

THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH.

Rt. Hon. Sir John Forrest.
Rt. Hon. Sir George Turner.

R. E. O'Connor.
N. E. Lewis.

Rt. Hon. Sir J. R. Dickson.
(Since dead.)

A. R. Deakin.

Rt. Hon. C. C. Kingston.



Rt. Hon. Edmund Barton.

The Earl of Hopetoun.

Rt. Hon. Sir W. J. Lyne.

THE GOVERNOR GENERAL AND THE FEDERAL MINISTRY.

AUSTRALIA'S NEW RULE.

TROUBLESOME QUESTIONS ARISING IN THE COMMONWEALTH.

STATE PREMIERS TRYING TO RETAIN INFLUENCE IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS—THE TARIFF QUESTION THE LEADING ISSUE.

Sydney, January 17.

Although ushered into existence with pomp and ceremony unprecedented in the Southern Hemisphere, the infant Australian Commonwealth has apparently a time of trouble to encounter before the newly created machinery gets into proper working order. At the outset an attempt will have to be made to secure the settlement of disputed questions abandoned in despair by the various Federal conventions, and which caused Mr. Reid, ex-Premier of New South Wales, while recording his vote for federation, to express a doubt of his wisdom in so doing. One illustration will suffice. The constitution of each of the Federal States provides that when a member of the State Parliament accepts an office of profit under the Crown he vacates his seat, and must be re-elected. This is in accordance with the principles of the British Constitution, on which those of the Australian States are based.

Of the nine members of the Federal Ministry only one—the Federal Premier, Edmund Barton—is not a member of a State Parliament, and four, including Sir J. R. Dickson, since dead, are State Premiers. Each on joining the Federal Ministry accepted an office of profit under the Crown, but contended that the rule did not apply in his case, as the Federal Constitution permits Federal offices to be held by members of State Parliaments without compelling them to vacate their seats. This, however, does not overrule the State proviso, and consequently the members of the Federal Ministry find themselves in an awkward dilemma, threatening unpleasant consequences in the near future. For instance, Sir William J. Lyne, the State Premier of New South Wales, refuses to vacate his seat or resign his Premiership until he has made a number of valuable appointments in connection with several commissions sanctioned by the State Parliament. Sir George Turner, the Victorian State Premier, has, on the advice of his Attorney-General, vacated his seat, but retains his State Premiership. Sir John Forrest, State Pre-

mier of Western Australia, also retains his seat and State Premiership.

THE PROTECTIVE TARIFF QUESTION.

An explanation of the existing state of affairs is to be found in the desire of the State Premiers to have a hand in the approaching Federal elections. But in this they are reckoning without their host. As soon as the New South Wales Parliament meets a motion will be offered to the effect that all acts by the State Premier, after accepting office in the Federal Ministry, were illegal, and, consequently, null and void. This is the view taken by the great majority of Australians, and it may possibly result in the defeat of the Federal Ministers, with the exception of Mr. Barton, at the Federal elections. All the members of the Federal Ministry are supporters of a protective tariff, and if they were allowed to have their own way prohibitive customs duties would be the rule. But the trend of public opinion in Australia is in favor of a revenue tariff only, and it is probable that Mr. Barton and his colleagues will attempt some kind of compromise.

VIEWS OF LOW TARIFF PARTY'S LEADER.

Mr. Reid, the ex-State Premier of New South Wales, is the leader of the low tariff party. He is, perhaps, the most popular man in the Commonwealth, and may oust Mr. Barton from the Federal Premiership directly after the Federal Parliament has opened its session. In discussing the Federal question, Mr. Reid refuses to accept any comparison between the American and Australian States, the circumstances in each being wholly different. America, he says, by way of illustration, is the largest manufacturing country in the world, Australia one of the smallest. The prosperity of Australia is based on its exports of raw produce, for which it has to take manufactured goods in exchange. In the future these conditions may be reversed. At present they must be taken as they exist.

FEWER STATE REPRESENTATIVES.

The Federal elections will be fought on the tariff question, but, no matter which side may gain the day, one result is inevitable—the Federal Parliament will absorb many of the best men in the State Legislatures. This will be a gain in one direction and a loss in another, for the members of the various State Parliaments are averse to any reduction of their numbers. In the New South Wales Legislative Assembly there are 125 members. It is sought to reduce the number to sixty or seventy, but the members, especially those representing the State labor party, will listen to nothing of the kind. It is the same in Victoria and the other States. If

the number of members were reduced the constituencies would have to be enlarged, and this would assist in excluding many of the smaller fry of Australian politicians.

OPENING OF NEW PARLIAMENT.

The assembling of the Federal Parliament in Melbourne will be a brilliant affair, accompanied by festivities rivalling those with which Sydney celebrated the inauguration of the Commonwealth, and the Duke and Duchess of York will have a magnificent reception. There can be no question of the loyalty of the Australians to the British Crown, but it must be remembered that the Imperial Government has allowed them to have pretty much their own way in everything. There are many Australians who can remember the cheers that greeted the departure of the last of the British garrison troops from Sydney a couple of generations ago. It represented the end of British military rule in Australia. Now the armed representatives of the Imperial army are welcomed with rejoicings, as indicating the close union of the mother country with the outlying portions of the Empire.

One significant feature of the Commonwealth celebrations in Sydney was the number and enthusiasm of the nationalities which took part in them. Nearly the whole of the American residents in the city, with the exception of the United States Consul and ex-Consul, took part in the movement for erecting a splendid American arch and constructing an American avenue, where in passing several of the procession's bands played American National airs. The French and Germans followed the example of their American brethren, while the Canadians and Italians furnished emblematical cars for the Commonwealth procession.

OPENING OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT.

The selection of Mr. Barton as Federal Premier was in accordance with popular sentiment throughout the Commonwealth, although few believe in his power to retain it. He had labored so long and so earnestly in favor of what at one time appeared a hopeless cause that it was felt that some such recognition, however temporary, was his due. Had Mr. Reid been State Premier, he would have had more success in forming a federal ministry than had Sir W. J. Lyne, but it would have been on a free trade basis. With the exception of the New South Wales State Premier, the whole of the members of the Federal Ministry have been ardent advocates of federalism. Sir W. J. Lyne opposed the Commonwealth bill because of its admitted defects, but accepted it when it was approved by a majority of the electors. Sir J.

Dickson, who died shortly after being appointed Federal Minister of Defence, will be succeeded by a leading member of the Queensland State Parliament.

PROSPEROUS LONDON COSTERS.

SIDEWALK MERCHANTS WHO MAKE GOOD INCOMES.

From The London Mail.

The announcement that the authorities have determined to clear itinerant street vendors from the Strand has caused consternation among the fraternity in London. For clearance means loss of income and severe competition in other streets.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to calculate with any degree of accuracy the amount of money turned over collectively in the course of a year by these people, but interesting figures may be supplied by placing on record the gross receipts of some street traders.

Many will be surprised to learn that a coster in the fruit or vegetable line, who, though only occasionally seen in the Strand, is yet aggrieved at the threatened exclusion, will make an average of £2 10s. to £3 weekly profit. Despite this income, which many a clerk would envy, tales of distress are frequent among them, owing to their universal improvidence. Fish is not so profitable a line of business, partly owing to the more perishable nature of the stock, and a fish coster, who is a "£2 man," after reckoning up on Saturday night, has no cause to grumble at his week's work.

The profits of vendors of penny toys, puzzles and other articles so familiar in the Strand and elsewhere vary according to their cost, which ranges from 4d. to 7d. per dozen. A pound to 25s. is reckoned a good weekly earning, but during the recent button craze energetic workers had no difficulty in clearing double this amount in some instances.

The gutter oilcloth merchant calculates upon a profit of 6d. to 1s. a piece, according to size, and can dispose of forty or fifty pieces in the course of a Saturday evening alone, to say nothing of slacker business done during the rest of the week. A street bookseller recently admitted that he had "never cleared less than £2 a week," and, on further inquiry, that does not appear to be much above the average. The proprietors of those miscellaneous stands, to be found chiefly in the East End, where everything from a violin bow to a saucepan lid may be purchased, have a difficulty in telling their profits, as, owing to the nature of their stock, some things sell rapidly while other articles lie on hand for months. That there is money to be made at this trade is evident from the fact that many of its followers are pointed out by their less fortunate brethren as being the owners of the houses in which they live.