whole of their members for the House and half of the Senate in the same booths at the same time. The leader of the Opposition, Mr. Deakin, who has resumed his duties in Parliament after a long absence due to severe illness, promptly challenged both the submission of so many amendments at the same time even if submitted singly, and also the confusion of constitutional with party issues by receiving all the ballots on the one day at the same polling places. Our Labour members, convinced that it is to their advantage to take the whole of the votes together under all the adventitious excitements and Party passions of election day have paid not the slightest heed to this suggestion. In some respects therefore, our Referendum measures may be bracketed with the Home Rule Bill now being bludgeoned through the House of Commons. At all events the parallel holds in the complexity of their provisions, their drastic inroads upon main principles of the Constitution, and the violent breaches of the methods of Parliamentary government by which they are being forced through our dominant Chamber.

THE NEW UTOPIA.

The closure is not being applied in Melbourne under any circumstances. Ministers recently preferred to take a beating rather than apply it when the Opposition protracted a debate upon the Estimates for 53 consecutive hours rather than permit the votes to be driven through without adequate information and consideration. There is no prospect of a resort to this weapon, though it is authorised in our Standing Orders, even in the discussion of the amendments of the Constitution. This debate promises to be briefer and also less interesting than it was in 1910, when the extravagant alterations of our chief charter of liberty and Government startled the whole country into anxious excitement. The novelty of that reckless invasion seems to have been worn off. Great care is being taken to dull its revival. The real issue is being "side-tracked" as far as possible: narrowed in the first place, and then buried in legal technicalities as much as Mr. Hughes, with the assistance of his professional advisers can manage. He has taken an unconscionably long time in expounding his brief to thin Houses and bewildered galleries. Apparently the last thing he desired was either to anger his adversaries or arouse his supporters, except, indeed, when with the "Trusts and Combines". These, according to his contentions, are to-day robbing our people, wrecking all their industrial enterprises and tyrannising over their Governments and Legislatures. From these depressing dangers we can find no escape according to him except by making our Federal Government master of our lives, occupations, and properties, supreme in constitutional authority, our sole employer, financier, and legislator. Labour Leagues with Labour members massed behind them will select our future Ministers and their staffs, who will manage the rest of us, controlling our occupations, and incidentally ourselves. Australia will then possess and be possessed by one Trust. This will absorb every power, rule every person, and allot every profit within its borders. It will be the trust of and for organised working men and women whose numbers will invest them with perpetual political authority. Such at least is the gist of the six speeches occupying some six hours, in which the new Utopia was inferentially outlined.

CHOICE BETWEEN THE FRYING-PAN AND THE FIRE.

The Sydney newspapers, and indeed those of all the capitals have struggled manfully to report the elusive speeches and to disclose their aim. Their relative mildness is generally attributed to Mr. Hughes's intention to retire from Legislature to a high post in that Commonwealth service which is presently to manage Australians and their affairs. But there is no mistaking the narrow choice to which we are supposed to be confined. Hereafter we are to be tutored by a gigantic Trust in all our doings. This is either to be a political despotism of Labour Leagues or a business despotism

of embattled Trusts united in a world controlling organisation. Our only choice is between the frying-pan and the fire. The only consolation is that every other nation is alleged to be in precisely the same predicament. But many of them propose such desperate remedies. We have now the evangel of 1911 recast in a new form though of precisely the same materials. The "Trust" side is now uppermost. Despite fresh paint, deepened shadows, and retouched colours, the Hughes pictures of our new policy are practically indistinguishable from the old, so summarily set aside by the electors last year. In the meantime we have some of the responses made by leaders of the Federal Opposition. Each was cut down to such comments as he could pack into an hour and five minutes, that being the utmost time allowed under the new Standing Orders. They, of course, are necessarily even more curtly reported. It was clearly understood at the time of the passing of these Standing Orders that they were not to be applied to Bills of special importance, but only to everyday measures, and then considerately. Evidently Ministers are apprehensive of the consequences of unfettered criticism of the amendments of the Constitution even in their present form. The Prime Minister himself indicated this alarm by dealing most inadequately with the few phases of the proposals upon which he touched. He made no attempt to reply to Mr. Deakin, Mr. Cook, Mr. Glynn, Mr. Groom, Sir John Quick, or other leading Oppositionists. Of their rejoinders the public so far know little or nothing, except that they maintain the critical attitude of 1910–11. So far, therefore, it seems as if the new battle will continue as it has begun, on the same lines as the old over the same principles put forward, and resisted in the same manner by the same parties.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

POLITICAL SITUATION REVIEWED.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Dec. 17 1912; Jan. 27 1913.

The Christmas season has arrived dissipating both politicians and their politics for the time being. Every Parliament in Australia has either concluded its session or is about to do so. Each is weary of debate and its members of their dissensions. The Referenda Bills have been carried, all six of them, through the House of Representatives, and will be carried through the Senate this week in the same fashion and without the alteration of a syllable. A Labour majority, unlike that of any other complexion, insists upon its own unity at all costs and in all circumstances. After a private discussion in Caucus its members vote in public on anything and everything as one man. The six Bills leave Parliament exactly as they entered it. Naturally a foreknowledge of that fact has assisted to diminish public interest in the measures and also the debating interest in both Chambers. There the usual spectacle presented has been that of members repeating carefully-elaborated utterances in an empty Chamber deserted by all but a handful of members writing letters to their constituents. Excitement in the proceedings, never very keen, has dwindled rapidly. But for an injudicious promise of the **Prime Minister** to issue free of cost to members a special edition of all the speeches delivered upon the Referenda Bills, the debate would have been much shorter. As it is the accumulation of tedious orations has alarmed a Government unable to expect that electors will read a large volume of familiar commonplaces to which very few would listen for an hour. Consequently the latest device is that a pamphlet is to be prepared containing a statement of the Government case for amending the Constitution, balanced by a statement from the Opposition attacking the whole batch of their amendments. Whether this will prove effective has yet to be seen. In the meantime the general attitude appears something in the nature of a thanksgiving that at last the long Parliamentary campaign is over.

ELECTORAL PROSPECTS.

Of course the novelty as well as the extravagance of the amendments roused universal attention in 1910. Now that they have become familiar the romance of the situation seems to have been dissipated. The question is whether the absence of excitement

may induce the fickle section of our voters to abstain from doing their duty at the polls. Labour men and women, if not fired with zeal, are usually under surveillance sufficiently close to oblige them to go to the poll. When they do the fear of discovery may induce many who distrust the proposals to cast an unwilling vote in their favour. On the other hand a fraction of the great host who rejected the two Bills of 1910–11 may have ceased to be as much alarmed at projects that seem to have become less threatening in the course of time. Still, the prevailing opinion in this State is that the huge majority against the measures eighteen months ago cannot be sufficiently reduced to ensure their acceptance. Already our Federal Ministers have deprived invalided women of the postal vote, have added largely to the baits scattered among their supporters, and have hampered the Press so far as it reports political meetings or ventures to be critical. Nevertheless it is still doubtful whether all their devices will operate to any considerable extent in their favour. On the whole unless the country is very strategically stumped, the chances are that there will be a fall instead of a rise in the total poll. During the debates Mr. Hughes has only occasionally exhibited the fire of invective, the raillery, and reckless perversions which formerly delighted his uncritical followers. The discussions have been largely dominated by the desire of the speakers not so much to influence the House as to accumulate quotable facts, figures, and arguments suited to the particular classes in the constituencies to whom they intend to appeal. This practice seems to have hampered their oratorical powers. It may also weary the audiences who are tempted out at night to hear them. So much it seems desirable to note in order that the fortune of war may be to some extent forecast on the evidence now available. At the same time it must be remembered that we are nearly six months distant from the fateful day when the Commonwealth Ministry as well as its Referenda Bills will face the fates. A great deal may happen before then.

PARTISAN APPOINTMENTS.

It would be impossible to summarise the throng of measures that have been raced through the Federal Parliament in the last week or two. Altogether it may be fairly said that the whole of the machinery of our National Government has been remoulded since the Caucus came into power two and a half years ago. Every opportunity has been seized to multiply appointments. These, in the majority of cases, have been made with an eye to rewarding services to its party or capturing a party control of the administration in the particular sections in which the new nominees have been placed. Taking two illustrations of legislation on a great scale, distinctly framed with the same self-regarding motives, even casual critics can perceive their perversion to party ends. These very important measures are just being sent up to the Senate. The first is brief and simple. It authorises the appointment

of two more Judges to the High Court, which is the guardian of our Constitution. The untimely decease of Mr. Justice O'Connor, an eminent lawyer of clear vision and admirable impartiality, places a third Judgeship in the hands of the Cabinet. Of the four members of the existing High Court the Chief Justice and Mr. Justice Barton represent what may be colloquially termed the Federal tradition; the other two Justices, Mr. Isaacs and Mr. Higgins, eminent as lawyers though differing in their lines of thought, display scant consideration for the Constitution as it stands whenever it hampers their views. In the three appointments likely to be made after Parliament rises the leanings of the Caucus towards an interpretation of our National Charter in a unitary direction are expected to manifest themselves. On the other hand, the Inter-State Commission Bill, a long and most important measure as drafted by the Deakin Government in 1900, cannot be summarised in the same way. But it also places three highly-paid and very influential appointments in the hands of the Caucus likely to be filled by men in harmony with its aims. There will not be a vacant post of any distinction in Australia left unfilled before the next Federal election day, and very few of them by men independent of the Labour Government.

MR. BEEBY AND A THIRD PARTY.

Although the happenings in this State, or, indeed, in all the States taken together, do not equal in interest current events in the national Parliament, yet those in New South Wales, as usual, not only deserve pride of place among her sisters, but excel the whole of their achievements taken together. Such a Cabinet as Labour has given us, with an amiably helpless Premier in Mr. McGowen, a brilliantly unreliable Attorney-General in Mr. Holman, and an independent Minister courageous and capable in Mr. Beeby, Australia has never before seen. Add the Speaker, Mr. Willis, whose utterances belong to topsy-turveydom rather than to real life, and one has a political combination without rival or parallel on this side of the world. All idea of an early dissolution anticipating that of the Federal Parliament seems to have disappeared, and yet the pressure upon our Treasury is rapidly increasing. Not only are old loans coming due and new loans hanging fire, but the cry of the Labour Unions, like that of the horse-leech, is still "Give, give". The Government doles will diminish and must diminish unless our finances are to become hopelessly involved and overweighted. No wonder Mr. Holman hesitates to take the long coveted helm from the feeble hands of his partners in the Premiership whose full responsibilities he is now sharing. Since Mr. Beeby's sturdy clear-headedness has been withdrawn the mental poverty of the rest of the team grows more than ever apparent. Mr. Griffith, who ought to have been a strength to the ultras, has become involved in so many schemes of one kind and another that he has lost the confidence of numbers of his former supporters. But for the unfortunate divisions in the Opposition its opportunity of bringing our political

farce to an end would have come long ago. It is paying dearly for lack of leadership and coherence. In such confused conditions Mr. Beeby's appeal for the formation of a third party in this State seems likely to fall upon deaf ears. It is very doubtful whether he can regain the seat he has just gallantly resigned to test the country. Both Ministry and Opposition are preparing to resist his return. Yet he can be ill spared from our Parliament. The one consolation is that in any event his vigorous denunciation to his constituents at Blayney of the Referenda Bills which embody the whole policy and carry all the fortunes of the Federal Labour Caucus can scarcely fail to gain attention in this State or beyond its bounds. Such a clear-sighted challenge from a politician of his standing and ability is in no danger of being disregarded; to him men of independent judgment all over the Commonwealth may be expected to lend an attentive ear; for it is perfectly plain that Mr. Beeby has little to gain and everything to lose by his manly outspokenness. If Mr. Watson had taken the same line three years ago the consequences to the Commonwealth might have been momentous. Mr. Beeby is a man of the same type with the same standards, who under the most trying tests has discovered a dominating sense of public duty rare in any political party and all but unknown in the Caucus.

— 1913 —



Photograph of the first Liberal Cabinet: PM Glynn, Sir John Forrest, Joseph Cook, LE Groom, WH Irvine, JH McColl, ED Millen, A Wynne, JS Clemons and WH Kelly

(Personal Papers of Prime Minister Joseph Cook, National Archives of Australia, M3798, 1)

L–R: Patrick McMahan Glynn (SA), Minister for External Affairs; Sir John Forrest (WA), Treasurer; Joseph Cook (NSW), Prime Minister, Minister for Home Affairs; Littleton Ernest Groom (Qld), Minister for Trade and Customs; William Hill Irvine (Vic), Attorney-General; Senator James Hiers McColl (Vic), Vice-President of the Executive Council; Senator Edward Davis Millen (NSW), Minister for Defence; Agar Wynne (Vic), Postmaster-General; Senator John Singleton Clemons (Tas), Minister without portfolio; William Henry Kelly (NSW), Minister without portfolio

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Jan. 7 1913; Feb. 15 1913.

New South Wales, for the last two years at least, has had more than its fill of crises and their confusions. Mr. Willis, as Speaker, has been responsible for the bulk of the confusion, or has worse confounded it. Of late it seemed that public interest in public affairs could no longer appeal to our somnolent citizens by anything short of a political earthquake. But we have been suddenly awakened. Mr. Beeby, ex-Minister and, perhaps it should be said, ex-Labour member, has resigned in both capacities, not only making a fresh start for himself, but emphasising the astounding situation which he has brought to a climax. Our nominal Premier, Mr. McGowen, has lost both his lead and his bearings; his co-partner in the leadership, Mr. Holman, has fled to London. Mr. Beeby himself has fought and just beaten the accredited candidate of the Caucus, the principal plank in his platform being his antagonism to the principal proposals in the Referendum, which the Federal Labour Government has carried through its Parliament. No wonder that such a marvellous transformation scene has stirred the whole of this State to its political depths, awakening us to the novel prospects foreshadowed by his break-away. Were he to succeed in regaining his seat the whole aspect of State affairs, and possibly to some, extent of Federal affairs, too, might be transformed. The issues raised are much more than personal. They may even become national. Mr. Beeby is a personality. Associated with a Caucus of extremists, with visionary and impracticable aims, he has gradually defined his own position. Radical still, he rebels against the coercion exercised within the Caucus and against the surrender of State rights, or of functions better controlled by the States, to the Labour unificationists, willing to force the whole Commonwealth into a strait-waistcoat policy of coercion. By comparison with them he is a Moderate – not moderate enough for our State Liberals – but not far removed from some of them. A possibly dangerous competitor for public favour, more dangerous to them, than to the bondsmen of the Caucus, or the militant Trade Unionists who drive it, he has certainly given both sides more than sufficient provocation to fly to arms against him. Should he by any chance survive the final contest with Mr. Withington, our State General Election this year may be fought under new auspices and with new war cries.

CROSS CURRENTS.

Last week's polling, while it gave Mr. Withington, the Liberal candidate, a majority of 642 over Mr. Beeby and of 676 over the Labour representative, Mr. Johnston, it did not secure him the final victory. Another election with Mr. Beeby alone will be held after a fortnight's interval. To that decisive struggle everyone is looking forward. Nothing could have better illustrated the political cross-currents through which we are steering than the open severance of the Labour Party. Its solidarity had become a by-word, but now this has come into conflict with the interests of its leaders, while they are in receipt of Ministerial salaries, the situation is changing. Mr. McGowen, good, easy man, most patient and long-suffering of Premiers, whose experience, like that of nearly all his colleagues, has taught him to distrust the mechanical tyranny of the Caucus, is now actually supporting Mr. Beeby. He does this by appealing to his party's antagonism to the Liberals, whom they have ousted, and whom they desire to keep out of office. He would have liked to commend Mr. Beeby, but dare not go so far. Fortunately for himself, he did not. The General Secretary of the Political Labour League, which represents the fighting force of the whole of the industrial Unions in the political arena, says in firm tones that "there should be no hesitation whatever on the part of every Labourite". Each and all of them must "do his very utmost to ensure the defeat of Mr. Beeby". With the titular head of the party and his chief officer in the campaign so directly at variance, what is the outlook? Apparently Mr. Beeby has no hope. The Labour ultras must support Mr. Withington, though an Oppositionist; the mass may not vote at all. The numbers Mr. McGowen rallies to his old colleague may not suffice. The outlook for the new departure and a possible new party is certainly not hopeful. Will Mr. Beeby be able to face the General Election some months hence, even if he succeeds now? If he fails now, where will he find a seat? All is a matter of guesswork. However, the important fact is that in any event Mr. Beeby has declared against the extravagant demands of the Referendum. Whatever the consequences to himself, he has struck a resounding blow against the embattled forces of Syndicalism and extreme Trade Unionism.

A CLAIM TO LEADERSHIP.

From this act, whatever happens, Mr. Beeby has established his claim to political leadership, irrespective of the number of followers he may find. If his present tendency to moderation continues he may easily extend his influence over the Radical elements in the State Liberal Party. So far as the public are aware, he has been a loyal colleague to our Labour Premier. He is a clear-headed administrator and a business-like speaker, who has always something to say well worth hearing. His present line of action, whatever else it does, has made for progress. It is another challenge to the

ultras, who have so far been driving the trustful and uninformed Trade Unionists to threats and even deeds of violence. Mr. Beeby has steadily resisted such aggressions and sought a policy of sobriety. His protests have been manly, timely, and weighty. On the other hand, his open endeavour to form a third party, unless that be only a first step towards an understanding with the Liberals, is likely to further embarrass an already very turbid situation. Supposing it to be a preliminary advance towards such a co-operation, this State will be the gainer. Our Liberals are weak in leadership. Mr. Beeby's judgment, courage, and character would be very valuable assets to them and would certainly much improve their prospects.

LABOUR PARTY'S RECORD.

The Federal Attorney-General, Mr. Hughes, well deserves a high and permanent appointment, if it were only for his long services to his party as its official apologist. But in his recent series of articles for a London paper he has artistically suppressed certain essential facts. He has also varied the order of events in the history of the Commonwealth. That the splendid fruits of an unbroken series of most propitious seasons should be credited to the Labour Government now happening to be in office is, perhaps, natural. That the redistribution of the Customs Revenue, as settled by their predecessors, in spite of Caucus resistance, should have given them some £18,000,000 above all previous records, and that the Tariff which most of them resisted should have also helped to provide them with ever-growing and overflowing increases, are details too trifling to be mentioned. He is content to quote the resulting totals as if they were the direct achievement of himself and his colleagues. The gain in population under the immigration methods of the late Government of 1909–10, which Labour Ministers, so far as they dared, have persistently ignored and cold-shouldered, is now cited as if it were in illustration of their own wise administration. As a matter of fact, they have expressly refused, and still continue to refuse, to co-operate with the States in any practical way to increase the numbers we are drawing from the Mother Country. What the Labour Caucus has spared no pains to do has been to please its own clients. It has amended legislation whenever possible in their interest. It has submitted fresh laws every session shaped in the interest of its own supporters. No one denies it. The Referenda presently to be submitted to the electors will, if accepted by the people, enormously increase Ministerial opportunities for purchasing such support. That is their chief recommendation in the eye of the Caucus. Meanwhile Mr. Hughes's ingenuity has been employed to conceal those and similar facts, and to misinterpret others to readers thousands of miles away, whose credulity is taken for granted.

DEFENCE LEGISLATION.

To conclude with an illustration of Labour methods of misstatement, take the actual facts as to the Defence scheme now in force. The first Defence Act of the first Liberal Government in 1903 authorised “a levy *en masse*” in time of war. When Mr. Hughes submitted a motion for universal training, the Liberals supported that step towards their policy. But he received next to no support from his comrades in or out of Parliament. No wonder, then, that on the great issue of Defence he naively remarks that “it is not necessary to go into the history of the matter”. It would have been fatal to his case if he had. But in view of his present pleading it becomes essential that the facts should be briefly recalled to the memories of English readers. The first Defence Act of the Commonwealth was passed by the Liberal Government in 1903–4. The second, which established compulsory training, was heralded in 1907, introduced in 1908, and passed in 1909 by Liberal Governments. This measure made the first provision for a real Australian naval defence. The proposals of the Labour Government of 1908–9 included only a mosquito fleet of small vessels for coastal service. Mr. Hughes and his colleagues point-blank refused to offer any battleships to the Mother Country. That offer was made by the last Liberal Government directly it returned to power. The present plan of Naval Defence by a battleship and cruisers was adopted by that Liberal Government. It has only been developed by its successors in accordance with the plan forced upon them. Mr. Hughes modestly says that Australia was without effective defence by land or sea when he came into office in 1910. Unfortunately we are still in that position. But the Fleet unit now building under the plan passed into law by the last Liberal Government together with the land forces supplied by compulsory training, as provided under the Liberal policy, are, as he says, about to become effective factors. All the Labour Government is doing now is to continue the work of their rivals, and their rivals’ policy as sanctioned by the country. It prefers to publish its pretences to priority over its Liberal predecessors as far away as possible on the other side of the world. Even there it can only mislead the ill-informed.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

FEDERAL POLITICS.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Jan. 28 1913; Mar. 5 1913.

The cables from London have shown that our latest development in Federal politics has been fully discussed at the centre of the Empire. The first shock of the disclosure was startling, but the three weeks intervening have naturally seen the surprise pass away. Owing to ill-health Mr. Deakin retires into private life, and Mr. Joseph Cook becomes Leader of the Federal Liberal Party. His accession has, of course, been heartily welcomed in his own State, although in this, its capital city, he is less known than a number of prominent citizens. Mr. Cook had his Ministerial training in the State Cabinet of which Sir George Reid was not only the chief but the unquestioned master. His colleagues were consulted in the Cabinet, but even there were dominated by his views in all important matters. With very little delay Mr. Cook's capacity as an administrator became manifest. His reign in the Post Office, always one of our most trying departments, was a distinct triumph. As a debater he steadily gained ground in our Assembly until his place in its front rank was assured. As a tactician, of the Reid school, he was also a success. Though the methods then in force were not of the highest type, they were distinctly superior to those lately exhibited in our degenerate Legislature. For some reason unknown Mr. Cook's place in the first Federal Parliament was not as prominent as anticipated. While Sir George Reid remained he retained nearly all the "limelight". It was only by degrees that the member for Paramatta fought his way to the lieutenantcy and then to the leadership of the Opposition. He took office for the first time in the third Deakin Government of 1909, making his short period as Minister of Defence memorable by the thoroughness and vigour of his administration. The Australian naval and military policy propounded at this juncture is still in force, though much expanded. None of the main lines then laid down has been altered in the interval. During the present Commonwealth Parliament soon to go to the country, he has been Deputy Leader, the illness of his chief during the last few months having thrown almost the whole of the burden of leading the Left upon his shoulders. Mr. Cook was therefore generally accepted successor, though the great popularity of Sir John Forrest in the party seemed almost as if it would enable him to capture the prize at the last moment. Mr. Deakin himself appears perfectly content to step out of the arena, as well he may after

a shower of encomiums. He proposes to take part so far as his strength will permit in the forthcoming Referendum campaign, which, according to Mr. Fisher, will be demanded by his followers from thousands of platforms.

MR. BEEBY'S VICTORY.

New South Welshmen may be forgiven if they place Mr. Beeby's victory above that of the Liberal Government of Tasmania. Both elections took place on the same day, and in both instances the majority was small. But the defeat of Mr. Withington is more significant because it gives colour to the suspicion that the solidity of the Labour Party in this State is by no means as marked as has been supposed. The real "head-centres" of the party, the little group of men including Mr. J.C. Watson, Mr. Spence, M.P., and Mr. Lamond, who almost officially command the whole of the Labour Leagues in this State, exercising at the same time a very potent influence over the Commonwealth Party and its policy, has found the beating of Mr. Beeby beyond its power. Yet every influence that could be brought to bear upon the constituency, directly and indirectly, was employed by this little Junta both openly and privately against their independent brother. But while the President of the local Labour League obeyed its behest his Vice-President and the Secretary openly upheld the ostracised candidature. The revolt was open. What penalties may be imposed upon the guilty Labour men who insisted upon a free exercise of their franchise is not yet clear. Though Mr. Beeby had only just beaten the official Labour candidate in the first election, and was left facing Mr. Withington's majority of 642 votes plus the bitter denunciations of the head centres of the Labour Caucus outside our Legislature, he won the seat. His second appeal to Blayney was responded to so cordially that he regained the whole of his prior deficiency, and defeated his Liberal rival by 136 votes. Here, then, we have a Labour member, so much at odds with his party that he is officially denounced as a renegade, and bitterly opposed at the polls, returned for the seat which he had just resigned, and principally by Labour votes. This is a phenomenon almost without a parallel in the history of the Caucus. Taking all the circumstances into account it may fairly be styled quite unparalleled. There is a distinct split in the Caucus ranks. The Premier, Mr. McGowen, and some of his late colleagues who spoke out in his favour at first when he was left to face the final test, were compelled to water down their recommendation, and in effect recant by way of explanation of their meaning. The disobedience of hundreds of Labour electors in Blayney to the commands, threats, and baits of their Labour leaders, is an extremely significant feature, suggesting possible breakings away both in New South Wales and beyond its borders.

MANIFESTATIONS OF INDEPENDENCE.

Quite apart from the electoral demonstration in Mr. Beeby's favour, both by Labour voters and their League officers, there is the undoubted fact that he also obtained the support open and covert of hundreds outside the League, who would as a rule vote with the Liberals. It is not only Mr. Withington who is defeated, but Mr. Wood, the acting leader of our Opposition in Mr. Wade's absence, and Mr. Wood's colleagues in Parliament, who received the ardent support of both of our great daily newspapers in their crusade against Mr. Beeby. This is a fact of quite as much significance as that the official Labour candidate was left at the bottom of the poll in the first ballot. We have in our Assembly a little knot of men who give Labour members an occasional vote and do not hesitate to differentiate themselves from the official Liberals, with whom as a rule they vote. Mr. Beeby's victory seems likely to stimulate them to further manifestations of independence. This movement may have an important bearing at the coming General Election, seeing that their votes are likely to be indispensable to the Liberal Opposition, if it is to attain and afterwards to retain the Treasury Benches. Nothing could well be more distasteful to the main body of the Opposition than to find themselves at the mercy of their own Left wing. The one piece of policy on which they might bring about an alliance, if not a union, at the approaching appeal to the country, now already well in sight, would be by agreeing to resist some, if not all, the Federal Labour Ministry's referenda proposals. It was his bold repudiation of those which led Mr. Beeby to resign his seat and challenge the opinions of his constituents. His victory greatly reinforces the dissentients in this State, who share his antagonism to both State parties, though many of them are Labour voters. It conveys a warning to Mr. Fisher and his colleagues, who are taking the aggressive, that State loyalty has still to be reckoned with. Hence from many aspects Mr. Beeby's boldness and shrewdness are more than justified by results. His appeal to his constituents was, in fact, a challenge both to the Labour Party everywhere, to the Parliament of New South Wales, and to the Referendum electors all over Australia.

THE SITUATION IN TASMANIA.

Another illustration of a courageous appeal over the heads of the elected representatives to the electors themselves is supplied by Tasmania. The last polling, only a few months ago left the Solomon Government with only a majority of one. They did fairly well on the whole, although from the first day of their meeting the House until the close of the session they were kept at the mercy of an eccentric member, Mr. Cameron. Mr. Willis himself, in our Speaker's chair, was not more truculent and dictatorial. But for the fact that he could not obtain from Labour the high terms he demanded for his vote he would have been able to unseat the

Government or force them to the country. Even the Labour Caucus jibbed at his dictatorship. They were not too confident that the country would approve their action if they accepted his dictation, and were extremely angry when the House was dissolved early in the New Year. Mr. Solomon having displayed excellent judgment during the session showed marked courage in his address to the country. It is still a puzzle why the manly note he struck and the clarity of his statement of the case for the Government did not make a greater impression. He has won, it is true, and by a relatively very healthy maintenance of last year's Liberal totals, coupled with marked decreases in the Labour totals. Still he has, so far, only the smallest of majorities. This unsatisfactory result is attributed locally in large measure to the system of voting in force in Tasmania alone, but apparently coming into favour with many thoughtful politicians in the Mother Country. The State is divided into five large constituencies, each returning six members. Every elector expresses his preference by numbering the six he supports in the order of his preferences. Whether because the electorates are too large, the electors too indifferent, or parties are too equal in influence, the fact remains that in the result there is generally very little difference between them in the House. That has again occurred in the present instance. At the moment the Government has a majority of one, after placing its candidate for the Speakership in the Chair. This one is staunch, and therefore the Ministry will survive. It may possibly gain another seat, though the prospects are not encouraging. The Labour organisation, of course, counts for a great deal, its members doing just as they are told, irrespective of their own judgments. It is to the absolute subordination of the right of private judgment in politics to the bidding of its wirepullers that the success of the Caucus is nearly always due. Its operation in Tasmania is alleged to be made more deadly by the system of clubbing six single member constituencies into one.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

TACTICS OF THE LABOUR PARTY.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Feb. 18 1913; Mar. 31 1913.

Our Opposition chief, Mr. *Wade*, has returned from his rest-cure voyage to the north-east in good time to prepare for a campaign against the State Labour Administration, of which Mr. *McGowen* remains the nominal head. If there had ever been any doubt as to the merely titular character of the Premier's leadership that would have been disposed of last session. The further question whether Labour Ministers severally, or the Cabinet they collectively compose, possess any authority, except to do or say what they are told, is being settled during the present recess. It has not been necessary for the Conference of the Labour Leagues to register formally a decree to that effect or declare its distrust of the Labour members who are not under its thumb, though they belong to the organisation. But its protracted sittings have made it plain to the public, as well as to the Labour constituencies, that its Cabinet is but a figure-head. With its supporters, who hold their seats in Parliament by favour, Ministers are tolerated only while they obey instructions. Mr. *J.C. Watson*, who years ago resigned the leadership of the party throughout Australia because it refused to fulfil his engagement to the independent Liberals who supported his Federal Labour Cabinet, is now one of the principal managers of a Conference which refuses to sanction any political engagement or understanding that is not made by itself. Last, and worst of all the indignities heaped upon the elected representatives of Labour, or rather of the Labour Leagues, the Conference has appointed a secret Court-martial, authorised to conduct an inquisition into the daring claims of some Labour members in our State Legislature to think or act for themselves. Even members of the Labour Government were not to be excluded from the application of the test, though in perhaps a final flash of independence they are understood to have refused to bow to such an insulting and tyrannous command. Our Labour Council, which represents and acts for the Trade Unions, had to protect its *secretary*, although a member of our nominee Upper Chamber, against an attack upon him for failing to obey the Political Labour league. The feature of this discussion was a declaration by the mover of a motion upholding the secretary that the political "Labour" movement was rotten. From this rapid survey of recent incidents it becomes evident that Labour, though in power, and with usually obsequious servants obeying its everyday behests, retains its

position, and also its unity, at an increasing cost. Mr. Nielsen, who was maintained as an emissary in the United States at the cost of the Government, has at last resigned his seat in the Assembly, with contemptuous references to his late associates. Naturally the question now arising is how long even the iron-bound unity of the Caucus organisations can be maintained under such strains.

CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE.

The secrecy which has always shrouded the debates and decisions of our Australian Labour Party has been more rigorously enforced in this State than in any other. So far as it tells in favour of unity and discipline the external influence of the party undoubtedly gains. On the other hand, the further it is extended the more the public is the loser, and the less opportunity exists for commending its policy to those who might sympathise with its aims. It becomes a conspiracy of silence against the open-minded. The recent Labour Conference in this city has seen the seal of secrecy affixed to all its debates, arguments, illustrations, or explanations. Our newspapers have contrived to present accounts of some incidents behind the closed doors, and the results speak for themselves. The one obvious circumstance is that though finality has not yet been reached, this Conference has taken another stride towards the establishment of an extreme rigidity of control centralised in a relatively small number of persons, who are ultras in every sense of the word. The significance of this is that in effect it implies a want of confidence in their own supporters and to some degree in the democratic method of appealing to the masses. Our Labour "powers that be" though subject to an election within the organisation, are autocratic when once enthroned. Everything is sacrificed to an enforced unity of action and of policy, and a martinet discipline, tending to exclude individuality of thought or action. The first essential is drill, and the first duty to obey orders of preference to Unionists is to be unqualified. On the other hand, the repeal of the declaration for a six hours' working day implies the recognition of a decided blunder last year. The women's demands were also met during this session, though rather grudgingly, for further guarantees of equality of treatment. On the other hand, state schoolmistresses or female teachers are to resign when married, and to become eligible again only when widowed. Full adult suffrage is demanded in municipal affairs. The crusade against our Legislative Council, to which the McGowen Ministry has been making additions from the ranks of Labour, is to be revived. Nothing short of its abolition will satisfy the stalwarts who control the Labour "machine" and its machine politics. One Chamber will be quite enough for them to attend to, if all the representatives chosen are to be kept up to the collar. So far we have no experience of one-Chamber rule in this country, although the present Federal Labour Government has handled the Senate of Australia with a contemptuous indifference to its dignity ever since it

has had a majority there always at call. In view of the position of the Labour Party in both Chambers of the National Parliament and in the principal Chamber of this State and of Western Australia, these recent aims in Labour development are worthy of attention both here and at home.

ONE AND INDIVISIBLE.

But it is not only within New South Wales that organised Labour is operating with arrogance. Mr. Spence, M.P., as President of the Australian Workers' Union, speaks for a powerful and wealthy body of men possessing the means of paralysing the wool and other industries if they believe that it is their interest to do so. His demands are two. The first is that any refusal of employers to grant the demands of their employees must of itself suffice to warrant an appeal to the Australian Court. The second is that unless employers assist the Caucus during the coming election in its demand for the transfer to the Federal Parliament of absolute authority over the whole realm of industrial activities, the whole force of the Australian Workers' Union will be employed in strikes. No mandate could be more imperious in tone or issued with more ostentation. The Labour Prime Minister and his Cabinet are treated as pawns which Mr. Spence will move at his pleasure. The Constitution is to be amended at his direction. Mr. Fisher and some of his colleagues have been figuring as official representatives of the Commonwealth at a ceremonial in celebration of the commencement of the transcontinental railway from Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta. Their political supremacy is apparently to be confined to similar functions and to appointments to the High Court long discussed in the private councils of their party. Two of the three lawyers chosen have had much less experience than the five Judges who have to constitute the High Court. Making all allowances, Mr. Gavan Duffy is a fitting substitute for Mr. Justice O'Connor. His career at the Bar justifies his selection, and, like his predecessor, he is an Irishman. Mr. Piddington, although one of the most promising younger counsel in New South Wales, is surpassed in his record and in seniority by many here and in other States. Mr. Powers's admirable record as Crown Solicitor certainly does not afford the best possible training for a place on the principal legal tribunal in Australia. Apart from this, and similar departmental matters, such as the preparations for commencing and naming the capital city at Canberra, members of the Cabinet are confining themselves to electioneering in the various States. The policy has been retouched for Mr. Fisher here in Sydney by the Conference just dispersed. The campaign to secure its continuance in office will be planned and carried on by the Labour Leagues. Ministers may have some freedom in deciding where they will speak, but for the most part even that will be determined for them. What they are to say has been made clear both to them and to the members who sit with them. By these means a great deal of the burden of

leadership, of the weight of responsibilities, and of the platform work in the General Election is taken off their shoulders. They are but some of the first rank and always under control. The Caucus itself bows humbly before the Labour organisations, now becoming “one and indivisible” in their working and in their aims.

MR. FISHER AND HIS ALLIES.

Mr. Joseph Cook is justifying the confidence of his supporters by the energy and judgment he is displaying in what may be termed a preliminary series of sallies against weak points in the past history and present situation of Mr. Fisher and his allies. Victoria is evidently the State in which he feels that he has most to fear, particularly from the Protectionists, whose disaffection three years ago injured the present Liberal Opposition in several seats. He has also spoken in this State upon this and other points to much the same effect. The policy of the Caucus he puts aside until Mr. Fisher, as its spokesman, shall have announced it in detail. But the past of the Labour Party, its many blunders, its ruthless tactics during the last session, and its financial plunging whenever under pressure have all been handled with freedom of illustration and force of argument. Mr. Hughes is not allowed to forget that he has announced the fixing of prices and profits as an essential of Labour rule, but none of Mr. Cook's jibes can wring from him or his colleague any consistent reply to the question how this transformation of our whole social system is to be brought about. From this forecast of the inevitable necessities of the situation if he succeeds in his proposal he cannot escape. Under Mr. Cook's insistent pressure he becomes as jocose as the subject permits, but he will not explain by what legerdemain he is going to fix all prices or what will be the effects of fixing them. Mr. Hughes's articles in praise of his colleagues and himself published in London were very cautiously commended to Englishmen. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., found himself bound to point out that our Federal Attorney-General saw no “very clear conclusion of his country's pursuit of economic justice and industrial peace”. In fact, Mr. MacDonald questioned whether Australia, under the Hughes policy, was not merely “marching round a circle”. When Mr. Hughes dealt with our recent finances the totals were swollen by some millions received during the reign of the last Liberal Government. Though the Fisher Cabinet had obtained £18,000,000 more from our people than its predecessors, it has finished with a deficit of a million and a half. While our population has increased by 7 per cent., our expenditure has risen 41 per cent. Labour members, now forced to take to the platform, find these facts and figures very embarrassing, and so far have made no serious effort to combat them. Mr. Cook is fighting hard, and will make them fight hard, too, whether they enjoy their task or not.

THE QUESTION OF FINANCE.

Finance is troubling several of our States at present, as is proved by the fact that no less than three Premiers – Mr. Scaddan, Mr. Watt, and Mr. Peake – are on their way to London, inter alia, to seek fresh supplies. The Queensland Ministry had the wit to float a loan last year before the money markets became affected by war and other risks and before it was under pressure. It is now re-lending to its neighbours. Our own Labour Government, like every other, is hard up and is spending more than even New South Wales has done hitherto. The Commonwealth Savings Bank so far does not appear able to relieve the situation. Our Commonwealth Government will soon be in the same plight in which Caucus administrations always find themselves.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

POLITICAL CAMPAIGN.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Mar. 11 1913; Apr. 21 1913.

Although the political campaigning already on foot is preliminary only to the general conflict which will be officially opened at the end of this month, it is being conducted with energy. The Liberal Leader, Mr. **Joseph Cook**, who succeeded Sir **George Reid** as head of the Opposition some years ago, became first lieutenant in the coalition Government of 1909–10, and is now Commander-in-Chief of the Federal Forces of the Commonwealth, is justifying his title to that post by the energy with which he is flinging himself into the fray. Always happiest when most belligerent, he is prelude the formal advance upon the Ministerial entrenchments which will follow the Prime Minister's exposition of his party's policy. What Mr. **Fisher** will have to say we know already. Although there is no reason to suppose that he has strong objections to any part of the policy which he will announce, it would make no difference if he had. The major proposals to be submitted were, in effect, settled at Hobart months ago. He can neither add to nor deduct from them. They are unalterable until the next Conference reviews and revises them. They will then remain unchanged and unchangeable until its successor begins again at the same point, with, additions or deductions, as may be directed by its controllers. Still, the old fiction is preserved that the Ministerial policy for the coming Federal Parliament is unknown until formally announced by the head of the Government. Speakers on both sides refrain from anticipating or appearing to anticipate its disclosures, which are already perfectly well known to all of them. In the mean-time discussion centres upon what has been done or left undone by the Labour Government, or as to the present consequences of their policy and administration. This field is more than wide enough to accommodate them. Indeed, so much of the Ministerial past is being challenged that the future, with its fresh throng of disputable developments already in view, is being little anticipated. Mr. Cook has flung himself with characteristic directness upon the long series of Caucus tyrannies and blunders, peppering every round these have inflicted with caustic comments. Not only in this State, but in Victoria and South Australia, his rhetorical raids are prelude a contest which for keenness and bitterness appears likely to exceed all but the last great struggle of 1910, in which Labour captured the Government of Australia by a majority of votes so small and of representatives so large as to constitute a deadly impeachment of Federal Electoral Acts.

THE CONFLICTING PARTIES.

So far as by-elections go, the recent verdicts in two State constituencies are favourable to Labour. In this State, although the Liberal vote exhibited a healthy growth, it fell short by 42 votes while in Victoria the poll was even closer. It is evident that the untiring energy with which the electoral rolls have been shepherded by both parties has reduced the difference between them, though without depriving the Caucus of its lead. It is perhaps noteworthy that three out of the four candidates in these instances were Roman Catholics. This tribute to the continuing solidarity of that vote which is usually cast for Labour, has to be discounted in this State by the evident desire of those who guide it to create a centre party, probably led by Mr. Beeby, able to hold the balance of power between the Liberal and Labour Parties. The precedents in German politics have been studied to some effect. In Victoria, the *Melbourne Age* has been openly bidding for a Protectionist group of representatives pledged to an immediate revision of the existing tariff of 1907–8 before anything else. So far this has merely assisted to stiffen those who are seeking Metropolitan seats. The proposed appointment of a Tariff Board to investigate and advise upon the necessities of our manufacturers, promised by the Liberal Government in 1910 was rejected at the poll with the body of its programme except as to defence, a financial agreement with the States, though limited to ten years, and the series of large developmental schemes to which effect is being given by the present Administration. There has been, so far, no Opposition criticism upon this series, nor upon defence or finance, except in respect to the gross extravagance with which the ever increasing revenue has been spent and the partisan purpose to which it has been incidentally applied for electioneering purposes. Speaking generally the always efficient solidarity of the Caucus has been maintained, if not improved, during the past three years. Despite the sometimes fierce friction generated within its ranks by the dictation of its leaders and the ever-increasing burden of its intensifying solidarity it enters upon the present campaign with bigger financial resources, with better, disciplined forces, and with far more confidence than in 1910. The only prospect of the Liberals arises from the disappointment it has inflicted upon the floating section of electors which acknowledges allegiance to neither of the great parties. This swings rather under the influence of sentiment than of judgement and reason, and is at all times an incalculable element. If it is divided the chances are that Labour remains in power with a diminished majority. No Liberal victory worthy of the name is possible without its revolt or active intervention. It therefore remains the one possibly dominant and practically unpredictable force likely to decide the coming conflict.

THE APPOINTMENT OF JUDGES.

The appointment of three new Judges to the High Court is not an event that can be passed over, and yet it is one upon which it is not desirable to dwell. Mr. Justice **Duffy**, of Melbourne, called upon to replace his co-religionist, the late Justice **O'Connor**, was sincerely welcomed upon his appointment by his four colleagues constituting the present High Court, thus restored to its original strength. There was an interval and apparently some hitches before the names of the two additional Judges to be added were given to the public. Mr. Justice **Powers** and Mr. Justice **Piddington** are well-known members of the profession, the former having held the office of Crown Solicitor in the Commonwealth Law Office for some years. Neither has any adverse record, but it is indisputable that their selection evoked no approbation outside the Caucus. At least one Federal Minister some time since openly declared for appointees who would appreciate their party claims and interests. A distinct preference for men allied to them has been ever since the Caucus came into power and in every direction legitimate or illegitimate. The Chief Justice, Sir **S. Griffith** who has presided over the Court since its first establishment, has chosen this time to apply for and obtained a well-earned leave of absence, during which it is understood that he will visit the Mother Country. His great abilities, wide legal knowledge, prompt insight, and high character have contributed greatly to the establishment of the Court in Australian public opinion. It has been rumoured for some months that the Attorney-General, Mr. **Hughes**, had reserved himself for the position of Chairman of the proposed Inter-State Commission a position for which he is probably as competent as any other member who has not enjoyed a training in business affairs. Of his abilities there is no question, and though his legal training and experience have been slight his quickness and resourcefulness have assisted to make him the chief adviser of the Caucus and one of the principle members of his party. He has been, in fact, its real leader in most, if not all, crises, though he has never been able to win the titular rank his services justified.

THE STRIKE OF GAS WORKERS.

In Sydney we have had in the Gas Strike yet one more lesson in the tactics of coercion employed by the Unions to enforce their demands, whether reasonable or unreasonable when and how they please. The incident in itself, though creating a great stir and much excitement, was not really novel in any feature. The circumstances made it of greater public interest than ordinary, the fact that it deprived thousands of citizens and many streets of gaslight rendering the object lesson more impressive and more effective than usual. We had also the spectacle of the **Lord Mayor** of this great city, with stained and blistered hands, **raking coke from the coal stoves** and feeding

them continually with fresh fuel for four hours. He thus set an excellent example to his fellow-citizens, who rallied around him in order that the city should not be left in darkness. Quite apart from this civic patriotism we were supplied with many scenic incidents, including the hasty return to the city of Mr. Carmichael, one of the leaders of the Cabinet in our State Government, and his pleading, almost in tears and with golden promises, with the men who were threatening a strike unless their wages were at once raised. They turned a deaf ear to his pleading, defying him and Premier, Mr. McGowen, to resist their demands. So exasperated were the Cabinet at this repudiation that they issued a public appeal to and for free labourers, to whom they guaranteed protection if they replaced the men on strike. Needless to say, the little syndicate associated with the workers' newspaper gave itself up to objurgations at such a declaration of independence from a Government to which it dictates both policy and administration. The rally of non-Unionists willing to restore the gas supply brought the strikers somewhat to their senses. Still, it was only under a pledge from the Government that, if necessary, it would summon a special session of Parliament within twelve days to permit an amendment of last year's Arbitration Act and the appointment of a Board that they resumed work. The verdict, whenever given, is to be retrospective in operation. For a settlement the Opposition is largely responsible, Mr. Wade having offered, on its behalf, if Parliament is called together, to take no advantage of the absence of Mr. Holman, which might have left the Ministry in a minority. Unhappily, the Unionist bullies stained their record once more by acts of violence against the free labourers, who, some said, had materially assisted to rescue the city from darkness and all that might have followed in its train. The strikers had reasonable grounds for asking a judicial inquiry into their claims, but no warrant for the strike itself, and still less excuse for the insults and violence that accompanied their efforts to force compliance with their demands.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

SHADOW OF DISSOLUTION.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Apr. 2 1913; May 12 1913.

A great deal has been happening of late important as well as interesting to all Australians, though the interest felt has been transient and the visible results are few. For instance, there was the formal *laying of foundation-stones* on the site of the future capital of the Commonwealth, and its naming. Unfortunately, though the *Governor-General and Lady Denman* officiated the ceremony appeared to obtain a party colouring owing to the prominence of Labour politicians and the absence of all our Liberal leaders. A reluctant acceptance of "Canberra", the local name, by Ministers who were seeking other appellations prevented a public scandal. The arrival of our first cruiser the *Melbourne*, in Port Phillip was made the occasion of another sectional demonstration with the object of advertising the Labour Party policy in regard to naval defence. Both the new cruiser and the three destroyers who welcomed her, though built to the order of the late Liberal Government, were inferentially credited in the *Fisher* Cabinet. The Easter encampments were treated in the same manner. The first national object-lesson in universal service though originally authorised and put into form while Mr. *Cook*, the present head of the Federal Opposition was Minister of Defence, has been handled as if the camps were only held in consequence of more recent Labour legislation. The pettiness of these pretences can be ignored in the circumstances, since the shadow of the approaching dissolution of the Federal Parliament lies heavy over all present outlooks. Electioneering aims, methods, and devices dominate the whole country, and will weigh upon it more and more heavily until May 31 next. In the meantime there have been two memorable events that could hardly be reduced to party proportions. The first "Dreadnought" to reach Australia, the *New Zealand*, a splendid pledge of the loyalty of our neighbours and kinsmen in the Island Dominion received a hearty welcome from the citizens of Melbourne. Unfortunately for us theirs was the only port which she could visit. The other incident is the opening of the sittings of the Imperial Trade Commission, which is now taking evidence in Queensland prior to coming southward. It was heartily welcomed when passing through Sydney, where its practical possibilities are highly estimated.

THE APPOINTMENT OF JUDGES.

Nor do these brief references to some of the most significant non-political events having a political bearing by any means exhaust the record. There are others directly political, too significant to be passed by in silence. For instance, nothing could have been done by the Australian Bar more dignified, expressive, and deliberate than the intimation of its intention not to offer the customary congratulations to the two lawyers whom Mr. *Hughes* had delighted to honour. After full consideration Mr. *Piddington* intimated that he withdrew his acceptance of the seat on the High Court Bench. The result has been the selection in his stead of Mr. Justice *Rich*, whose record in this State entitles him to accept the post. There are, of course, a number of other leading barristers in the Commonwealth also eligible. Among them Mr. *Piddington* will probably in due course become entitled to judicial honours. In the meantime Mr. *Powers*, who has acted as Crown Solicitor for the Commonwealth since the office was established, has returned to Australia. He, too, accepted Mr. *Hughes*'s offer, but has declined to make any comment upon the situation created by the attitude of our Bar. There is a Melbourne suggestion that the solicitors should offer him the congratulations refused by the other branch of their profession. Then, again, Mr. *Hughes* himself has to announce his decision as to the Inter State Commission, of which he withholds the establishment until he can take or decline the Chair. Apparently his colleagues at the last moment objected to his withdrawal from the electoral field of battle before the actual engagement had begun. In vain he pleaded ill-health, as he has often pleaded it before. With the prize within easy reach, he has been induced to recast his whole plan of campaign. Apparently he had some idea of confining himself at first to an exposition of the Labour case for the Referendum, as Mr. *Deakin* is doing. When the late Leader of the Opposition addressed our Chamber of Commerce a week ago, in a speech which the *Daily Telegraph* styled "impassioned", he at once sprang into the arena with a rejoinder a column long. No wonder his colleagues, with a proper appreciation of his qualities as a debater and of his gifts as an apologist, insist upon detaining him. He has now announced an active campaign here and in the other States to fulfil which would task the strongest of his associates. He has to earn his prize, much against his will, but at all events will earn it as none of his Ministerial associates can.

MR. FISHER AND THE REVENUE.

The Prime Minister's speech to his constituents at Maryborough was naturally enough a laborious production, carefully wrought out from the decisions of the Hobart Labour Conference with the collaboration of his colleagues and the aid of the principal officials of the departments. Mr. *Fisher* imparted warmth and force

whenever his recital permitted it, but the general effect of the statement being informative or reminiscent afforded him few opportunities for the expression of sentiments in his own characteristic manner. During the past two days analyses of his utterances have been made, chiefly in our newspapers. They are fast reducing the mass of material handled to reasonable proportions. The great bulk of the speech is taken up by a review of the past three years. As usual, the enormous upward bound of the Commonwealth revenue, due to the new agreement redistributing the receipts from Customs for ten years, in exact agreement with the proposals of the Deakin administration, is treated as if it were the outcome of a new departure undertaken by the present Ministry. As a fact, it is wholly a heritage. The expenditure of the huge sum thus made available for the Premier as Treasurer is set out in detail. For the most part it has been devoted to defence by sea and land largely upon the lines already laid down for him. Mr. Cook is at once challenging the errors by omission and alteration made in Mr. Fisher's speech, though thus in part anticipating full dress reply. The blunders and extravagances of the Government upon which the Opposition leader will dwell are largely those for which Mr. O'Malley is responsible. He is also expected to comment upon the amount of the gold backing of our Commonwealth note issue. It is proposed to reduce this from 40 per cent. to 33 per cent., with an eye to a further deduction, bringing it down to 25 per cent. Mr. Cook is certain to arraign the policy favouritism and the spendthrift disbursements debited to the Northern Territory, where so far there is nothing to show for the outlay. The energy of Mr. Gilruth and his colleagues seems indisputable, but, though the local officials are relatively very numerous, their exertions have as yet reaped no result. The general scheme for this settlement emanates from the Cabinet, which has practically nothing to record except appointments and disbursements. It has been more than once compelled to alter these to meet persistent complaints of its own followers.

BAITS OFFERED TO ELECTORS.

Over and above such unsatisfactory features and of its past three years in office, with absolute control both of the legislation and administration of Australia, the Fisher Government relies upon a few new departures. The development of the sugar industry in Queensland is delayed by a deadlock between the State Administration and that of the Commonwealth. A "New Protection" policy is once more paraded in an attempt to justify the enormous demands for increased central authority about to be submitted to the Referendum. A "nationalisation" amendment, the most dangerous of all affecting any or all industries taken over by the Government, is disposed of in one sentence. This is so characteristically phrased that it is certainly Mr. Fisher's very own. "On general principles, the rule of guidance would be that where competition exists there is no need of interference". As the Government is to

decide whether “competition”, as it understands the word, does or does not exist, no sort of reliable guarantee is to be found in this cryptic utterance. We cannot forget that the maximum Land Tax to-day is fixed at sixpence per acre though Mr. Fisher, in his 1910 policy speech, publicly stated that it would be fourpence. His memorable justification for this 50 per cent. increase on his own statement months afterwards is, and always will be, remembered. Although he said fourpence, and was so reported, he “had sixpence down upon his notes”. There it remained unknown until after the election, and has been insisted upon ever since. Apart from some minor utilities, such as the often-promised “Agricultural Bureau”, Insurance and Bankruptcy Bills, and a vote of £20,000 for the prevention and cure of consumption and cancer, the new baits offered to the electors are two. Within the last few months Ministers have expressly and defiantly refused to revise the tariff in a Protectionist direction, and to introduce the Initiative Referendum. Under pressure at the last moment they have turned a complete somersault, or rather two somersaults, in order to place these very proposals in their fighting programme. No other Government and no other party would have dared to make such a *volte face* in the moment of its appeal to the electors. A storm of ridicule and conscientious protest would meet them from every quarter. As it is, the Liberal Opposition is suffering because it is divided on these very issues. Neither has a place in its official programme. But especially in Victoria, most of its candidates are ardent Protectionists, and probably a majority of them in favour of the Initiative Referendum. These Liberals will now find it less easy to make converts in this relation, while their colleagues of another opinion in these regards may suffer. Of course, just what “effective Protection” meant to Mr. Fisher this week, what it may mean to him if in office next session, and what it is certain to mean to his followers, may prove to be widely differing interpretations. Events will create, or at all events govern, their definitions. As for the general public in this State, despite its constant outbreaks of reckless disorder and defiance of the law, there is no visible reaction in protest. Even in this city, smarting under the losses and disabilities occasioned by the recent wilful gas strikes, ferry strikes, coal strikes, and shipping strikes, some still current and others threatening, there is no such rally against the instigators or active participants in these defiances of the law, even when they have no justification whatever for their outbreaks. Whether they act from interest or from fears, from aspiration or under aggravation, the bulk of the employees here, and probably elsewhere, are learning nothing by experience except that in almost all cases they can succeed to some extent, legally or illegally, in enforcing their demands. Hence they are, to all appearances, inclined to vote Labour and once more chance the consequences.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

ELECTORAL CRISIS.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Apr. 22 1913; Jun. 4 1913.

The Australian position to-day is not easy to describe or summarise. Its ramifications would absorb much space. But it must by this time be plain to all onlookers that the existing crisis is due to the enforcement upon our operatives by Trade Unions and political Leagues of a party discipline which makes them mere pawns in the hands of their leaders. The policy is coercion. The bait is that of higher wages. It is greedily taken, though the cost of living appears to grow almost, if not quite, as fast as their increased earnings. Still, the bulk of them remain loyal to their leaders and trustful of the impossible promises held out indiscriminatingly to each and all. The small group of extreme Socialists in the lead is now capable enough and numerous enough to select and control a majority of the representatives sent to the periodical Conferences at which the current programme of legislation is periodically revised and enlarged. As a consequence, therefore, of the militant methods enforced throughout all the Trade Unions, the party approach the coming Federal Election and its revolutionary Referenda with much more confidence than the facts appear to justify. Every appeal made to the continent nowadays is ushered in with declarations that on this particular polling the fate and future of the whole Commonwealth are at stake. This was true in 1910 and it is again true in 1913. The decision at the ballot-box on May 31 next may easily shatter either the Labour Leagues or the improvised electoral Leagues in which the Opposition has rallied its forces. In the first case recovery would be probable, while in the latter event the disintegration may be serious. The Referendum results will decide whether or not our Constitution is to remain Federal. If not, it will be soon recast upon quite another plan, and with its new powers a new policy in every sense of the word may be anticipated. It is certain that our electoral decisions will be fateful; it is possible that they may be final; it is not improbable that they will remain among the landmarks of our history.

PARTY LEADERSHIP.

So far the *Prime Minister's* exertions have been almost entirely devoted to winning his own seat. Opening at Maryborough, he had little to say that was characteristic

and nothing that was new. It was a boastful record, coupled with an elaborate statement of the Labour case for re-election. He then disappeared in his constituency. Since then the **Attorney-General** has acted as party leader in the South, and, as usual, with more effect than his chief. But a few days ago he was declining all calls to the platform, making pessimistic declarations of impaired health, and meekly surrendering his future in politics so as to retire with the Presidency of the Inter-State Committee. His colleagues refused to be convinced. To-day he is the alert and untiring head of the advance guard of the Labour Leagues, speaking at length and with frequency to large audiences, who welcome his diatribes with delighted cheering. No other Minister seems to count. As Mr. Fisher will come South, Mr. Hughes will go North, and public interest will be roughly divided between them. The Opposition has good ground for congratulating itself upon the energy and effectiveness of its new chief, for Mr. **Cook** has proved not only an untiring general but a searchingly effective critic. Behind him rally not only our Federal members and new candidates but also the Ministries of the four States that have rejected Labour. This suffices to enrol them all as "Liberals" in the Australian sense of that much-abused word. Our State Ministers will confine themselves as far as possible to resisting the attack made upon the constitutional status which is necessary to their very existence. They consequently address the public not as party men but as opponents of the Referenda. In Tasmania they have had whatever help Mr. **Deakin's** health enabled him to give. In Western Australia Sir **John Forrest** stands, in one sense, alone, since very few Eastern politicians can find their way so far, maintaining a double battle against the Labour Governments, Federal and State. Mr. **Watt** and Mr. **Peake**, doing excellent service in the Mother Country, are, none the less, much missed here. Meetings are being held all over the continent, by day and by night. Speaking generally, they are very well attended, and as a rule orderly. The Government pamphlets are in every hand or very soon will be. These put the case for and against the six Referendum Bills, only awaiting a successful ballot to become part of our Constitution. The rolls bid fair to be much larger than they were three years ago. There is a real anxiety among Liberals to have them properly scrutinised, since large accessions to the list are anticipated, presenting many opportunities for duplicate or unwarranted enrolments. It would be premature to describe our public as on tiptoe with expectation, though the general forecast is that "anything is possible". The poll that lifted Mr. Fisher into office in 1910 with a pledged majority in both Houses came as a surprise to the whole country. It will not surprise many if next month repeats their success on a smaller scale. On the other hand, strong symptoms of reaction are not wanting, even among those who gave him his victory in 1910.

LABOUR PARTY AND STRIKES.

One of the most interesting and most baffling problems of the coming struggle relates to this possible swing over. It owes nothing to the ordinary party means of influencing voters. The innumerable speeches at innumerable meetings, and the fact that the attendance of the public at these has been, and promises to remain, larger than ever, tells little or nothing of what we are to expect. When one calculates the enormous body of electors who attend no meetings, or, if they do, give no sign of their trend, one faces the real factor. In any case, it is already clear that these are the men and women who will determine the coming contest. It is also becoming plain that the industrial eruptions to which we not only have been, but are still being, subjected will count for a great deal, when the fateful polling day arrives. Ever since Mr. Fisher and Mr. Hughes took office they have been directly or indirectly associated with every industrial outbreak of any significance in Australia. In many they have been advisers behind the scenes. In a few instances they have ostentatiously disclaimed official responsibility of any kind. Still, directly or indirectly, they have had in one way or another to father every strike of any importance, and many affecting but minor local areas. They dared not stand aloof either from the most portentous eruptions or from some of the utterly indefensible ones. It is calculated that there have been, no less than 250 "strikes" since 1910, when Labour came into power. A large proportion of these have, either in origin or in date, and, often in both, proved on inquiry to have been unjustifiable. The question of questions for Labour candidates to-day is, how far they can justify their endorsements of revolutionary methods employed to meet disputes for whose settlement our law had wisely provided in advance. With the most "advanced" legislative and administrative provisions for the just and peaceful settlement of business differences between employers and employed that are known in any nation, we have had disorder, violence, animosity, and sometimes mob rule thrust upon us, because the employees refused to listen either to justice or reason. We have suffered somewhere in this way on two working days out of every three. After having made the amplest provision possible for the growth and development of the most approved means of securing and maintaining industrial peace throughout the Commonwealth, this is our reward.

BROKEN HILL AND BRISBANE.

The Broken Hill strike just concluded furnishes the latest illustration of the lengths to which the militant elements in some Unions are prepared to go, at any moment, without warning or justification. Probably the cables have given the facts with sufficient fullness to make it plain to British readers how unwarranted the outbreak was and with what criminal recklessness the population of this important mining

centre have been at the same time threatened with starvation and dragooned by threats of physical violence. The helplessness of the State Labour Ministry and its passive submission to this reckless outbreak stood out in strong relief against the fiery fulminations of the little group of Syndicalists on the Barrier, which seized for the time the reins of local government and sought to overrule the law by force. Between the two Broken Hill was dragged to the very verge of a great disaster. It was only at the eleventh hour that a majority of the men recoiled from the programme of violence dictated to them by their leaders. The Commonwealth Government, like Mr. McGowen's Cabinet, pursued the same policy of silence and inactivity when it allowed the great city of Brisbane to be seized and dominated by a mob led from its Trades Hall, while criminal attempts were made to dynamite trams carrying citizens and their families to their homes. The Fisher Government refused to fulfil its obligations as a Government when it publicly declined to protect life and property against organised disorder. Brisbane, thrown back upon itself, gallantly restored order by enrolling its citizens for police purposes to suppress the "domestic violence" of which it was the prey. In Broken Hill the miners constitute not only the greater portion of the population, but the sole source of the earnings of the whole community. It was not until famine stared them in the face that they realised how hopeless was the endeavour to frighten the Labour Ministry of New South Wales or the Labour Cabinet of the Commonwealth into taking the field aggressively for their sake. For their abstinence the current Federal Election was largely responsible. With a sudden swing of the pendulum the majority of the miners called a halt and abandoned the attempt to force seven more employees to join their Unions by penalising 8,000 workers and as many more dependents. To put it briefly, they surrendered at discretion. The one result of the vainglorious tyranny of the small minority of Syndicalists was a heavy loss to the companies and their shareholders, to the railways, to all employers and employees, to the Unions, and the whole population of Broken Hill.

EFFECT ON POLLING DAY.

What affect this bitter experience will have upon the Barrier remains to be seen. The probabilities are that it will affect the poll there next month little, if at all. Many may wish to vote for freedom, but few will venture to do so, especially as they will be in a hopeless minority. It is but one of the 250 strikes that have to be reckoned with, affecting in some cases the strikers, but in many cases gravely affecting the indifferent and the alarmed, to say nothing of the general community. Three years of Labour Government in the Federal Parliament and in three States for shorter periods have taught our public some lessons they are not likely to forget. Business people have suffered everywhere, and those to whom they have passed on a part of their

costs and losses have begun to realise whom they have to thank for their extra trials. No doubt the Caucus is more imperious in its attitude, the heresy hunts are more searching, and the methods employed to bring in to and keep in the Unions all who live by their labour are more stringent and remorseless than ever. The total affected by these tactics will steadily grow larger. The prospects of a heavy poll are brighter so far as those sources are concerned. But they are not all the sources. Labour cannot capture a majority without assistance at the poll from those who sympathise with the wage-earners, and even with the wasters among them, on the ground of their trials and their ignorance of affairs. To all appearances, the votes for wrecking the Federal Constitution will be greater than before and from the same sources. But the election and the Referendum polling will both be powerfully affected by our strikes and strikers. Whatever gains go to the Opposition will come principally from the reaction against these abuses. If anything can sever the solid phalanx of organised employees from the rest of the community it will be the recklessness, wilfulness, and violence of the tactics they have adopted. It was with difficulty that Mr. Watson persuaded the Old Guard of the Socialists to postpone their demand for a six hours' day, which was flaunted this week once more in Melbourne at the Eight Hours' Day celebration. Even a four hours' day is jocosely heralded by the more sanguine. If the real guides and governors of the city working classes can retain for the Caucus policy the large section of the people who have suffered by Labour legislation and administration, it may count upon retaining the government of Australia and control of its Constitution. The one and only hope of the Liberal Opposition rests upon the return to its ranks of the central section of our citizens, upon whose support and sympathy it is absolutely dependent.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

GENERAL ELECTION AND REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, May 14 1913; Jun. 23 1913.

The party conflict for political power and its perquisites still agitate many in all classes and of all interests. More money is being spent and more canvassing employed on both sides than ever before; the organisations are stronger and more active. Our Press is choked with warnings, denunciations, and prophecies, while meetings almost innumerable are being held nightly, and in many cases are proportionately well attended. A large proportion of the hearers, especially of the aggressives, make it their business to take part night after night in most centres. Yet, with all the paraphernalia, the tumult, and the shouting on the surface, the depths appear to be undisturbed; numbers take the situation very quietly. An unprecedented vote is anticipated, but a mixed mass, sufficiently large to ensure victory to either side, seems wavering or silent. Anything is possible so far. At the same time, the chances on the whole appear decidedly in favour of the Ministry, or rather of the Labour Leagues behind them, who will stick at nothing to accomplish their ends. The several somewhat suspicious and occasionally envious organisations formed out of the Opposition ranks affect with a very ill grace to act unitedly. Especially is this the case in Victoria, where Single Taxers and other Utopian factions are also likely to do much damage to the "Liberal" cause. In the same State the local Ministry and its large majorities of both Legislative Chambers have been singularly remiss in their endeavours to protect themselves and their self-governing status. Here, too, in New South Wales, though Mr. Wade is doing his duty, his colleagues and supporters appear ineffective. The principal organ of Roman Catholic opinion in this State has publicly declared for all the Referendum amendments, though the consequence of its success would be the destruction of "Home Rule" in our vast undeveloped State. With Western Australia apparently in the hands of the Labour Leagues the prospects are undoubtedly cloudy for the Opposition. Their only hope lies in the large number of citizens who will cast a silent vote.

LABOUR PARTY CHANGES OF FRONT.

Among the chief factors making for the success of the Labour Government at the polls has been the ingenuity with which it has grafted upon its programme important concessions quite outside the Caucus programme. Prior to Federation this was notable for its anti-militarism, conspicuous throughout the whole, of the Boer War. When Mr. Hughes first moved a moderate amendment in favour of universal training he had to abandon it because it had so few supporters in his party. The first naval defence scheme was forced upon Mr. Fisher, and consisted only of gunboats for coastal service. His party resisted the first vote for them, and later ostentatiously refused to offer the "Dreadnought" demanded by the Liberal Opposition, and offered to the Mother Country directly its leaders re-entered office. The Kitchener policy of universal service within Australia, framed at the request of that Government, and also the 1909 naval policy, adopted while it was in office, were both condemned by leading men of the Labour Opposition. Their acceptance since, with the approval of the Henderson programme, given after such a record as theirs, are gratifying Labour developments. They were as surprising as they were welcome to those who, from the first, had declared for an adequate military and naval defence in co-operation with the Mother Country. The electoral value of the Fisher changes of front has been very great. Then, again, a majority of the Labour members in the Federal Parliament and a huge majority of the State Labour members always have been and still are reckoned Free Traders. They are indifferent, if not hostile, to Protection. Their authorised party programme, while declaring for a "new Protection" based upon State regulations of wages and profits, leaves them still hostile to duties intended to encourage and maintain local manufactures. Our chief Protectionist paper, the *Melbourne Age*, has condemned them and their expedients in the strongest terms. It still continues its censures, although the Fisher Cabinet, dreading the loss of the Protectionist vote, has made a despairing attempt to propitiate the paper and retain those who follow it. The Caucus authorised programmes for the current elections the Federal Labour Government dare not and cannot touch. It has, therefore, manufactured another piece of policy to be tacked on to the Caucus platform, so far as a majority of the Federal Labour members are concerned. Under this ingenious device in Victoria especially, the Caucus candidates are declaring themselves whole-souled Protectionists, encouraged thereto by no less a convinced upholder of free imports than Mr. Hughes himself, who takes care to say nothing on that matter in this State. His *volte face* is complete. Like that of Mr. Pearce and Mr. Thomas, and in a less degree like that of Mr. Fisher, the transformation is amassing because it has been accomplished in public, under pressure, and in sheer fright. There have been several other useful adjustments of the so-called objects of the party, unauthorised or illegitimate, and introduced solely for their immediate electoral ends. Smaller

deviations made in this way at the last General Election were lightly set aside by the Labour members returned when they were found inconvenient. If the electors this time prove as gullible as in 1910 the Fisher Cabinet, which was obviously tottering owing to the recent angry reaction of sections of its supporters after the Federal policy had been thoughtfully examined by them, may yet recover its lead. Probably its majority will be reduced. The voting will need to be carefully scrutinised. Judging by experience in New South Wales, Mr. Fisher with Mr. Hughes's help and acting under his direction, will have quieted the large sections of his 1910 following who have been rebelling against either his defence or his latest fiscal policy, or both.

VIOLENCE AND COERCION BY STRIKERS.

On the other hand, there is a counterbalancing movement which ought to be much more influential than it appears to-day. This is due to the reckless acts of violence and the extravagant undertakings of the militant elements in and behind the Labour Party. At Broken Hill the peace is but temporary. In the Northern Territory, a dependency under the direct control of Mr. Fisher and his colleague, Mr. Josiah Thomas, there is a malicious strike of Government employees denounced in Melbourne as reeking with "absolute infamy", "dishonesty" and "bad faith". Our Darling Harbour outbreak of railway porters has been properly condemned by Judge Heydon as a piece of "reckless malice", leading to the "destruction of their fellow citizens' private property" at the very time a board was granting the strikers increased value at £60,000 a year. With such manifestations of contempt for their employers – the people – and with such impossible aims as the fixing of prices and others openly fostered by Labour organisations, and evoking hardly a word of censure or warning from Labour Ministers, what can be expected while its Caucus is in power? In Western Australia the Government management of its lately-established steamship service has been so effectively attacked by shippers that a public inquiry is promised. At Bendigo, in Victoria, the Broken Hill precedent of coercing all non-Unionists into joining the Union or driving them from the goldfield has been authorised by a ballot of more than ten to one. In order, if possible, to avoid the scandal certain to arise out of this despotic attempt to bring all the employees under the whip, effect is not to be given to this decision until June 1, the day after the General Election. When the pledge-bound candidate for a mining constituency, just recommended by Mr. Fisher, asserted that now Labour received only one-third of what it produced and was really entitled to the other two-thirds as well we have a further disclosure of the real aim of the organisations that are behind the Federal Government. They are intentionally in line with the Continental Socialists, and as ruthless in their proposed exploitations. Though a minority of the voters who support the Caucus platform, these extremists dominate their associates and drive the Ministers of the Crown,

who are their nominal leaders, along the perilous path of confiscation. Mr. Cook has made this perfectly plain wherever he has spoken. Though less plausible than the Prime Minister, he has greatly assisted in tearing off the political disguise in which Mr. Fisher poses with so much apparent innocence and simplicity. The one hope of Liberalism is that the three years' Administration and legislation we have endured will have at last sufficiently awakened our electors to the over-increasing cost, confusion, and caballing for sectional ends that have blurred the Commonwealth's record.

VISIT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION.

The Dominions Royal Commission is making its tour of Australia under a very unfortunate pressure of time and at a most unfortunate season. The Commissioners individually were welcomed and appreciated, although both the composition of the body and the individual qualifications of some of its members were rather hard to appreciate. With one, or possibly two, exceptions those nominated by the Dominions discovered no special qualifications for their appointment to such an important Commission. The Chairman had a few able assistants, though apparently they were all of one party colour. The flying visits made by the more active and representative members, were of necessity far too hurried and limited to permit a real grasp of our situation or anything approaching an understanding of the prospects of the interior. Probably Sir Rider Haggard has gained most information affecting our inland possibilities and developments, applying himself during his investigations with a zeal and knowledge that impressed those whom he unofficially examined. The Hon. Mr. Foster made much more impression than any of his colleagues except the capable Chairman, whose controlling hand, though considerate, was always firm. The public as a whole, however, in no way realised the importance of such a visit by such a body. For this the elections were most to blame and next to that the necessarily fragmentary and hasty glimpses afforded the Commissioners of our huge Continent. Again, the industrial unrest obvious everywhere doubtless puzzled them very much when they compared our rates of pay and hours of work with those of the Mother Country. This, too, was an obstacle to their comprehension of our problems. As a first experimental glimpse of Australia their flying visit promises to be a success, but it will need an even stronger group of investigators with a great deal more leisure to enable even the very able Commissioners included in the present body to realise the best means of developing this great segment of our Empire. As it is, much to our regret and loss, they leave us having only a fractional knowledge of the great State of New South Wales, which could have easily and profitably occupied the whole of their stay in Australia.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

REFERENDUM PROBLEMS.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Jun. 3 1913; Jul. 14 1913.

A month ago the cable will have informed your readers of the results of the long and wearisome campaign during which the Labour Ministry's record in the last three years has been criticised exhaustively from many points of view. Everything has been challenged – acts of administration, methods of legislation, principles, policies, and personal shortcomings. So far the attitude of the Opposition to the Acts passed over their heads by the Ministerial majority has been discriminatingly critical. It has demanded amendments. Some of these might fairly be termed vital, though the majority were in the nature of additions and qualifications. Every new Ministerial departure has been assailed, whether in relation to the establishment of the Commonwealth Bank, the attack on the High Court, the Navigation Bill (now awaiting expert British criticism prior to Royal sanction) the land tax upon absentees, and the methods of control, or rather, in most cases, of relaxation of control, over branches of the public service. The Cabinet is accused of a general connivance with strikes everywhere, whether engineered with or without reason, and with making large number of appointments, apparently partisan. One and all of its new departures have been challenged persistently in the House and out of it. If the public are not thoroughly enlightened upon such of these matters as interested them it is certainly the public's own fault. The State Administrations have also been active participants in the Federal fray, though it cannot be claimed that they have added any fresh features to the conflict. State members, though active agents, have contributed nothing new. One of the consequences has been that ten days before the poll most of the speakers on both sides had become stale. In addition to a review of the last three years' rush of legislation, there were added as targets the elaborate policies put forward by both sides for the next three years. Then, again, above all these very varied and interlaced projects rose towering the six sweeping amendments of the federal Constitution. English observers can, therefore, very well understand how vast and complex were the throngs of problems and interests dealt with by ten separate questions on three separate papers, handed to every elector that is, every adult man and woman – in the Australian continent who went to the poll.

ELECTIONEERING ACTIVITIES.

So far, considering all risks and difficulties, the official effort to secure an effective verdict upon the future policy of the country appears to have been accomplished with commendable efficiency, rapidity, and promptitude. How far its dangerous laxities have been abused is another question yet to be dealt with. Still it can be confidently alleged that last Saturday's polling came as the climax of a more exhaustive canvass and a more fully-organised campaign than the Commonwealth has ever witnessed. Nothing seems to have been left undone in the first place to win over the electors to one or other of the platforms, and in the next place to organise their polling more effectively than before. There was no lack of heat displayed by the legions of working men and women, who believed that a victory at the ballot-box would give them substantial rewards, taken directly or indirectly out of the pockets of their opponents. Such a conviction seemed deeper than in 1910. Yet behind this army of ardent electioneering proselytes strategically massed came some of the wiser comrades among the wage earners who appeared to be distinctly less trustful of the outcome than they were when they swept the polls in most of the States three years ago. Many Labour candidates were bitterly resentful and vituperative, but, on the other hand, even amid orgies of calumny, not a few traces of humour still appeared, thus mingling jest with earnest. Oddly enough, therefore, on the whole they have been cooler and calmer than during the passionate excitement of 1910. Then, in several cases by few votes, Labour obtained a working majority of ten in the Senate, and of twelve in the House which made them absolute masters of the legislation and the administration of the whole Commonwealth. For three years past the business of the Opposition has been confined to pressing inquiries, often baffled – for information sometimes denied – riddling unreasonable proposals, often amended and occasionally withdrawn – and generally in seeking to educate the public to an understanding of what Labour law making and Labour control of departments really means and actually costs. The work then done has not been without effect, despite the indecent manner in which the reshaping of the constituencies, rendered necessary under the Constitution, was forced through by superior numbers. But just as the earlier Parliaments were sadly crippled by the existence of three distinct parties, so the subordination of our last Legislature to a single party, really a faction, in which the independence of all Labour representatives was sacrificed continually to any majority in its caucus, has left us in a worse constitutional plight than ever.

THE FIGHT FOR THE CONSTITUTION.

Naturally, the proposition that our Constitution shall lose its federal character, and this by means of a string of amendments, none of them constructive, whose whole

purpose and character is simply destructive, is by far the most important factor in our situation. New Parliaments, new Ministries, and new parties we can confront with some confidence, however extreme the doctrines they embody or the transformations they portend. But the acceptance of a new Constitution, suddenly taking the place of that under which we have been working for a dozen years – which we can still amend wherever and whenever necessary – means the taking of a decisive step into the dark that cannot be retraced. It also implies the introduction of a system of centralised legislation, which ultimately must prove fatal to the whole of our State Governments, their legislation, their administration, and their developmental activity. Among the great daily newspapers of this Continent only one, *The Age*, and that endorsing only two of the six amendments demanded by the Caucus, has spoken, and that timidly, in favour of these demands. The chorus of our Press, always excepting the hopelessly and fanatically partisan Labour journals, has been wholly adverse to the proposed revolution. The final figures are not yet ascertained but we are already close enough to realise that the change since 1910 is critical, if not fatal. The political drilling persisted in by the Labour Leagues ever since the Referendum vote has been marvellously successful. The mass of Labour followers, unable to appreciate the true gravity of the propositions or the safeguards of liberty and legislation involved, are quite content to see these reduced to wreckage by a central Legislature capable of being captured at any General Election by a specious party cry. By far the most serious feature of the situation is the recklessness with which the bidding of their leaders has been obeyed by the rank and file, many of whom have dreaded the effect of their votes. Fortunately, this State is once more leading the Commonwealth so boldly that we are beginning to be confident that, after all, our Constitution will be preserved to us on the final count, though, perhaps, by a narrow majority.

DEADLOCK APPEARS IMMINENT.

On the other hand, in the political field the Federal Caucus Government, the authors of this root and branch assault, are reeling under a series of electoral reverses. Its majority in the Senate seems largely increasing, but its majority in the House of Representatives has disappeared, and with it the possibility of its continuing in office. It is being said that its successors will find themselves in precisely the same hopeless plight. The Senate, being three-fourths Labour, will hold one key of our Federal Legislature. The House will hold the other. No Acts can be passed without the consent of both. All that the Liberals will obtain, when they become advisers of the Crown, will be a power of administration, and for a short season. They cannot count upon any supplies being accorded to them if, as will probably be the case, it appears to be the interest of the Labour organisations to force another appeal to the people without delay. If they should now obtain a popular sanction to the Referenda

they would doubtless endeavour to insist upon immediate advantage being taken of those drastic powers by which they can exercise the new and fundamental authority of the Commonwealth over the whole range of State affairs and interests. To resist these demands would be unpopular with all the classes affected. Their members would angrily insist upon immediate experiments under any extended supremacy of the Legislature, which will cease to be Federal and Liberal in the exact proportion that it becomes centralised and omnipotent. Quite apart from this contingency, what support a Liberal Government can hope for with perhaps only a majority of one in the popular Chamber and no majority at all in the Senate is already a matter of speculation. This complication is not likely to arouse much enthusiasm among their voters, many of whom lately refused to exercise their rights of citizenship at the ballot-box unless they were motored to the polling booth at the hour most convenient to them. But to dwell upon a future so uncertain at the present premature stage, with both the Referenda and the election results uncertain, would be unwise. We shall have to face the facts as soon as we know them. A deadlock between the two Houses seems imminent. How it can be solved is a problem of the early future. In the meantime we find a situation precarious to Liberals if they endeavour to escape from a "stale-mate" on the political chessboard. There are prospects of a hazardous siege, in which those in possession of the Parliamentary citadel can soon be financially starved into a desperate sally against their besiegers. No such problem has hitherto confronted either the Liberal or Labour Party. In New South Wales we have done our duty and done it well, both in refusing the Referenda and defeating the Caucus, but only Tasmania appears beside us: Queensland, South Australia, and the Western State are failing to support us. Victoria, though doing well in adverse circumstances, has also fallen short of our hopes. The Liberal Press, capable and well informed, has proved less effective than ever. It cannot claim much credit in any State. In fact, the utterly one-sided and unreliable partisan papers published by and for the Labour electors, though not comparable for a moment to their Liberal rivals either in breadth of view, fairness in handling facts, or in putting both sides of the case before their readers, obviously exercise a greater influence upon them, probably because they appeal to class self-interest, and that alone.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

POSITION OF RIVAL PARTIES.

THE NEW MINISTRY.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Jun. 25 1913; Aug. 11 1913.

As already explained the adult population of Australia has very good grounds for an indictment of the amended form in which the Electoral Law of the Commonwealth has been shaped by the Fisher Government. Among other things it appears to have fostered what looks like illegitimate voting, dual and triple, on a considerable scale. This abuse calls at once for searching inquiry. In addition, as a consequence of extensions of absent voting throughout the whole Commonwealth, the chief returning officer in each constituency after polling day has had transmitted to him, intermittently, batches of votes from all parts of the Continent. These arriving irregularly have been rapidly altering the totals, and with them the prospects of some well-known public men day after day. The first seeks totals gradually sufficed to make plain the return of four-fifths of the candidates. Interest in the fortunes of the remainder was then revived and enormously quickened as it became evident that after all the fate of the Government and its policy were hanging in the balance. Day after day, for three long weeks, the absent votes kept trickling in. The sporting section of our people, relatively larger than in almost any other country, followed with delighted interest the gains and losses that created an excitement which became keener and keener as the end approached. One by one the large Labour majority in the late House declined until the last constituency undecided was reached. So close were the Liberals then that upon it depended the fate of the Government and its party. The Senate was already practically in their hands, with a Caucus majority of over four to one. They required but one vote to secure a bare majority of the other House. Their candidate, Sir William Lyne, though not a member of the Caucus, carried its colours for a constituency that he had held, including the period which he served in our State Assembly, for over thirty years. The serious state of his health, which I deeply regret, confined him to a sick room here in Sydney during the whole of the struggle. Beaten by but one member the Labour Party will constitute a most formidable Opposition. But to-day the rule of the Commonwealth is in Mr. Cook's hands.

NEW FEDERAL PRIME MINISTER.

It is many years since our new Federal Prime Minister, then a young working miner, found a place in our State Legislative Assembly as an Independent Labour candidate. It was in the days before his comrades at Lithgow or our country dwellers had put themselves under any organised political control. When later his associates took the critical step of sacrificing their personal freedom for the sake of party effectiveness in the House, Mr. Cook declined to go with them. His courage and ability recommended him to an astute and able leader, now his **High Commissioner** of the Commonwealth, at that time fighting hard to hold the Premiership of New South Wales. He accomplished his purpose, though it appeared at first an impossible task, with the help of some colleagues, among whom Mr. Cook was prominent. One of the few mistakes his singularly able chief made years later, when he formed his first and only Commonwealth Ministry of 1904–5, was the omission of Mr. Cook. Nevertheless, it was into his hands, not long afterwards, that Sir George Reid resigned the leadership of the Opposition. This elevation brought him soon after into the second place in the Cabinet of the Liberal Coalition of 1909–10, in which he more than justified the hopes of his friends and the fears of his enemies. Although to-day Mr. Cook commences his reign with characteristic courage and caution, it must be confessed that the difficulties he has to encounter are of the gravest. These, begun with his choice of colleagues, multiply from the moment he meets Parliament, and will increase with every effort he makes to fulfil his programme. He takes office with a bare majority of one, that one, by help of his own vote, becoming Speaker. Unless the Speaker's vote be used for the purpose, Mr. Cook cannot carry a single division in a full House. The Labour members will be always in attendance, as usual, and so must the Ministerialists. The absence of any single supporter at any time owing to illness, to engagements in his constituency, or to a stroll for a few moments beyond the precincts of the House, can precipitate a defeat or force an adjournment.

OBLIGATION OF THE GOVERNMENT.

As already stated, the first obligation of the new Government to the country will be to investigate the extraordinary swelling of the current electoral rolls and the numerous alleged cases in which more than the single vote authorised to each elector has been cast and not in his own name. If rumour is correct, at least two or three seats are occupied by Caucus nominees, who obtained them in consequence of fraudulent votings. The Liberals cannot obtain a working majority, even in the House, unless they recover some of the lost constituencies. It is hard to see how they can accomplish this, or even obtain amendments of the existing Electoral Law. In any event they can do nothing without the assent of the Labour Opposition in the Senate. That

cannot be expected from its majority, especially if the charges of roll stuffing are fairly sustained. Consequently it is not too much to say that no Government in Australia has taken office under such grievous difficulties and numerous dangers, that no such Government can last, and that under existing conditions not even an appeal to the country is likely to result decisively in its favour. Unless the Senate as a whole can be forced to face a dissolution, as well as the House, the Cook Ministry will find itself helplessly and hopelessly “cabin’d, cribbed, confined” from its first hour its last.

NO SURPRISES.

The constitution of the new Commonwealth Cabinet contains no surprises. Five of the principal members had seats in the last Liberal Ministry. Those new to Federal office are Senator **McCull**, Mr. **W.H. Irvine**, and Mr. **Agar Wynne**, all of whom have had at some time experience as State Ministers in Victoria. The two honorary members, Senator **Clemons**, of Tasmania, and Mr. **W.H. Kelly**, of this State, who sits for a large Sydney constituency, are both of them excellent Parliamentary combatants. Undoubtedly, Mr. **W.H. Irvine**, one of the leaders of the Victorian Bar and a former Premier of his State, is the most conspicuous of the additions to the Government. Mr. **Bruce Smith**, another leading member of the legal profession in this State, is expected to be nominated for the Speakership. He was for some years the very capable colleague of Sir **Henry Parkes** in his last Administration. Apart from the significance of the personnel the new Cabinet, as just constituted, something may be gathered as to its policy from the distribution of offices among its members. Mr. Cook’s choice is crammed with significance. It expresses for the time being the first and most important elements in the political situation of the new Government. Hitherto, every Prime Minister who has taken charge of a Department, in addition to the inconsiderable departmental duties necessarily attaching to the head of the Government, has selected either External Affairs or the Treasury. The first of these now falls to Mr. **Glynn**, formerly Attorney-General, and the second to Sir **John Forrest**, who had occupied that post in two previous Administrations. Mr. Cook’s choice for himself, as Premier, is the Department Home Affairs, in which the amazing Mr. **O’Malley** has disported himself for the last three years to the mingled disgust and delight of the more responsible members of the Labour Party. It was upon officers of this department that the control of the late elections fell, and it is perfectly obvious that that control is now to be challenged in the most searching fashion. Over and above the matters of administration involved loom questions as to the character and effect of the amendments of the Electoral Law made under the late Labour Government. These the new Ministry can hardly hope to alter materially and yet secure their approval by the Labour majority in the Senate. But Mr. Cook may be able at least to put the case in favour of alterations before the public, and may thus

warn our electors and the electoral officers of the consequences if any abuses of the ballot can be sheeted home to them.

MILITARY AND NAVAL SERVICES.

The next most significant selection of a Ministerial office is that which put Senator **Millen** at the head of the Department of Defence. In the first place the choice of a Senator implies indirectly an acceptance of the doctrine that the military and naval services are to be dealt with as far as possible above party considerations. The Liberals during the last Parliament adopted and maintained this attitude. They will naturally expect their opponents to abide by these weighty precedents.

In the next place the contrast between the Ministers implies a probable change in the policy of administration. Senator **Pearce** has done admirably on the whole during the development of his predecessor's proposals, because he is by nature receptive and passive, amiable and trustful. His reputation implies that he has followed his professional advisors too uncritically. Senator **Millen**, who succeeds him, besides being the best Opposition speaker and ablest tactician in the Senate is a man of strong character and independent judgment. If time permits he will probably leave this Department on a very different footing to that on which he finds it. Even if he spends as freely as his predecessor he is likely to obtain better value for the money the Treasury can spare him. He is a keen and resourceful man of business, and this, with all his good qualities, his predecessor was not. So far as the general public can judge, besides the Electoral Department the administration of at least three of our most important departments calls for decisive alteration. The Post Office in particular is fertile in complaints, though External Affairs under Mr. **Thomas**, and the Customs Department in several of their principal branches have occasioned great dissatisfaction. Unquestionably there are better prospects now in all three if only the new Ministers can obtain a fair trial. The prospects of this are certainly not inspiring. Yet Mr. **Frazer**, Mr. **Thomas**, and Mr. **Tudor**, so far as the public are concerned, have made no mark despite the splendid opportunities afforded them during the last three years. Put behind them are ranked Labour members who, except in trifling matters, are never critical even of the abuses of their comrades, though inexhaustible in philippics against their adversaries with or without reason. This unhappy tendency will probably be quite unchecked in the new Parliament, where the two parties must come to grips very shortly. Under these unfortunate circumstances the new Ministers, or those who have won their spurs, sustained by a merely nominal majority, including several independent supporters, are likely to have to meet rougher seas and more frequent risks than any Federal Cabinet of the Commonwealth since its inauguration twelve years ago.

THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH.

WEAKNESS OF THE NEW MINISTRY. POSITION OF RIVAL PARTIES.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Jul. 15 1913; Aug. 20 1913.

Australia's national politics were never as keenly interesting or more complex than they are to-day. The whole situation is so perilously precarious, that all prophecy is at a discount. The new Parliament has met. The new Ministry has carried the election of its new Speaker, Mr. Johnson, and its new Chairman of Committees, Mr. Fowler, though if pressed to a division it must have relied upon its bare majority of one to put Mr. Johnson in the Chair. It would have scored only a tie for Mr. Fowler if he had not been fortunate enough to see a pair of his Labour adversaries arrive just five minutes too late to take part in the division. Mr. Cook cannot always expect such good luck, and yet it is hard to see what else he has to rely upon. His nominee for the Speakership was Mr. Bruce Smith, one of the most conspicuous representatives of this State, whose experience in Ministerial office dates back to the days of Sir Henry Parkes. His fitness for this position was incontestable, particularly because his dignity and judicial manner would have exactly fitted the Chair. Why he should have preferred to stand down remains a puzzle. No doubt Mr. Johnson, who was an excellent Deputy Chairman of the Committee of the House, will justify the choice of the party. He, too, represents a Sydney constituency, and his elevation is decidedly welcome in this State. But, on the other hand, an even more significant incident has arisen in the Senate, where its President, a Labour member, has been elected without challenge. His nominator was Senator McGregor, who having led this Chamber for the late Labour Ministry for three years obviously intends to lead it still, having now an overwhelming majority behind him. The Chairman of the Senate Committee was nominated in the same fashion, Senator O'Keefe being re-elected to the post without a division. The new President, Mr. Givens, of Queensland, obtains his high office by direction of the Labour Caucus, which, purely for reasons of its own, has dispossessed its former nominee, Senator Turley, although he had filled the post to the satisfaction of both parties. There is no pretence that the new Liberal Ministry or its policy will be recognised except in mere formalities in the Senate of the Commonwealth as at present constituted.

CANNOT "KEEP A HOUSE".

So much being clear, the critical position of the incoming Government leaps to the eye. It commences its career without inheriting and without ability to acquire any legislative power whatever. In the Senate there are but seven Liberal members, including two Ministers. The twenty-nine other Senators are all members of the Labour Caucus and will act as one man under party instructions. The Government cannot even "keep a House", cannot even secure a meeting of the Senate, except at the pleasure of the Caucus, and cannot maintain it a moment longer than the Opposition pleases. These conditions render nil legislation entirely subject to its pleasure. In the House itself the position must always remain critical. When the Ministerialists are in their full strength they will only equal the Labour total. They can rely only upon the casting vote of the Speaker. The illness or absence of any single supporter of the Government, unless paired at once, leaves it in a minority. Pairs are sure to be refused save under exceptional circumstances. In Committee, unless the Speaker attends and votes, the Caucus will "rule the roost". Even then the Government can only win by the casting vote of the Chairman. The situation is simply impossible. Gilbert and Sullivan alone could have dealt with it as it deserves. If the impossible does happen, for a time it will mean that, for reasons unstated and yet to be explored, the Caucus prefers to prolong the present Parliamentary extravaganza. The one-day sitting held last week means nothing. To refuse supplies would have suspended public payments and injured those responsible for it. The outbreaks anticipated by the timorous did not occur because the Opposition wisely kept its fires banked in both Chambers. What will happen after the adjournment will depend on future developments.

MEMORABLE ACTIONS.

The few days for which Mr. Cook and his colleagues have held office have already witnessed some memorable actions. According to promise all "preference to Unionists" over their fellow employees outside the Unions has been abolished in Government appointments. As that very issue is responsible now for several seriously threatening strikes in Victoria and elsewhere the consequences are certain to be serious. The Labour Caucus, however much it may prolong the interval between the recent election and that already in sight, dare not hesitate to insist upon this the very first of all its commandments. It is the basis of its hopes for the future control of all the Legislatures of Australia by the banded Unionists of the Labour Leagues acting at the bidding of its Caucus. The industrial issue is at once forced to the fore. As it stood the ukase of the late Minister responsible for nearly all the Commonwealth appointments in Australia did not in words require the choice of Unionist labourers

quite irrespective of their qualifications, though there is reason to believe that this has been the practice so far as he could shape it. The further belief is that competent and incompetent employees alike have been allowed to take a very generous reading of their obligations to their amiable Government employers so as to preserve themselves from all risks of overwork or undue pressure. If the one-day sitting of the new Parliament had been preceded instead of succeeded by this announcement it would not have closed so promptly or peaceably. As it is the war-whoops of the Unionists or of those who are playing up to the Unionists are already painfully audible. They recognise that this declaration of attitude on the part of the Cabinet is equivalent to a direct defiance of their organisation and its policy of aggressive Socialism with a communistic goal. It is but the forerunner of other important developments of the same or a similar nature which will constitute the Federal fighting platform for the coming election already well in view, though both parties are rather reluctant to admit it. Neither desires to appear to force the pace. Both Government and Caucus desire to pose as the victims of circumstance. Each wishes the other to force the campaign. Sweeping alterations in the administration of the Post Office are being broadly outlined. The one department in respect of which there is a profound silence is the Customs. It is true that the Labour Party, according to the versatile Mr. Hughes, himself in principle a free importer, is absolutely pledged to increased Customs duties. It is also true that the new Minister for Customs, Mr. Groom, is a sincere and consistent Protectionist, though his chief and most of his colleagues desire this critical issue to be dealt with non-politically. The sufficient answer to this riddle has not yet been found.

FACING A DEADLOCK.

Quite apart, from the numerous matters of policy on which our recently-elected members are at variance stands the unprecedented position of Parliament. The Senate is, and will remain, obstinately and aggressively Labour in policy under all circumstances and at all times. The House of Representatives for the time being is Liberal, and while its majority of one remains will cling as pertinaciously to its political creed as its opponents. Of course, its members differ openly among themselves upon a number of issues. This does not prevent them from acting as one man upon those lately submitted to the country. If presently defeated upon any of these, it seems certain that Mr. Cook will seek a dissolution. Whether he will get it remains to be seen. We shall be facing a deadlock. Much depends upon the circumstances. Then the voting in the Referenda by the electors was most uncomfortably close. It is evident that the same issues must be submitted again. Probably the Liberals may define their own proposals for constitutional amendments and endeavour to get them sent to the country. In the face of the Labour majority in

the Senate this course seems certain to secure their rejection. It must be remembered that if the same amendment were again endorsed by the House in another session a new situation would be created. The Liberals would then have every right under the Constitution to face the situation by asking for the remission of their amendments to the people, and would probably obtain it. However hopeless their position in the Senate, they are strong enough to accomplish this, though with a House majority so slight the adventure appears to be possibly beyond their strength. It would suit them far better if they could stake their fortunes upon some other Bill embodying a cardinal principle of their policy. This if twice rejected by the Senate would entitle the Government to ask for a double dissolution. In the circumstances it is far the most promising road for the new Ministry to take. Indeed, the existing conditions are so obviously intolerable that there is no other means anything like so tempting as an escape from them. The crucial question is whether a majority of one can carry a measure so important that its rejection would justify a double dissolution. No doubt the fiercest resistance, and a resort to the extremest of extreme measures possible must be anticipated from the Caucus and all its agencies in such a crucial crisis. On the other hand, it is quite possible that, with its absolute command of the Senate, it may pass once more the constitutional amendment lately negated by the Referendum, and upon their rejection by the majority of one in the House may then exercise the Senate's right of sending them once more direct to the electors. Indeed, many things are for the first time possible in our Legislature which until now have been practically impossible.

ECONOMY TO TAKE A BACK SEAT.

To visualise the extraordinary situation in our Federal politics it is necessary to keep constantly in view the instability of our new Cabinet, balanced to some extent by the apparent anxiety of the Caucus to avoid another early dissolution, and especially the double dissolution. Thus might possibly lay the axe at the root of the tree of their supremacy. For reasons which they are extremely careful to conceal, Labour does not relish the prospect of another appeal to the people while the electoral machinery is in other hands. As already pointed out in the columns of the *Morning Post*, the possible revelations of recent electoral irregularities seem to be especially dreaded. The one outcome of the sitting, at which it was easy for the Labour leaders to challenge the investigations of the Government, resulted in its prompt agreement to allow the appointment of scrutineers by candidates, in whose presence the returning officers would examine the ballot papers. Liberals are confident that the result will be astonishing. In the meantime a great deal has been happening which cannot be commented upon at present. The surprising carelessness with which an invasion of small-pox has been permitted in this city, leading to its temporary isolation, at great

cost and with many vexatious consequences, is still, naturally, the occasion of great anxiety and alarm. The retirement of Mr. McGowen to a secondary office and the début as Premier of Mr. Holman, whose visit to London will have acquainted the English public with his abilities, are events of much significance. At the same time Mr. Beeby has publicly launched his third party with a motley but not inconsiderable following, while within the Liberal ranks there is a threatened organisation of a strictly country party, balancing to some extent another disruptive proposition that the Trade Unions and their members alone should shape and uphold the future policy of the Labour Leagues all over the Commonwealth. The Holman programme is one of energetic local development almost regardless of cost. His boasts relate to increases of expenditure. This State is sought to be dazzled by ambitious developmental prospects. Economy is to take a back seat. There is no surprise in this revival of an old political gospel, having regard to the real need of large outlays by our Governments in consequence of the discouragements to private enterprise in many directions, though, happily, not in all. Still, in the meantime the new Federal Ministry, with its investigations into the recent voting for its new Parliament and the policy it is now shaping, obviously for the time being practically surpass, if they do not exclude, all other public interests.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

POSITION OF RIVAL PARTIES. DIFFICULTIES OF THE COOK CABINET.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Aug. 6 1913; Sep. 11 1913.

Australia must perforce abide the evolution of the situation created by the return of its obviously unstable Parliament. In the meantime the approaching arrival of the Commonwealth flagship and her cruiser consort, the, is eagerly awaited by our Metropolis, and indeed, by all our people. These vessels not only convey to us a Royal message of congratulation, but appeal directly both to our Imperial and to our territorial sentiments of patriotism and union. They mark for us in the most conspicuous manner the beginning of a new national era, of a new outlook, and of a new confidence in the combined powers of our far-spreading nation. Even if these warships never fire a single hostile shell their mere presence on our coasts marks the opening of a new chapter in the story of this Continent, and probably in the glorious records of the Empire as a whole. To keep it whole and to develop it in peace are the supreme obligations of our present generation, born under the British Flag. We are proud to be the first of the Dominions (including New Zealand, as we must, in this relation) which is frankly facing its responsibilities and beginning to cope with them both by sea and land, so far as its present population can. Of course, almost all our northern and western coasts remain practically either unsettled or undefended, or both.

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY.

The problem of the Northern Territory becomes increasingly complex the closer it is studied. There is more than one open and unguarded bay and more than one problem at the sea mouth of every considerable river in these regions, as yet so sparsely peopled and imperfectly prospected. The preparations for settlement, such as they were, made by the late Ministry, possibly with the best intentions, do not at all come up to expectation. The Naval Dockyard in our own harbour here has had work suspended for a time in the machinery of one of its important sections. The preparations at Jervis Bay are also suspect. Neither here nor elsewhere do the results

of a lavish expenditure appear commensurate with the outlay. Senator *Pearce*, in the Defence Department, seems to have been a docile administrator with excellent intentions. So far as Mr. *O'Malley* was concerned, there seems to have been no docility except towards men upon whose votes he might have to rely. His intentions were principally political, no matter what the undertakings he was carrying out. It remains to be seen how many more disclosures will follow the searching investigations of the new Defence Minister, Senator *Millen*. His aims are efficiency and economy. In the meantime, whatever doubts exist as to our naval and military organisations, we are at last coming to close grips with actual service problems. As the *Morning Post* aptly points out, the basis of an Imperial Pacific naval force has at last been established. Thus the policy of the Liberal Government of 1909 has been confirmed and acted upon. Its expansion by the late Labour Ministry is tentatively endorsed under advice from the Admiralty. Happily on these, as upon military issues, both of momentous importance, there is no real division of opinion in this country. The flag of the Royal Australian Navy will fly at the masthead of his Majesty's flagship in our future squadron. It flies to-day on the *Australia*, which will soon be welcomed in Sydney Harbour with patriotic enthusiasm as the first instalment of the first Dominion Fleet of the British Empire.

THE INTER-STATE COMMISSION.

The *Cook* Cabinet is diligently engaged in framing measures – which it cannot pass – and preparing reforms – that can only be carried out to a limited extent administratively. The sanction of the electors must be sought before there can be any legislative new departures. Its appointment of the Inter-State Commission shuts the door upon Mr. *Hughes*, and places Mr. *Piddington*, K.C., his recent nominee for a Federal Judgeship, in the Chair. Mr. *Lockyer*, the head of the Customs Department, and Mr. *Swinburne*, a former Minister and present member of the Victorian Legislature, are his colleagues upon this important tribunal. Pressed for in the first years of our federation by the earliest Federal Government, and from time to time demanded in vain from the Fisher Government during its three years of office, the measure authorising its establishment was only passed at the very end of the last session. Apparently, the object was to provide for the late Attorney-General, supported by a Labour Senator and a Liberal lawyer, the latter always in a minority. But when the appeal to the country was close at hand it became evident that the coming contest was likely to be close, and consequently Mr. Hughes, much against his will, was compelled to remain in the fighting line though never dreaming the Caucus could be defeated. The first issues to be referred to the Commission will be fiscal, and, so far as can be judged, the new body will commence with no pronounced opinions on this vital matter. Its instructions will be to advise such amendments

as will place our Customs duties upon a business basis. For this purpose it must maintain a continuous examination of our import trade and the effect of the duties levied. These will be its first and most politically interesting duties, though, in time they must be largely overshadowed by the great issues arising out of endeavours to use the water supplies of the continent, particularly those of the South, to most advantage, and also to unite the various railway systems so as to obtain the best national results. Beyond these imposing obligations, lie a number of others of high practical importance, though not of the same public appeal. If the Commission had been brought into existence under the first Federal Ministry, as proposed, it might have saved the Commonwealth large sums of money, have alleviated the acrimony of fiscal strife, and have hastened the development of our great resources, especially those of the interior. It comes late, but it is to be hoped not too late to accomplish its great tasks.

WAYS AND MEANS.

The real problem confronting Mr. Cook is how and when to get to the country. All his preparations have that end in view. But in the meantime the investigations into the suspected abuses of the recent General Election are being pressed on. The first researches been formally made into the rolls and the marking off of the voters. So far they point to duplications and impersonations only on a minor scale and not sufficient to affect large results. The total number of votes polled still appears abnormal in a number of instances, but beyond this nothing definite has been elicited as to the causes of the excess. Then, again, Ministers are particularly active in studying from the inside the management of the departments by their predecessors. Here, too, though there are piquant instances of blunders and abuses already unearthed, the crop of revelations is not so far at all startling. Possibly others are being reserved for display on the floor of the House, where animated exchanges are anticipated and for which surprises are being prepared. The one thing certain is that a great deal of energy is being expended by the new Government in mastering the meaning of the hitherto unexplained new departures authorised by Mr. Fisher and his colleagues, apparently to please their following and propitiate its leaders. For the results of all this stir we must wait in patience. Meanwhile the optimistic tendencies of most Australians lead them to the comfortable conclusion that all can yet be put right and with little pains. Is not the revenue of the Federal Treasurer nearly £22,000,000, and is not that the high-water mark of our receipts? What the surplus to our credit actually is, after making fair allowance for expenses incurred, is not yet quite clear. These may be subjects for keen debate. Financial affairs promise to receive more attention, not only because Mr. Fisher's lavish spendings are certain to be challenged, but because "money is scarce" and threatens to be scarcer. It can only be captured with higher

rates. Considered continentally, the question of ways and means appears likely to receive much closer attention than it has obtained since the Labour Ministry held the purse.

UNPRECEDENTED GAGGING.

Apparently acting upon a concerted scheme the Labour Opposition of Senators and Representatives appears to have been placed as a whole under a constraint to which they are all individually unaccustomed. Their public utterances have been few and as a rule vague or vapid. It is obvious to everyone that a restraint has been imposed upon them with exceptional authority. What they do say in public is either of little moment or limited to some very narrow grievance. Not one of the Labour leaders or even one of its prominent spokesmen has said anything worth hearing. They have received abundance of public provocation, always polite, but occasionally stinging, but have met it with the fortitude of martyrs, or, at all events, with a padlock upon their tongues. Their customary methods, whether of attack or defence, with their still more familiar verbosity and reckless impeachments of everyone outside their particular fold, are all tabooed for the time – and this to the amazement of all beholders. Until Parliament resumes its sittings we seem likely to witness a continuance of this unprecedented gagging of the whole party, and to some extent even of its Press, which, particularly in this State, is in a condition of fierce exasperation owing to its quite unexpected defeat. The decease of Sir [William Lyne](#) was not unforeseen. Ever since his nomination was followed by a letter from him intimating that he could no longer visit his old constituency, much less take the platform in support of his allies, it was inferred that his recovery was practically impossible. The great compliment of a re-election under such circumstances was very nearly paid to him, despite the fact that his opponent was both capable and popular. His victory would have kept Labour in office. His passing deprives us of probably the most striking political figure in this State and the Labour Party of its warmest ally. His silence of late was not at all of his own choice or in obedience to the tactics pursued by his Labour comrades, to whose policy he gave a conditional and qualified support. It was wholly due to illness. There is now no member of either Chamber of the Federal Parliament coming under the Labour banner who is not pledged up to the hilt to obey the Caucus blindly, even if this involves the forfeiture of some of his own convictions or of any qualifications of these which his practical experience has forced upon him. Their majority is extremist both in aims and methods; their minority is dragged behind the majority no matter what sacrifice of judgment and conscience this may involve for them. The recent polling is notable, therefore, as a sign of the times, since it marks the decisive and apparently final exclusion from the Caucus forces of every man who is not absolutely and wholly at its bidding.

SECOND CHAMBERS.

To draw a rough parallel between the Parliamentary revolution now culminating in the Mother Country and that all but achieved by the recent Referendum in the Commonwealth would be relatively easy. Our Second Chambers are diminishing rapidly in authority, though it is the threatened destruction of the Federal principle, which with us is by far the gravest outcome of the ruthless tactics of Labour. But in respect of our State Governments, whose spheres ought to be growing in importance rapidly year by year, the weakening of their influence and their confusion of principles are reducing them to lower stages step by step. The series of involutions by which Mr. **Holman** has taken the place of Mr. **McGowen** as Premier and the indifference with which any Constitutional precedent is set aside off-hand by his majority without discrimination or compunction, are unfortunate illustrations of the political demoralisation of Labour methods. The deficit of a million and a half confronting us in this State tells once more the tale of Labour extravagance, now too familiar, from Perth to Sydney. Mr. **Watt** in Victoria returns from a fairly successful borrowing visit to London to find his supporters hopelessly divided by personal ambitions and internal party disputes. The members in insurrection are actuated in part by differing readings of the necessities of the situation and also by pitiful personal ambitions. So far Mr. **Watt**'s handling of the crisis has been bold and firm, though unhappily lacking at times in dignity owing to his taste and ability for recrimination, even when untimely and laying him open to effective retorts. In Queensland, though the party positions are different, the **Denham** Cabinet and its following battle rather ineffectively with the local Caucus. Their one achievement is the transfer of the control of the sugar industry from the Commonwealth to the State. This experiment ought to be made successful, and may yet be despite the Labour antagonism to such a stride towards a wise decentralisation of administration. In South Australia the business of the State proceeds in a more orderly fashion than in most. Tasmania is its rival in decorum and in practicality, partly because in both the area under control is relatively circumscribed. In both economy and discipline tend to prevail despite the perpetual insurrections, large or small, which are as the breath of life to the Labour forces, always exulting in guerrilla warfare against the equities and efficiencies of stable government.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

MINISTRY'S MAJORITY OF ONE. THE LABOUR CAUCUS.

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Aug. 26 1913; Oct. 13 1913.

Our Federal Parliament to-day unquestionably overshadows all the Legislatures of all our States. Limited by the precise terms of its constitution, against which the Labour organisations 1910 are maintaining a perpetual crusade, the great extent of the sway already exercised more than compensates for these restrictions. Then, again, the party now in possession of the Australian Treasury benches (and practically of nothing more) is also united in its desire to increase the number and extent of the powers possessed by the National Government. True its demands fall short of the indiscriminating transfers of authority demanded by the Labour legions, but still even these would add immensely to the authority of the Commonwealth. They, at least, are certain to be authorised within a year or two. If not, the radical programme of Mr. Fisher's following will be carried, with all its far more sweeping amendments. In that event the enfeebled States will be thrust still farther into the background. Their Legislatures will become relatively much less important than those of the States in America. The authority of our Central Government will be far greater than that exercised from Washington. In any event the character of our Federal Constitution must soon be materially transformed. It may cease to be Federal in the original sense of that very elastic word. What our individual, State Legislatures do will affect little. Everything that matters, will be decided authoritatively at Canberra. It will become "the capital" city, though only peopled by public servants, and for a long period unable to maintain a Press comparable to that of any of our State capitals. The heart, and probably the brain of Australia's political life will be found there. Meanwhile the paramount issue at present before us is whether our Constitution shall be recast by our Liberals upon its present Federal lines, but in a larger mould, or whether it shall place almost unrestricted authority in the hands of Labour, or rather its secret Caucus and conferences acting through their obedient delegates to the Senate and House of Representatives. From 1910 to 1913 we have been under their yoke, and are beginning to realise its mischiefs. As it is, a majority of but one vote in the popular Chamber preserves the Cook Ministry from instant dismissal. In the Senate

its representatives, like Wordsworth's little cottage child, can merely continue to repeat "We are seven". The Opposition there being more than four times as strong has the business of that Chamber entirely in its own hands. No such situation as this transformation produces has been witnessed since Heir Apparent his Majesty King George V. inaugurated the Federal Union of all the Australian States in 1901. Indeed, taking all the circumstances into account, and remembering that in the House parties are all but equal, it would be hard to parallel anywhere.

GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENT OF POLICY.

The respite granted to Mr. Cook and his colleagues after they had met the House was of the briefest, but it sufficed to enable them to prepare and submit a clear statement of policy. This took the place of the usual speech read by the **Governor-General**, differing only in its directness and its larger supply of details. An omission which seems to have escaped attention is the absence of any statement relating to our Universal Service Scheme now in active operation all over Australia. The real significance of the curious silence on this critical question is that both parties endorse the principles now in force. The present scheme indeed varies only in minor details from that adopted in 1909 by the Government displaced in 1910. It has been of necessity developed in detail but not altered. Under such circumstances the silence of the new Ministry is more impressive than any paragraph that it could have added. On naval defence there are evidently some possible departures from the existing scheme already in view. A conference with the Imperial authorities on the present incomplete programme, is definitely suggested. The manner in which our Fitzroy Dock plant has been permitted to wear out, and the unsatisfactory conditions existing at such bases as Cockburn Sound, Western Australia, and Westernport in Victoria, are alluded to in such a manner as distinctly to imply a censure upon the late Administration. Another censure is directly conveyed by the very first paragraph of Mr. Cook's statement, which relates to our electoral law and the need for considerable amendments both in it and in its administration. Apart from abuses of the gravest character in the actual conduct of the elections, referred to in two previous letters, the new Government propose to restore the postal vote to the sick or infirm, to place effective checks upon the abuses lately discovered in connection with the votes of those absent from their districts on polling day, and to withdraw the insistence upon the signing of all articles in the Press dealing with political matters after the issue of the writs and until the final results are published. Other alterations of policy of less moment are also projected, but since the Labour Senators are absolute masters of the situation in their own House there is not the slightest prospect of any Ministerial amendments being accepted if they seem likely to reduce the vote polling under Labour mandates. This proposal of course is an aggravation in itself, and a serious one, too. But it is

not as exasperating to the Caucus as the declaration which follows protesting against any preference to Unionists, as such, and proposing to withdraw the power to deal with rural workers hitherto possessed by Mr. Justice Higgins. As President of the Arbitration Courts he is called upon to deal with the many industrial problems arising out of employment or unemployment. In addition there is a Ministerial declaration against preference or favouritism in the Public Service, which will be anything but acceptable to Labour employees.

FISCAL POLICY.

Mr. Cook's formal acceptance of the Protectionist policy already in force does not really take the issue much further. The amendments demanded in Victoria were consistently refused by the Fisher Cabinet during its three years in office. As a consequence its members were attacked for their inaction during the recent election with so much severity that, though it was too late to call a caucus, a hurried appeal by letters and telegrams was made to Labour candidates in order to enable them to change their fiscal coats and to recover lost ground. This probably saved Labour several seats and certainly larger votes for its nominees at the eleventh hour. Mr. Cook still declares that his Government will "maintain the accepted protective policy", obtain recommendations from new Inter-State Commission as to its amendment, and in the meantime deal with existing anomalies in the tariff – this, apparently, without waiting for the Commission. Earnest attention is being given to the reciprocity proposals from New Zealand and Canada in particular, and will be given to the increase of our trade with the Mother Country. Once more co-operation with the States in furthering immigration and the taking over of the State public debts promised special attention. The transfer of the management of the Post Office to three Commissioners is formally submitted, together with a number of practical proposals intended to relieve an already overburdened Legislature. The last, but by no means the least, of the reformations outlined by the Cabinet are those which, if carried, will potently affect the Commonwealth Bank. Its Gold Reserve, lately lowered by the Fisher Government, is to be restored to its former amount, and the State Savings Banks are not to be fought on their own field, as authorised by the late Administration. In point of fact, the policy of the present Governor of the Bank is to be reversed if Mr. Cook obtains his ends. Whether he will be able to do so is to say the least, very uncertain. His policy is plain: militant upon matters vital to the Caucus, practical in essentials, and tactful as regards Protection. It cannot be said that the manner in which the House has met its crisis is worthy either of the national interests affected or of those responsible to the country. Judged either by "Hansard" or the Press reports, Mr. Fisher and even Mr. Hughes, as well as lesser lights, have failed to rise to the occasion. The debate so far as they are concerned has been, and

will continue to be, a mere wrangle. In the disorder the ex-Speaker, Mr. McDonald, has been unfortunately one of the conspicuous. The Prime Minister, Mr. Cook, in his reply, was lucid and practical, though evidently too susceptible to offence. His colleagues assisted to make out a good case for their proposals and to put some of their predecessors, notably Mr. Tudor and Mr. Frazer, in the pillory. But, taking the debate as a whole, and allowing for the sincere and sensible manner in which the new men returned to support the new Ministry deported themselves, the total impression is not favourable. The Opposition is bitter because bitterly disappointed; the Ministerialists are angered because their prospects of maintaining their hold on the Legislature are very problematical. The National Parliament has rarely been seen to less advantage.

UNCERTAINTY OF THE SITUATION.

The uncertainty of the future oppresses all concerned. No way out is visible. Yet an interjection of the Prime Minister put the situation in a nutshell. A diffuse member of the Opposition feeling himself in need of a point challenged him to go to the country at once. Mr. Cook's retort went direct to the heart of the present situation: "Yes! If you make it a double dissolution", was his curt reply. With its overmastering supremacy in the Senate the Labour Caucus can afford to pose as indifferent to all developments in the House of Representatives. It holds the key to all legislation practically for six years to come. But the Constitution allows either Chamber to force an appeal to the other. The Senate can obtain a Referendum upon its measures if rejected by the House. The House can coerce a Senate which refuses its measures by securing a double dissolution. It is possible, but not at present probable, that the Government will be able to obtain such an appeal to the people to reconstitute the whole Parliament. But with a majority of only one vote, and that the vote of the Speaker, this hardly appears possible. The absence of a single supporter may at any moment lead to a Ministerial defeat. The Whips must live "on tenterhooks", having that possibility always before them. Were it not for the momentous issues at stake such a situation would possess many temptations for a theatrical burlesque writer.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

In Sydney we still lie under the shadow of the epidemic, always being suppressed and always breaking out afresh with a few more cases requiring treatment. We still cherish high hopes that Sydney will be able to offer the first public welcome to the *Australia* though we shall be hard pressed to make it more successful than that just accorded to her in Cape Colony. Meanwhile we have a real crisis looming before

us, not so much due to the want of confidence motion launched by Mr. Wade as to the fact that our present House must go to the country before the year closes. Naturally our State Opposition is only too anxious to take advantage of every opportunity to harass the new Premier, Mr. Holman. He on his part is making desperate efforts to frame a policy which shall enable him to become master of our Assembly. He has just returned from a week-end visit to Melbourne in the course of which Mr. Watt and himself have arrived at agreements upon quite a number of practical issues. If this meant that they will be put into effect within a reasonable time both Ministers would win, and deservedly win, applause and prestige. What our State Labour Caucus thinks of these propositions, and what chance there is of our Opposition adopting them, are questions yet awaiting an answer. Despite his arts and graces and confessed political superiority to Mr. McGowen, who has retired to a portfolio under the new leader, Mr. Holman has less of the confidence of their following than the old stumbling and prosaic warrior whom all respect. He begins with a large deficit recklessly incurred, and yet is forced to face the electors with a rapidly increasing expenditure upon public works. Apparently in an attempt to avoid a new loan, a most extraordinary contract has been entered into with a local company, eight local members of which have invested £1 apiece, thus becoming local representatives of Norton, Griffiths, and Co., a powerful English firm, which has undertaken and successfully completed in various parts of the globe important works representing an outlay of many millions. The proposition is that the company here shall enable our Government to obtain £3,000,000 in London for the completion of three extensions of our railway system in addition to current works. Mr. Wade has challenged the Government to justify this undertaking, so that before the debate closes the transaction should be better understood than it is at present by the public at large. Apparently the aim is to increase employment and win country support at the approaching election. At least one of Mr. Holman's supporters has openly attacked the project, which is said to be unpopular with quite a number of members of the Caucus, whose constituencies will not benefit by the outlay. Probably these ebullitions will be suppressed, for whether Mr. McGowen gives way to Mr. Holman, or the latter surrenders in his turn to someone else, the iron rule of the Caucus majority will affect its purpose at any expense. No change of leadership or of policy can affect its solidarity, so that in fact "the more it changes the more it remains the same thing".

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARLIAMENTARY PARTY'S VISIT.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Sep. 12 1913; Oct. 29 1913.

The visit of the distinguished Parliamentary party from the Mother Country in response to our invitation was an assured success from its conception. There was not the least necessity for Sir Joseph Walton's apologetic tone on behalf of his comrades last week when addressing the three hundred members of our Chamber of Commerce, whose guests they were. He was absolutely justified in claiming that "the spirit underlying this visit was the essence of the whole situation". As a plain fact the welcomes tendered to our guests in every part of the Commonwealth yet visited have been characterised by the utmost cordiality. There has been no distinction made anywhere by the local hosts between the representatives of differing English parties. Neither has there been any visible line of demarcation between our Australian public men of all shades of opinion in respect to our Dominion politics. The welcome extended is that of the whole country, which feels itself honoured by its distinguished guests and looks to every one of them for assistance in drawing all parts of our Empire together. We anticipate, *inter alia*, invaluable aids to the development of our immense unutilised resources as they become better known. We hope for larger reinforcements of all the far scattered segments of our nation living under the Union Jack. This would enable us to grapple with the gigantic problems of settlement by means of proactive undertakings now before us, rapidly, and with steady aims. Nor must it be supposed that because these national business aspects, some of which were examined by the Royal Commission under Sir Edgar Vincent a few months ago, are of vital importance our strongest impetus proceeds from merely utilitarian aims. The warmth of feeling generated, to which we owe, first, the acceptance of our invitation, and, next, the success of the visit, arises first and most from a rekindled sense of kinship and of our undying ties of blood. Lord Emmott's allusions to the emigration problems affecting the Mother Country were cautiously guarded but judicious. Mr. Amery, M.P., touched lightly but effectively upon the scenic beauties and rich resources of Queensland and the northern portions of this State, through which he had just passed, without overlooking the practical considerations they suggested to him. It is in the frank conversational interchange of opinions and suggestions between our guests and our own people that public men, like Mr. Amery, already

in close touch with oversea problems in South Africa and Canada, and accustomed to watch their practical experiments, will reap the best results of their investigations into our antipodean conditions. Australians are not only convinced that this is one of the largest and richest countries of the world, but are more than content with the judgments formed by the body of capable, critical, and experienced British legislators who have done us the honour to visit and inspect some of our most accessible fruitful areas.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

It is not easy to curtail comments upon the visit of our kinsmen from the old land, full as this is of practical possibilities and appealing in so many ways to the "horse sense" of Anglo-Saxons everywhere. To turn to the political proceedings of our State Legislatures or those of the Commonwealth Parliament is to put aside for the moment a world of facts and acts of wide importance to criticise Legislative Chambers which might as well be in Lilliput as in Sydney or Melbourne for all that they are doing. We are making no real progress in either; we are solving no problems, but multiplying frictions; we are overwhelmed with talk, most of it merely for talking's sake. Of course it is to the electors as such that our members, Federal or State, are addressing themselves and in their own interest. Questions of sound policy or of practical progress are for the time being at a discount. Nothing is in view beyond and except two imminent General Elections. Mr. **Holman**, as Premier of this State, and Mr. **Wade**, as Leader of the Opposition, are preparing for a visit to the ballot-box, whose contents will put one or the other "in power". Into whose power it will place either the Federal or the State realm is another question, at present premature and by no means easy to answer. The preparations for our local contests in our Assembly seem so crude and reckless in character that the thoughtful business people of Sydney find themselves deafened by the riot and repelled by the tactics of both parties. Formerly some relief from local squabbles, and at times some light on national affairs, was obtainable from the National Parliament sitting in Melbourne. Unfortunately that occasional means of "light and leading" is not now available for public purposes. The situation in that sphere at this moment is just as desperate from a practical point of view as in our own feckless local Legislature. Legislation of any value seems impossible in either. Riot, recriminations, and a blockade of all real business fill to overflowing the political cup tendered to Mr. **Cook** by an Opposition which commands only one vote less than he can muster. He lives upon the vote of the **Speaker**: his majority sits in the Chair. In Western Australia the local Labour Administration has no political difficulties in the popular Chamber. It is the creature of a well-disciplined, Caucus-ruled majority. This made and maintains a Cabinet which can and does snap its fingers disdainfully even at unanswered exposures of its

blunders and extravagances, or its ever-increasing deficits and shamelessly partisan tactics. The Legislative Council is of very little avail, Mr. Scaddan acting as the nominated executive leader of a pledged partisan majority which is the real absolute master of all public affairs in the vast Western area of the Continent. Three out of the seven Legislatures of Australia being practically under Caucus coercion, remain in a helpless and hopeless position so far as the shaping of a wise and sound policy is concerned. In the remaining four States, Labour being in a minority, a reasonable progress is being steadily made, our neighbour Victoria leading the way.

AMENDING THE ELECTORAL LAW.

The Prime Minister and his colleagues have done well considering their majority of one and the fact that more than one supporter is deeply chagrined at not being offered office. They have defeated the vote of want of confidence so long spun out, but only by the Speaker's casting vote, diplomatically defended by him, since otherwise no business of any kind could be transacted by a just-elected Legislature. A vote of censure upon the Attorney-General for continuing to accept a retainer from the Marconi Company was also defeated by a single vote, without that of the Speaker, owing to the unexpected absence of a Labour member. These obstructions out of the way, Ministers promptly tabled their first measure of magnitude, amending the existing electoral law. This restores the postal voting, specially prized by mothers in country districts and meeting the natural necessities of our rural population. It also abolishes the requirements that all newspaper articles criticising candidates and policies should be signed by the writer. A third proposal, certain to evoke the angriest criticism, is that every voter should sign the butt of a numbered voting paper, producible thereafter only when necessary to enable fraudulent ballot-papers to be detected, and punishing those responsible for them. The same safeguard is to be applied to all absent voters. There appears but the smallest prospect of these reasonable preventives even passing the House, and none at all of their being accepted by the overwhelming majority for Labour in the Senate. All this Bill can accomplish is to distinguish the attitudes of the two parties and compel the Opposition to face its responsibilities. A resolute resistance of any such guarantees against electoral abuses may be taken for granted. A trifling little measure amending the Audit Act occupied a prominent place on Thursday and the whole of Friday's day sitting. Evidently the Government is to be compelled to fight every inch of its way, even upon matters of quite minor national interest. The Labour majority in the Senate makes all Liberal legislation impossible in that Chamber. Hence the chief object of the Caucus at present is to make the most of its chances of dallying with and delaying every Bill submitted to the House of Representatives. What it wants is time to replenish its funds and complete its preparations for the inevitable appeal to the country against

the existing situation. Even if it should lose seats in the House the Labour majority in the Senate, however reduced, cannot be annihilated. If these simple facts are borne in mind the throng of difficulties surrounding Mr. Cook and his colleagues becomes plain. The Opposition harasses them upon trifles and prolongs quibbles in order not to call too much attention to the despotic authority it enjoys through the Senate. Perhaps, too, this may be proved to be in large part due to the defective character of our existing electoral law, which was recast for party ends during Mr. Fisher's last term of office. In any case the situation in the Commonwealth Parliament today remains not only unaltered but unalterable. Ministers seem to be still hopefully seeking a way out, but their efforts appear to be all in vain.

REMEDIES RECOMMENDED.

The only remedy for the present deadlock which has been submitted has been through the columns of the *Melbourne Age*. After an analysis of the whole situation, intended to demonstrate the fruitlessness of a single or even a double dissolution in existing circumstances, the alternative recommended is that of an all-round Referendum to the whole of the electors. Six questions are suggested for their decision – restoration of the postal vote, preferential voting, preference to Unionists, the regulation of rural labour, effective tariff protection, and the adoption of the initiative and referendum. So far this wholesale suggestion has been little criticised. A revival of the Chinn case, due to the dismissal of that railway officer by the present Federal Government, has occasioned much interest, chiefly in respect to the constitution of the political tribunal before which his grievances are being considered. A Committee of the Senate of seven members, of which only one Senator was chosen from the Ministerial minority, has heard Mr. Chinn in his own defence. Mr. Deane the Chief Engineer of the Transcontinental Railway, who recommended his dismissal, has stated at length the numerous grounds upon which he took so serious a step. The Cook Cabinet has refused to find the funds for a visit to Western Australia by this militant Committee. It is anticipated that the Labour members concerned, to whose party Mr. Chinn belongs, will make the journey at their own expense, trusting to the next Labour Cabinet to reimburse them hereafter. A revival of the suggestion that a cession of New Caledonia should be sought, though formerly the New Hebrides was more in evidence in this relation, has led to a promise of inquiry into the possibilities by Mr. Glynn, the Minister for External Affairs. Previous endeavours have all been without result. The existing limited condominium in the New Hebrides and its tribunal do not appear to succeed. Though Papua, on the whole, affords promises of profitable development, the demand for extended powers of local self-government made on behalf of the white settlers has not met with much support.

LABOUR TROUBLES.

There remain for brief mention the amazing series of adventures in which our New South Wales Labour Government is still indulging, if anything more irresponsibly than when Mr. McGowen was its nominal head. Mr. Holman is naturally much more in evidence than his old chief. He speaks much more effectively and much more frequently, but on the whole does not seem to carry any more weight. The session will not be really fruitful if one trusts to present appearances, and the result of the election is, strange to say, apparently as much in doubt as ever. Both Mr. Wade's formal attacks have failed in the House, and rather badly. The Opposition seems out of hand, and out of luck as well. Evidently any Cabinet of which Mr. Griffith is a member must face a series of sudden and often risky ventures, for which Parliamentary excuses have to be found. None can find them more readily or more copiously than Mr. Holman, but even his freshness of appeal must disappear if the current combats are to force him perpetually into the fray. Then again, both here and in Melbourne, as well as at Broken Hill and Bendigo, there are a series of strikes in progress, which, costly and aggravating as they already are, may at any moment assume State, or even national, proportions. A somewhat similar condition, according to the cable news, appears to prevail in Great Britain, but here the outbreaks are much more directly associated with political movements and Parliamentary intrigues. At any time one or more of them may lead to the calling out of the police, perhaps of the military. Then, again, in Western Australia a heavy deficit is mounting up owing to the action taken under Caucus dictation to force the State into the field of private enterprise at the cost of the taxpayers. Altogether New South Wales retains the first place among the States in the public eye, partly owing to our business anxieties, to our novel political adventures and intrigues, and also to the unhappy small-pox outbreak, slowly dying out under careful handling.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

POLITICAL DEADLOCK.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Oct. 28 1913; Dec. 20 1913.

As the area of Australia is immense, so are many of its problems. In number they are legion. What with the varied nature of our resources and our inherited individuality as Britons, it is but natural that each of our six States has a definite individuality of its own. Before federation each of them was very lofty in its attitude towards its comrades, who were occasionally its competitors. Since 1901 they have been under a pressure which has brought some of them often, and all of them occasionally, into line. This was the dominating authority of the Federal Parliament, to which they have as a rule been obliged more or less gracefully to give way. But there are long drawn out struggles, such as those between the three States interacted by the Murray and its tributaries. In this the interests of New South Wales and Victoria as a rule unite them against their persistently resolute co-partners in the greatest river system of the Commonwealth. But even the principal of our State rivalries can only be touched upon here very lightly, so various and complex are their several policies. In the meantime our Australian Parliament, overwhelmed with obligations north, south, east, and west, was, is, and will remain the victim of a Parliamentary deadlock. Under existing conditions the closure, which has proved each a drastic weapon in the hands of the British Cabinet, cannot be invoked by our Mr. Cook in the House of Representatives. The casting vote of the present Speaker cannot be employed to crush debate, however wearisome, irrelevant, and deliberately obstructive. Even if it were available in the House, all that could be accomplished by its persistent use would ultimately be a formal embodiment in Bills of the policy of the Liberal Party. The object would be to distinguish it in the most graphic fashion from the policy of the Labour Caucus. But the series of measures, when sent up to the Senate, would only serve as an advertisement, being altered out of recognition or rejected offhand. Unless something serious happens to a member of the House on the Government side, preventing his attendance, he will probably, be refused a pair. If the victim is a Ministerialist he will probably be refused it under any conditions, and the little authority now vested in the Government legislatively would be withdrawn. The Senate majority has already made its intention clear for the next three years at least. It will employ every power it possesses to annoy and strike at Ministers and their

supporters at every opportunity. The hatchet will never be buried while Mr. Cook continues to hold the Prime Ministership. Our new Parliament, therefore, is already out of date. Its two Chambers independently exercise what powers they possess to hamper and discredit one another. No progress is being made. No progress will be made while the situation lasts. There are two huge policies before the country, most of their items really constituting political antitheses one to the other. Nothing can determine which party is to prevail until there is another General Election. As already remarked more than once, any General Election must be ineffective unless and until the Senators can be sent to the electors with their colleagues in the other Chamber. Even then another stalemate will be possible. The majorities in the new Houses may be still adverse to each other. A way out is, therefore, hard to find. The present prospects are an ordinary General Election for the present House, as prelude to a second, at which half the Senate must face the ordeal. But the only decisive election possible for the next five years will occur when under the Constitution the whole of the Senate, as well as the whole of the Representatives, are sent together to their constituencies. This prospect is remote, and a great deal must happen before it can be attained.

SITUATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

In this State the fate of our Legislative Assembly is now being submitted to the electorates. Their verdict is still in doubt. A general forecast is that Mr. **Holman**, despite his pleasant manners, his persuasiveness on the platform, and the solid support of the Labour Leagues, some of it conceded to him not at all willingly, will fail to retain office. On glancing at the record of his Government in the Parliament just closed, the obviously outstanding feature is the enormously increased, and still increasing, outlay for which the now Premier and his party are responsible. It must be admitted that Mr. **Wade's** good business record in his previous Cabinet awakened no public enthusiasm, and that he faces the electors surrounded by colleagues who even yet are not highly appreciated by the public. The probable entry into the battle of Sir **W. McMillan** augurs ill for himself and for the Liberal Opposition. On the other hand, the cautious thrift, the plodding honesty, and the consistent development schemes fathered by Mr. Wade, present a striking contrast to the off-hand manners, the unauthorised expenditures, and the narrow class feelings for which Mr. Holman will be held responsible. A far more showy speaker than the present leader of the Opposition, he impresses the critical as a less reliable pilot and less consistent statesman. His colleagues, barring Mr. **McGowen**, do not possess a good opinion of business men. Indeed, two or three of the Ministers who support Mr. Holman have had serious public charges levelled against them, which are not yet disproved. The **Willis episode** is not likely to be forgotten. The land policy of the party remains

unutilised. It has spent £9,000,000 over and above its predecessor's record, and faces a deficit of £3,500,000 more. Though the prospects of the Caucus are not rosy, unless Sir W. McMillan's secession assists them, it is probable that the Premier's powers of speech and his good fellowship will enable him to make a strong appeal to the people. Several constituencies at present held by Liberals, but unfortunately by men who have not roused the enthusiasm of their constituents may be put in peril. These sitting members have always meant well, and sometimes done very well, but in one way or another have missed that ardent support of their party to which they are entitled by their general principles. For some reason or other, nowadays our best available men do not look to politics. They dislike its burdens and doubt the loyalty of the voters or their powers of discrimination. A great deal of localism is still visible in New South Wales. The higher politics are preached without enthusiasm. Mr. Wade has made an excellent statement of his policy to the country. It ought to evoke a warm response. But as yet it has not done so. It has been heartily approved by his party. But the impetus that should have sped from his platform to his followers throughout the State has been missing so far.

IN OTHER STATES.

Victoria's Parliament opened its session some months ago with the customary parade of important measures to be dealt with. It promises to close with a harvest that will appear even smaller than usual. Its greatest measure, one of the very longest tabled in Australia, proposes to place the custodianship of all the great services which supply the needs of its capital in the hands of a small, highly-paid, and highly qualified board. Against the wishes of the bodies with vested interests to conserve, including the Corporation of the City of Melbourne, its Metropolitan Board of Works, charged with a huge system of water supply, and its tram-way services, numerous and rapidly multiplying, the Premier, Mr. Watt, its chief author and exponent, remains resolved to achieve his end. It is the hugest legislative enterprise yet attempted in his State, and perhaps in any of our States. The whole Act that created the Commonwealth is briefer than several sub-divisions of this Bill, which overshadows Melbourne politics to-day. The expectation is that the prorogation will find the political situation tense. The vain attempt made to force Mr. Watt's hand when he returned from London in order that several of his colleagues might be replaced from the section of the party which considers that country interests are being over-looked, has not been openly revived. The tone of the Premier may be too radical for some of them, but the expected early termination of the sittings has revived the expectation that some Cabinet changes are close at hand. The recent rainfall simplified Mr. Watt's Budget speech since it promises a continuance of the present flourishing condition of the Treasury, but for all that the outlook continues unsettled. In Queensland the Denham

Cabinet is steadily grappling with the many problems of its various areas. The sugar industry, now transferred to the charge of the State, is to be placed on what ought to be a permanent foundation. The sugar worker in the fields is already guaranteed good earnings by the establishment of Wages Boards, and the great mills are well protected by an import duty of £6 a ton. But it is the grower, the farmer hitherto obliged to shift for himself, who has been left in the lurch. He, too, is now to be safeguarded by tribunals, on which he will have the same representation as the manufacturers or mill owners, under a mutually-selected chairman. Altogether the Brisbane Legislature may claim to be steadily supporting measures for the development of the immense resources of this large section of Australia, probably too large before long for any one legislature to satisfy. Here, as in Victoria, the Labour Caucus does its best to foment dissatisfaction in order that it may divide and conquer its antagonists, the more Conservative-minded and independent representatives of the interests of the whole community.

LEGISLATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

South Australia to-day has more title to the attention of British critics than any other State, inasmuch as one of the greatest measures ever passed by its Assembly, or perhaps any other Australian Assembly, has now been sent up to the Legislative Council. The debates have been longer and the interest taken in them has been keener than probably in any other Bill of the same character and importance. The results are that household suffrage has been adopted for the Legislative Council, that Appropriation Bills in future will be dealt with apart from all proposals relating to loans, taxation, or new works; that deadlocks between the Chambers will be dealt with under the same powers as those now possessed by the Commonwealth, and that new provisions have been made for the periodical redistribution of seats. The chief Labour struggle was to place the Legislative Council as well as the Assembly under adult suffrage. When this move was defeated they increased their protracted endeavours to defeat the passage of the Bill. A stalwart Liberal veteran, Mr. *Burgoyne*, though eighty-eight years of age, faced the all-night sittings and the continuous calls of the bells as cheerily as the youngest. Subject to the anticipated endorsement of the measure by the Legislative Council, the recent battle between the Labour Caucus bondsmen and the free representatives of all classes marks a most important crisis in the development of this progressive State. Tasmania, too, has an excellent record of patient growth, and will be further inspirited by the Federal grant of £400,000 in consideration of her losses in consequence of the Federal Tariff. She proposes that her Government shall utilise the great possibilities of an enormous but cheap supply of water power from the high-lying natural reservoir, the Great Lake. Obviously these two gains alone are certain to prove potent aids in the development of our only

island State, the beautiful and very popular summer resort for the whole of Eastern Australia.

LABOUR PARTY'S EXPENDITURE.

It is a much less satisfactory record that confronts us in Western Australia. The results of government by a Labour majority for two years show that the first had plunged them into a deficit of £122,000, which the second increased to £311,000 more, while the estimates for the current year are estimated £130,000 more. Mr. Scaddan's three years of office will probably result in a deficit of nearly half a million. His difficulties have also forced him to abandon some of the devices he mostly relied upon for increasing the prosperity of this great State. The most significant change is that henceforth improved land will be taxed at the same rate as unimproved. Yet so satisfied is he with his two loans from London, which cost him £4 3s. 3d. and £4 5s. 6d. per cent. respectively, that he intends to call there again. The cost of his experimental shipping service, which was to bring in such rich returns, has not even yet been accurately defined or its policy justified. It is alleged by a New South Wales member that the day labour experiment demanded by the Caucus in this State had cost £113,000, though the public buildings thus erected could have been constructed by contract for £48,000 less – not far from half the money so recklessly disbursed. On the other hand, the Commonwealth Parliament learned from Mr. Fisher's quotation of a speech by Mr. Paget, the Queensland Minister for Railways, that the lines constructed by day labour during the last eleven years had meant a saving of over £2,000,000 of public money when compared with contract work. How far, it may be asked, can the people of New South Wales be persuaded to shut their eyes to the costliness of the impracticable programme which the Labour politicians in this State, from Mr. Holman downwards, are compelled to endorse and advocate, no matter how strongly of opinion they may be that those wasteful outlays are directly antagonistic to our progress and prosperity? The forthcoming polling may tell us something, but probably not much, since the probability is that a number of seats will fall to Labour candidates simply because they are content to take their orders from the little knot of men who have the Press of the party and most of its organisers well under the thumb. Far more drastic and coercive than they suppose will be the action of the present Cabinet if New South Wales, after all its lessons, still accepts Mr. Holman and his oddly assorted colleagues as its leaders.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PROPOSED DEFENCE CONFERENCE. RIVAL POLITICAL PARTIES.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Nov. 18 1913; Jan. 2 1914.

The attitude of the Home Government in respect of the **proposed Defence Conference** is to us quite inexplicable. The practical results of the Conference of 1909 are before us. We have our Australian Squadron in Australian waters, and shall soon complete it. But there are questions to the next step which require to be answered. Other Dominions so far have not attained, and some have not even attempted to attain, a similar preparedness. Of course that is their affair; but it leaves them in somewhat of a predicament, and leaves us in doubt as to our immediate policy. Are we not to expect any co-operation for the defence of the Empire as a whole? If not, what course ought we to pursue? So far, we have met the wishes of both the Admiralty and the War Office to the best of our ability, and apparently to their satisfaction. We shall soon be spending more per head of our population upon defence than any other Dominion, and possibly in the near future more than any other country. We are anxious that this money should be spent wisely. We are also most anxious for an Imperial organisation making for Imperial safety against the obvious risks to which our Empire is exposed. What is it that paralyses Mr. **Churchill's** action? What does he fear from the Dominions? Why does he refuse to trust, or even consult with them? Our object is to uphold the British flag and defend our freedom. Why is the Conference which we have sought refused at this critical juncture, when, apparently, nothing else can replace it?

LABOUR CAUCUS CAUGHT NAPPING.

The general Australian situation has not materially altered during the last month or two, except so far as it is being affected by the extra-ordinary return to cool weather, with most welcome rains over the east and south of the continent. There are districts where the very unusual downpour has been unwelcome, but on the whole the unexpected fall has been of enormous value. Its good effects may be anticipated for some time to come. Observers of the general trend of our public affairs would in

most instances prefer to linger upon these gifts and promises to our great farming and grazing interests rather than assess the political outcome of our seven sessions in our seven Legislatures. Not that practical measures are being neglected in any of the States, but that they are being pushed aside so far as public attention is concerned in New South Wales by the General Election campaign now drawing to its close, and in the Commonwealth Parliament by the deadlock between the Chambers, and practically in the House of Representatives as well. The end of these imbroglios is not yet in sight. Most surprising of all the recent incidents was that in which for once the Labour Caucus was caught napping and punished badly for its blunder. While a number of Government supporters were absent its leaders snatched an opportunity of defeating the Ministry, some of whose followers were following the body of Mr. Knox to its last resting place. They had all duly paired before leaving, but the Labour Whip had omitted to enter one pair. Owing to this blunder and the recklessness of the Opposition the sitting was brought to an untimely close by a snap division; Ministerialists, stung to the quick, rallied next day to expose and denounce the bad faith by which they had been betrayed. When they next found themselves in possession of a decided majority, owing to unexplained absences of several Labour members, the closure was applied with vigour. Amidst angry scenes of disorder and much spleen the two Bills before the House were driven through all their stages, and sent up to the Senate, despite the frantic protests of the Opposition minority. If opportunity offers the same course will be pursued again with other measures. What the Government most desire is to place sufficient responsibilities upon the Second Chamber because of its amendments or rejections of Ministerial measures so as to justify a demand for the double dissolution provided for in the Constitution. With the whole of both Houses sent to the country the Liberals would be afforded their only opportunity of capturing a majority of seats in both Houses. Without this the existence of the present Government must continue precarious, and its policy be absolutely excluded from the Statute Book. That is the key for the present situation and to the whole campaign now in progress.

EXTRAORDINARY CONTINGENCIES.

The two measures which the Senate is now obliged to confront are of grave importance, both in themselves as possible grounds for a dissolution of the House and as questions of policy. The first to be faced is a Loan Bill. In this connection Sir John Forrest emphasised the fact that the present indebtedness of the Commonwealth, comprising the appropriations so far made by this Parliament, all of them introduced by the Labour Caucus, amount to £3,000,000. The obligations of the Northern Territory and the heritage of the last Labour purchase, that of Cockatoo Island and dock, bring up our responsibilities to nearly £22,000,000.

This Bill, closed through the House, cannot be dealt with in any fashion by the handful of Senators who represent the Liberal Party in the Upper Chamber. They are powerless. The Postal Voting Restoration Bill, originally passed to enable the sick and absentees to vote in the presence of official witnesses or under safeguards, though away from the polls, has also been sent to the Senate having been forced through the Representatives by the Ministerial majority of one. The Government Preference Prohibition Bill, and another providing for the appointment of a Committee of Public Accounts, have been brought up to the second reading stage in the House, and will, if possible, be transmitted to the Senate this week or next. Government business will henceforth always take precedence. The endeavour then will be to force the Senate Labour majority to reject a Bill, though this stroke can be easily countered for a time by the endless prolongation of Senate debate until the session is over. This contingency, however, is also foreseen and provided against in the Constitution when the failure to pass a measure may be made a sufficient ground for a double dissolution. Three months must intervene between the two sessions in which a Bill has been blocked before this can happen. Should this method of compelling the Federal Parliament to face its responsibilities be adopted it will mark a new stage in our political development. When both Houses are sent to the electors we are sure to have a desperate struggle at the polling booths. Should the Caucus conquer in the fray we shall see our Constitution cast into the melting-pot and then transformed. Never have there been so many extraordinary contingencies evoked as will arise if Section 57 of the Constitution is brought into play next year.

SIR GEORGE REID IN SYDNEY.

Meanwhile the battle in New South Wales for the mastery of the State has reached its height with the close of the nominations. These by their number emphasise the confusion of the situation, the medley of rival interests, and the utter uncertainty the results in many constituencies in which three or more combatants will take part. The ruthless extravagance of the expenditure authorised by the **McGowen** and **Holman** Cabinet, not to mention the many devices of theirs rejected, which would have involved us further in huge costs, are powerful factors with business people. These should tell heavily against Mr. Holman, despite his cleverness and gifts of speech. The third party, established by Mr. **Beeby** after he seceded from the Caucus and resigned his portfolio is now at odds both with the Holman Cabinet and with the **Wade** Opposition, though, of course, not yet out of touch with some of his old colleagues and in sympathy with many Labour aims. It is not easy to discover the sources of his confidence in the struggle, but his friends anticipate, or at all events, predict, that it will hold the balance of power in the new House, but so far the situation is too complicated to make any forecast reliable. Outside these three parties there are an

unprecedented number of independents running under all kinds of composite labels, and relying upon local support. Only three seats out of ninety will be uncontested, two of them falling to Liberals and one to Mr. **Cann**, the Treasurer. Under all these circumstances, prophecy is necessarily at a discount, though present appearances make it doubtful whether either Liberals or Labour men will obtain a sure working majority. In this relation the reintroduction of what is sometimes termed a religious and sometimes a sectarian question adds to the confusion of the electors. Queensland has adopted the policy of permitting scholars in all primary schools, whether denominational or not, to compete for State bursaries and scholarships, and also allows free railway travelling by children to and from school. Queensland and Victoria have subsidised Roman Catholic hospitals and orphanages. New South Wales has not followed their example. At the approaching election here, and also at the next election in Victoria, the Queensland concessions are to be fought for, and in this State a Royal Commission of Inquiry as well. The Roman Catholic Archbishops in both States having formally and publicly made these demands upon the electors, there can be no doubt that there will be a large response. The political problem is whether the Roman Catholic vote will strengthen Labour candidates, whose replies are satisfactory to its Federation, or whether the uncertain attitude of their Caucus leaders will carry that vote elsewhere. At present the trend appears to be in the former direction, but not even the High Commissioner of the Commonwealth, now once again at home in his old dwelling-place, could give more than a guess. Sir **George Reid**, astutest of party leaders and most persuasive of public speakers, has received from Sydney the hearty welcome home to which his abilities and services entitle him. Many an impossible situation has he coped with while this city was his head centre and New South Wales his province, but none was electorally as complex as that between some seven separate “parties” which he is now witnessing from a point of vantage above the strife. Unless the solidarity of the Caucus has been much more impaired than is suspected, the cross-currents to be encountered in the height of the contest should affect its polling less than either that of Mr. Wade’s legionaries or the guerrilla forces at present threatening both sides.

“GREATER MELBOURNE”.

When the next General Election in Victoria will take place can hardly be foreseen. On the whole the **Watt** Ministry is not making headway this session with its most important undertakings. The “Greater Melbourne” projects from which so much was expected, appear to be too extensive to win the support of the influential interests in the City and its far-spreading suburbs. This is to be regretted for many reasons, because it appears to indicate that the scope of the scheme will be subject to a great deal of reduction at the hands of combined forces, especially in the

Legislative Council. Really each factor should be considered on its own merits instead of being treated, from the first as an inseparable portion of one great plan. Mr. Watts's ambition appears to have soared too high even for his own following. The further risk, of placing before long the whole of the second greatest Metropolis in the Dominion under a universal and unconditional franchise for both sexes tells already in his own party against the much more safeguarded constituency that he desires to establish. The fear is that it might open the door too wide. The friction in the Assembly which he had to face upon his return from England among his own supporters in the Assembly has not yet disappeared. Then, again the *Attorney-General's* leadership in the Council has not displayed sufficient tact and discretion to assist his chief.

LARGER PRODUCTION.

A comparison between the South Australian methods of handling their fundamental State problems in both Houses and those employed in the five other States upon less vital issues is, after making all allowances, very much in favour of the tactics of the *Peake* Ministry. Then, again, it is to the example set in Adelaide by Mr. *Peter Waite* that our wealthy citizens require to recur in order to stimulate their apparent indifference to the need for to development of a higher cultivation and a larger production. He has lately presented to the State Government some 250 acres of valuable land about four miles from the Adelaide Post Office, shortly to be connected with the city by tramway. Upon its sites will be erected a University of Agriculture and kindred studies, and also an Agricultural High School, in which youths will receive their first rural training, perfecting it afterwards in the senior institution by means of applied science and persistent research. The splendid gift made by Mr. Peter Waite is valued at £50,000. Operations are to be commenced immediately to put the whole area conveyed to its best uses. It is upon developments such as this that the future growth of the Commonwealth must depend. We are assured by high American authorities that consumption, even in the United States, is rapidly overtaking many kinds of production. The products must rise in price unless more thorough cultivation can enable them to keep pace with consumption. One of the gravest complaints against the Labour Ministry in New South Wales, made by Mr. Wade, is that while under his administration 750,000 acres of private land had been made available for settlement and cultivation, the McGowen-Holman administration has not resumed a single acre in its three years and only advanced a third of the money authorised. A Labour Caucus and the farmers rarely combine or sympathise with each other.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PARTY CONSTRAINT.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Dec. 9 1913; Jan. 27 1914.

Naturally enough, it was almost under protest that patriotic New South Welshmen have been sparing any attention even to the National Government while our State election was, and, indeed, practically is, still in progress. If the first place must always be allotted to the Commonwealth Parliament as a matter of form and precedence, it really comes second, and a bad second too, while public feeling here continues excited. Naturally the sudden and wholly unexpected death of two young members of the House of Representatives – one of them in the Queen's Hall, into which he had just stepped hot from debate on the floor of the House – came as shocks to the whole community. Mr. **Frazer** was recently Postmaster-General; Mr. **Roberts**, an honorary Minister, represented the Defence Department in the popular Chamber; both stood high in the opinion of their party, and for both careers of distinction were generally anticipated. Their loss will, at all events for a time considerably weaken the debating power of the Opposition, and their counsel be missed in the Caucus. Yet it is only in a general sense that their decease can be said to affect the cause to which both had pledged themselves, since in so doing both had surrendered their independent judgments. They are not at all likely to be replaced by men approaching them in ability. On the other hand, the two votes cast by their successors will prove precisely as valuable as those of the two stalwarts who have just been laid to rest. Arithmetically, they will not be missed by their party. Their places will be filled by two men who must in all circumstance say ditto to Mr. **Fisher**, or any other authorised leader, just as Mr. Fisher must say ditto to the Caucus when speaking in the House, no matter how he may have fought against the proposal in question while it was being discussed in camera. The manner in which Ulster is to be treated under the legislation approved by the House of Commons' majority incidentally points to a somewhat similar party constraint now being indirectly exercised here. The establishment of any coercive method of handling the greatest and most vital issues, under a personal pressure upon members, has always been productive of mischief wherever it has been introduced in Australia. Lending itself very often to a total misrepresentation of the real views and aims of the electors, it may become as costly to the Mother Country and as disastrous to its politics as it has proved in this

continent, in every State that has tried the experiment. When once the individual judgment and conscience of representatives are set aside by a merely machine vote, our experience is that healthy self-government ceases to exist

LABOUR PARTY AND LEGISLATION.

Under the conditions obtaining in the Commonwealth Parliament little work has been done. But what has been achieved is of the first importance. Owing to a happy combination of good luck and good management Mr. Cook has scored two signal successes. Of course, his Bills have no prospect of acceptance by the Labour legion in the Senate. Nevertheless they are now in its custody. One restores the postal vote to those whom illness or absence prevents from going to the poll. The other forbids the granting of preference to applicants for public service appointments on any grounds except those of merit and qualification. No measures could be more unacceptable than these to the Senators who owe their positions to the favouritism and mechanical coercion which rule in the Labour ranks. Mr. Fisher's leadership in the House failed to block either Bill, though his following had only one vote less than the Ministry. The Government will now be able to treat these Bills as test measures and apply for a double dissolution of both Chambers – the one contingency which the Caucus feared and was confident it would avoid. The next move of the Labour Senators was designed for dramatic effect and as a means of revenge for the failure of their colleagues and their chief. As already explained, the Ministerial Senators only number seven in all. They cannot even form a House without the assistance of their 29 opponents. The situation there was, and is, absolutely in their hands. They then conceived a bold policy – so bold, in their opinion, that Ministers would at once be brought to their knees, suing for mercy on any terms. When the Senate met the leader of its majority of 21, Senator McGregor, amid the cheers and laughter of his throng of followers, announced his decision. As the last vote of want of confidence moved by Mr. Fisher had been put at the bottom of the notice paper of the Assembly, where it could not be reached until all Government measures had been disposed of, the Labour Caucus had decided that no business should be transacted in the Senate until the Cook Government, humbly confessing its guilt, should replace Mr. Fisher's challenge at the top of the paper, and debate it at full length. When the jubilant cheers of the Labour Senators hailing this ultimatum had died away, Senator Millen, on behalf of his half-dozen supporters, politely regretted his inability to comply with the demand. Accordingly a guillotine motion for the adjournment of the Senate was carried immediately with theatrical effect. The Government in the House of Representatives next day proceeded calmly with the business on the paper. The Senate demonstration was simply ignored and so were its continuous adjournments. Little by little it became apparent that the action, or rather the inaction, of the Senate

was telling only to its detriment, and that of the foolish majority of the Caucus which had endorsed a political “strike”. Then, again, the public were reminded that the Senate consists of an equal number of members from each State, irrespective of its population and its voters. A majority there could expect little sympathy for its challenge to an actual majority in the House representing a majority in the whole country. Gradually, therefore, the spectacle of a Second Chamber adjourning again and again in a pet because it was not allowed to dictate to the representative Chamber, and the electors behind it, became a farce. The arrival of a Supply Bill furnished the Senators with an excuse for deserting their claim to a dictatorship. Without a word of explanation, excuse or apology, they seized greedily upon the opportunity afforded them of debating and passing the measure which had come into their hands. The political history of Australia presents no exact parallel to this attempted coercion of the principal legislative body of the Commonwealth by its fellow House, or for the humiliation of the latter at the hands of our Labour Senators.

ELECTION RESULTS.

The electoral struggle in this State is by no means over – no less than fourteen constituencies require to face a second ballot. Until then it would be premature to forecast the precise position of parties in the New Parliament. Still, the first ballot has been explicit on some very important general issues. To begin with, it is perfectly clear that there is no room in New South Wales for the third party upon which Mr. Beeby and his friends staked all their hopes. In ability and courage he was superior to all his Labour colleagues, his departmental administration was sounder, and his outlook far broader than that of his party. His position at the bottom of the poll, however regrettable, is in all the circumstances most significant. Our public are not prepared to allow him to hold the scales. As between Liberalism and Labour, the fight is to be fought to a finish. No personal claims, however strong, will be considered until one or other of the two conflicting policies is relegated to the back benches. Mr. Beeby made his break from the Caucus because he could not consent to its mechanical tyranny. He was consistent and courageous, but evidently he had faced the conflict much too soon. His following was almost equally unfortunate. In the next place it is clear that the farmers’ and settlers’ organisation did not co-operate as effectively as was anticipated with Mr. Wade and his following. Evidently a great deal remains to be done before the two organisations become one in fact and operate with their full weight in all their districts. It seems also apparent that the Catholic vote has not been cast against the Caucus with anything like the solidarity that was anticipated. The tactful approbation accorded to Mr. Holman in general terms, when his seat was secure, by a leading Roman Catholic priest was obviously intended to point towards their still possible co-operation. One of the most satisfactory results

of the polling from the Liberal point of view was the contemptuous rejection of the Mr. Willis whose Speakership occasioned so much discontent, seriously aggravating the difficulties of the situation. At present Labour has the lead, and though there are more than a score of seats still in doubt, including over a dozen for which a second ballot is to be taken, the indications are that the contest will continue to be close until the last vote has been reckoned. In one instance, and one only, has a Labour constituency returned, and by a very large majority, as its representative a Labour man, Mr. Page, who refused to support the Caucus proposals to revolutionise the Federal Constitution. Still, "one swallow does not make a summer", and there is only one in Sydney.

POLITICAL ISSUES RAISED.

The outstanding feature of our electoral contest so far is that it appears to have been decided chiefly by financial considerations. At no previous period, in the face of increasing rates of interest, has any of our Governments increased its borrowings and spendings as much as Mr. McGowen and Mr. Holman. In their three years they have borrowed from lenders and from trust funds some £25,000,000. The Government went to the country defending its finance. Moreover, by undertaking large railway extensions it has been able to place on the rolls some thousands of working men alleged to have been strategically employed for electoral as well as railway construction purposes. The vote for Labour has really often meant a vote for the labouring men it employed, while the increased outlays in this regard have come out of the pockets of those who oppose such lavish disbursements. Self-interest has therefore played a larger part than ever in the recent polls, and will very largely determine the fate of the constituencies in which there will be a fresh contest in a few days. Mr. Holman and Mr. Wade in the main represent conflicting policies as well as strongly contrasted individual characters, the first relying chiefly upon his eloquence and the second upon his record and character. But the unsatisfactory conditions of what appeared to be a triangular duel till Mr. Beeby disappeared did not end there. Unfortunately, the purely political issues raised by no means covered the whole field of action, or can explain the results recorded. Rarely, if ever, has any electioneering contest been as tangled, and probably never has one been forced to a lower level by volleys of personal abuse, or by platform tactics of such an indescribably petty or personal nature. So much must be admitted. In the conduct of this election so far there has been very little to commend, and a great deal to ignore, or avoid, without even touching upon the effects of the wholesale maritime strike sought to be engineered by the Labour extremists, whose whole policy in politics appears to be directed by the reckless tactics of their most reckless members. Fortunately the suicidal consequences of their violence were so clear that their leaders brought them

to heel, but only just in time to avoid a grave disaster. Pending the second ballots there is little ground for the hope that good sense and fair play will really resume their normal influence upon our public affairs. Whether the Liberal or the Labour Party is triumphant, the principal obligation of all the responsible sections of our community should be to restore peace and goodwill as soon and as far as possible.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

INSPIRING OUTLOOK.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Dec. 29 1913; Feb. 16 1914.

Australia may felicitate herself upon another "record year", all the more appreciated by her people because the early spring was most unpromising. Our producers naturally prepared for the worst, and are therefore the more rejoiced since the year now promises to prove one of the best. The official figures already published are all favourable, and especially valuable for their demonstration of the fine results achieved owing to improved methods of cultivation and a closer study of soils and seasons. New settlers now arriving, prepared to face a few years of steady work under diminishing inconveniences, have excellent auguries wherever they turn their eyes. They have been preceded, but for a short time, by British families already living in comfortable homesteads, and with prosperous yearly yields. The well-trained farming hand, or the alert and persevering immigrant, have still brighter prospects. They are everywhere in demand. Even the Northern Territory, isolated, un-peopled, and in parts subject to fierce tropical heat, is being proved to possess far finer opportunities and better prospects than were credited to it until now. The railway extensions just authorised by Parliament will help to transform this great region and establish its future. Papua, too, is now becoming progressive. There are hopes of oil supplies, a most important factor in modern developments. Taking Australia and her dependencies together the outlook is most inspiring. There are but two considerations qualifying our general expectations. The first is the absurdly small population responsible for this great continent and its future. Its productive powers alone ought to furnish a sufficient stimulus to all adventurous newcomers, especially those of our own stock, and, no doubt, will attract larger and larger numbers as our resources become better understood. Our first drawback is the oversea ignorance of our prospects. The second is the variegated nature of the political adventures into which we are liable to be plunged while the Labour Party is permitted to play ducks and drakes with State revenues.

THE LABOUR CAUCUS.

Of the Australian States, four are politically in the hands of Liberal majorities, and all prospering. Our Commonwealth Parliament itself flies the Liberal flag on behalf of the National Government. But it is only over one Chamber, and reigns in that Chamber by only one vote. The power of the purse rests with the House of Representatives, but even that supremacy has been crippled considerably owing to the absolute domination of the Senate by the Labour Caucus. Still, besides dealing with ways and means, Mr. Cook has succeeded in passing the measures upon which he must next year stake the future of his Ministry and his party. Recently rejected by the Labour Senators, these will be re-submitted to them a few months hence, no doubt only to receive a similarly contemptuous dismissal. Upon this refusal Mr. Cook will base his demand for a double dissolution. The Governor-General must then accept one of two grave alternatives. In the meantime the Labour members in the House of Representatives appear to have been unable to recover, even yet from the shock of their defeat at the polls. Leadership with them involves no personal responsibility on the part of their chief in the accepted sense of the term. Mr. Fisher cannot take up any course until it has been authorised by a majority of his following. He must pronounce in favour of whatever decision is arrived at by his comrades, no matter how hard he may have fought against it in Caucus, or any humiliations its acceptance by him may demand. Of what takes place in their Caucus there is, of course, neither statement nor confession made outside. But even then it is sometimes impossible for those who direct its decisions to avoid partial revelations of their real intent. One of their members having openly attacked the Speaker at a public meeting was suspended from the House until he should apologise in the usual formal fashion. Soon afterwards, in reply to criticism, he expressly announced that the moment his vote was needed in the Chamber he would at once return to it and formally apologise off hand. As he did not present himself during the rest of the session it is obvious that his masters did not desire his vote. In other words, they did not wish to carry some of their own proposed amendments, or to prevent some Liberal measures from being sent to the Senate. All that was needed to be done by them was accomplished by their sweeping majority in the Second Chamber. This sometimes offered a very undignified spectacle. In the other House Mr. Fisher himself has never shown to less advantage or appeared to exercise less authority over his unruly colleagues than in the recent session. On the other hand, Mr. Cook has taken control of the Assembly more and more as the session proceeded. Obviously he has acquired a greater authority among his supporters and accomplished a series of successful strategic movements at the expense of his opponents. His majority of one proved staunch, although there were some very disappointed members included in the Liberal total. Although under the strain he was sometimes unduly sensitive his leadership, on the whole, was entirely satisfactory to his supporters.

CABINET CHANGES IN VICTORIA.

Our six State Legislatures still retain four under the Government of Liberal majorities. The most populous of these, Victoria, has just undergone a short series of changes in its Cabinet. While accepting Mr. Watt himself without hesitation, the right wing of his following has continuously resented the inclusion of none but his immediate adherents in the Cabinet. After a good deal of friction the dissentients united with the Labour Party to practically defeat one of his principal measures. When he resigned they believed that their opportunity would come with the reformation of the old Ministry. The Labour members thereupon delightedly seized the reins of Government, though all told they numbered only a score. They were and are separated entirely from the rest of the House by their Labour platform, as well as by more personal antagonisms. No sooner did they formally take office than they were put out of it, loudly wailing, as usual, because the tail was not permitted even to try to wag the dog. When Mr. Watt reformed his Ministry he tendered Mr. McLeod, the most prominent of the dissatisfied Liberals, a portfolio, and a seat in the Cabinet without salary to another. These terms being rejected as insufficient, he simply reformed his Ministry upon the same lines as before with some minor changes in the personnel. Whether this was a wise course to pursue remains to be seen. What revised programme he will submit is also a matter of curiosity. Labour members still resent the humiliation to which they were subjected, though that was solely owing to their own folly. Altogether the prospects are that when members reassemble there will still be materials for another explosion at some period of the current session. The Premier's ambition was and is to pass legislation providing for a "Greater Melbourne", with all its public activities over its whole area brought under centralised control. How far the reconstitution of his Government will facilitate this great task remains to be seen.

POSITION IN OTHER STATES.

The session in Queensland closed comparatively in peace and goodwill, and the Premier has just sailed for London upon an errand which assures him the sympathy even of his political foes. Something between £11,000,000 and £12,000,000 sterling was borrowed by the great Northern State during its boldly constructive period between 1875 and 1882. This relatively large sum falls due within the next eighteen months, and though the credit of Queensland stands deservedly high, it has been obviously desirable that the head of the Government should himself undertake the responsibility of providing for the necessary repayment or renewal, or both. Fortunately the Hon. Digby Denham is not only a highly capable and experienced business man. He is also a progressive leader who has accomplished much for the

development of the very rich territory of which he is the principal as well as the most popular leader. The settlement of the sugar-growing problem is the chief feature of the recent prolific session. The South Australian Parliament has lately completed, at all events for the time, a remoulding of its Constitution, of which the principal features should prove lasting. The amendments made by the Legislative Council, and ultimately endorsed by the House, were somewhat restrictive in character. When the Act is taken in hand again it will be probably in order to make a return upon the complete scheme submitted by Mr. Peake and accept something very like it. Tasmanian politics at present are, in one most important particular, a duplicate of the situation in the Federal House. The present island Government has lived, in the popular Chamber, upon a majority of one vote, which has now been lost owing to the death of one of its oldest and most trusted members. A great deal turns upon the method to be adopted to fill the vacancy in a State which has long enjoyed an advanced system of proportional representation. Any election of a candidate for the large sub-division now vacant is likely to be greatly confused by contending nominations. The seat will probably pass into the hands of Labour unless some special means of avoiding the tangle can be adopted. The emergency is one likely to recur, which ought to be judiciously provided against without delay.

MINISTERIAL HUMILIATIONS.

There remain the two great States still under the control of the Caucus, so far, that is, as regards their working and governing Chambers are concerned. In Western Australia the Legislative Council has acted as a brake upon many phases of its extravagant policy, but cannot expect often to enforce its control in this fashion. In New South Wales we are now approaching a similar situation. The recent election proved much more decisive for the Ministry than was indicated by the first returns. The Roman Catholic vote did not defeat Mr. Holman or any other Labour man, so far as is known. But so many Liberals were lost, especially after the second ballot, that Mr. Wade, despite his persistent energy and sanguine optimism, finds himself once more condemned to the shades of Opposition. This will be for three years at least. His complaint against the stuffed rolls, on which in some parts the election was conducted, are probably well founded. But it is too late now to protest against them even if they were in some cases effectively packed. Besides, it may be taken for granted that while their Caucus has its way no proposal for cleansing them will pass our Legislative Assembly any more than it would the Federal Senate. The very first act of our Caucus after the election was to refuse to honour, or to allow its Ministers to honour, their solemn pledge to accept Mr. Morton, an independent Liberal, as Speaker. The leaders were obliged to surrender to the bidding of their "followers", to fail in their pledges to Mr. Morton, and accept the orders of the party tail. Yet a

further indignity awaited the newly-elected Cabinet, in which Mr. McGowen has been lately and for long their Leader, and is now second only to Mr. Holman. He sought to win the vacant chair. But here, again, it was the Government that was defeated, and by its own "supporters". The chosen of the Caucus was Mr. Meagher, whose conduct while member of a prior Parliament led to disaster. Accepting the inevitable, the Opposition Leader contented himself with entering his protest and that of his party against the selection of any man with such a record. Then, when offering to the new Speaker the customary formal congratulations for himself and his associates, Mr. Wade generously commended his conduct, since his catastrophe, as Acting Chairman of Committees or Deputy-Speaker. Quite apart from these personal issues the humiliations to which the Holman Government has submitted at the very outset of its career offers us a sad augury. In our Assembly the ruck will rule; the nominally responsible leaders will obey.

UNWARRANTED EXPENDITURE.

Our thoughtful citizens have no doubt good grounds for their pessimistic comments upon the methods of financing, as well as its motives, which the taxpayers will soon have to face. Economy and efficiency will become subordinate considerations when the Labour majority in our Assembly frames its demands. How far the Upper House will venture to protect the public has yet to be discovered. The West Australian precedents for propitiatory disbursements stare us in the face. The opportunities for extravagance afforded by the inauguration of the great defence scheme of Lord Kitchener (obtained and made law by the Commonwealth Liberal Government of 1909) appears to have been sadly abused. Mr. Fisher and Mr. Pearce have confessedly plunged into new outlays not contemplated by Lord Kitchener, as well as upon uncalled for additions to the authorised scheme. Though Australia is rich enough to shoulder these unwarranted outlays, it will be in the highest degree regrettable if our public funds continue to be employed in partisan fashion for partisan political advantages.

— 1914 —



The Cook Ministry, 24 June 1913 to 17 September 1914

(Australian War Memorial, Accession No. A02818)

Top row (L–R): **William Henry Kelly** (NSW), Minister without portfolio; **Senator John Singleton Clemons** (Tas), Minister without portfolio; **Senator James Hiers McColl** (Vic), Vice-President of the Executive Council; **Agar Wynne** (Vic), Postmaster-General; **Littleton Ernest Groom** (Qld), Minister for Trade and Customs

Bottom row (L–R): **Senator Edward Davis Millen** (NSW), Minister for Defence; **Sir John Forrest** (WA), Treasurer; **Joseph Cook** (NSW), Prime Minister, Minister for Home Affairs; **William Hill Irvine** (Vic), Attorney-General; **Patrick McMahon Glynn** (SA), Minister for External Affairs



The Fisher Ministry, 17 September 1914 to 20 October 1915

(Australian War Memorial, Accession No. A02819)

Top row (L–R): **William Oliver Archibald** (SA), Minister for Home Affairs; **John Andrew Arthur** (Vic), Minister for External Affairs (to 9/12/1914); **Hugh Mahon** (WA), Minister for External Affairs (from 14/12/1914); **Senator Edward John Russell** (Vic), Assistant Minister (to 14/12/1914); **Jens August Jensen** (Tas), Assistant Minister

Middle Row (L–R): **Senator Albert Gardiner** (NSW), Vice-President of the Executive Council; **William Morris Hughes** (NSW), Attorney-General; **Francis Gwynne Tudor** (Vic), Minister for Trade and Customs; **Senator George Foster Pearce** (WA), Minister for Defence; **William Guthrie Spence** (NSW), Postmaster-General

Bottom: **Andrew Fisher** (Qld), Prime Minister and Treasurer

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

OPERATIONS OF THE LABOUR CAUCUS.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Jan. 20 1914; Mar. 4 1914.

The creation of the Inter-State Commission by the Cook Administration is not only by far the most important act of the present Government, but also the most important addition possible to the powers effectively exercisable under the Constitution of the Commonwealth. Its Chairman, Mr. Piddington, K.C., and his colleague, Mr. Nicholas Lockyer lately Comptroller of the Customs of Australia, are both men of high standing in this State. Mr. Swinburne, an ex-Minister of the State of Victoria, completes the list. The scope of the jurisdiction vested in this body is of the widest. The whole of the trade and commerce of this country is to be subject to its scrutiny and control, acting on its own motion and subject to no appeal, except to the High Court, and then only upon questions of law. It is very doubtful if any other part of the British Empire has established a tribunal so wide in range, so independent in character, and so supreme in authority. Not that this great experiment is quite without parallel or precedent. Those who drafted our Australian Constitution foresaw from the first the probability that an effective control of the development of this continent would demand a judicial executive qualified to investigate and cope with the great domestic and oversea problems and interests within our vast area. With these even the Legislatures of the dominion, Federal as well as State, could not be expected to deal efficiently unless some such national agency were specially created for the purpose. We are making a new departure. It will require a very exceptionally experienced and gifted tribunal to ensure justice to the rival interests and organisations already very active among us. Besides, for some years past, we have been witnessing in our arbitration jurisdiction, a novel exercise of quasi-Sovereign powers by Mr. Justice Higgins acting as President of a Commonwealth Industrial Court which has been preparing us for fresh ventures. The laundry employers in Perth having lately protested that increased pay and decreased working hours combined would make business impossible in Western Australia, were told, on appeal, that the President's decision must be obeyed. When their representative caustically observed that more power seemed to be vested in the President than in all the Governments of Australia combined, Mr. Justice Burnside simply replied that "The people of Australia had trusted him (Mr. Justice Higgins, as President of the Court) with what

appears to be unlimited powers". He also frankly added that he personally upheld Judge Higgins's ruling in the case before them on the ground that if the industry could not pay a living wage there was no reason why it should live. Besides the seven Parliaments and seven Governments engaged in the government of Australia we have now enthroned an Arbitration Court and an Inter-State Commission, two national tribunals with an almost unlimited scope and authority of investigation and control. Their future cannot be foretold. The one fact clear and indisputable is that we are cutting ourselves adrift, transforming our methods, and establishing new precedents which are certain to lead to new political horizons and probably also to strange alterations of the Constitutions under which Australia lives to-day.

RESULTS OF THE RECENT ELECTION.

In this State the result of our recent election is obviously the prelude to a revolution in policy. Unless the Legislative Council has the courage to examine the methods of polling which gave the Labour Party its present majority at the polls there is little or nothing to hope for in the way of rectification. After all the diminution of its majority could hardly be sufficient to affect their majority. The Labour Caucus will dictate to its Ministry the policy to be pursued. It will also make that Ministry of its own choice, and remake it if necessary when any emergency arises. The Cabinet will probably seek to transform the Legislative Council so as to remove the only existing check upon its legislation. The fact that already the wharf labourers, in defiance of their commander-in-chief, Mr. Hughes, are refusing to work overtime, is already disorganising our shipping services at the height of their activity. The threats that country produce not harvested and handled by Union labourers will not be touched by them threatens another series of injurious and provocative strikes. What the Labour Government can or will do in these emergencies is quite uncertain. In the meantime its attention is now absorbed by the reconstitution of its Cabinet, a task of extreme difficulty since nearly half of the members of the Caucus are seekers after portfolios. A great deal of bitterness is generating among the aspirants, while nearly every Minister is likely to be challenged at the ballot. One seat, and one seat only, that of our new Premier, Mr. Holman, is now secure. All the rest have to canvass and intrigue, each of them seeking a salaried place. The whole of the heat generated is due to personal rivalries. They have their leader; they have the policy to which they were pledged in Caucus and at the hustings, but not one quarter of them can hope to capture any of the "places of profit under the Crown" on which their hopes are individually and anxiously set. Our Chief Railway Commissioner, Mr. Johnson, having had his engagement terminated, the question whether he might not be replaced for a fixed term by a pledged supporter of Labour has already been raised. Those who are voted portfolios by the Caucus will only hold them while a

majority of their comrades are content to allow them. They can be dispossessed at any moment. Such at least is the method of government to which we are now committed and from which the best results cannot be expected. We are bound to experience the continuous surprises and disappointments, due to an attempt to govern a great country by a merely political machine. New South Wales, the most populous, the wealthiest, and the most influential of the Australian States, is likely, for the time being at all events to find herself relegated to a less distinguished place than she has hitherto enjoyed. Hitherto her Labour Administration has been obviously temporary and its area of authority limited. Now that such conditions no longer exist the whole situation is changed. We have a new field of experience and probably of expensive experiments before us. In a small way Western Australia has already suffered under somewhat similar circumstances, though the check imposed by her Legislative Council is still of real value. But the rapid deterioration of its Caucus-led Assembly is already costing the country dear, principally owing to a want of business knowledge, and perhaps even more due to the necessity of distracting public attention from Ministerial blunders and jobs. Class feeling overrides the bounds of reason and leads to extravagances chiefly at the expense of the independent-minded citizens, who are honestly and sincerely anxious of uniting all sections and classes for the common good.

NEED OF A DISTINCT VERDICT.

The Victorian Parliamentary crisis is now over. It was never really serious and has ended by a return to the *status quo*. The corner members responsible for Mr. Watt's resignation were discontented with their representation on the Government. Having asked too much, they have obtained nothing. The slight changes made in the personnel of the State Cabinet will not affect its policy or position. The one suggestive feature of the incident is that it assists to emphasise the unlikeness of the present political position occupied by the two most populous sections of our Dominion. While we have been accustomed for years past to the prominence of the Labour Caucus, whether in office or in Opposition, and are now entirely under its control, the same party in Victoria has only once obtained Ministerial rank, and then held it upon sufferance for but a few days. When Mr. Watt, with a slightly-altered Cabinet, took up the reins that he had dropped, the Labour forces only ventured to challenge three Ministers. Two of these held Melbourne seats, where Labour is potent, while the third was challenged by a nominal supporter of Mr. Watt partly on a sectarian issue and partly as a sympathiser with the discontent of the corner. Despite the holiday season and the aloofness of disappointed followers all three Ministers were returned by large majorities. Labour remains in opposition. There is no sign of its having made any real advance in popularity with the Victorian electors.

Queensland occupies much the same situation, and South Australia, too, though less decisively. Yet at the last Federal Election Victoria only secured one Senatorial seat, while neither of the other two had even that slight consolation. Oddly enough it was in this State that Labour was defeated in its raid upon the Commonwealth Second Chamber. New South Wales stood alone in the Federal Senate for the Federal platform, while this had the support in the popular Chamber of a majority of only one vote. To unravel the reasons why the people of Australia have made themselves responsible for this incoherent condition of their public affairs passes the wit of man to explain at the present juncture. Sir John Forrest and Mr. Fisher have been figuring in print, descanting upon the official Treasury figures in an attempt to find some reasonable excuse for their very unsatisfactory positions. The fact remains that at present and until the next Federal election our National Parliament is, and will remain, in a deadlock, subject, of course, to the constant risks of mortality among our legislators. The two recent vacancies in the Assembly on the Opposition benches have been filled with Labour men. There has been no loss on the Government side. Obviously a double dissolution is the goal towards which Mr. Joseph Cook and his following are steadily steering. Whether they will reach that decisive test of public opinion remains to be seen. The present confused and confusing political dead end imperatively demands a wide awakening of a general interest in the momentous issues with which we are confronted. The time for action is brief. The need of a distinct verdict is urgent. The capacity of Australia to give a clear and distinct definition of her desires and needs must soon be put to the proof.

WAYS OF LABOUR CABINETS.

Whatever else may be left undone, it is obvious that the Cook Cabinet is carrying very heavy burdens along a very precarious road and liable at any moment to find itself at the mercy of its opponents. Quite apart from its manifold legislative obligations and its critical executive work, there are two great tasks to be accomplished during the recess. The pretence that a scrutiny of the last election ballot papers has disclosed nothing more than the customary percentage of dishonest voting misleads nobody. An investigation officially made by officials who were chiefly responsible for the authorised but lax methods and checks adopted has disclosed little more than their utter futility. No one can prove the extent to which the rolls have been stuffed; no one can pin down the many persons guilty of nefarious roll stuffing or personation. In the three Victorian seats just contested there are alleged to have been a number of instances in which would-be voters, in answer to the regular inquiries, gave a name already voted upon by some other person, and upon this discovery instantly left the booth without complaint or excuse. The Federal rolls appear to be even more open to abuses of this flagrant character. It is often contended

that with our exceptionally large floating population migrating regularly afar every year for shearing, harvesting, and other purposes, the opportunities for duplicating and dummying votes are multiplied exceptionally. Most of the so-called checks upon these abuses are obviously paltry and superficial. To make them really efficient will be a very difficult and, indeed, more probably an impossible task while there is an overwhelming Labour majority of the Senate deeply interested in covering up the tracks of its supporters. The gravity of the Federal situation in this respect can hardly be overstated. Then, again, before Parliament closed Ministers most willingly pledged themselves to a thorough analysis of our Defence system as it has been fostered under Senator **Pearce** and his colleagues. The more the searchlight is brought to bear upon their recent administration of this hastily-expanded department the more extravagant it proves. Of course, the late Minister's knowledge and judgment were merely political and his financial control little more than nominal. His colleagues were no better equipped. Mr. Fisher, as Treasurer, was always dependent upon his officers. Their powers of patronage were constantly being exercised for party ends. As a result we are now facing alarming financial responsibilities piled up off-hand. Consequently, the new Minister's tasks have already proved exceptionally onerous. Fortunately, Senator **Millen** has a long experience of our methods of government, and also of business to guide him. Economies are essential and will have to be firmly insisted upon. Judging by the disclosures so far there has been no real supervision of a very alarming extravagance. Labour Cabinets in this country, as a rule, know little and care less about our costs of government while they are obtaining political popularity during their term of office and making their own seats secure. Safeguards and economies are much more efficiently applied under our present Cabinet.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

EARL GREY'S VISIT.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Feb. 10 1914; Mar. 28 1914.

Australia at the present moment is honoured by the presence of three distinguished Britons, whose utterances are attracting great attention directly and indirectly. Directly **Earl Grey** landed at Fremantle his first words were in earnest of his sincerity. He touched a sympathetic chord at once when he drew a line of demarcation between the Federal Home Rule he commends and a Nationalist Home Rule making for separation. He spoke frankly of the necessity for an efficient immigration scheme, and warmly of the work in this direction accomplished by the Salvation Army. The frankness with which he is addressing himself to broad non-party issues of moment to the Commonwealth is placing him at once *en rapport* with thoughtful citizens of all classes. With his fine record of public services and his impartial attitude towards our local politics, his visit is certain to prove most valuable. It is certainly most timely. We have our problems. For instance, the figures of the recent Federal General Election become more puzzling the more closely they are scrutinised. Those of the still more recent election in this State, and particularly in the second ballots, in some cases are beyond comprehension. The new Federal rolls ought certainly to be made up with the utmost caution. A Parliamentary Committee of Commonwealth members is commencing a critical examination of the rolls on which the Labour Caucus was defeated in the House of Representatives by a solitary vote. Earl Grey is not likely to give us his mind upon these or similar fighting issues. It is our own electors who sadly need enlightening upon the inevitable outcome of their indifference and absence from the polls, neglected by a too self-confident people because we live in a marvellously prosperous land.

DEFENCE FORCE DEVELOPMENTS.

As fortune decreed, it was on the same day and to the same audience in Western Australia which had listened to the late Governor-General of Canada that the Inspector-General of the Imperial Forces addressed himself. This is **General Sir Ian Hamilton's** first visit to our continent, the last and certainly not the least important territory to be covered by his tour. The standardisation of the whole of the land forces

of the British Empire was the enormous and onerous task to which Lord Kitchener appeared devoted prior to his present important appointment. Our own Compulsory Service scheme is still in its earliest stage so that direction rather than correction is anticipated at General Hamilton's hands. All the more, therefore, must we realise that his advice, given at the critical stage we are just reaching, should be of very great value. It will be especially welcome to the small body of capable and well-instructed officers who constitute the real motive power of our military development. Lord Kitchener's own Australian scheme has provided an invaluable basis, but it was not and could not be complete, even in some of its simpler aspects. Experience was lacking then which is now unlocking a new series of local problems. General Sir Ian Hamilton has experiences of Canada and South Africa behind him, clearly illustrating the nature of some of the grave problems our unpeopled vastness presents. His adaptation of it to present needs will be in itself a very great assistance to Senator Millen, an exceptionally efficient Minister, as cautious as he is capable. Despite the perpetually uplifted voices of a very small minority of local critics the solid sense of our community supports all our present martial endeavours. Every demonstration of the development of our defences in Sydney has been welcomed with inexhaustible applause. The young cadets of this city become when in uniform the pets of the whole community, and our naval developments are hailed with enthusiasm at every stage whenever an opportunity presents itself.

LABOUR PARTY AND MILITARY.

One suggestive incident in another Dominion has not been without echoes across our border. Whether or not it be in consequence of the recent attempt of Labour ridden miners to exploit the Transvaal as a whole, and Cape Colony, too, if possible, Labour extremists here and elsewhere are already anxious to have all military means of coping with outbreaks of industrial warfare, no matter how violent or coercive, expressly forbidden by law. Strikers with or without justification, are to be not only a law unto themselves, but to all outside their ranks, and particularly to all owners of anything worth having. In the last Brisbane tramway strike an appeal of the Government of Queensland for the maintenance by the military of law and order in the capital city of that State was point blank refused by the Fisher Federal Government. Its Ministers dared not do otherwise than obey their Caucus masters. Of course, military aid will very rarely, if ever, be asked by any afflicted State or city. If granted it will be only for very special reasons, and amount to nothing more than the protection of the unprotected against violence. When our existing system of defence is established in full working order the training through which all males will have passed should of itself dispose the whole community to rely upon the orderly and ordinary procedures ensuring justice without any employment of force of arms or of any other intervention than that of the Courts.

EXTRAVAGANCE AND INEFFICIENCY.

When the Commonwealth was first established almost, the whole of the Labour members were pledged to the peace at any price school among their supporters. It was with great difficulty that the preliminary steps were authorised continuing the voluntary Militia system established in a partial fashion in each State. The first law requiring universal service was introduced and passed by a non-Labour Government, which in a previous session had set aside the first quarter of a million sterling for naval defence. Only after 1910 did the Caucus take advantage of its control of both Chambers to incidentally utilise both its naval and military opportunities for party patronage. The first battleship of Australia was ordered by its predecessors as the first cadet levies had been in 1909. Since then excellent progress has been made in developing our defences both by land and sea in all the States. Only recently have the investigations, conducted under Mr. Cook's regime, made it evident that there has been much carelessness both in the planning and execution of those works, unfairness in the party patronage exercised, and a great many extravagances for which there is little justification. The huge expenditure anticipated to be required in Western Australia, for which the late Minister Senator Pearce is officially responsible, has led to a series of independent investigations recently conducted on the spot. These have already made it plain that still more searching studies of the whole situation will be indispensable before the plans prepared can be authorised. Unfortunately for the Senator, a very popular member of the last Government, his attempt to divest himself of responsibility for the wasteful outlay of public money already made was conducted in such a fashion as to be more damaging to himself. Two or three of his other expenditures on naval preparations are being impeached on the ground of cost and inadequacy. Before the next election arrives it is probable that some exposures will be complete telling against the late Minister's professional advisers in some instances, but in most cases largely due to faulty methods. The general impression conveyed by the disclosures to hand is that extravagance and inefficiency have been frequent in respect not only to these defences, but to much else besides. Owing to the agreement arrived at between the Deakin-Cook Government and the States in 1909 the receipts from Customs and Excise during Mr. Fisher's three years rose to £26,000,000, a total thrice as large as his predecessors had enjoyed. It was only because his receipts happened to be nearly a million and a half more than he had anticipated and his expenditure more than a million less that he was able to show a satisfactory surplus on leaving office. He also left accruing debts. Lavish expenditure, coupled with careless and incompetent supervision, would evidently have been still maintained if Mr. Cook had not obtained a majority of one in the House of Representatives last year.

LAXITY OF SUPERVISION.

A catalogue of the blunders already made at the Fitzroy Dock, the Lithgow Small Arms Factory, the Commonwealth Woollen Mills, and in the Northern Territory (to which the Labour leaders eagerly attempted to restrict this year's Immigration Grant of £50,000) would occupy much space. The Commonwealth Bank itself, after levying charges for transfers of credits throughout Australia amounting to £8,000 last year, found itself saddled with a much larger deficit in its accounts for the twelve months. Our **Federal Public Service Commissioner**, who is vested with the control of our huge and ever-expanding departments, has **called aloud** for "a more searching and rigid check, on the several items of appropriation", for "removing the elements of favouritism", for avoiding "payments for excess duty", for "revising travelling and relieving allowances", and generally for the "development of an official conscience, particularly in relation to minor payments". By far the greater portion of these defects and deficiencies are due to the laxity in every direction under the Federal Labour *régime*, and also in its two States. The increased salaries to Federal members and to those of New South Wales, which are almost as large as the former, are swollen in our case by an expansion of our railway and other concessions, putting our State members in at least as pampered a position. Here, in New South Wales, as in Western Australia, there is increasing taxation and accumulating deficits. The aim of Mr. Joseph Cook and his Ministry has been to provide as far as possible against the waste and extravagance creeping into our public services. The Chamber in which he has the smallest of possible majorities has passed Bills establishing a Committee of Public Accounts, a Committee for Public Works, and for the constitution of Tender Boards. The last was refused the Senate endorsement. Its predecessors would have been also rejected if the Caucus had not dreaded the conclusions which the taxpaying public must have drawn if these checks upon extravagance and favoritism had been deliberately denied us. As it is the Cook Cabinet is still pursuing its inquiries into the lavish disbursements in which its predecessors revelled while indulging the hope of securing their continuance in office. Meanwhile in this State our Labour Leagues are demanding that their hitherto covert doctrine of "spoils to the victors" at the ballot-box should now be applied continuously and upon a much larger scale than heretofore. Sooner or later such raids upon the Treasury will be resented and resisted.

CAMPAIGN AGAINST EMPLOYERS.

At present we have to encounter still more ominous movement now impending wherever the employees in any calling begin, at the bidding of their leaders, to reduce their output and increase their own wages, with the ultimate aim of absorbing all industrial earnings. At present throughout almost the whole Commonwealth all

wharf labourers cease work at 5 p.m. each after-noon, and refuse to commence again until eight o'clock next morning. Having regard to the deliberately measured pace at which they load or unload from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. it is easy to explain the practical paralysis of all seaborne business which is gradually approaching. It is well known that this campaign against employers, carried on at the public cost, is not approved by thousands of the employees. It is under duress or by apprehension of injury that the solidarity of the wage earners is captured for the disastrous policy of their dictators. If our Arbitration Court, is to deserve its indefinitely wide autocratic jurisdiction there must be at the very least a compulsory conference between the shipowners of Australia and the wharf labourers of our ports.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

SOCIAL ISSUES.

TRADE UNION DOMINATION.

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Mar. 2 1914; Apr. 11 1914.

The New Year is still young; the holiday season is barely over, and all the seven Legislatures are at rest. But, for all that, industrial unrest continues. Nowadays it is always with us to some extent, and very much with us at the present moment. Not that Australia is the only battlefield. South Africa has lately witnessed a graver attack upon its Government and Parliament by the employees in its mines and subordinate industries than has ever been witnessed in any part of the Empire. New Zealand has only lately suppressed a very bellicose outbreak, which threatened for a time to seize and master all the shipping, upon which its citizens, and particularly its farmers, depend. In both countries the rebellious Unionist elements have been completely defeated, but in each case this was only accomplished by a Government intervention, more prompt and vigorous and effective than we have ever been accustomed to witness in our Dominion. In the Commonwealth we have already established an elaborate semi-judicial means of settling our industrial disputes by a special Court, or rather by a special Judge. His sympathies happen to be with the employees and their organisations, and he has had no hesitation in making his sympathy for them plain to the public. During the last few years Mr. Justice Higgins has met all their reasonable demands, and most of them handsomely. Sparing of his censures and open in his commendations, he has done everything in his power to satisfy their reasonable claims and to induce their employers to assist him. Yet the further he has proceeded the less willingly do discontented employees appear inclined to rely upon quasi-legal methods; the more openly do many aggrieved workmen seem to desire to avoid the Arbitration Tribunal. It is difficult to understand this curious unwillingness on their part to trust a Court of Justice whose main aim is conciliation, and whose methods always have been, and still are, most considerate. Yet it was with the greatest difficulty that the rank and file of our Trade Unions have been induced, and sometimes coerced, into submitting their differences with their employers to our independent, but obviously sympathetic, tribunal. This was specially established to meet their demands and to safeguard their interests whenever and wherever that was justifiable.

These are the social issues with which we are now confronted in the Commonwealth. The questions raised are not merely what just terms will be substituted for those that can be proved unfair to the working men affected, under our present conditions, but to what extent the Unions can demand, or acquire, better terms by using their strength to coerce their employers.

STATE SPHERE OF ACTION.

Looking backward, it is now quite plain that the capture in 1910 of both Houses of the Australian Parliament by the Labour Party did mark a new era in our political and economic history. The immediate outcome of the defeat of the **Deakin** Government, which more or less represented all sections of our community outside the Labour Leagues and Unions, was an audacious appeal to the people of Australia by **Referendum** to increase enormously the powers of the National Legislature at the expense of the States and their Legislatures. That proposed transformation was rejected by huge majorities, while at the recent General Election the Caucus Government of the Commonwealth lost office, though only in the House and by a single vote. The Senate passed wholly into the hands of Labour candidates, and a second submission of the sweeping constitutional amendments, previously rejected, all but obtained a majority in its favour in 1913. Making all allowances for possibly dishonest votes, the significance of such a polling cannot be ignored. It points directly to a coming crippling of the State Parliaments, which will speedily result in a further diminution of their authority and prestige. It also points to an increasing sway soon to be exercised by the National Parliament over all our industrial affairs. It has already become clear that the small section of Labour leaders who are pressing for their complete control more than ever realise their opportunity and are prepared to seize it. Our Mr. **Holman** himself, who partially resisted this fatal encroachment upon the State sphere of action, no longer dares to resist the demands of his extremists. Mr. **Beeby**, next to him the most influential Labour man in the Cabinet, has been driven out of public life because of his resistance to the very same encroachments. There could be no more typical illustration of the growing authority of the aggressive element in this State. What with avowed Syndicalists, supporters of single Chambers in the States, opponents of the granting of freeholds, or those who advocate the ruthless penalising of all electors who do not vote as they are ordered, the prospects in the political field of this State are not encouraging. However many of the panaceas our public may consent to try, it is at least plain that a rapidly increasing expenditure, coupled with an equally increasing Government authority exercised in the interests of employees, whether of the State or of the Commonwealth, may be anticipated this year and in those that follow. Such adventures may prove interesting; they must prove expensive.

CAUCUS MAJORITY DEMANDS.

For the first time in its history the political control of this State has now passed entirely into the hands of the Trade Unions and their delegates. Mr. McGowen was the moderating head of the late Labour Government, but with such an uncertain majority that the task of avoiding defeat and retaining office absorbed all his energies. That condition of things has disappeared, and with it Mr. McGowen's leadership. In Mr. Holman we now possess a tactful, resourceful, and persuasive Premier, all of whose serious difficulties are practically created by the extremists among his own pledged supporters. He himself is already pledged by the platform he was obliged to adopt to a great many innovations which he would gladly forget, postpone, or defeat. So are a number of his supporters who must come to heel with him whenever their Caucus majority orders. That body has framed a series of demands for aggressive legislation which cannot be ignored, but in the meantime the lavish expenditure incurred during the late Parliament has to be met. Consequently new taxation proposals must occupy a good deal of the time during the short session just opening. There could be no better reminders than these for the careless non-Labour electors in this State who refrained from voting at the recent poll. They must now face the new burdens to which their neglect to vote will quite justly condemn them. Putting aside for the time the bias dictating the fresh taxes about to be levied upon us, the citizens of New South Wales have also to recollect that the Federal Labour Caucus seems likely to carry at its next referendum a huge extension of its legislative powers at the expense of all our States and beyond their means of resistance. The situation in this State is therefore more serious than that of any other, unless Western Australia is put in comparison. Both are ruled by Labour men engaged at the same time as ours in a ruthless raid upon their own State powers and finances. Tasmania is in other difficulties. Its representatives being divided into two equal parties now must prepare themselves for another General Election. If the present Opposition there should gain the day our six States will then be evenly divided between the party which subordinates its Parliamentary representatives to the bidding of a Caucus and that which upholds the freedom of the members of its Legislature and the dignity of its Government.

NEW SOUTH WALES STRIKES.

There will be little of the latter left for us unless Mr. Holman learns discretion even when he is visiting outside the State over which he rules and at a distance permitting him to ignore immediate refutation. In London not long since he publicly boasted that strikes were extinct in New South Wales, though before the echoes of his eloquence died away there were very serious strikes of the gas workers,

ferry employees, and railway porters in his own capital. In Auckland the other day he repeated his boast at what he seemed to think a safe distance, only to find his fib again disposed of by fresh strikes among our wharf labourers, ironworkers, and butchers. At the present time the whole of our Australian shipping is threatened with paralysis by a strike operating in all our principal ports and threatening our oversea and coastal trade with disaster. No excuse is possible for such defiances of fact in misrepresentations made at distance. An Organising Committee of the Liberal Association here complains bitterly that its candidates have "had to contend with the most unscrupulous electioneering tactics of which it is possible to conceive". They set out a long series of defects in our official methods of polling capable of being abused, all of them, so they assert, having been deliberately taken advantage of by the Labour Leagues in this State. There is a good deal of evidence in support of their complaint. The Labour leaders know it, but are no wise abashed. Mr. Holman's own position, unenviable already, will be made intolerable if a fair measure of these crying defects is not reasonably remedied at once.

INCONSIDERATE RECKLESSNESS.

Among the costly undertakings adopted in the late Parliament by the Fisher Government, in pursuance of the Australian policy sanctioned by both political parties, that of constructing a railway connecting Western Australia through South Australia with the rest of the Commonwealth seems most expensive. It is necessary to remember that a maximum of expense had produced only a minimum result when the Cook Ministry commenced to scrutinise the Labour Party methods in operation. Very slowly these are being reformed. Contracts not being fulfilled have been suspended or cancelled. Then Mr. Scaddan, in his heat, retaliated by prohibiting the cutting of timber sleepers necessary for the line. When, however, the number of workpeople who are electors in his State protested angrily against a penalisation for which they paid, though it was aimed at the Cook Cabinet, he was obliged to reverse his attitude altogether. The supplies are no longer to be refused to a National Government which is paying handsomely for the equipment of this great national line, constructed specially to further the development and protection of Western Australia. But Mr. Scaddan has gone further still by openly breaking his pledge to lay a fresh line of rails from Kalgoorlie to Perth in order to complete the connection of his capital with the line through the great unpeopled area east of Kalgoorlie, uniting with the South Australian system. That he postpones indefinitely, partly by way of retaliation upon the Commonwealth Government and partly to allow him to use the money promised for this purpose elsewhere. He calmly leaves it to his successors, the Liberals, to face the outlay when they occupy his place. It is safe to say that only a Labour Ministry would be capable of such a breach of trust committed

with callous indifference. We owe to the same spirit, but nearer home, our shipping strike, our butchers' strike, and other industrial outbreaks, slowly and painfully in course of settlement. This must mean a great cost to our public owing to the better terms conceded to the insurrectionist. To catalogue the full story of their pleas, their excuses, their repudiations and inventions, would be a tedious as well as an aggravating task. That, from time to time, industrial agreements need revision and readaptation is clear; but it is the inconsiderate recklessness, the misrepresentations, and intimidations leading up to these changes that provoke the general public, whose interests are often ignored and whose efforts to maintain peace are rendered abortive. Port Phillip for once is discovering that its waterside workers are even more bellicose than those of Port Jackson. A settlement seems close at hand. But whatever it is, and whatever may be promised by the strikers, any agreement made will be treated by them as always open to further review on any pretext.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

REVIEW OF THE SITUATION.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Mar. 24 1914; May 8 1914.

Dr. Mawson's return from the Antarctic, after privations and deaths of comrades, naturally exacting a heavy toll from the brave men who faced them, has been a great relief to thousands of Australians appreciative of the courage, capacity, and modesty of the leader and the loyalty of his gallant assistants. The tale he has to tell will be full of human interest and of information of scientific value. In another field Sir Ian Hamilton's tour of the Commonwealth has established a record unparalleled within our borders. His movements have been as rapid and untiring as those of a guerrilla chief, and while evolutions were proceeding he appeared omnipresent in the field. Of course, he has been heartily welcomed in the hospitable Australian way, for we could not have been favoured with the presence of a more inspiring leader or a more candid and generous critic. The prolonged struggle between the Labour Leagues in every State seeking to enforce their class doctrines, and the Liberal rallies against those, much less continuous and often divided in their resistance, has long been and will long continue to be the feature of the Australian situation. Naturally the organised forces of the Trades Unions, spurred on by often quite impossible promises of gain, and ruled with rods of iron, have been more formidable bodies than our hitherto always lax and temporary allies. These, suffering from such invasions, resist instead of attacking. Though they have much to lose they have little more to gain. Intimidation on the one side has proved more potent than reasoning on the other, and is more persistently applied. Until 1910 the Liberal forces comprised two sections, neither too friendly to its neighbour. In the Parliament of 1910–1913 the Labour members easily dominated their two lately divided rivals – united as Opposition. What that *régime* cost Australia during its three years' reign can only be imperfectly assessed at present. How much of its huge Ministerial outlay was for merely partisan emoluments and how much was due to the hopeless blunders of its Cabinet we are only gradually discovering. The late election in 1913 gave our Liberals a majority of one vote in one Chamber. Though his hold upon the Treasury Bench continues precarious, Mr. Cook is gallantly challenging his Labour opponents to another trial of strength at the earliest possible date. Of course, with but a helpless handful of supporters in the existing Senate the Liberal Cabinet finds itself utterly unable to pass any of its

promised legislation. But it declines to be content merely to administer departments. Ministers insist upon giving effect to the promises they made to the electors. Hence their public-spirited action in challenging an immediate appeal to the country. In the ordinary course such a step would leave the half of the Senate elected last year, when reinforced by a new election, in possession, for several sessions to come, of a complete mastery of the Second Chamber of the Commonwealth. This, of course, carries for Labour a power of vote upon all Liberal legislation. It is quite certain that, as the only means of overcoming its supremacy, Mr. Cook will urge the necessity for a double dissolution, including the whole Senate. This might give him a mastery of both Houses. Nothing less can suffice to meet the situation.

INDUSTRIAL PROBLEMS.

Of course Mr. Fisher is pained at the mere thought of such a democratic appeal to the whole of our electors. He has commenced a tour involving peregrinations of over 4,000 miles, in which he is deeply deploring any such decisive appeal to the people. Beyond an attempt to give currency to some minor scandals as yet unproved, in his familiarly deprecating way, so far, he does not appear to be introducing new matter. He relies most on the platform upon an aggrieved manner, pained allusions to suspected Ministerial mistakes, and his pictures of the paradisiac surroundings promised so often to members of his party, but only to be realised if he and his colleagues are kept permanently in office. It is not pretended that our experiments in State Socialism have not proved really satisfactory from any point of view except that of the employees. There are cases in which the most generous Ministers have fallen short of satisfying them even after many a solatium. Most in our minds at this moment is the experience of the State Government of Victoria with its coal mines. During its three years' working it has suffered from more than a score of strikes, all of them costly to the Government, which has made concession after concession, and so far only in vain. The trend of Australian experience of Socialistic ventures is most emphatically illustrated by the fact that we have now no less than three High Court Judges busily engaged in dealing with industrial problems, with a fourth Judge in reserve. Though the Melbourne sittings of the Court have been extended at public expense it cannot finish its work. Our own sittings have had to be postponed. Here we have many problems of the same character. Indeed, they are the principal source of our political, as well as judicial, difficulties. Even Mr. Holman, popular as he always has been in his party, was "carpeted" at a recent Caucus in a very unpleasant fashion, though in the end his victory was that of a two to one majority. He will manifestly have to bestir himself in order to retain his present strong position in his party. Even as defined by himself his sacrifice of Cabinet Authority is plain and painful. His colleagues have to submit, and he, though chief of our Labour Party,

will also submit to the dictation of a majority of his followers in respect to the whole of the legislation about to be adopted in New South Wales. All that he now asks for himself and his colleagues is control of the administration of the departments. This is a very moderate request indeed, since at any time a majority of his following can also re-shape his administration at its pleasure on any point of importance. All it needs is a majority-vote in favour of an amending Bill or Bills. It is not by any means certain that even the great concession thus made by Mr. Holman and his colleagues will be considered a sufficient sacrifice by a majority of their supporters. Before long they may insist upon majority-rule in the Caucus on all questions. When the numbers are up the leader of the party and his colleagues will go down. They must either remain beneath the yoke imposed upon them, or pass out of both the Executive and legislative spheres, into the obscurity of private life.

INCREASED TAXATION.

The one thing plain to us in this State is that we are obliged to pay very high for the luxury of accepting a Labour Government. While Mr. McGowen was leader parties in the last House were too evenly balanced for the Caucus to carry out its policy of new taxation. What even then it contrived to do was to borrow and spend in advance, fortified by the reflection that if the country returned a State Liberal majority the new Government would be obliged to begin with fresh levies upon the people of New South Wales. Mr. Holman has now the pleasure of meeting these obligations already incurred with his consent and of providing for further disbursements under party orders. Railway and tramway fares are to be raised. An extra half million is to be forced out of an increased income tax; there is to be a new tax on exports, as well as a tax upon real estate sales. This will amount to $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the total profit since the last change of ownership of the land. With the alleged object of increasing "closer settlement", lands within fifteen miles of any railway, or its terminus, or of the navigable portions of the River Murray, unless within town areas, or used for mining purposes, are to be subject to a new super-tax on each pound of unimproved value, rising by degrees from twopence to ninepence, subject to a variety of conditions and exemptions. The receipts from this source cannot be estimated in advance, and the general outcome of the various new proposals only guessed at. But Mr. Holman's last year's accounts already show a deficit of £1,167,000, and those of the 1913-14 a further deficit of £604,000, in spite of a revenue increase estimated at £2,120,000. In the meantime our sinking fund payments are suspended and new taxation, roughly set down at £1 per head is being imposed upon our population. There is no provision for past deficits; the ordinary cost of our State Government is rising at the rate of more than £300,000 a year, while our public debt has been recently increased by about £8,700,000. This extravagance is seen in its true light when the records of the

last Liberal Government are contrasted with those of the Labour Caucus. Mr. Wade so adjusted his outlay to his income that every year showed a considerable surplus carried forward. On the other hand, Labour, so far, has created, and is now more distinctly creating large deficits. These, again, are coupled with vague indications of new State ventures intended to enlarge its present receipts, but almost certain to become drains on the Treasury. No doubt New South Wales can afford to spend even more than is proposed, providing that its new investments are well chosen and thriftily managed. Our undeveloped resources are enormous and our progress constant. So far, however, Labour's disbursements have proved more costly than remunerative, in almost every direction. Certainly, there is nothing in its present Budget to assure us the sound policy and good results of our progressive Liberal financing under Mr. Wade.

EXPENDITURE AND DEVELOPMENT.

Nor are the burdens due to our State Cabinet all that we have to provide for. We have our Australian Parliament to reckon with. The Commonwealth plunged badly while the Caucus controlled Mr. Fisher and his fellow-administrators. The condition of the national finances has become more serious since then, owing partly to the results of their recklessness and partly to the present unpromising outlook for the farmers in several States. New South Wales, as the most populous and prosperous part of the Union, will have to bear the largest proportion of the levies required to meet its share of our new Commonwealth obligations. Sir John Forrest is eager for our Federal Government to take over the whole of the debts of all the States at once and to relieve them of all liability as these mature. He will borrow for any States at their request, or they may still seek the money market themselves should they so prefer. A sinking fund of $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. is in course of time to relieve the National Government of its burden. His further aim is to provide against the competition between the Commonwealth Bank and the State Savings Banks, which have done excellent service hitherto in most States. The former, having acquired some six and a half millions, which would otherwise have been employed by the ordinary banks, has not yet succeeded in finding clients prepared to utilise more than one million. Our Australian note issue gave the bank £10,000,000 of gold to start with, of which £6,000,000 has been lent, providing a revenue of about £200,000 a year. This appears to be the present sum total of the achievement of an institution of which great things are expected. It may yet be invited to lend its aid in the long-projected development of the Northern Territory, upon which a very large sum of money has been expended by the Fisher Government without anything like commensurate results. Its Board of Inquiry is far from unanimous in its reports, though a majority favours a large and continuous outlay. Yet the two experimental farms from which so much has

been expected are now closed, having cost the country nearly £60,000, for which we have nothing to show. The products natural to high northern temperatures probably require tropically-bred labour, which is not forthcoming. As it is, our aborigines appear to be the mainstay of whatever cultivation exists. Dr. Gilruth has displayed great energy, courage, and resolution in his control of the territory, but so far he has not been able to do more than make a beginning in Port Darwin. He has roused almost the whole of the old residents against him by his endeavour to put pressure upon them sufficient to bring them up to his standards of efficiency. Whether regarded from the standpoint of production, or of the white labourer's contention that he cannot face summer work in the open except for short spells, excluding the heat of the day, the development of this great area is still a difficult problem to solve. The economies now being insisted upon by the Cook Cabinet are considerable. Some railway extensions are about to be commenced and large sums will be disbursed, adding to the existing debt of the territory. South Australia is the only State that has reason to bless the day when the Commonwealth Liberal Government accepted its expensive nursing.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

PROBLEMS FOR THE NEW GOVERNOR-GENERAL. POSITION OF THE LABOUR CAUCUS.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, May 4 1914; Jun. 20 1914.

Lord **Denman**, always polite and pleasant, leaves many friends in Australia, though a large proportion of them are much puzzled by his most inopportune, retirement. His right to resign is, of course, unimpeachable. The consequences of his retirement are clear. A very grave responsibility indeed is being transferred from his own shoulders to those of Sir **Ronald Munro Ferguson** directly the latter sets foot upon our soil. Our new Governor-General must at once face a problem new to Australia, and interpret a provision of our Constitution hitherto untouched. He may exercise a power – that of a double dissolution – never hitherto employed. Under the Commonwealth Constitution the Federal Ministry is responsible solely to the House of Representatives, chosen from single constituencies, and capable of being sent back to them at any time. Our Senate, elected on the same broad democratic franchise, differs immensely from its fellow Chamber. Each of our States, however small its population, possesses exactly the same representation as its fellows, no matter how huge the difference may be between their areas or between the thinly-peopled and the thickly-peopled communities that return them. Another fundamental difference is that the six Senators representing each State are divided at the outset, if necessary, by lot, into two sections. Three of them retire at the close of three years' service and the remaining three after six years, that being the term of all their successors. After a double dissolution the three of the successful Senators lowest on the poll are obliged to be content with a three years' term. After that the six years' term applies continuously and to all unless and until another political earthquake occurs. Needless to say that an Upper Chamber like the present, with three-fourths of its members bitterly antagonistic to the **Cook** Government, all of them being sworn servants of the Labour Caucus, is not likely to consent to any special appeals to the country. That might result in the loss not only of their control of the Senate but also perhaps the loss of their all but equal strength in the House of Representatives. At present the **Cook** Ministry, though in office, has not sufficient Senators supporting it even to form the quorum essential to the transaction of any business in the Upper Chamber.

Besides, it has only a majority of one representative in the popular Chamber. To-day the Opposition Caucus is quite content with its absolute supremacy in the Senate, which has at least two years to run and probably five years. Meanwhile at any time the loss of one or two seats in the House would restore Labour ascendancy there, while the loss of several Senators need not imperil Labour authority in that body. No wonder then that the Constitutional Party under Mr. Cook is straining every nerve to secure a double dissolution, well content to risk its present nominal superiority in one House in a bold endeavour to capture a complete control of both Chambers.

AIMS OF THE MINISTRY.

Assuming the defeat of Mr. Fisher's merely blocking amendment, and the clearing of the ground by the adoption of the Address in reply, the Cook Cabinet has next to establish its case against the Senate. This it will do by re-submitting as tests the Bills contemptuously thrown out last year by the sweeping Labour majority in the Upper Chamber. The unfair favouritism to Trade Unionists, endowed as such without regard to their deserts or defects, with a special preference in all Government appointments, will be again assailed by the Ministry. The cruel deprivation of the postal franchise of all women physically disabled for the time being from reaching a polling-booth or facing its excitements will be challenged again. The Senate dare not accept these or any other proposals of the same just character. Their second rejection by the Senate will justify an appeal to the new Governor-General for the double dissolution, which will remit these and other vital questions at issue to the whole of the Australian people. Having regard to the impotence and indifference of many voters, the outcome of such a struggle cannot be forecast. His Excellency may consent only to dissolve the divided House of Representatives, though that will prove utterly insufficient to meet the needs of the situation. Such a course would doom the Commonwealth to a long, costly, and weary combat. So far in the House, the political tide is favourable. True, we have not yet got beyond the Address in reply, three-fourths of the sittings being exploited by Labour members' speeches. Comparatively few Ministerialists have spoken, and some of them briefly. Mr. Fisher opened the battle with a speech he had been long rehearsing throughout the Eastern States, though he did not repeat all of the charges manufactured by or for him. Mr. Cook's reply, explicit in facts and lucid in argument, was, though strictly limited to the matter before him, perhaps the most effective he has made since he took office. He finally disposed, not only of Mr. Fisher's canards but of many others which have been given currency while he has been Prime Minister. Since then there have been many other fictions. One of these reflects even upon the present Governor-General for his retirement under an alleged pressure upon him exercised by his present advisers. This fabrication apparently intended to injure Mr. Cook and his colleagues, has been put into currency by the would

be Labour friends of Lord Denman, who find in our Sydney *Worker* a means of reaching their constituents. According to Mr. Fisher and his associates, even our new Governor-General still en route to us, has been already threatened by his Australian Ministers before he arrives or they have made his acquaintance. When the Leader of the Opposition and his principal newspapers stoop to such malicious and groundless calumnies, little need be said of their following which exaggerates and multiplies these slanders.

LABOUR SLANDERS.

The one instance in which the present Federal Government, acting upon the advice of the most experienced and able **engineers** appointed by the late Fisher Cabinet, let a relatively very small contract to a tenderer for railway construction in Western Australia at prices which compare very favourably with those authorised by two State Governments, has been at last disposed of not only to the satisfaction of the public but even of members of the Opposition. In fact, though two supporters of the Ministerial Party unwarrantably attacked their lenders from personal standpoints, the final effect of the debates so far is most distinctly creditable to our present national Cabinet. The slanders so far, with their endless repetitions relied upon by the Labour gramophones have been thoroughly discounted. It is in our own State and in our own capital city that the real character of Caucus rule and the real relations of its members to each other and to its organisation are being gradually disclosed. While our Constitutional Party in New South Wales always has troubles enough and to spare, their origin and character are generally known to the public, and as a rule even in their details are openly canvassed. As a State we are at sixes and sevens, much in need of a dominating but independent Leader of our Opposition, and also of a Council composed of capable, and trustworthy advisers. In one aspect we have all these already, but we are so divided and subdivided by conflicting interests and local jealousies, that it is not for us to throw stones at our State Labour Party. We have a long task before us to attain efficiency and harmony. Our own political "machine" is more pretentious than efficient, and more divided than united. Still, the spectacle lately disclosed to our public, chiefly in connection with the duel between our Labour Premier, Mr. **Holman**, and the Labour Speaker of our House, Mr. **Meagher**, has brought some revelations to light upon which it is to be hoped that our public will find time to meditate. The comedy began when Mr. Meagher captured the Speakership, badly defeating Mr. Holman's rival **nominee**. It became low comedy when, in the Premier's absence, the offended Speaker suddenly carried a motion in the Caucus elevating that body above Ministers and the Cabinet, and making it the sole authority in the appointment of members of the Legislative Council. The brawl finally assumed a tragic complexion when the *Worker*, insisting that "the Labour

movement has no leader” and “no use for leaders” (except the *Worker*), went on to declare to the public that “the party has had bitter reason to distrust the Government in this matter”. Its summary of the situation is: “The day of the leader has gone by; he is an obsolete institution”, unless indeed that paper itself assumes the crown and sceptre.

NEW SOUTH WALES LEGISLATURE.

Mr. Holman severely alluded to his acquaintance with rumours of “trafficking in appointments to the Upper House”, for which there are believed to be two hundred applicants. He also implies much by warning these candidates that they are being “swindled” (presumably out of cash), since his “Government is not going to put anybody into the Upper House”. No wonder that Mr. Meagher challenges his Premier to make a definite charge either that he accepted fees for moving the adjournment of the House on a critical occasion or that he used his influence in connection with an authorised “Totalisator”. No wonder that Mr. Holman in turn challenged the new Speaker to move his dismissal as Premier. After publicly declaring that the choice of candidates for the Legislative Council will be made by Ministers alone, and on their own responsibility, despite the resolution carried in his absence by a Caucus in January last, he has sunk into sudden silence. Mr. Meagher, too, has as mysteriously closed his lips. The *Worker*, left in possession of the field, solemnly and severely protests that: “The matter cannot rest where it is to-day. Either Mr. Meagher is a corrupt politician who should be hounded out of public life, or Mr. Holman is a reckless vilifier of his fellow-man and utterly unfitted either for leadership or membership in a representative Assembly”.

Rarely does the daylight clearly penetrate our perplexed Caucus, and very rarely does any cry from thence reach the outside world. Yet the manoeuvres of our disciplined political forces are carried out steadily, often by Labour men obviously recalcitrant, and at times bitterly hostile to their standard bearers. Under modified forms and with modulated protests the party led by Mr. Wade carries out the orders of its leaders only within certain limits, and for the most part criticises him severely. It suffers owing to its own weaknesses and to the uncertainty of its chief advisers. Instead of all their sections coming together, they multiply subdivisions and increase the obstacles to their effective action. While these adverse circumstances beset the Opposition, the enforced political servitude of the Labour forces leaves them in possession of the field. It has already enabled them to add another seven and a half millions to our deficit this year. Critics assert that the effect of the latest award of Mr. Justice Higgins, as President of the Arbitration Court, will increase the rates payable to waterside working men by a very large sum, possibly approaching £400,000 a year. The latest

organisation to emerge out of the many already in existence is the Federal Grand Council of Labour, which held its first executive meeting in Melbourne last week. Its ambition is “closer organisation, fewer Unions and more Unionists”, and “the closer unity of political and industrial sections”. For all these our community will be obliged to pay.

THE LABOUR CAUCUS AND FINANCE.

Yet, according to the Prime Minister, workers in Victoria under Governments hostile to the Caucus are earning 4s. a week more in effective wages than they earn in this State, where Labour absolutely rules. Furthermore, since he had come into power there had been an increase of 1s. a week in the effective wage earned throughout Australia. He reminded his hearers that when the late Labour Government purchased our Sydney Dock they incurred a responsibility without the authority of Parliament of no less than £870,000, which our taxpayers must now finance. Mr. Fisher also agreed to buy Admiralty House and Garden Island for another £650,000, but that transaction Mr. Cook intends to contest. He further made it plain that the **Teesdale Smith** contract, accepted on the advice of the Engineer-in-Chief, a highly capable officer of long experience, had been abundantly safeguarded and was proving an excellent piece of business. His concluding contention was that the Labour Party “had erected itself into a tyranny which was undermining Parliamentary institutions and would leave all other institutions the worse”. It was Mr. Fisher who lately dubbed all non-Unionists as “sneaks of society”, and thus affixed offhand to two out of every three working men in Australia one more opprobrious epithet added to the many already coined by him and his colleagues. Yet they themselves are one and all the servants of masters whom they dare not disobey.

When a large Labour majority floated Mr. Fisher into office in 1910 he commenced with far greater advantages financially than any of his predecessors, or than Mr. Cook his successor. The financial agreement with the States, which he and his party resisted, was invaluable. He spent royally for three years, and though he concluded with a good balance to his credit, his obligations totalled far more than his successors are receiving. Mr. Cook is continually attacked as if he were to blame, though the plain fact is that he is grappling boldly and steadily with Mr. Fisher’s obligations. He has been able to save £3,250 a year in the Northern Territory salaries hitherto payable to Mr. Fisher’s nominees. For all that, the ten months’ takings of the Commonwealth are £600,000 behind last year’s. Our pensions and maternity allowances are still on the increase. Our courageous outlay upon the Australian unit of a Pacific Ocean fleet has involved us in a necessary, but also costly, outlay, in which we have not been supported by Mr. **Churchill**. No one grudges the money, but it must be confessed that the implications of this strange incident suggest further outlays for us still if the Empire is to hold its own in these waters.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

NEW GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, May 27 1914; Jul. 6 1914.

Our new **Governor-General** has been duly sworn in, but, unfortunately for us, the ceremony took place in Melbourne, in what was the Victorian Parliament House until our National Legislature was temporarily housed there. This will continue to meet there until Canberra shall have been built to receive Australia's representatives as our political capital. In the meantime New South Wales is obliged to rest content and wait, conscious that she is the most populous State of the Commonwealth and Sydney its largest, wealthiest, and most charming city. Her old and beautifully-situated Government House was refused to Lord **Denman** for his stays here amid petty struggles, somewhat in bad taste. Mr. **Holman** and his colleagues insisted upon devoting the old building to other public purposes. However, the principal wing of the Federal Labour Party not only resented the action of its State allies, but sought in every way to emphasise its devotion to the Governor-General. He, on his side, even went the length of accepting an invitation from the leaders of the Labour Caucus, now in Opposition in the Commonwealth Parliament, to a party dinner, attended only by their own side. This was held just prior to the official dinner, presided over by the Federal Premier, Mr. **Cook**, including all members of both parties with many other distinguished guests. Still, Lord Denman's tact, devotion to sport, particularly racing, and his close interest in the military training of Australian youths, stood him in good stead at his departure. His successor, heartily welcomed in Perth, in Adelaide, and in Melbourne, is obviously a man of a different mould. He will commend himself to all classes by the straight forward manliness of his bearing and frank replies to interviewers. Received with rapture by "brither Scots" and with much confidence by the general community, his gallant bearing has evoked much appreciation wherever he has, spoken. **Lady Munro Ferguson**, accredited by her distinguished father's fame and her own achievements among the poor and ailing, has also been most cordially welcomed by all classes. The warm-hearted comments of the critical in our southern States will constitute, here and in Queensland, an excellent introduction for both of them.

NATIONAL AIMS AND NEEDS.

The Premiers' Conference and that of the Treasurers of the States were both assiduously attended by the Prime Minister and his **Treasurer** on behalf of the Commonwealth. As a consequence we have had for the first time a real endeavour to cope with the interests of the whole Continent. We have at last been able to combine its seven Governments in an endeavour to serve our national aims and meet our national needs. But even now unfortunately some of our pressing needs must remain unmet for a time and some of the boldest efforts after a true union continue unsatisfied. Nevertheless, the mere fact that there has been such a memorable meeting and that public attention has been again called to some high ideals of national life will make the occasion memorable. It is very unfortunate that nothing has been achieved enabling us to deal with our public debts as a whole or to adjust the still unrestricted borrowings of the States. One of the chief newspapers of this city goes so far as to rejoice that there are obstacles to every united effort in this direction and that there is one more failure to agree as to the launching of future loans. A principal motive for this hostility is a dread of the growing ascendancy of the National Parliament, which is obviously being increased by the divided counsels of our States. So far as the Commonwealth Bank is concerned an understanding as to its scope has been attained at the Conference, and will be formally submitted to our seven Legislatures. Its fate is doubtful in at least two States and quite hopeless nationally, while our National Senate is overwhelmingly hostile. It will so continue while in the hands of the Labour Caucus. This naturally constitutes one of the chief problems for which a double dissolution may presently be sought by Mr. Cook.

PROGRAMME OF LEGISLATION.

It would be a mistake to infer that the two or three Bills which the Cook Government only passed last year by the casting vote of the Speaker represent more than a fragment of the programme on which it seeks to go to the country. There are many other measures of great practical importance upon which the electors will be called upon to give their verdict. A whole policy will be at stake, though only the brief and vital Bills will be used to challenge the Senate. The autocratic **banker** whom the Caucus placed in despotic control of the Commonwealth Banks has publicly refused to allow the State Savings Banks to remain the recipients of their people's savings on fair terms. The Labour Party's code demands centralisation, and defends the banking policy established during its supremacy. On the other hand, the present Government seeks to make the bank a purely national institution, working with the Savings Banks established years before the new invading institution began its career. Then, again, the agreement arrived at by the States and the Commonwealth as to the distribution of

the Murray Waters, the works being subsidised by the present Federal Government, is also quite likely to be challenged by the Caucus in one or more of their domains. New South Wales is well content. Western Australia, under Caucus control, continues unjustifiably hostile to the reasonable proposals of the National Government in respect generally to the trans-continental line and other co-operations. Consistency seems at a discount in the Labour Party generally. It is especially manifest whenever an opportunity occurs of making a clutch at office on any terms. There is the flagrant breach of faith of the Tasmanian Labour Ministry, which, directly it attained the Treasury Bench, proved false to its pledges. The wriggles of the same faction not long since in Victoria are among the recent memorable evidences of the untrustworthiness of the Caucus. In addition, there is the damaging demonstration by the **Premier of Victoria** that the Labour members of that State, now making a bid for office at the impending dissolution, have committed themselves to a wildly extravagant, policy of which they have made no attempt to count the cost. Should they prove victorious at the polls their Caucus will have pledged itself to an increase of the taxation in that State of over £7,000.000 sterling a year added to the one million and three-quarters of taxation which meets all its present needs. The replies of the members of the Victorian Opposition when faced with these figures, have been of the feeblest. It is plain that none of them have attempted to estimate their reckless commitments. Hence their programme has been practically shattered at the very outset. Of course, their supporters are pledged to it. No matter at what outlay or with what consequences, they have bound themselves to foot the bill. To meet it is, of course, utterly out of the question.

AGRICULTURAL CONFERENCE.

It is a relief to turn from these vote-catching antics to the Brisbane Conference of Ministers of Agriculture. The issues there were practical, and they have been practically met by the adoption of a series of really unanimous conditions. These provide, *inter alia*, for the compulsory grading of butter for export oversea, compulsory cream grading, the careful handling of perishable products when being shipped, the fixing of the f.a.q. standard sample of wheat each year, and also for pure food standards. The unanimity secured in relation to the handling of cheese, butter, and other products, cannot fail to be of great value to the whole of Australia. In this connection it may be noted that the Federal Government has announced its intention to officially investigate the operations of the American Meat Trust in connection with our export trade and to ascertain, *inter alia*, the probable increase in prices already foreshadowed. The appointment of Mr. Justice **Street** as sole Commissioner is welcomed especially in this State, where he possesses a fine record. It will be interesting to note the attitude of the Labour Party, which did nothing whatever

during its recent three years of absolute power in office even to determine the effects of the Trust's recent establishment in Queensland and alleged entrance into New South Wales.

SITUATION IN NEW SOUTH WALES.

Even to outline the political situation in this State is no easy task at present. The facts up to certain point are plain and unmistakably. It is the sudden and complete disappearance of the highly critical situation described in my previous letter three weeks ago that must be borne in mind. It reminds one of the instability of any situation in which the Labour Party is an effective power. When it was written we were awaiting the political duel between Premier and Speaker which was to determine the leadership of the Parliament of New South Wales. One or other of the combatants was to find a public funeral and be blotted out of our list of leaders. The newspaper of the Caucus not only described the contest as final but dictated in advance the obsequies of Mr. Holman and the future policy to be adopted by his successor. Since then nothing has happened in public – but everything is totally transformed. Some party meetings may have been held in private, but none of those sensations promised to the public have occurred. If Mr. Meagher's lips have been padlocked those of Mr. Holman have been taught to lisp his programme, and nothing but the programme. This was recently elaborated in the mildest manner to a crowded and occasionally unsympathetic Trades Hall audience by a Premier seeking absolution for his angry threats of a few days before. He spoke in camera, but it was with bated breath, of the long list of Bills he and his colleagues are fabricating for the session about to open. Seventy of them are said to be in some stage of preparation! "Decentralisation" is one watchword covering local subsidies, while our railways are henceforth to be under "non-political management". This also seems to suggest other Ministerial possibilities, as they are to cover our defence against the Meat Trust. The Civil Service is to be "reorganised", another magic word that may embrace all kinds of increases to employees. There are to be "State" fishing vessels and iron works, harbours other than Port Jackson, and workshops in country districts are to be Governmentally developed.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

LABOUR PARTY'S BID FOR OFFICE.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Jun. 16 1914; Jul. 28 1914.

The Labour Party of the Commonwealth is making preparations for another bid for office. Its leaders have never accepted their defeat of last year. If the constituencies could have been bought by either promises or concessions Mr. Fisher would have been in office still. Their victory in 1910 gave them the millions due to the then new financial agreement with the States, which they had fiercely resisted, but which the Deakin Government had fought for and carried. On that hoard they traded as if it had been the fruit of their own financing, spending lavishly and recklessly in order to enjoy another term of office. This Mr. Cook's narrow victory at the polls denied them. The political life of his Cabinet has hung upon his majority of one vote from then till now. But for a mysterious demoralisation of the Labour Opposition in the House due to internal intrigues and feuds only partially controlled by the Caucus, the Prime Minister could not have worried through as he did. As for the Senate, his supporters there were so few that the Government representatives could neither form nor keep a quorum. They were absolutely dependent upon the pleasure of their opponents, who embraced every opportunity of harassing them. Even Mr. Millen's tactful leadership could accomplish nothing then, or, indeed, at any time, against such hopeless odds. Yet the position of parties in the House continued in the highest degree precarious. It was only by the help of the casting vote of the Speaker now and then that the measure repealing the preference to Unionists granted by the Fisher Government was first passed last year and again this session. It was met in the Senate the second time by a hostile Labour majority. Some of its members defiantly and insultingly forced a division – and defeated the Bill – without a word of explanation. This action, however, fulfilled the statutory requirements of the situation. At once Mr. Cook appealed to the Governor-General, only just arrived among us, for a double dissolution, enabling the Electors of Australia to make a fresh choice of members for both Chambers. With a prompt courage that has established his reputation Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson sanctioned the crucial step.

THE DOUBLE DISSOLUTION.

Our representative men in the Nineties who drafted the Constitution of the Commonwealth were much perplexed in their endeavour to establish a truly Federal Government and at the same time to endure its working. Deadlocks were obviously possible, particularly when the little State of Tasmania with its small population was allowed the same representation in the Senate as New South Wales. In the Federal Chamber, which exercises financial supremacy, the number of members for each State above a fixed minimum is always in proportion to its population. It was obvious, therefore, that whenever the two Chambers were at odds the result was likely to be a deadlock, paralysing legislation. For nearly ten years before federation the provision of a safety valve for such situations was eagerly canvassed. It was only at the very last stage that the double dissolution was accepted by the Premiers of the States as a constitutional method of cutting Gordian knots by an appeal to the whole people. Such a reference is now anticipated, and for the first time in September next. It is, of course, possible that the two Chambers elected may then prove to be still at variance with each other on the question of preference to Unionists. The Government may secure a working majority in the House and still remain with only a minority in the Senate, or conceivably the present position in the two Houses might be reversed. The clumsiness and inadequacy of the compromise method adopted for solving deadlocks at the last moment in 1899 is now plain. In the last resort all the members of the two Houses will sit and vote together, despite the immense difference in their several constituencies, upon the one issue as to preference to Unionists. Nothing else need be settled. All members returned will obey their electors and pursue the general policy of their parties. Doubtless it is well that our new test is to be faced by both Chambers. Even if it should prove fruitless, its occurrence may act as a serious warning to both parties. The political situation as it existed demanded this or some other distinct solution. It also required a brave and far-seeing man to face the crisis. When Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson pays his first visit to Sydney he will deserve a hearty welcome from all who can appreciate a fearless discharge of public duty by the one man whose courage may yet enable us to overcome the existing deadlock in the Parliament of the Commonwealth.'

BOLD MINISTERIAL POLICY.

Generally speaking, the Federal political outlook is, and threatens to continue, very clouded. Nothing less than the extreme pressure of party necessities can hold either the Government or its antagonists together. Ministers now must not only fight hard for their own seats but for their followers, too, and for the command of both Houses. Without a majority in both Chambers neither party can accomplish its programme.

Yet with last year's Senate almost wholly in the hands of the Labour Caucus, it appears very unlikely that even now a satisfactory situation will be achieved by the appeal to Caesar. Still, there is no other way to test it than that which the Federal Cabinet has been pursuing. When even a joint sitting shall have been proved fruitless, some other and graver alteration of the Constitution seems likely to follow. But long before the country arrives at any such crisis as that the electors are sure to be asked to consider a bold Ministerial policy, embracing a number of issues lately left out of sight, or else set aside until the time was ripe for their full declaration. Upon these the electors will be invited to meditate before they cast their votes in the memorable contest now about to begin. It may be taken for granted that a lengthy programme from the Government embracing many measures, some of them novel, be laid before the country. The Labour Caucus will also recast or rephrase its former bid for public support. Both parties will criticise each other fiercely, and personally too, probably without making much impression on even our ever credulous and ever sanguine working men and women, for whom new Eldorado is only a short distance ahead. The contest will certainly surpass all that have preceded it in this country, both in breadth of aim and depth of feeling. Whether we may anticipate any approach to a clearer understanding of the real and practical issues at stake to-day is still doubtful. It is not in the least unlikely that either party may win, so to speak, by accident.

MR. WATT'S INFLUENCE.

Under such conditions it is quite possible that the proposed entry of Mr. *W.A. Watt* into the Federal sphere will help to turn the balance in Victoria in favour of the Cook Cabinet. The consequences of such a step may prove serious to the Ministry, of which he is the leader for no successor can be named in the State House who exercises the same influence or anything like it. A return to Mr. *Murray* would certainly not inspirit the party. His retirement was inevitable when Mr. Watt was put in contrast with him. Sir *Alexander Peacock* seems almost as hopeless. But on this side of our great border river, the Murray, the present Premier of the Southern State is practically the only public man there who has made an impression on us or become the friend of our subtle leader, Mr. *Holman*, despite their many differences of opinion. The mere fact that the thought of his entrance into Federal politics has evoked a new interest in the coming battle at the ballot-box is sufficient measure of his reputation and influence. Of course, he will not lay down his Victorian status of Premier unless he is invested with the equal dignity attaching to a seat in the Commonwealth Cabinet. It is understood that this will be offered to him, in which case he would probably become Postmaster-General of the Commonwealth. His verve and judgment, courage, and self-control have made him the most effective fighter in Victorian politics. The far larger field of Australia, as a whole, will be open to him and from

the very first position will be that of a potent leader, always assuming that the negotiations now proceeding induce him to transfer his energies and influence to the widest area we possess. His adhesion could not have been more timely or propitious. Mr. Cook will have good grounds for rejoicing that such another lieutenant has stepped up beside him in his hour of need.

COCKATOO ISLAND DOCKYARD.

Were it not for the enthralling interests attending the unexpected double dissolution a great deal of public attention would have been devoted by this time to the numerous discoveries that are being made of Labour's reckless mismanagement. The Cockatoo Island dockyard was suddenly acquired by the Fisher Government at what appeared to be an exorbitant price only a short time before that Ministry left office. The why and wherefore of such a step, and of the huge sum paid for the property, would have attracted much more attention if the public had taken any real interest in the matter. For one reason and another a full inquiry into the transaction was postponed, and though it soon became clear that the price paid was quite unwarranted it was assumed, especially after Mr. J. King-Salter, a trained expert, became general manager, that the undertaking would be profitable to the Commonwealth. Those hopes seemed to have been dashed to the ground about a year ago by Senator Millen's scepticism soon after he became head of the Defence Departments, to which this was one of the most important additions. Naturally, the officer in charge has made an exhaustive study of the great undertaking committed to his care. He is now alleged to have prepared a report for his Minister, parts of which have been published as his by the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Since their sudden appearance in print there has been a general and somewhat mysterious silence in respect to a severe condemnation of the dockyard and its deficiencies. These statements remain uncontradicted for the present, and are apparently accepted by Ministers, though Mr. Cook himself appears to resent their publication. What is more, they are specific. It is alleged that the all-important work of constructing the four vessels necessary to make up the first fleet unit of the Royal Australian Navy is proceeding so slowly that more than another year must elapse before the light cruiser *Brisbane* can be even launched. The three destroyers were to have been finished by October next, but are not completed or expected to be until long after the date fixed. One of the causes of the postponement appears to be a great lack of competent, trained workmen, and another the "Government stroke", which there is no attempt to improve. It appears that before the Fisher Cabinet made its wild plunge the Management Committee of the dockyard had submitted a statement of the labour required for the work in hand, which seems to have been buried out of sight from that day to this. It is well known that a system of piecework would largely increase the earnings of competent men,

and, what is more important, would expedite the completion of the ships necessary for defence purposes. Perhaps the most effective criticism of the dock as it stands is to be found in the calculation that if the *Brisbane* had been completed here in the same time as a sister ship was in England the Australian taxpayer would have saved £300,000. Another rough calculation indicates that the dockyard will probably cost us half a million before it is really fitted up efficiently. Even if the figures be greatly reduced they remain sufficiently large to impress every thoughtful taxpayer.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

EFFECTS OF THE WAR.

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.
SYDNEY, Nov. 11 1914; Dec. 30 1914.

Australians so far see little change for the better in the world war. Despite our successes by land and sea the blood toll is continuously demanded of us, and as continuously paid by our gallant kinsfolk and their brave Allies, and already there are many homes, even in this far country, whose records of sacrifice and suffering become heavier and heavier as we proceed. Yet the Press of the Commonwealth very properly maintains a studied silence as to our future. The man in the street is full of rumours and revelations alleged to be authentic, but mainly with little or no foundations. Yet it is obvious even to him that the youths who march past the saluting stations at their parades to-day disappear next evening by some route he knows not and to trials he cannot conceive. What we do realise more and more clearly as we proceed is that the terrific, the unceasing life and death struggle in France and Belgium, and upon the Austro-German frontier, marks the most memorable conflict in either the past or present history of our race. From the *loss of the Emden* and of the *Königsberg* and the *surrender of Tsing-tau* we may anticipate a still more effective ocean pursuit and ultimate paralysis of the German Fleet and its cruisers. The dogged courage with which the forces of our Mother Country, including her Colonies, miscellaneous Indian peoples, the gallant French, and the so far irresistible Russians, are now making headway against our ruthless enemies, is, of itself, a supreme testimony to the unparalleled importance of the campaigns that signalise the greatest crisis in history. Australian struggles, in politics, or against the drought to the south and west of us, seem by comparison quite minor matters, when matched against the stirring incidents of Europe's battlefields. Yet we are not blind to the manifold risks of our present situation, and, though little or nothing is said in this regard, are much dissatisfied, *inter alia*, with the methods of our Defence Departments. It is for the sake of the country that silence is being observed under many provocations, and their veils of meaningless mystery allowed to flutter almost without challenge. The spirit with which our recruits accept their position is for the most part admirable, and, for the rest, certain to develop manfully as they proceed.

FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE STATES.

In the meantime it is satisfactory, after all, that Mr. Fisher nominally, and the majority of his followers actually, should control the situation. Whatever blunders and extravagances are sanctioned it is better that, for the time being, one party has all the power and the other a right to criticise. To the credit of Mr. Cook and his stalwart supporters it must be admitted that so far that right has been exercised very sparingly and with good judgment. Had the positions have been reversed the outcome would have been very different. The Conference behind closed doors between the Commonwealth Government and the Governments of the States fell far short in its results of what the Labour Caucus of the former desired. We have escaped extravagant borrowings by Mr. Fisher and grievously disappointed most of the States. Mr. Holman's heart is too full to permit him to adequately define his deprivations. Mr. Scaddan is another borrower whose narrow escape at the late election indicates the very great change in West Australian politics. Apparently nothing that any of the Premiers desired has been accomplished. A shower of daring projects, all involving large sums of borrowed money, have disappeared. The British Government enables us all to carry on for the time being with modest supplies at ordinary rates and earnest hopes of peace. Mr. Scaddan even is himself growing grateful for comparatively minor mercies, content to carry on with the smallest of majorities in one House and a minority of supporters in the other. On the other hand, the Premier of Queensland, Mr. Denham, occupies an entirely different position. He has ample loan moneys for the current financial year, which he commenced with £3,000,000 in hand, a sum sufficient to complete several railways, while 4,576 miles are already open for running. Last year only 6 per cent. of the cost of the lines in the Northern State needed to be met out of revenue. The remaining 94 per cent. was paid for out of reproductive works. No wonder that our Labour financiers sit very uncomfortably under such a practical comparison. No wonder either that Mr. Fisher's summary of the arrangements made to meet the wants of the five borrowing States was grudgingly given at the close of the sitting in half a dozen lines. It was not, so he said, "in the public interest to say more". It was clearly not in his own interest to go any further. After two days of private discussion this was the total revelation vouchsafed to our anxious taxpayers. Mr. Fisher spoke for the Commonwealth only, and there stopped short. The Premiers not only know that the Imperial Government was really finding the whole sum, but that Queensland could have secured £2,000,000 if she so pleased. This State of ours expected to receive another three-quarters of a million but failed to secure it. Hence Mr. Holman's bitter comment on the situation.

THE MURRAY STORAGE SCHEME.

It is a significantly suggestive fact that ever since Labour Ministries have administered New South Wales the cost of our Government has been rapidly rising. By far the larger part of the increase has been upon works of real value, and even when their cost has been challenged, as it deserved to be in several instances, the need met was real in most instances. In the present distribution of loan funds, if Mr. Holman and Mr. Scaddan had been supreme, they would have captured nearly two-thirds of the £18,000,000 available for general purposes. Our Premier, directly and indirectly, has registered his strong dissatisfaction with the division approved. Yet Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania are obliged to be content with less than £8,000,000 between them. The necessary Bill for this distribution will be passed immediately, and for the present must suffice. A fellow measure, framed originally by the Cook Ministry, and endorsed by a special Conference of the States affected, will follow promptly. The low levels of the Murray for many months past, and the present desolate stretch of drought-stricken country beside it, have made the completion of a huge storage scheme and an elaborate distribution system essential. When the present Cabinet laid its proposals for the current session before the National Parliament at its opening a month ago all that was promised in this regard was consideration of the project. Since then pressure from somewhere has been applied so promptly that the scheme seems certain to be sanctioned out of hand. What pressure it was that affected the present Commonwealth Cabinet is not yet apparent. The £1,000,000 promised by the late Government will be contributed by its successors, while the three States concerned are to accept the great project, so long sought for and of such great promise. The problem was truly Federal, and is being dealt with in a truly Federal spirit. It is true that a large number of amendments are to be introduced as merely minor alterations, of which the States are likely to be suspicious critics. However, the fact remains that by unanimous consent this immense scheme for the utilisation of our longest river and our largest area of cultivation is of very great importance to the three States, and, indeed, to Australians as a whole. It must be confessed that the growth of our irrigation settlements has been very tardy, despite the remarkably remunerative development of Mildura and Denmark. The prospects are not illimitable, but the area available is very large. Whether the flow of the great Artesian Basin will answer the high expectations some of our experts have expressed, though still a question in controversy, is one on which the experts are still sanguine.

UNIFORM RAILWAY GAUGE.

Whether it was in a very sanguine spirit that the Fisher Cabinet proposed, among the ambitious projects submitted to the State Premiers, one providing for an uniform

Australian railway gauge, or whether it was as a mere advertisement of the Cabinet's desires, is not quite clear. Upon this issue also Mr. Holman has very distinct opinions, and, what is more, seems likely to inspire his fellow-representatives from the States with his own strong views. Until lately the general opinion was that the main railway in each State should be relaid wherever necessary in order to establish one line, upon an uniform gauge, passing through all the States, available for military purposes in the event of invasion. The Inter-State Commission was invited by the Cook Cabinet to inquire into the necessity for such an undertaking, the cost of adopting it, and how to apportion the outlay. But Mr. Holman, without waiting for any such investigation, has frankly declared that it is for the Federal Government alone to undertake this problem. It should not interfere with the present State Railways either to unify the gauge or for other purposes. His implication clearly is that it is for the National Government, wherever and whenever necessary, to build its own lines at its own cost on a gauge of its own selection. Consequently he brushes aside all thought of any State responsibility, which, in his judgment, expressed in his own words, ought not to be considered for one second. Of course the States would carry out the work severally at the expense of the Commonwealth if so desired. Apparently what is intended is that the line now building from South Australia through Western Australia should be continued to the east and north-east through Victoria and New South Wales into Queensland. It would be constructed at a safe distance from the seaboard, and either connected with State railways or using, by arrangement, existing lines where they are of the gauge required. It must be confessed that if this be the adopted policy of the Caucus majority it can be given effect to without much delay. The whole undertaking will cost us a huge sum before it is completed, as proposed, wherever the Continent is already settled or about to be. Even then, our Northern Territory and its great stretch of country running south-westward, very sparsely occupied where it is occupied at all, must remain untouched and probably for a long period.

REMEDIAL LEGISLATION PROPOSED.

So far the Federal Parliamentary sittings in Melbourne have been few in number and tame in character, nor is much antagonism anticipated as yet from Mr. Cook, though his following is keenly conscious of the openings for stringent criticism afforded by the Ministerialists and their internecine feuds. The present temper of the Liberal Opposition is to allow the Government a free hand as far as possible until the European crisis becomes more settled. The speech of Sir [Alexander Peacock](#), the State Premier, delivered last Saturday evening at Creswick in exposition of the Government policy of the State Liberal Party, was well received. Being practical, progressive, and business-like, it was naturally approved on all hands. To recapitulate in detail would be idle. There are a score of proposals to assist drought-stricken

farmers, raise 50,000,000 bushels of wheat, increase the irrigable area from 250,000 to 650,000 acres, provide for an anticipated deficit, establish a Greater Melbourne and a new Council of Agricultural Education, multiply light railways, subsidiary roads, and motor transport, encourage forestry, improve the State schools, reshape the Charities Bill, extend the Legislative Council franchise to all ratepayers, and readjust the Legislative Assembly constituencies. These are obviously the principal projects of the State Government for the next three years. In New South Wales such a bill of fare would be considered by us to be very moderate, and its necessary financing a mere trifle when compared with the never-ending list of novel aims pursued by Mr. Holman's following. Mr. Scaddan's extremely narrow majority will hardly deter him from adding to his throng of speculative remedies chiefly in the shape of fresh levies upon well-to-do taxpayers by which he hopes on some future day to balance his accounts. South Australia can easily furnish its neighbours with illustrations of almost parsimonious thrift, while conducting its gallant fight against the deficit sure to be occasioned by the present persistent drought.



Alfred Deakin at Point Lonsdale, posing for a portrait by AT Woodward, 1910

(Brookes family, Alfred Deakin Photographic Collection, Deakin University, <http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30006291>)

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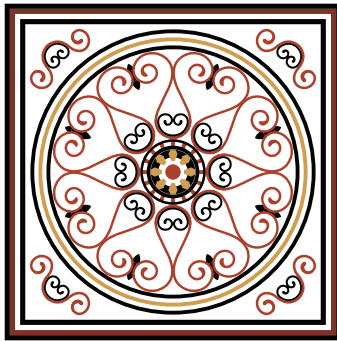
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