

1906.

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

No. 70.

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FRIDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 1906.

1. The House met pursuant to adjournment.—Mr. Speaker took the Chair, and read Prayers.
2. MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.—ASSENT TO BILLS.—The following Message from His Excellency the Governor-General was presented, and the same was read by Mr. Speaker :—

NORTHCOTE,
Governor-General.

Message No. 21.

The following Bills, intituled :—

- “ An Act relating to the Acquisition by the Commonwealth of Land required for Public Purposes and for dealing with Land so acquired and for other purposes connected therewith ” ;
 “ An Act relating to Duties of Customs ”—Customs Tariff 1906 ;
 “ An Act to amend the Excise Tariff 1905 ” ;
 “ An Act relating to Duties of Excise ”—Excise Tariff 1906 ;
 “ An Act relating to Preferential Duties of Customs on certain Goods the produce or manufacture of the British Colonies or Protectorates in South Africa which are included within the South African Customs Union ” ;
 “ An Act to amend the Law relating to Parliamentary Elections ” ;
 “ An Act to amend the Patents Act 1903 ” ;
 “ An Act to amend the Excise Tariff 1902 ” ;
 “ An Act relating to Spirits ” ;
 “ An Act to amend the Pacific Island Labourers Act 1901 ” ;

as finally passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth, having been presented to the Governor-General for the Royal Assent, His Excellency has, in the name and on behalf of His Majesty, assented to the said Acts.

Government House,
Melbourne, 12th October, 1906.

3. MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.—RESERVATION OF ASSENT TO BILL.—The following Message from His Excellency the Governor-General was presented, and the same was read by Mr. Speaker :—

NORTHCOTE,
Governor-General.

Message No. 22.

A Bill intituled “ An Act relating to Duties of Customs ” and known as the “ Customs Tariff (British Preference) 1906 ”, as finally passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth, having been presented to the Governor-General for the Royal Assent, His Excellency has reserved the said Bill for the signification of His Majesty's pleasure thereon.

Government House,
Melbourne, 12th October, 1906.

4. PAPERS.—Mr. Deakin presented, by command of His Excellency the Governor-General—Banking Returns of the various States of the Commonwealth and New Zealand, for the quarter ended 30th June, 1906.

Ordered to lie on the Table.

Mr. Deakin presented, pursuant to the direction of an Act of Parliament—

Commerce (Trade Descriptions) Act 1905—

Regulations—Statutory Rules, 1906, No. 84.

Amendment of Regulation No. 8—Statutory Rules, 1906, No. 85.

12th October, 1906.

5. MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.—A Message was delivered by the Usher of the Senate.

MR. SPEAKER,

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

Accordingly Mr. Speaker, with Members of the House, went to attend the Governor-General, when His Excellency was pleased to notify the Royal Assent to the following Bill :—

“ An Act to grant and apply a sum out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund to the service of the year ending the thirtieth day of June One thousand nine hundred and seven and to appropriate the supplies granted for such year in this session of the Parliament.”

After which His Excellency was pleased to make a speech to both Houses of the Parliament as follows :—

GENTLEMEN :

1. I am pleased to be able to release you from earnest labours, rendered more arduous by the obligation to close the session as soon as possible in order to expedite the elections.

2. Fortunately, I am able to congratulate the people of the whole of Australia upon the plentiful and seasonable rains with which we have been favored. The prosperity of the continent in production, exchange, finance, and accumulation, surpasses anything enjoyed since the establishment of Federation.

3. The Second Parliament of the Commonwealth, though commencing under serious disabilities owing to the existence of three independent parties, has, during the last two sessions, proved fruitful in practical measures of great value to the community. With the acceptance during the next Parliament of the remaining administrative responsibilities conferred upon you by the Constitution, the Commonwealth will enter into the full enjoyment of its powers.

4. A measure has been passed for the preservation of Australian Industries ; the repression of destructive monopolies ; and the prevention of dumping of imported goods on these shores. It prohibits contracts or combinations in restraint of trade or commerce to the detriment of the public, and aims at maintaining a fair, active, and healthy competition in the industrial and commercial world.

5. Legislative effect has been given, with some modifications, to certain valuable Reports of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the working of the Customs Tariff and its effect upon Australian industries. My Advisers regret that time did not permit of further reports being made and dealt with, though the necessities of other industries and of the desirability of meeting them without delay were fully recognised.

6. As a preliminary step to the establishment of Preferential Trade relations with the mother country, a Tariff advantage in the markets of the Commonwealth was proposed to certain of her manufactures. My Advisers earnestly trust that their efforts may lead to closer commercial relations and foster the sentiment of unity between the United Kingdom and the self-governing dominions.

7. A mutual concession of preferences has been arranged with South Africa, from which both countries will reap benefits. This will afford another object-lesson of the potentialities of Intra-Imperial Preferential Trade.

8. The negotiations of My Advisers with the late Prime Minister of New Zealand for Preferential Trade relations between that colony and the Commonwealth resulted in resolutions being approved by them which were welcomed in this Parliament ; but, as they were not acceptable to New Zealand, the project has been postponed.

9. Provision has been made for the appointment of two additional Judges to the High Court, which has now acquired the numerical strength appropriate to its status as one of the tribunals of highest judicial authority in the Empire. The Court as constituted will be enabled to efficiently exercise its appellate and original jurisdiction, and, at the same time, to permit one of its members to preside in the Arbitration Court designed for the purpose of securing industrial peace.

10. A contract has been entered into for a new line of specially-constructed steamers to carry the Australian mails to and from Great Britain and Europe. The vessels will be registered in Australia, fly the Australian flag, give a faster mail service, and afford much larger accommodation for perishable products.

11. A measure providing for the taking of a Referendum for proposed alterations of the Constitution has become law. The first reference under it to the electors of Australia will be made immediately upon a proposal to change the date upon which Senators commence their term of office. If this be assented to the effect will be to allow the triennial elections to be held in the autumn instead of in the summer as heretofore.

12. The financial relations of the Commonwealth and the States between themselves and to the holders of their debentures are among the most important matters now demanding consideration in the interests of Australia. Your Advisers deplore the fact that a determination of these relations has been deferred. A proposed alteration of the Constitution extending the powers of the Parliament to permit the taking over of the whole of the debts of the States not having obtained an absolute majority in one House cannot now be submitted to the electors.

13. My Ministers regard it as unfortunate that the authority to levy special duties for specific purposes, although approved by a majority of votes in both Houses, failed to secure in the Senate the absolute majority required by the Constitution, in order that the proposal might be submitted to the people. My Advisers were anxious to obtain this power for the purpose of providing without delay for the payment of Federal Old-Age Pensions.

12th October, 1906.

14. The discussion of the financial situation by the Conference of Ministers of the several States now sitting in Melbourne will, it is believed, contribute to a better understanding of the imperative urgency of early action, so far as that may be possible. Until the Constitution is amended any advance in this direction must necessarily be of a limited character.

15. A Lands Acquisition Act has been passed, re-enacting the *Property for Public Purposes Acquisition Act 1902*, providing for the simplification of procedure in effecting more speedily the settlement of claims for compensation for property acquired by the Commonwealth. Certain administrative difficulties have been removed, and the machinery clauses amended, in the light of the practical experience gained.

16. A proposal has been made to South Australia for the transfer of the Northern Territory to the Commonwealth, involving the ultimate construction of railways from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie and from Pine Creek to the southern boundary of the Territory. Owing to the necessary closing of the session, a Bill for the survey of a route for the western line has not yet been approved by Parliament.

17. The extremely valuable report of the Imperial Defence Committee enables the Government to review and revise the whole of our system of Defence, so as to considerably reduce the previously estimated cost of our fortifications by a re-adjustment of their armaments.

18. But, in addition to the recommendations of the Imperial Defence Committee, it is proposed to provide for the protection of our harbors and coastal commerce by obtaining torpedo boats and destroyers, some of which, if possible, will be constructed in Australia.

19. Important alterations in the conditions under which Australians serve in the Imperial Squadron have been suggested by the Naval Commander-in-Chief, which would provide a highly-trained body of men available for service upon the local Floating Defences or for promotion in the Royal Navy.

20. Large additions have been made during the last twelve months, both to the strength of the Cadets and Rifle Clubs and to the stores of weapons and war materiel which cannot at present be obtained within the Commonwealth.

21. The cost of the Land and Sea Forces will be carefully investigated to insure the utmost economy consistent with efficiency. It is confidently believed that the net result of the re-organization now proceeding will be highly advantageous to Australia.

22. The Act relating to Industrial Designs completes the legislation on the related subjects of Patents, Trade Marks, and Designs, and qualifies the Commonwealth to take advantage of the International Convention for the protection of industrial property.

23. A measure has been passed providing for the establishment of a Meteorological Department, and authorizing agreements with the States for work of this character hitherto undertaken by them, the object being to assist the agricultural, pastoral, commercial, and shipping interests, by enabling Australian forecasts to be issued, meteorological records to be taken, and storm warnings to be published.

24. Steps are being taken by the Commonwealth, by arrangement with the Government of Queensland, for the repatriation of the Pacific Island Labourers in keeping with the terms of their original engagements under which they were brought to Australia. The assistance of the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific in carrying out this duty has been generously tendered.

25. Provision has now been made to relieve those using the telegraphic service between Tasmania and the mainland of the cable charge hitherto levied, thus placing the island State in this respect on precisely the same footing as her sister States.

26. My Advisers regret not to be able to inform you that the Convention providing for the future control of the New Hebrides has been agreed upon, or that a joint protectorate over the group by the Imperial Government and the Republic of France has been proclaimed.

27. The Territory of Papua, having come under the control of the Commonwealth, is being governed under the Constitution passed in 1905. An inquiry into the best method for its administration is proceeding, and action to promote settlement and cultivation is about to be taken.

28. At the request of the Government of New South Wales several fresh sites approved by its Parliament have been inspected by Federal representatives. Owing to the delay which these visits occasioned, the Bill defining the precise area of the selected Seat of Government could not be further proceeded with this session.

29. The Bill providing for the payment of Bounties to encourage the establishment of new and valuable primary industries which can readily be developed, though approved in one Chamber, has not been passed into law. It would, in the opinion of My Advisers, have greatly conduced to the permanent and profitable settlement of portions of Australia not yet utilized.

30. My Advisers regret that it was not possible to give effect to their proposals for the imposition of uniform postal rates throughout the Commonwealth by the introduction of the Penny Post in Australia and to other parts of the British Empire.

31. I thank you in the name of His Majesty for liberal Supplies granted for the services of the Commonwealth.

32. An Imperial Conference, to be attended by the Prime Ministers of the self-governing Dominions under the Crown, has been summoned for April, 1907. Your Ministers have forwarded a list of important subjects for discussion.

33. A Navigation Conference, upon which Australia will be represented, will be held in London to consider the best means of bringing the Navigation Laws of the Empire into unity.

34. A sum having been voted towards the encouragement of suitable immigration, the preliminaries necessary for commencing operations in London for bringing the many exceptional

12th October, 1906.

advantages that Australia possesses under the notice of those who are seeking new homes will be completed with as much expedition and upon as large a scale as is warranted by the present inducements to settlers offered by the States.

35. Resolutions for the purpose of giving effect to the recommendation of the Commissioners appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Act, for the redistribution of electorates throughout the Commonwealth, have been adopted, and the new boundaries and divisions will be observed at the elections shortly to take place.

36. New regulations for the introduction of the "toll system" in connexion with future subscribers to the Telephone System will shortly be in operation. It will then be possible for subscribers, particularly in country districts, to secure telephonic communication at much lower annual rates than have hitherto been levied.

37. I now declare this Parliament closed until the 31st day of October, 1906.

MEMBERS PRESENT.—All Members were present (at some time during the sitting) except—Mr. Bamford, Mr. Batchelor, Sir Langdon Bonython, Mr. Cameron, Mr. Carpenter, Mr. Chanter, Mr. Conroy, Mr. R. Edwards, Mr. Fisher, Sir John Forrest, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Frazer, Mr. Fuller, Sir Philip Fysh, Mr. Gibb, Mr. Harper, Mr. Higgins, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Hutchison, Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Kingston, Mr. Lee, Mr. Lonsdale, Sir William Lyne, Mr. McCay, Mr. McColl, Mr. Page, Mr. Poynton, Sir John Quick, Mr. Reid, Mr. Salmon, Mr. Bruce Smith, Mr. Sydney Smith, Mr. Storrer, Mr. Thomas, Mr. David Thomson, Mr. Dugald Thomson, Sir George Turner, Mr. Watson, Mr. Webster, Mr. Wilkinson, Mr. Wilks, Mr. Willis, and Mr. Wilson.

C. GAVAN DUFFY,
Clerk of the House of Representatives.