

AUSTRALASIAN FEDERATION LEAGUE.

THE INAUGURAL MEETING.

An Enthusiastic Assemblage.

[From the *South Australian Register*, August 2, 1895.]

The Australasian Federation League of South Australia held its inaugural meeting in the Town Hall on Thursday, August 1. and a successful gathering in every respect it was. The accommodation on the main floor of the hall was fully taxed, the assemblage including, besides a large number of ladies, His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, the Chief Secretary, the Commissioner of Crown Lands, the Commissioner of Public Works, and numerous members of the Legislature. Mr. J. H. Symon, Q.C., President of the League, occupied the chair. The following gentlemen were on the platform:— Vice-Presidents, Sir R. C. Baker (President of the Legislative Council), Sir J. W. Downer, Q.O., M.P., Messrs. E. H. Bakewell, and C. Willcox, the President of the Australian Natives' Association (Mr. J. T. Fitch, jun.), the President of the Chamber of Manufactures (Mr. L. Grayson), the President of the Federated Employers' Council (Mr. A. L. Harrold), the President of the National Defence League (Hon. J. J. Duncan, M.L.C.), the President of the Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society (Mr. W. Gilbert, M. P.); members of the General Council, Rev. Dr. Jefferis, Councillor Bruce, Hon. D. M. Charleston, M.L.C., Mr. G. Ash, M.P., Messrs. T. Soherk, M. P. and W. F. Stock; the Executive Committee, Messrs. W. J. Sowden (Chairman), W. M. Green (Vice-Chairman), T. Hardy, A. Melrose, E. Pariss Nesbit, Q.C., and W. L. Ware (Hon. Treasurer), F. H. Stokes (Hon. Secretary), and Mr. G. Fowler Stewart (Hon. Secretary of the Bimetallic League).

Apologies for absence were received from Sir John Madden, President Victorian League, the Hon. Alfred Deakin, of Victoria, Mr. Justice Bunday (a Vice-President), Mr. Justice Bouoaut, the Hons. C. C. Kingston (Premier), F. W. Holder (Treasurer), and Dr. Cookburn (Minister of Education), Sir Henry Ayers, Sir Thomas Elder, the Mayor of Adelaide, the President of the Trades and Labour Council, and Mayors of suburban towns.

The proceedings were begun by Mr. T. H. Jones, Mus. Bac., playing on the organ "The Song of Australia," "The watch on the Rhine," and "Rule Britannia."

The CHAIRMAN said it was a happy inspiration on the part of the sub-committee to unite in one grand organ peal the three patriotic songs. The burst of music was at once the symbol and expression of the union, should he say rather the fusion of the people of this great

continent? The League desired to fix the seal of completeness and perfection on that fusion. At the same time they desired that "Rule Britannia" should still be to Australians what it was to the dweller within the shadow of St. Paul's. (Applause.) It quickened the pulse, it stirred the blood, and reminded us of the noble lineage and the illustrious descent to which we lay claim. We held as a priceless heritage the traditions and glory of our race, but we longed for the time when with one voice from end to end of this great continent we should be able to apply the sentiment to United Australia. (Cheers.) When he looked upon this vast assemblage he was moved with the magnitude of the question which stirred their hearts. No more worthy object could assemble the citizens of any free country. (Hear, hear.) They were present to give the baptism of a public meeting, with the people themselves as sponsors, to the great cause of federation, for this meeting marked a real advance. It was the first meeting of the kind that had ever been held in South Australia. It was to give not only form and stability to the movement, but a momentum not to be resisted. It was to introduce a League established to promote this great end. (Applause.) The word inaugurate was not a pleasant one. It was one of the least harmonious in the language. It came from the old Romans, with their College of augurs—soothsayers—who were said to be able to forecast future events. If therefore there was some element of divination in that which was inaugural then the meeting was a realized prophecy of success. (Cheers.) They did not prophesy until they knew, and they did know that this great question was on the high road to a successful issue. They of the League had put on their armour, and they did not intend to take it off until the good fight had been fought and the prize had been achieved. (Applause.) But what was the prize? It was the noblest that had ever engaged the enterprise or the energy, or fired the patriotic ambition of Australians; it was, in one word, the making of a nation. It was that the whole of this vast continent—aye, the whole of the Anglo-Saxon people of Australasia—should become one great and solid confederation, without a Custom House inside, throughout the length and breadth of its territory, and with freedom everywhere, equality everywhere, law and order everywhere, and peace everywhere. (Applause.) It was a perpetual League of

friendship and of power, which should bind together the scattered fragments of Australasia and present a homogeneous whole to the astonished gaze not only of Christendom, but of heathendom. The people of Asia should see it and wonder; the Caucasian should see it and rejoice. It would be as though a new planet swims within their ken. Abraham Lincoln—one of the greatest Presidents of the greatest Confederation the world had overseen—said at the dedication of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg these words—"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and educated to the proposition that all men are created equal." The League said to every fellow-citizen, not only in this colony, but in every colony in the group, every fellow-citizen under the Southern Cross—"Go and do likewise." Establish the Commonwealth of Australasia, and they would fill a space in the eye of civilization which it had not yet entered into the heart of man to conceive. Why was it that we of one common origin, sprung from that "happy breed of men" that little world, that "precious stone set in the silver sea," why was it that, speaking the same language, having the same love of liberty and the same hatred of oppression, alike devoted to the cardinal principles of free government; why was it we were not one people, and under one flag? If we were one nation in so many essentials why were we not one nation politically? Surely we had area and acres enough? The Emperors of Germany and Austria, the King of Italy, and the President of the French Republic were mere Governors of provinces compared with the dominion over which the democracy of United Australia should rule. (Applause.) In population we numbered more than the United States when they federated, and as many or more than Canada when she federated. The volume of our trade and commerce had outgrown our divisions, and aspired to be the commerce of a great nation, and we had got into debt with the lordly audacity of half a dozen Emperors. (Laughter.) Why, then, this unnatural—he had almost said fratricidal condition of things which prevailed? Was it for the common weal to maintain for ever the unfortunate inter-colonial jealousies and rivalries of the past? So long as we were apart there must be a continual war of rivalry. It could not be otherwise. The struggle for existence between nations was governed by the same laws as between individuals. Trade rivalries only ceased when the rivals became partners. United, therefore, on a broad basis, those out-throat railway rates and idiotic Customs tariffs would disappear. (Cheers.) They could not breathe the air of federation and live. It was lamentable that one section of the same people should be ordaining laws to confound and prejudice and suppress the affections of another. Were these States with their immense potentialities of greatness if united to remain apart, pulling this way and that? In August, 1894, Mr. Reid, the Premier of New South Wales, laid it down that from a purely provincial point of view it was desirable for the colonies to federate, "for it

is clearly impossible that any one of them can have full scope for the development of its resources until the whole continent is free from provincial trade restrictions." The New England States before they combined were constantly quarrelling with each other, and it was in their heterogeneous structure, their clashing interests, their internal disputes, and the misplaced economy of penny-wise and shortsighted politicians that the hopes of their enemies lay. Why should the aspirations of South Australia be bounded on the east by that ridiculous strip of disputed territory? Federation would soon wipe that away. Federation would break down those insane tariff walls, which imprisoned us commercially, and which made foreigners of our own flesh and blood. And who could declare the sum of what it meant for South Australia, for this colony cleaved the great continent as with a wedge, and the internal trade was like the parted water on either side. (Applause.) Federation would enable us to borrow on easier and better terms; in fact, we would be able to save in interest what would be equivalent almost to a new loan. (Cheers.) A new impetus would be given to enterprise and the expenditure of capital. Wealth instead of being hoarded up would be tempted to flow in vivifying streams. What might that not mean to all of them, and to the industrial classes in particular? He believed that federation was the poor man's best friend, as it was the highest hope for his children. (Applause.) The River Murray, rolling its mighty flood to the Southern Ocean, would be no longer in danger of having its sources in a foreign State, or its tributary—the Darling—locked in spite of us. Law would be simplified, and its remedies facilitated. (Hear, hear.) We should have more efficient and less costly defence. Federation in a hurry for defence would be deplorable, and if we did not federate well and at our leisure soon we might be driven to do so badly and in haste later on. The whole aspect of Eastern Asia in its attitude towards Australia had been changed during the past twelve months. Russia, with China in the toils, was scheming and intriguing for a port in Manchuria below the ice line to which she might bring that great railway which was to span the distance between St. Petersburg and Eastern Siberia. What that might mean to Australia no human being could tell. China with her 300 millions of people was emerging from the salutary lessons she had just learned. What might she develop into? Then there was Japan, with its 40 millions of people, intelligent, vigorous, brave, adaptable, who could build, manage, and fight an ironclad as well as Europeans. These were the Powers with whom we had to reckon as an Asiatic Power ourselves. Our concern with Europe was comparatively slight, but with Asia it was paramount; and in the consideration of our foreign politics—if we had any—we must not treat with contempt these Powers who were so near to us and were so strong; but we must deal with them as Great Powers, and put ourselves in an equally great and strong position. (Applause.) Federate now, and these Asiatic realms might do us homage. Postpone it, and we might wake up with the whole of Eastern Asia

thundering at our gates, and we would federate when perhaps it might be too late. Sometimes we forgot how long the subject of federation had been in the minds of the statesmen of these colonies in years gone by, and sometimes we did them less than justice in the estimation in which we held these great men. In 1857, immediately after the establishment of Victoria into a separate colony, a committee sat in that colony to consider the whole of these questions which were now moving Australasia, and in their report they declared that federation was an essential element in national prosperity, and the absence of it invited aggression from foreign enemies. The conclusions arrived at then were now being brought home to us by events which were happening in the East with a force and conclusiveness which we should be mad to resist. (Cheers.) In this great work we were not groping in the dark. We were not going to make any rash experiments in union without examples of success. We had sound principles and tried precedents to guide us. We had beacons of experience to warn us off from what was unsafe. The United Kingdom was long disunited. There was internal strife, constant warfare without union. Where would have been the bewildering prosperity of Great Britain if this state of things had continued? One and potent she has achieved, a marvellous measure heaped up and running over, of prosperity, opulence, and power. If separated now, with each kingdom torn with contention and discontent, could any one say her power would be the same. The most ardent Home Ruler professed to abhor separation. Here we had Home Rule and desired to superadd union. Australians, he believed, desired to speed the day of union. What a noble picture it would be when that consummation was reached— Great Britain, the centre of civilization, in the North; the Greater Britain, in its highest and best sense, the sun of civilisation in the South. Did they want for examples? They had the example of that glorious federation of the United States—a New England indeed, with her seventy millions of people. They had Canada, with her astounding record of internal advancement. He did not wonder that that distinguished statesman, Sir George Grey, had dreamt of a vast confederation of all the English-speaking races. (Cheers.) Turning to foreign countries they found examples of the benefits of union in Germany—a gigantic confederation of 25 States — and Italy. The foundations in Germany and Italy were set in blood; ours would be securely established in peace and goodwill. Mr. Playford, at the Conference of 1890, said that one great drawback to federation was that it was too much in the hands of politicians. He said, and very truly, that it was a people's question. There was one slight danger, and that was the very unanimity, the absence of controversy, that prevailed, and which was apt to cause a sort of benevolent apathy. The Hobart Conference declared federation to be the great and pressing question of Australian politics, and now what was wanted was action, and to secure it they must make the fate of members and Ministers

depend upon their action. The cause then was momentous, the time was ripe, the unanimity was complete, why was it that there appeared to be plenty of motion but no substantial progress? When the destiny of a nation was involved standing still was childish folly, going backward was a crime. The danger was that inaction might mean retrogression. Onward, then, must be their cry. Was it the Hobart Conference that barred the way? Why should it? Why should not South Australia take the lead. (Cheers.) He was pleased that the Government had given notice of their intention to introduce the Enabling Bill. Mr. Reid had said that perhaps Parliaments were not the best bodies to frame a Constitution, and he pointed to the fate of what was known as the Commonwealth Bill, of which, while no one could pronounce that it was dead no one could assert that it was alive. Nevertheless they wanted Parliament to deal with the Enabling Bill, and say whether they would adopt it or reject it. Then they would know where they were. If they adopted it the question would be submitted to the people, so far as South Australia, as one colony, was concerned. (Applause.) If they rejected it, some other better method would have to be suggested. He would like to express his regret that Sir Henry Parkes was for the present shut out from the active political conflict. (Hear, hear.) There were spots on the sun, but he believed the verdict of the present generation, and undoubtedly the verdict of posterity, would be that Sir Henry was a great statesman, who devoted his life to the welfare of Australia, and who did as much as any man had done for the cause of federation. (Cheers.) There were difficulties, and they must not be minimized. He was sick of hearing the so-called Federationist say he was in favour of federation, but "not at any price," or "not on the lines of the Commonwealth Bill." These were mere pretences. No one wanted it "at any price." It must be on a just and lasting basis. And as to the Commonwealth Bill, it was a monument of painstaking, constructive ability, and whether it was adopted or not it would be of the utmost value. It reflected the greatest credit upon those who were responsible for it, and upon the gathering which gave it its imprimatur. It would be a guide and a guide only to the final measure. What they did want on this question was discussion and debate. Hence the League. They wanted everybody, whatever were their views as to details, to come into the League and to say that they were for federation. (Cheers.) The League claimed to be of no party, but of the people for the people. They wished to keep the question free from the entanglements of local party politics—in a higher, purer, and larger atmosphere, believing that the cause was to be advanced by a patriotism above and independent of local parties. They declared themselves to be organized for the creation of that new and greater State of; which they hoped to be citizens. They sought to concentrate the federal opinion where it existed and to form it where it did not exist, to arouse federal desire, to convert the desire into a demand, and if politi-

cians obstructed the way they must try to push them onward or else cast them aside. (Cheers.) If the light grew dim and flickered they would try to trim the lamp and feed the sacred flame. They welcomed all to their ranks. They were wedded to no details, and propounded no cut-and-dried scheme. The only password they had was "federation." They were pledged to one thing only—home rule in our local concerns, and they should keep that just as they did not part with the historic old gumtree, and they also pledged themselves to loyalty to old England, the homeland they loved so well, and to which they owed so much. (Cheers.) Animated by the assurance that federation was as certain as the process of the sun, or the stars in their courses, they believed that it would be as the dawn of a new and greater day, and they wished to federate in calm and peace. (Applause.) There was something in the pomp of glorious war that stirred the blood, but the triumphs of peace and the pageant of a great people marching to its destiny were no less stirring. They wanted to federate in the calm of peace. Our provincial life was coeval with the reign of the Queen. What a happy augury it would be if within her reign we merged into the perfect national life of United Australia—a nation whose corner-stone would be perpetual freedom. (Cheers.) Shall we, then, make a divided country into a great empire? They appealed to the men and women, to young men and maidens, to advance the cause. Its foundations must rest on morality, honour, and justice. Therefore they especially appealed to the women of South Australia. To them they looked for the vindication of public morality. Their influence was immense. They must teach their children, for whom it meant careers, to believe in federation. The destiny was more for our children than ourselves. They appealed to the lusty youth of South Australia. The Headmaster of Harrow lately said that England owed her Empire more to her sports than to her studies. Athletes, then, put your shoulders to the wheel—Come forth from the valley, come forth from the hill, Come forth from the workshop, the mine, and the mill,

From pleasure or slumber, from study or play, Come forth in your myriads to aid us to-day; There's a word to be spoken, a deed to be done, A truth to be uttered, a cause to be won. Come forth in your myriads! come forth every one ! Come, youths, in your vigour; come, men in your prime; Come, age, with experience, fresh, gather'd from time; Come, workers! you're welcome; code, thinkers, you must; Come thick as the clouds in the midsummer dust, Or the waves of the sea gleaming bright in the sun! There's a truth to be told, and a cause to be won; Come forth in your myriads, come forth every one.

Men and women of South Australia, concluded Mr. Symon, we call upon you to come and help us. We beseech you to help yourselves, and your children, and your children's children. Under the banner of high resolve and lofty patriotism we fear no failure. At no distant date we shall hear the earthquake voice of victory—a victory of union over disunion, a victory of all that is great and national over all that is petty and

provincial, a victory which shall fulfil our highest aspirations, and which, under the blessing of God, who is the God of Peace as well as the God of Battles, shall open to us a material future of radiant promise, and shall at once strengthen the moral fibre and add to the splendour and glory of our race. (Great cheering.) He said the committee had drawn up in the form of a resolution a sentiment, which they hoped the meeting would adopt. It was :~

That in order to promote the present and future prosperity of the Australasian Colonies their federation on a Broad basis of justice and honour is imperative, that the time is ripe for such a federation, and that we pledge ourselves to do all in our power to secure it.

Mrs. T. H. Jones rendered " Home, sweet home," in a charming manner.

Sir R. C. BAKER, speaking to the resolution, said if he had wished he could not have spoken from the same point of view as the Chairman had done in such eloquent and burning words. His endeavour would be to remove some of the misconceptions which had retarded the progress of the federation movement. From the aspect of outside nations federation was the most complete union that we could have. From an internal aspect federation gave the most complete home rule to the constituent States — (applause) — and that was one of its greatest excellences. So far as outside nations were concerned a federation showed an undivided front, and so far as the internal States were concerned federation gave the greatest freedom of action to the people of individual States. When the people of Australia thoroughly understood what federation meant he believed they would ardently desire it, because it was only by federal union that we could retain our present great powers of local self-government. The first essential of a federal government was a bicameral system of two Houses of Parliament—one House being elected to represent the people as a concrete nationality and the other House being elected to represent the State as States. In the National House the people elected their representatives as if they belonged to one individual nation. In the Senate or States House each sovereign State elected an equal number of representatives as a State. But really both these Houses were the people's Houses. It was quite possible and quite consistent with the fundamental ideas of the federation that both Houses should be elected by universal suffrage—one House being elected by the people of the State by universal suffrage, or whatever qualification they liked, and the other House being elected by the people as a whole as a nationality. The object of that form of election of the two Houses was to protect the interests of the State Governments to provide that there should not be in time to come a consolidation. No South Australian would want this colony to be swamped or overwhelmed by larger and more populous colonies. It was curious to find that some of those gentlemen who rejoiced in calling themselves democratic—a blessed word supposed to sanctify everything it touched—(laughter)—objected to giving the Senate equal power to that given to the House of Representatives,

but the fact was the Senate was the democratic House. It represented the State rights and represented the government by the people for the people, while the other House represented the consolidation idea or concentration. The Senate represented decentralisation. (Applause.) The second essential element was a dual citizenship. Each citizen was a citizen as it were of two States—of the federation and of the State. Each citizen of Adelaide was a dual citizen, for he had to obey laws of the State in which he lived as well as the by-laws of the city. That was the germ of the idea, only in the federation it was extended. The third essential element was that there should be a division of powers—certain powers being delegated to the Federal Governments and certain to the State Governments, each Government, though, having paramount authority to deal with the matters referred to it, and the sharper the line was drawn the less clashing and confusion. The fourth essential element was that the Federal Government must have power to raise its own revenue, must have an executive and a judiciary. These four elements constituted a federal form of government, and it was on these lines that the Sydney Convention Bill was based. He had no sympathy with those who said that they would not federate on the lines of the Sydney Convention. The matters in dispute in that Bill were only matters of detail. While not desiring to underrate the sentimental aspect, we were a practical people, and our pockets were the first consideration in this great question. (Applause.) He enumerated some twenty positive gains from federation. We should gain by intercolonial free trade. We had suffered for a long time in this colony from the evils of protection. (Cheers.) There would also be gains in economy and efficiency in defence ; in the status and power of the colonies ; in naturalization ; in the power to exclude undesirable aliens ; in economy and efficiency of postal and telegraphic services ; in quarantine; in marine; in the control of the currency ; in banking laws; in copyright, trade marks, and patents ; in having uniform marriage and divorce laws; in providing facilities for recovering debts and claims; in regard to the influx of criminals; in the power to make treaties with other countries ; in the regulation of the rivers; in the consolidation of our debt; and in regard to our railways. It was a fallacy to think that intercolonial free trade, if first established, would lead up to federation. (Applause.) These colonies had had the power since 1873 to have a common tariff, but they had not availed themselves of it. In 1849 these colonies were within an ace of being federated in consequence of the great importance which the Imperial Parliament attached

[to a common Australian tariff. The Imperial Government carried a scheme in both Houses, but the majorities were such and the arguments against it were such that they dropped it. Taking the population of South Australia in 1890 and the official returns of revenue and expenditure, South Australia, under the Sydney Commonwealth Bill, would only pay £9,291 per annum for the privilege of being a State in the federation. The population of this colony was about one-tenth of the whole, and if she paid one-tenth, or about £54,000, of the total paid by the whole of the colonies, this colony would save more than the £54,000 by the consolidation of the public debt. In concluding an address lasting nearly an hour Sir Richard said:—

Write on your doors the saying wise and old,
Be bold, be bold, and everywhere be bold, Be
not too bold, yet better the excess Than the
defect; better the more than less. Better
like Hector on the Held to die Than, like the
perfumed Paris, turn and fly.

They should say with the American states-
man—

I march with no party,
I march with no flag,
That does not keep step with the Union.

(Cheers.)

Mr. O. Tæuber sang, and was much appreciated.

The Hon. D. M. CHARLESTON supposed that as a direct Labour representative in the Legislative Council they would expect to hear what the labour classes thought of federation. The question was chiefly viewed from the commercial and sentimental aspects, but the greater were the commercial. From the standpoint of economy nothing but good could result. (Applause.) Anything that would increase wealth production and decrease the discomforts attending labour should be hailed with satisfaction. Whilst admitting that federation under present industrial systems was impotent to produce any great change among the masses, he saw in federation a growth capable of such expansion as would ultimately conquer and destroy the anarchy now existing in our industrial and social life—(applause)—and promote individual and collective prosperity. Federation would remove those artificial barriers raised by Customs tariffs. Some of the Eastern nations would soon be demanding an equality consistent with that enjoyed by other nations, and Australia must be ready to speak with a united voice. Federation would elevate us from our petty parochialisms into a dignified sphere of nationalism. (Cheers.)

The motion was carried, the audience rising *en mases* and giving three cheers for federation.