

HENRY DE WALKER

AUSTRALASIAN
DEMOCRACY

Henry Walker
Australasian Democracy

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Содержание

PREFACE	4
I	6
II	36
III	55
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	77

Henry de Rosenbach Walker

Australasian Democracy

PREFACE

The following pages have been written from the point of view of the year 1896, the greater part of which I spent in Australia. During the earlier months of the present year I was in New Zealand, but I was unable to continue my survey of general Australasian affairs.

A result of the limitation that I was compelled to impose upon myself will be observed in the apparent antiquity of the chapter dealing with Australian Federation; but this is not so great as might have been anticipated, the new Federal Convention having drafted a Bill which is based, to a large extent, upon that of 1891. For purposes of comparison I have, with the kind permission of the London agents of the Melbourne *Argus*, included an article in which that newspaper has summarised the provisions of the new Federal Constitution Bill.

I have also included a brief account of a visit to the Coolgardie goldfields which, though alien in purpose from the remaining chapters, may not be without interest as a record of personal impressions of a Province which has but recently felt the effects of a budding prosperity.

It has been suggested to me that I should attempt to discuss Australasian problems with reference to their applicability to Great Britain; but I have preferred to leave this task, of which the importance cannot be overstated, to persons of greater experience, and to confine myself to a record of Australasian action and to a comparison of the points of similarity or the reverse between the several Provinces. It will be seen, however, that, in some cases, as when dealing, for instance, with the results of payment of members and with the powers and privileges of Australasian Upper Houses, I have noted differences of conditions which must render deductions by analogy a matter of extreme difficulty.

The terms "Liberal" and "Conservative" are used to denote, respectively, the more and the less advanced parties in Australasian politics, and must not be taken to imply differences in opinion similar to those prevailing in Great Britain.

In conclusion, I would only say that my studies would have been impossible in the absence of kindly communicativeness on the part of politicians of all shades of opinion; and, on the social side, that I retain warm feelings of gratitude towards the committees of clubs and numerous acquaintances who extended to me the cordial hospitality of kinship.

H. DE R. WALKER.

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I

LIBERALISM AND LABOUR IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Contrast between Western Australia and the Eastern Provinces—The Constitution of South Australia—The alliance between Liberalism and Labour—Joint action in the face of financial depression: Village Settlements, Progressive Taxation, the direct encouragement of production—The advocacy of an Elective Executive—The State and Religious Instruction.

The traveller who visited Western Australia in 1896 saw a country which was enjoying, owing to its goldfields, a phenomenally rapid development, with all its attendant advantages of a large increase in population, an expanding revenue, and abundance of employment. As he passed to the Eastern Provinces he found himself in the midst of communities which had been shaken to their foundations by the fall in the value of their staple products and the collapse of many banking institutions, and were putting forth strenuous efforts to restore the equilibrium between revenue and expenditure and to make a fresh start upon the path of prosperity. These efforts, varying in detail in different Provinces, have included the imposition of additional taxation, provision for the unemployed, and, in some

cases, direct encouragement of production. The policy pursued by South Australia is of particular interest as her Constitution gives the freest play to democratic influences.

The House of Assembly is elected on the basis of adult suffrage; the Upper House or Legislative Council by adults possessing a property qualification consisting of a freehold of the clear annual value of £50, a registered leasehold of £20, with three years to run or the right of purchase, or the occupation of a dwelling-house of the clear annual value of £25. No property qualification is required in candidates for election to either House, and the Members of both Houses are paid at the rate of £200 per annum. Adults, upon reaching the age of twenty-one in the case of the Assembly or possessing the requisite qualification in the case of the Council, can claim to be placed upon the electoral roll and are entitled to vote upon the expiration of six months after registration; upon removal to another constituency, the vote can immediately be transferred. Plural voting is forbidden under heavy penalties, and all the elections, except that for the Northern Territory, take place upon the same day.

These conditions have enabled the democratic element to obtain a preponderating voice in both Houses, by a majority of one in the Council and by a considerable majority in the Assembly. During the last three years the Government has been in the hands of the Liberals under the Hon. C. C. Kingston, who has included in his cabinet two former Premiers in the persons

of the Treasurer, the Hon. F. W. Holder, and the Minister of Education and Agriculture, the Hon. Dr. Cockburn. The Ministerialists have had the support of the Labour Party, which has been very successful with its candidates and now holds the balance of power. It was formed towards the close of the year 1890, after the failure of the maritime strike, in response to the feeling of the Trades Unions and other labour organisations that their objects would be obtained most easily by securing the direct representation of labour in Parliament. They were influenced also by the rejection by the Assembly of Dr. Cockburn's proposals for progressive taxation in spite of promises made by a majority of the members before their election. A political programme was, accordingly, drawn up, which is the accepted creed of the Labour representatives, who number six in the Council of twenty-four and twelve in the Assembly of fifty-four members. It has successively been modified, as measures previously advocated have been passed into law, and contains the following principal items: The cessation of the alienation of Crown Lands by the substitution of some system of leasing; the remission of the duties on articles not grown or produced in the Colony, any resulting deficiency in the revenue to be made up by increasing the tax on land values; redistribution of seats on the basis of population; the encouragement of local industries by the extension of the State Export Department, so that producers may be able to obtain the full benefit of foreign markets; and Federation on a democratic basis. The Labour Party

are opposed most strongly to the admission of coloured races and to assisted immigration, on the ground that the former would lower the status of the Australian workman, and the latter cause the supply of labour to exceed the demand and bring misery and destitution upon the poor. The relations of the Labour and Liberal members, which have been most cordial, are based upon mutual interdependence. The Liberals rely upon the support of the Labour members; the latter are not strong enough to take office, nor, I understand, do they wish to do so, and must support the Liberals in order to be able to mould the legislation to the shape that they desire. A prominent member of the Labour Party has thus summarised the position: "The hardest work in connection with some of the measures has been done by Liberals who, though not members of the Party, are generally found working in connection with that body. But it must be conceded that most of the planks which have been carried owe their early success to the fact of their adoption on the programme of the United Labour Party, and the persistent advocacy and solid votes of its members." The policy of the Party has created a great amount of bitterness in the country, their successful advocacy of progressive taxation on incomes and land values and of other democratic measures having led them to be charged with being inimical to capital as such; but the Speaker of the Assembly, who is a Conservative, has stated in a recent speech that, "in speaking of the Labour Party, he wishes to do so with the greatest respect. They are a power in the House, and no Government

could have retained office in the last Parliament without their support. The Labour representatives were picked men, clever in debate, unremitting in attention to their duties, and a credit to the districts they represented." The leader of the Party is Mr. J. A. McPherson, a native of Aberdeen, who migrated to Adelaide in 1882 and engaged in the printing trade. He identified himself with Trades Union affairs, was elected unanimously in 1890 to be Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council, and still holds that position. He entered the Assembly at a bye-election in 1892, and is regarded as one of the ablest and most energetic members of the Labour Party. Mr. McPherson has a popular supporter in Mr. E. L. Batchelor, the colleague of the Premier in the representation of West Adelaide, who has risen from subordinate employment on the Government railways to be, at the age of thirty, President of the Railway Association and Secretary of the Party. Mr. Batchelor is a man of broad views and a keen student, and has brought forward a Bill for the institution of the initiative and referendum, which he considers to be suited to the small population of South Australia. The Party are fortunate in their leading men and show no signs of cleavage, their only serious difference of opinion having been in regard to the qualifications of Labour candidates. As long as solidarity can be maintained and the present leaders remain in the ascendant, no fear need be felt that they will subordinate the interests of the community to those of their own class, though they would be the first to admit that their main object is to protect the working man and

to improve his position.

The principal measures of the present Administration, such as the Taxation Acts and the establishment of the Village Settlements and of the Produce Export Department, may be said to be the joint product of the Liberal and Labour Parties, and may be regarded as an example of the policy pursued by a pure democracy in the face of financial depression, dislocation of trade, and widespread scarcity of employment.

The object of the Act of 1893 which authorised the formation of Village Settlements was to prevent men of small means, who found difficulty in obtaining employment, from leaving the country by affording them the opportunity of settling upon the land and working it co-operatively with the assistance of advances from the State. Its main provisions were, that any twenty or more persons might form an association for the purpose of taking up a grant of land not exceeding 160 acres per head; that the work should be done under the direction of trustees appointed by members of the association from among their number, who should manage the affairs of the village upon principles of co-operation and equitable division; and that the Commissioner of Crown Lands might advance to any such association out of funds provided by Parliament, an amount not exceeding the sum of £50 for each villager and not exceeding one-half the cost of the improvements upon the land. The advances were to be repaid in ten equal annual instalments, with interest computed at 5 per cent. per annum on the moneys for the

time being remaining unpaid; but the first of such instalments was not to be payable until after the expiration of three years from the date of the advance. The formation of settlements on a purely communistic basis was rendered possible by Section 78 of the Act, which states that "the rules" (of an association) "may require payment to a common fund or otherwise as may be determined of all or any part of the earnings of the villagers whether earned within the village or elsewhere." Twelve associations were formed, mostly on the banks of the Murray, between the months of February and August, 1894, but not, with a single exception, on the lines intended by the Government. The extreme scarcity of employment and great poverty at Adelaide and in the neighbourhood in the early part of that year led them to form the remainder of persons who were almost entirely destitute. They were necessarily assisted at the start, but did not afterwards receive advances until the Government Inspector had certified that they were justified by the improvements made upon the land. The action of the Government was illegal throughout, as the Act stated expressly that the advances should be made out of funds provided by Parliament, and no funds had been voted for the purpose, but it may be condoned on the ground of the extreme urgency of the crisis. At the expiration of a year the limit had been reached in most cases, and further advances were indispensable to prevent the immediate collapse of the majority of the settlements. The Commissioner of Crown Lands, accordingly, introduced a Bill in which he asked for authority

to increase the advances, under the same conditions, to £100 per head, and for further powers of control over the settlements. The Bill, which was hotly opposed, was not passed till a Select Committee had been appointed to inquire on the spot into the conditions and financial prospects of the settlements and had reported in its favour.

The report, which was dated November 14, 1895, and the evidence upon which it was based, gave a complete picture of the disadvantages under which the settlers laboured and of the drawbacks of the system of distribution. The land selected for the villages was such, it was pointed out, that it could not be cultivated except under irrigation. This had necessitated the erection of a costly pumping plant, which the settlers had difficulty in purchasing, as they could offer no security for payment. When the plant was finally obtained, it was found, in some cases, to be unsuitable; in others it could not be properly worked in the absence of a capable engineer. The settlers, brought together at haphazard by destitution and not by their knowledge of agricultural pursuits, had wasted much time and labour through ignorance, incapacity, and insufficiency of proper tools. They had lacked a strong controlling hand to direct their operations, and had disobeyed the trustees whom they had themselves appointed; and as the trustees had little power discipline had been nonexistent, and quarrels, at several settlements, of continual occurrence. Order had been restored with difficulty, as the only punishment was expulsion, upon a

decision of the trustees ratified by a vote of the villagers, and many villagers had voted against expulsion from the fear that they in their turn might be subjected to a similar penalty. The arrangements for the distribution of rations also had caused considerable dissatisfaction and led to disagreement between single and married men, as the former felt that the latter received a share of the stores out of proportion to the work they had done. The general system was, that rations were issued on a sliding scale, according as a man was single or had a large or small family, and was to that extent purely communistic.

The difficulties encountered by the settlers had been such as would have discouraged most men, but, in spite of them, the total number had only fallen in eighteen months from 598 to 440, and the majority of witnesses expressed themselves satisfied with their lot. They admitted the necessity of further advances, but pleaded that they had a heavy burden to bear in the cost of machinery, and that their labour, especially in the planting of fruit trees, could not yield an immediate return. The financial position was thus summarised:—The Government had advanced £26,000, the unpaid accounts amounted to about £11,000, and the improvements were valued by the Commissioner of Crown Lands at £41,000.

During 1896 the further advances had been expended, but the settlements had not become self-supporting, and the increased burden of debt and uncertainty as to the future had caused many of the settlers to become disheartened and others to leave in

despair. On the other hand, the appointment of an expert to exercise the additional powers conferred upon the Commissioner and to give advice to the settlers, had led to the diminution of quarrels and disagreements among them and to a better direction of their work. In view of these facts the Government decided to close four of the settlements which had been formed upon land unsuitable to the purpose, owing to the poorness of the soil or the absence of facilities for profitable irrigation. It has been estimated that the remainder have sufficient irrigable land to maintain a population of about three hundred families, and that they require an average of about £25 per settler to make them self-supporting. A few enthusiasts alone believe that any portion of the principal of the loans will ever be repaid; but the Government will have no cause to complain if they receive regular interest on the money. Some difficulty is likely to arise in the disposal of the produce. There is a considerable market for vegetables on the river, but it will soon be overtaken by the supply. The settlers will probably devote most of their land to fruit growing and dairying, and will be able to take advantage of the Export Department.

The settlers should have a better chance of success in the future, as loafers are gradually being weeded out, and the process is to be continued until the settlers shall have been reduced to such as have shown an honest desire to make homes for themselves and their families upon the land. This course has been rendered possible by the large exodus of working men

to Western Australia, which has reduced the pressure upon the local labour market. The Government desire to approximate all the settlements to the level of Murtho, which alone was formed of persons who had considerable means of their own. The settlers, about twenty in number, put an average of £60 each into the venture and left good situations out of enthusiasm for the principles of co-operation. They are intelligent, well-educated men and women who are bound to put forward every effort to be successful, as otherwise they will be in a worse position than at the start. They work all the land upon the method of joint cultivation on the ground that, as different forms of produce are grown, it is of importance to be able to concentrate the greater portion of the labour at any point where it may be required, and, under the influence of communistic ideas, give to all an equal share of the results of their united efforts. This system would have seemed, from the constitution of human nature, to be doomed to failure; but an amount of work has been done in planting and clearing which testifies to continuous and sustained labour, disagreements have been rare, and the settlers, in conversation with me, expressed themselves as contented with their lot and confident of eventual success. They do not regard themselves as recipients of charity, as they have received advances on the same conditions as holders of Working Men's blocks; on the contrary, they regard themselves as pioneers of a new movement, and desire, not only to make homes for themselves and their families, but to prove that land can be

worked successfully on a co-operative, almost a communistic, basis. If the Murtho settlers succeed, they will do so by the continued exercise of mutual forbearance and from the impulse of a common enthusiasm.

The Government appear to have made several grave mistakes of omission and commission in the formation of the settlements. They should have caused a survey of the Murray lands to be made before the selection of the sites, and they should have realised that men, united only by their destitution, required control and direction, and, as the majority were ignorant of agricultural pursuits, constant superintendence of their work. The system of joint cultivation also was entirely unsuited to the class of men who formed the bulk of the settlers. It is true that the Act authorised neither preliminary surveys nor the appointment of superintendents, and stated expressly that the associations were to be co-operative; but if the urgency of the crisis may be taken to have justified the Government in making advances without the sanction of Parliament, it would also have justified such further illegalities as would have benefited the settlers and safeguarded the interests of the tax-payers.

A certain amount of co-operation was inevitable if the settlements were to be formed upon land which could only be cultivated under irrigation, in the erection of the pumping plant and the use of water. It would also be advisable in the purchase of seeds, trees and vines, the disposal of produce and the common ownership of horses and implements of husbandry. But the land

might have been cut up into blocks, in order to enable each settler to obtain the full benefit of his exertions subject to payment for the services rendered to him by the association.

The Government are to be congratulated, however faulty their methods may have been, upon their attempt to enable the unemployed to make homes for themselves upon the land, a great improvement upon the policy of their predecessors, who wasted thousands of pounds upon unnecessary relief works. They have undoubtedly raised the moral tone of the settlers, who make a good impression upon the visitor through their intelligence and sobriety and the happy appearance of their children, and one cannot but regret that, owing to the absence of direction, much of their labour has been absolutely valueless. The cynic will say that the men have every reason to be contented as they are living entirely upon advances and can rid themselves of all responsibility for the loans by leaving the settlements; but he forgets that they have qualified for these advances by hard work and that they never see a shilling that they can call their own.

The whole question must be looked at from the point of view of the Australian, who would be horrified at our system, under which indigence is assumed to be the result of idleness and improvidence and relief is offered under the most degrading conditions, and expects his Government to do something to relieve the misery caused by scarcity of employment. In South Australia, where adult suffrage and payment of the members of both Houses have made the working classes masters of the

situation, they can compel the Ministry to pay attention to their wishes. A step in the right direction, was taken when Village Settlements were substituted for temporary relief works; but any future scheme, while affording to men the opportunity of regaining a position of independence, should compel them to prove their worthiness by their own individual exertions.

The wide application by the Australasian Provinces of the principle of State action renders them especially liable to violent fluctuations of prosperity and adversity. As young countries they have borrowed largely for purposes of development, and have constructed expensive public works which have greatly increased the demand for labour. During the recent years of depression the Government have been obliged to discontinue their operations, and have offered less employment at a time when the labour market was already overstocked owing to the contraction of private enterprise. Similarly in the case of revenue: the receipts from the railways, which are almost universally owned by the State, vary proportionately with the returns from taxation, which depend in their turn largely upon the condition of trade. They have fallen in South Australia from £1,229,598 in 1891-2 to £967,656 in 1894-5, with the result that when the community has been least able, owing to the diminished returns from other resources of revenue, to bear additional taxation, further taxes have necessarily been imposed to meet the interest upon the loans out of the proceeds of which the railways have been constructed. The Kingston Government, which took office in

1893, had to face a deficit of £200,000, and immediately set to work to restore order in the finances. This they attempted to do by retrenchment, reducing the expenditure by £100,000 per annum, and by the imposition of fresh taxation. Succession Duties, a tax on the unimproved value of land and an income-tax had already been imposed, a distinction being made in the latter case, between incomes derived from property and incomes resulting from personal exertion; but the present Government were the first to introduce the progressive principle into the taxes on incomes and land values. This legislation has encountered, as might be expected, the strongest opposition from the richer members of the community, who protest that a feeling of insecurity is produced and capital driven out of the country, but it may be noted that South Australia in 1895 raised money at 3 per cent. upon exceptionally favourable terms. The Government were compelled to obtain further funds, and showed their desire to equalise the incidence of the additional taxes by lowering, in spite of the opposition of the Labour Party, the exemption from income tax from £200 to £125 and by increasing the duty on beer, spirits, and other articles of ordinary consumption. Income tax is at present at the rate of 4-1/2d. in the pound up to £800, and of 6d. in the pound above £800 of taxable amount resulting from personal exertions, and at the rate of 9d. and 1s. in the pound, respectively, on incomes from property. Incomes between £125 and £425 enjoy exemption on £125 of the amount. Taxpayers are required, under penalty of prosecution for perjury for a

false declaration, to furnish annually a statement of all forms of income that they have enjoyed during the past year, except in respect of any share or interest in a registered company; in this case the tax, at the rate of a shilling in the pound, is deducted by an officer of the company before payment of the dividends to shareholders. The higher rate is not paid on either form of income unless it, separately, exceeds £800. The tax on the unimproved value of land is ½d. in the pound up to, and 1d. above, the capital value of £5,000, and is increased by 20 per cent. in the case of absentee owners. A general assessment of all the lands in the Colony is made triennially, each person's property in each district or township being treated separately. The assessments are then sorted alphabetically, in order to discover the total holding of each individual which is the basis upon which the higher or lower rate of taxation is imposed. Little objection is taken to the manner in which the value of the land is assessed; in the majority of cases the owner and the official of the Government are able to agree as to a fair valuation, and, should they fail to do so, an appeal against the valuation may be made to the Taxation Department, and, if an arrangement be not arrived at, to a Court of Law. The assessment of 1894 led to a large number of appeals, as the assessors had not realised the enormous fall in value of agricultural and pastoral land, but all, with a single exception, were met to the satisfaction of the appellant by concessions voluntarily made by the Department. Their attention is turned mainly to urban land, because it is subject to the greatest increase

in improved value and returns the larger portion of the receipts derived from this source. An incidental advantage of the tax lies in the fact that land held by speculators for a rise in value contributes to the revenue equally with that on which buildings have been erected. The tax is recognised by most people as equitable in principle, but its progressive character has brought upon the Ministry the bitterest animosity of the landed class, who maintain that it has caused land to be given up and to become unsaleable, not so much because the present burden is intolerable but because it is merely the thin end of the wedge. They point to the programme of the Labour Party in which it is stated that the duty should be taken off certain articles of ordinary consumption, the deficiency (which, according to an official estimate, would be £310,000 a year) to be made up by increasing the tax on land values, and argue that as the Labour Party hold the Government under their thumb, they will be able to enforce compliance with their wishes. It is difficult for a stranger to judge to what extent possessors of capital have actually been deterred from investing it in land, especially as several important factors have led concurrently to a depreciation in its value, such as the fall in the prices of wheat and wool, the failure of banks which were interested, directly or indirectly, in large tracts of country, and bad legislation, passed some ten years ago, under which the runs were cut up into blocks too small for the successful prosecution of the pastoral industry. The Government can point to Pastoral Acts which are admitted to be steps in the right direction, and

challenge their opponents to show in what way they could have raised the £20,000 yielded by the additional Land Tax with less burden to the community. The Absentee Tax lacks similar justification, as it only brings in £3,600 a year. It is defended by the Premier on the ground that the absentee, as regards his property, has the full protection of the administration of the laws, and should contribute to the expenditure necessary for the maintenance of the State; and that he does not do so to the extent of those who live in South Australia and contribute daily to the revenue by means of the Customs in all they eat and drink and practically all they put on. On the other hand it is contended that it is of supreme importance to attract capital to the Colony and that this principle is recognised in the case of public loans and Treasury bonds, on which no income tax is charged, and should also be taken into consideration with reference to private investments in land. Succession Duty is levied upon a graduated scale, ranging from 1-½ per cent. for £500 to 10 per cent. for £200,000 and upwards in the case of a widow, widower, ancestor or descendant of the deceased, and from 1 per cent. for any amount under £200 to 10 per cent. for £20,000 and upwards where the property is inherited by a person in any degree of collateral consanguinity. If the heir is a stranger in blood he pays 10 per cent. whatever be the value of the property. In order to promote the diffusion of wealth the rate of the tax is based upon the amount inherited, not upon the total value of the estate.

In the relief of the unemployed and the imposition of

additional taxation, the Ministry, while choosing their methods, have dealt with problems which they were bound to face; but they have not confined themselves to the negative task of coping with existing difficulties. They have realised that greater commercial activity would permanently benefit the revenue and add to the demand for labour, and that, in a country like South Australia, it could only be secured by a wider and more varied cultivation of the soil, and have, with the hearty support of the Labour Party, seized every opportunity to encourage production and develop the export trade. Farmers already had the advantage of an Agricultural Bureau at Adelaide, with local branches, which periodically disseminated information, and of an Agricultural College to which they could send their sons, at a small annual charge, or gratuitously if they could obtain a scholarship; but they were hindered, when the fall in the value of cereals compelled them to turn their attention to subsidiary industries, by the absence of facilities for obtaining a market for subsidiary products. The limited demand in the Colony for butter, fruit, and wine offered insufficient inducement to farmers and small cultivators. Previous to 1893, the total export of butter did not exceed the value of £1,200, but in that year and in 1894 a bonus was offered by the Government, with the result that butter of the value of £110,000 has since been shipped. They also formed a Produce Export Department through which producers can ship their goods to London, entered into a contract with the Peninsular and Oriental and Orient Steamship Companies for cheap rates of

carriage, and established in London a Wine and Produce Depôt to receive the goods and sell them on the most favourable terms. A receiving depôt has since been established at Port Adelaide and refrigerating machinery and chambers have been erected, which enable the Department to receive sheep and send them as frozen meat to England. Butter, wine, frozen meat, and fruit have been sent to London through the Department, and in some cases prices have been realised which far surpassed those which could have been obtained in the local market. The scheme is not yet self-supporting, as, though the charges cover the expenses, the salaries of the additional officials required in the Ministry, and an annual sum of some £3,500 for the maintenance of the Depôt in London, fall upon the revenue of the country; but this expenditure is more than repaid by the impetus undoubtedly given to trade which would not otherwise have been afforded owing to the absence of private enterprise. The Ministry have undertaken a work in which individuals would have had little chance of success, and have enabled small consignors to ship their produce at wholesale rates. Their object also has been, in the words of the Minister of Agriculture (Dr. Cockburn), "to afford a guarantee of quality. All goods consigned to the Depôt are examined previous to shipment. If found to be in good condition and properly packed, they are sent forward to the London manager with a certificate to that effect. By this system of inspection a barrier is erected against the export of inferior goods which have an injurious effect on the reputation of South

Australian produce." This latter point is of great importance and applies equally as regards the injury that might be done by one Province to another, as the British consumer regards Australian produce generically, and does not distinguish between the output of different Provinces. Dr. Cockburn called a conference in 1896, which was attended by representatives from New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, to consider how far joint action might be taken to secure uniformity of output. The presence of a representative from Victoria enhanced the practical character of the deliberations, as that Province has been the pioneer in the movement and conducts its operations on a very extensive scale. It was decided that the respective Parliaments should be invited to legislate in the direction of uniform inspection of frozen meat, dairy produce, wine and fruit, the adoption as far as possible of a federal brand which would be a guarantee of high quality and the joint exhibition of Australian produce at some leading agricultural show in England. The conference is regarded as a promising sign of the willingness of the Australian Provinces to act together in matters of common concern. The institution of the Produce Export Department is favourably viewed by the press of South Australia and by the bulk of the community, but, while it is admitted that the initiative of the State has been successful, the hope is expressed that, when the trade has been firmly established, the scope of State action will be reduced and private enterprise be allowed to step in. Such an attitude shows the prevalent distrust of State action; in order that it may not be

perpetuated, the middleman is to be invited to absorb a portion of the profits which at present are gained by the producer.

The present Ministry have also legislated on the subject of workmen's liens, to protect the wage-earner against an insolvent or dishonest employer; they have passed a Conciliation Act, to facilitate the settlement of industrial disputes, and have established a State Bank to provide for advances to farmers and other producers and to local authorities. These measures were warmly supported by the Labour members, who tried, unsuccessfully, to enlarge the scope of the State Bank by making it a Bank of Issue.

At the General Election in 1896 the Liberals, who were again successful, advocated certain measures of social reform; continued economy of administration; the extension of the functions of the Export Department; Federation on a democratic basis, and the election of Ministries by Parliament, a proposal which has excited singularly little interest, in spite of the complete change that it would effect in the methods of government. The justification for it must be sought in the local conditions of the Province, which has never taken kindly to the system of government by party.

The tariff question, which has caused a clear line of division in New South Wales, has been settled decisively in favour of protection, and no distinct issue has taken its place at the recent elections. In Adelaide and the neighbourhood the contest may be said to have been fought in some sense between capital

and labour, though among the supporters of the Ministry are many men of considerable means; or between individualism and socialism, but that all are socialists to the extent of believing in State ownership of railways and State control of waterworks and water conservation, while the majority are favourably disposed to the Export Department, and the average man has no definite ideas on the subject, but views each proposed extension of State action according to his opinion of its possible effect upon himself. The success of the Liberals was remarkable, as the South Australians are a fickle people, and usually overthrow the party that is in power; but it is suggested that the female vote, which has been given for the first time, may have been recorded largely in favour of those who had passed the Adult Suffrage Act. However that may be, the Kingston Government are by no means sure of an extension of three years, as the ties of party allegiance are slight except in the case of the Labour members, and the struggles in the Assembly may resolve themselves, as in the past, into contests between individual aspirants for office. The tendency of the last Parliament was in the direction of a clearer line of cleavage, but this was due to the cleverness of the present Premier, who included in the Cabinet his two strongest opponents whose opposition had been the more bitter that it was not founded upon differences of political opinion. Until that time South Australia had had forty-one Ministries in thirty-seven years, a constant change of the responsible heads of public departments which greatly impaired their efficiency and

prevented continuity of administration. The absence of a stable majority in the Assembly gave the opportunity, and ambition and love of power the impetus, to continual struggles for office which were wholly unallied with any baser motives, as Australian statesmen have obtained an honourable pre-eminence for their rectitude of character.

The intentions of the Government in regard to the substitution of an elective executive, which have not yet been definitely formulated, may be gathered from a speech made by Dr. Cockburn, the principal advocate of the change, in which he proposed that Ministers, who would continue, as at present, to be Members of Parliament, should be elected by ballot by the Assembly at the commencement of each session; that they should appoint one of their number to be their leader, but should be responsible individually to Parliament for their respective departments; and that their corporate responsibility should be limited to matters affecting the Province as a whole, such as finance or its relations with other countries. The Governor's prerogative of dissolution would remain unaffected, but as the House would be brought into closer touch with the people, dissolutions would be unnecessary and undesirable. Dr. Cockburn claimed that his proposal was in accordance with the natural evolution of Parliamentary Government, and contended that, the area of selection being enlarged, the best men would be chosen as Ministers from the whole House and the best man for each office. Ministers would not be called

upon to justify proceedings of their colleagues which in their hearts they condemned, and private members would be able to exercise greater independence, as they would not be called upon to sacrifice their convictions to maintain their friends in office, and, being allowed greater freedom on questions of legislation, would introduce many bills of an important character. Intrigue, which was an essential of Party government, would become disreputable when resorted to for purposes of personal advancement. The objection that certain members would not work together if chosen to form an administration was met by the fact that men sat in amity on the Treasury benches who previously had denounced one another to the utmost of their power. The distinctive feature of the proposal, therefore, is the indirect election of Ministers. The people elect the representatives, who, in turn, are to elect certain of their number to form the Executive. The first criticism that suggests itself is, that it is difficult to believe in the rapid elimination of party feeling, and that it is probable, granted the existence of intrigues among aspirants for office under the present system, that they would be increased tenfold when such persons sought to ingratiate themselves, not only with prospective Premiers, but with a majority of the members of the Assembly. Again, while it is impossible to foresee all the results of the change, it may be anticipated that some obvious advantages would be counterbalanced by incoherence of policy and haphazard legislation, but that a class of men might be induced to come forward as candidates who are

deterred by their horror of continual party strife. Dr. Cockburn stated that no amendment would be required in the Constitution Act, as, after the election of the Ministers, their names would be submitted in the ordinary way to the Governor. The present Ministry also favour the biennial retirement of half the members of the Assembly, in order to secure continuity in its composition, and the institution of the referendum.

These proposals are warmly supported by the Labour Party. They advocate elective Ministries on the ground that the people would obtain greater control over the Executive, that stability of government would be promoted, and that the legislative efficiency of Parliament would greatly be increased. They contrast the rapid dispatch of business by local governing bodies with the waste of time and obstruction which prevail in legislative assemblies. The biennial retirement of half the members of the Lower House commends itself to them for the reason which causes it to be opposed by men of conservative tendencies, that it would do away with the form of minority representation which is rendered possible in two-member constituencies by the widespread habit of plumping. They have been foremost in their advocacy of the referendum and the initiative, and one of their representatives, Mr. Batchelor, has introduced a Bill which provides for the establishment of the referendum, and contains the striking clause that "If petitions, signed by not less than one-tenth of the electors entitled to vote for the election of members of the House of Assembly ... shall be presented to Parliament

praying that legislation shall be initiated on any subject, the Attorney-General shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, a Bill to give effect to such petition; and such Bill shall be introduced into Parliament as a Government measure." Mr. Batchelor believes that legislation would be accelerated on subjects which fail to receive attention because Ministries fear that they might alienate the sympathies of some of their supporters.

The idea of the direct consultation of the people upon a particular subject was put into practical effect at the recent elections, when they were invited, in the form of an initiative, to say whether they desired alterations in the law in regard to education. Primary education in South Australia is free, secular and compulsory. No religious instruction is permitted in the State schools, but the Minister of Education has the power, on receiving a written request from the parents of not less than ten children who attend any school, to require the teacher to read the Bible to any pupils who are present for that purpose for half an hour before half-past nine, the time at which the ordinary teaching commences. The direct reference to the people was the result of a Parliamentary resolution instigated by the advocates of denominational education, who contended that public opinion was veering round in their favour and believed that they would obtain a great accession of strength in the female vote which was to be exercised for the first time. It was couched in the form of the following questions, which were submitted to the electorate on a separate voting paper on the occasion of the

general elections:—

1. Do you favour the continuance of the present system of education in the State schools?

2. Do you favour the introduction of religious instruction in the State schools during school hours?

3. Do you favour the payment of a Capitation Grant to denominational schools for secular results?

The wording of the first and second questions was calculated to act in favour of the opponents of secularism, as the first would probably be answered in the negative not only by those who support religious instruction but also by many who believe that, in the present state of the finances, education should not be free except to such as are unable to pay for it. It was not made clear whether it was intended to apply to the system as a whole or merely to its secular character. The second question would bring together all who favour religious instruction, however much they may disagree among themselves as to the form in which it should be given. During the progress of the campaign the majority of the candidates declined to express their views upon the matter, but stated that they would be prepared to abide by the popular decision.

The following figures give the result of the reference for the whole Province with the exception of the Northern Territory, which has a very small electorate:—

1. Yes 51,744. No 17,755.

2. Yes 18,889. No 34,922.

3. Yes 13,428. No 41,975.

The classification of the papers is disappointingly meagre, as no information can be gathered as to the number of supporters of religious teaching and the capitation grant who were favourable to the other leading features of the existing system, nor as to the extent to which the friends of the capitation grant approved or disapproved of religious instruction in the State schools. The returns show, however, that, while 90,000 votes were given for Parliamentary candidates, some 20,000 persons either did not vote at all or gave an informal vote upon the distinct issue, and that less than one-fifth pronounced against the Act as it stands. The condemnation of the capitation grant is still more emphatic, and if the supporters of religious teaching have less cause for dissatisfaction, it may be noted that in no constituency were the affirmative in excess of the negative replies, and that as the total number of votes given upon the first question was far larger than that on the second and third, thousands who had voted affirmatively upon the first must have considered that they had thereby returned a negative reply to the others and should be reckoned as additional opponents of religious instruction and of the capitation grant. It is also noteworthy that, contrary to the general expectation, the country districts gave a considerably higher percentage of votes in favour of the present system than the seven constituencies which include Adelaide and its immediate neighbourhood. The advocates of religious instruction have announced that they intend to continue their

efforts to win over the majority to their views; in the meanwhile, they will realise that the process must be slow and will stir up the various agencies of the churches to increased activity in a sphere which is particularly their own.

The secular character of State education, which dates from 1851, cannot be shown to have had evil effects upon the conduct of the working classes, who almost universally respect and obey the law and have an air of confident independence which has been fostered by manhood suffrage, high wages and a high standard of comfort. South Australia was fortunate in her original settlers, and has always attracted a good class of immigrants. At present great benefit is accruing from the rapid development of Western Australia, which has relieved the pressure upon the labour market and increased the demand for South Australian goods. The latest Savings Bank returns give the total amount deposited as £2,713,000 and the number of depositors as 88,876, a very satisfactory rate for a population of about 320,000, especially when it is considered that the working classes also have large investments in Friendly and Building Societies. In conclusion, the visitor cannot but be struck by the entire absence of squalid poverty and of overcrowding in tenements and by the orderliness of the people and the high average of prosperity.

II

DEMOCRACY AND ITS SAFEGUARDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

The necessity for safeguards against financial extravagance and political pressure—The Crown Lands Act—The appointment of independent Railway Commissioners—The Standing Committee on Public Works—The Public Service Board—The unemployed, their numbers and treatment—The democratisation of the constitution—The Labour Party, its history, successes and aspirations.

The inhabitants of New South Wales, as of several other Australian Provinces, lived for many years in a fool's paradise. They had received a magnificent inheritance in the land and were able, owing to the proved mineral resources of the country, to draw upon a practically inexhaustible fund in the willing advances of British capitalists. All classes vied with one another, especially in Victoria, in the extravagant loans and expenditure which caused the crisis of 1893, the greatest blessing, as many think, that has ever befallen Australia. Regardless of the burdens it was imposing upon future generations, the Parliament of New South Wales, with which I shall be dealing principally in the present chapter, constructed unnecessary public works, allowed

the Civil Service to be packed with the friends and relations of those in power, and authorised roads and bridges almost at the whim of each individual member. This condition of things could not continue indefinitely: on the one side, a rapidly increasing debt, on the other, an enormous army of civil servants, aspirants for employment on public works and local claimants for a share of the expenditure of loan funds, who were able, on account of the wideness of the franchise and the numerous functions undertaken by the Government, to bring pressure to bear upon the Ministry through their representatives in the Assembly. It was essential that the power to borrow should be curtailed; essential also that the possibilities of political pressure should greatly be diminished. The former object could only be achieved at the cost of a comparative loss of credit, the latter by a wise recognition on the part of the electorate of the dangers of unfettered State action under a democratic constitution.

The rapid growth of indebtedness cannot justly be laid solely to the charge of the popular representatives, as, though the Legislative Council has occasionally resisted Loan Bills, it does not appear to have realised the dangers of the proposed expenditure. Nor was it in human nature that it should have opposed the construction of railways by which its members, mostly landholders, would enormously be benefited. Were their lands to be resumed by the Government, they would obtain an enhanced price for them; in any case, many of them would gain a large unearned increment. The members of the Council who are

nominated for life, similarly with Labour members, lawyers, and others who represent particular sections in Parliament, have been active mainly where their own interests have been concerned. In pursuance of their right to reject measures of taxation, they threw out Sir George Dibbs' Income-Tax Bill in 1893 and, two years later, Mr. Reid's Land and Income-Tax Assessment Bill. As landholders they objected to a land tax, and to an income tax as representatives of the wealth of the community. Nor has the extravagance been due to payment of members, which is regarded by some as the cause of all the evils of Australia, as it was not inaugurated until after the greater part of the indebtedness had been incurred; but the necessity for political safeguards has been accentuated by the entrance into Parliament of men who, owing to their pecuniary circumstances, are less able to resist the demands of their electors, are deeply interested in the postponement of dissolutions, and are more dependent upon their re-election. It would be equally false to attach any blame to the Labour Party, which did not make its appearance in the Assembly until 1891.

While the great diminution of borrowing and consequently of the construction of public works has lessened the opportunities for undue political influence, many still exist, and the number would have been far greater in the absence of recent legislation. How numerous these opportunities might be, may be gauged from the fact that, exclusive of some 10,000 railway employés, 20,000 persons were formerly in the service of the State at an

annual salary of £2,600,000; that many thousands are tenants of the Crown, liable to be propitiated by the reduction of their rent; that nearly half the population live in unincorporated districts, in which the local expenditure is met out of national funds, and that the unemployed continually clamour for rations and employment upon relief works, the receipt of which, under the existing law, does not entail political disfranchisement.

The first legislative recognition of this danger is seen in the Crown Lands Act of 1884, which constituted Local Land Boards, consisting of not more than three members to be appointed by the Governor in Council, which were to consider all applications for land, insure the due fulfilment of the conditions, residential or other, which are attached to different forms of tenure, and appraise the rents of pastoral leases and the rate of compensation for improvements. The practice of the Ministry has been to appoint as chairman of a Board some experienced official of the Crown Lands Department and, as his colleagues, persons recommended by the residents in the district. I am assured that this system of Land Boards, whose decisions are subject to an appeal to the Land Court, has worked satisfactorily and that confidence has been promoted by the publicity of the proceedings. A full statement is published periodically, for each district, of the areas still open for settlement and of the conditions under which they can be taken up: the Land Boards have to inquire into the *bonâ fides* of the applicants. The question of the remission or suspension of the payment of rent is one of

great difficulty in countries in which the Crown is the largest landholder. If a discretionary power is given to the Ministry, political pressure can be brought to bear upon them by tenants through their Parliamentary representatives; if it be withheld, great hardship may ensue. This is particularly the case in Australia, where the value of a property may greatly be reduced by the devastations of rabbits or other pests and the consequent deterioration in the grazing capability of the land, or by a fall in the price which can be obtained for stock or wool. The Land Acts of New South Wales recognise either of the above causes as sufficient to entitle a pastoral lessee to a reappraisal of his rent by a Land Board, and permit the suspension of annual payments for one year in the case of holders of land under conditional purchase who reside upon it, but compel the vast majority of tenants of the Crown to abide strictly by the conditions of their agreements, under pain of the forfeiture of their holdings. Cases of individual hardship, which would engage the attentions of a private landlord, are, in the avoidance of a greater evil, left without redress.

In 1888 two further measures were passed with a similar object, the Government Railways and Public Works Acts. In a book recently published by authority of the Government,¹ to which I have to acknowledge my indebtedness, it is stated that the re-organisation of the railway administration was rendered necessary by the excess of political influence, the absence

¹ "New South Wales; the Mother Colony of the Australias."

of expert control, and the construction of new lines without sufficient regard to the prospects of an early remunerative traffic, which had caused the capital expenditure to have been nearly doubled while the net earnings had not increased. Under the former Act, accordingly, the Government railways and tramways, which are now about 2,600 miles in extent and have been constructed at a cost of thirty-eight millions, were vested absolutely in a Board of three Railway Commissioners to be appointed by the Governor in Council. In order that their independence might be secured, they were made irremovable except for misbehaviour or incompetency, and then only upon a vote of both Houses, and their salaries were charged on the consolidated Revenue Fund, which was permanently appropriated to the required extent. They were entrusted with the general management of the railways and with the appointment, subject to the regulations governing entrance into the public service, and dismissal, of all clerks, officers and employés, whose salaries and wages, however, are subject to the vote of Parliament. The Government were fortunate in securing the services of a very competent senior commissioner, who, with his colleagues, has been able, without lowering the rate of wages, to reduce the percentage of working expenses to gross revenue from 66.69 to 54.46 per cent., and has increased the net return on capital from 2.85 to 3.60 per cent. The result is the more satisfactory that the railways are not worked solely with a view to profit, but in such a manner as to benefit the population as a

whole and to encourage the remote farmer and pastoralist. The experience of the other Australasian Provinces which established similar Boards proves it to be essential that the commissioners should not only possess great commercial ability, but be strong men who are able to withstand the pressure to which they will be subjected and are regardless of the attacks which are likely to follow upon their refusal of favours.

The Public Works Act provides for the appointment of a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, which is to consider and report upon all proposals for the construction of public works, except such as are connected with the military or naval defences of the Province, where the estimated cost exceeds £20,000, and upon any similar proposals involving a smaller expenditure, which may be submitted to it by the Governor in Council. It consists of thirteen persons, eight members of the Assembly and five of the Council, who are appointed for the duration of a Parliament and receive remuneration at the rate of three guineas for each sitting and thirty shillings a day for travelling expenses where the sittings are held at a distance from Sydney. The Secretary for Public Works nominates an equal number from both sides of the House after consultation with the leader of the Opposition; in the majority of cases these nominations are challenged and the appointments are made by ballot of the whole House, which, according to trustworthy information, leads to disreputable negotiations between those who desire the additional salary and those who are able to confer

it. It has been suggested recently by a Royal Commission, which reported that "the expenditure on public buildings is in excess of what is necessary, owing to the system of political interference, which is responsible for the erection of special post offices in country townships where shops could be used, and of costly courts of justice and other structures which are not required," that all proposals for public expenditure involving a probable outlay of more than £5,000, should be considered and reported on by a committee consisting of the permanent heads of the Public Works Department, the Treasury, and the Department on whose behalf the proposed expenditure would occur. But the adoption of this suggestion would not go to the root of the evil, which lies in the manner in which small public works of a purely local character are carried out in rural districts. In the early days of the Province the Government, in order to widen the area of settlement, constructed all roads, bridges, and other local works out of national funds. As population increased, municipalities were established, which rated themselves for local purposes and received subsidies from the Government proportionately to the amounts thus raised; but the Act of 1867, which contemplated the extension of the system, provided that new municipalities, either boroughs or municipal districts, could only be created upon the receipt of a petition signed by a stated proportion of the prospective ratepayers. The Councils of such municipalities have the right to levy rates not exceeding two shillings in the pound in one year upon all rateable land within their borders, and receive

from the Government during the first five years a sum equal to the whole amount actually raised in this manner or from any other specified source of revenue. This is gradually diminished until, at the end of fifteen years, no further subsidies are received, except such as have specially been voted by Parliament. At the present time, owing to the absence from the Act of any compulsory provision, the incorporated districts of the Province comprise somewhat more than half of the population, but less than one hundredth of the total area. Successive Governments have recognised the evil, but have failed to pass a satisfactory Amending Act which would establish some form of local government in the unincorporated areas and compel them to pay a fixed portion of their local expenditure. The estimates for such expenditure are framed by the Public Works Department, and are based upon the reports of its resident engineers and of the agents of the Government Architect. The opportunity of the pushing rural member occurs upon the expenditure of the unappropriated sum of money which is left in the hands of the Minister, to meet requirements that cannot be foreseen; in this connection, members may threaten a withdrawal of their support and ministers may seek to win over new adherents. The reports of such actions are probably much exaggerated, as there are many who delight in vilifying the Assembly, but the popularity of a rural representative depends undeniably on the number of public works which the Government carry out in his district.

The next important step was the appointment, early in 1895,

of a Royal Commission to inquire into the Civil Service, which reported that the Act of 1884, under which a Civil Service Board of five persons had been constituted, had failed in its purpose, because the Board consisted usually of men who had other duties to perform and had not the power to fix the salaries or control the service, and because the right was reserved to ministers in special cases to make appointments without either examination or probation. The Commissioners found that, owing to the absence of any well-ordered system of classification, the grossest inequalities and anomalies existed in the salaries of offices attached to different departments or even to the same department, as, to take an extreme case, that, in the department of the Government Architect the official who designed the Crown Lands office and supervised its erection was receiving less remuneration than the principal messenger; and that, while the service contained many high-minded and able officials, there were cases where incompetency, neglect of duty, and even drunkenness had formed no bar to continued employment. In accordance with their recommendations, founded on the belief that Parliament could not directly cope with the matter, an Act was passed in 1895 which constituted a Public Service Board of three persons, to be appointed for a period of seven years in the same way, and with the same securities for independence, as the Railway Commissioners. The Board was charged with the duty of making a thorough investigation, which was periodically to be repeated, into the working of each department, and of fixing the

number, grade, and salary of the officials. Future appointments and promotions were to be made by the Governor in Council, upon a certificate of the Board, subject to the regulations in regard to competitive examinations and an obligatory period of probation upon entrance into the service. As the Commission had reported that it should be possible to effect an annual saving of a quarter of a million, special importance attached to the provisions which enabled the Board to dispense with the services of those who could not usefully and profitably be employed, such persons to receive gratuities on a fixed scale upon their retirement. The Board were sitting during my stay in Sydney and had to suffer from the open hostility of those who had been affected by their decisions and from abusive correspondence in the press. Their impartiality was impugned, and they were charged with allowing themselves to be influenced by the wishes of Ministers; but when the unpleasant task of retrenchment has been completed, they will doubtless carry on a work of practical utility unhampered by criticisms and accusations.

No serious attempt has yet been made to deal with the problem of the unemployed, which is the more urgent from the fact that the receipt of relief does not disfranchise the recipient. Its origin must be sought in the extensive Public Works policy of the past, which absorbed immigrants who would otherwise have settled on the land. In 1887 the majority of the great undertakings had been completed, and many thousand men, thus thrown out of employment, drifted into Sydney and led

the Ministry to establish a casual labour Board, which was discontinued after a year, but spent £252,000 in the relief of destitution. In the following years other causes intensified the distress: the great strikes of 1890 destroyed confidence and deterred enterprise; the Broken Hill strike and the recent strike at Newcastle have had similar effects, the latter having struck a blow at the export trade in coal, which was gradually recovering from earlier disturbances; the collapse of 1893 cast adrift a large number of mechanics and clerks whose services had been required during the period of inflation, the fall in the price of wool caused a shrinkage in private expenditure, and the severe drought experienced during the latter part of 1895 had disastrous effects on the labours of those employed in mining, pastoral, and agricultural pursuits. To meet the difficulty a Labour Bureau was established at Sydney in 1892, in order that the unemployed might be able to register themselves and might be helped to obtain work; but, while much has been done in this direction, no more satisfactory solution has been found for the problem, as a whole, than continual relief works, which attract the destitute from country districts and other Provinces, and afford merely temporary alleviation of the distress. According to a recent report of the Superintendent of the Bureau, to whom I am indebted for information, £201,000 were spent during the year ending February last (in a population of a million and a quarter) upon works in aid of the unemployed, an expenditure of which two items alone, £50,000 for forest thinning and £35,000 for railway

deviations, can be supposed to have had any other justification. Mr. Creer told me in June, 1896, that the daily attendance at the Bureau had averaged for several months 1,500 to 2,500, but had decreased latterly to 300 to 500; that many who had been given employment had abandoned it, and that, where a large number had been working together, he had had much trouble owing to their rowdiness and bad behaviour. On this point the Premier, Mr. Reid, stated that he had been informed, on good authority, that there were not more than 1,500 genuine unemployed in Sydney, but admitted, quoting his informant, that "there are also hundreds of men who do little or no work" and "a large number of men who have been identified with the unemployed agitation for the past ten years, and who appear to delight in its existence, as no doubt they consider it a capital cover to pose as *bonâ-fide* workmen out of employment." The conduct of the latter is mainly due to the weakness of successive Ministries, which have failed to resist pressure and may almost be said to have encouraged idleness. Such encouragement is also provided in the climate of Sydney, which enables men to sleep in the open for nine months of the year without discomfort. Mr. Creer proposed that those who profess to be willing to work should be employed upon schemes of water conservation and irrigation in the drier parts of the Province, which should be carried out by gangs of men under strict supervision, and that the confirmed loafers should be placed in Industrial Homes and be compelled to choose between work and starvation. The

present Government have established thirty-five branches of the Labour Bureau, which will tend to prevent the unemployed from flocking into the Metropolis. But the bulk of the unemployed at Sydney are demoralised by idleness and ignorant of agricultural pursuits, and can only be dealt with by a strong Minister who, regardless of political consequences, will discontinue the system of indiscriminate relief and treat the confirmed loafers with the greatest severity.

Democratic government, actively opposed by some and detested by most of the more educated members of the community, is firmly established in New South Wales, and is essential to the happiness of the people there as elsewhere in Australasia, in the general prevalence of purely commercial instincts and the absence of a landed class which is bound by inherited traditions to take an interest in its dependents. Of recent years the democratic movement has been more rapid: payment of Members of the Assembly dates from 1889, Sir George Dibbs passed manhood suffrage in 1893, and Mr. Reid seeks to curtail the power of the Upper House. A great impetus has been given by the Labour members, whose numbers and influence entitle them to be regarded as one of the most important political factors in the Province. The reason for the formation of a separate party has thus been explained to me by one of its members: the prominent men among the working classes, who were anxious to promote progressive legislation, were hampered by the fact that they disagreed upon the question of the tariff, and that their votes

were, consequently, useless as far as the advancement of such legislation was concerned. The line of cleavage in the Assembly was between Protectionists and Free Traders; reactionary and advanced views were represented on both sides of the House. They felt, therefore, that labour would be powerless unless the issue of the tariff were explicitly sunk and a programme put forward which would concentrate the votes of the working classes. In their campaign they were doubtless aided by the Act passed for the payment of members, and by the failure of the maritime and other strikes, which impressed Trades Unionists with the necessity of seeking to attain their ends by other means. A programme was, accordingly, drawn up, of which the principal items were, in order of importance, Electoral Reform, the Right of Mining for Gold on Private Land, and the Taxation of Land Values; it was adopted at the elections of 1891 by a large number of candidates who came forward in the Labour interest and succeeded in winning thirty-four seats. Upon the meeting of Parliament it was decided by the Party, although the majority had Protectionist leanings, that support should be accorded to Sir H. Parkes, who had made Electoral Reform the principal item of his policy. A few months later he was defeated on the Coal Mines Regulation Bill, and the votes of the Labour Party were transferred to his Protectionist successor, Sir G. Dibbs, who also favoured Electoral Reform; but, in the meanwhile and subsequently, many of the Labour members refused to leave their views on the tariff in abeyance, with the result that the

number of those who adhered staunchly to the programme was reduced to five or six. In spite of these defections, the first two items in the programme were carried and the Taxation of Land Values took the foremost place. At the 1894 elections the Labour Party had been much discredited, but secured fifteen representatives, in the Assembly of one hundred and twenty-five, who were pledged to the so-called "solidarity" vote. Their support was then transferred to Mr. Reid, the present Free Trade Premier, who was in favour of the Land Tax, which they enabled him to carry in 1895, though only after a further election, caused by the action of the Upper House, at which they carried three additional seats. At present the Labour Party are concentrating all their efforts upon the abolition of the Legislative Council and the substitution for it of the referendum, which they regard as a necessary preliminary to the passage of advanced legislation, and are prepared to accept, as a step in the right direction, Mr. Reid's proposal that the tenure of the members of the Council who are nominated for life should be reduced to a period of years, and that all-important Bills, upon which the Assembly and Council have failed to agree in two consecutive sessions, should be referred to a plebiscite. They argue that when the electors realise that the Council can only delay legislation for one session, and that the issue is then directly referred to them, they will sweep it away as a mere obstacle in the path of progress. It may be doubted whether the adoption of the plebiscite would have the results that they anticipate, but it cannot be doubted that a

compact body of representatives, aiming at the democratisation of the constitution and willing to support whichever party makes the highest bid for their votes, have but to remain united to achieve their object, especially when it is in accordance with the natural evolution of Parliamentary government. The Labour members have a definite programme upon which all their efforts are concentrated, but are chary of giving their views upon other questions, as their votes, in consequence of the common pledge, will depend on the decision of the majority of the party. Great indignation is expressed at the "caucus" meetings, at which the votes of all are thus determined; but it is difficult to see wherein the conduct of the Labour members differs essentially from that of the representatives who support one of the principal parties in the State. In both cases certain main objects are sought and individual convictions are, on occasion, subordinated to their attainment; the only difference is that, in the latter case, the action is taken voluntarily in order to maintain a party in power; in the former, its expediency is determined by the majority of those who are united in a common purpose. On the other hand it must be admitted that the Labour Party display, at present, all the irresponsibility of independence, and have often acted in such a manner as to justify the hostility of their opponents. During my stay at Sydney they attempted, on one occasion, to convert the Assembly into a court of judicial appeal; on another, to interfere with the actuarial calculations of insurance societies.

The importance of political safeguards is accentuated not only

by the accelerated movement in the direction of constitutional change, but by the increasing belief in the efficacy of State control and state interference. During the session of 1896 the Government brought forward measures dealing with the conservation of water, the public health, adulteration, and the regulation of coal mines and of factories and workshops, the passage of which would necessitate a considerable increase in the number of State officials; and the Labour Party, the transference of whose support would place the Ministry in danger of defeat, have shown, by their votes in the past, their conviction that all new public works which are in the nature of a monopoly, should be constructed and owned by the State.

The scope of my inquiries in New South Wales led me in directions which have caused me to emphasise the darker sides of political life; but I wish to guard against the inference that similar shadows could not have been found elsewhere, and have touched upon the subject in my general observations upon Australasian tendencies. In fact, I may add, I was drawn into my particular line of study at Sydney by the knowledge that New South Wales had taken especial precautions, except in regard to the unemployed, against the evils which I have here sought to summarise. The predominant note in that Province is one of hopefulness: the vast pastoral, mineral, agricultural, and other resources of the country, the harbour at Sydney which renders it the natural centre of the foreign trade of the Continent, and the rapidity of the recovery from the crisis of 1893, are calculated to inspire

confidence in the future; as are the high average wages of the working classes, the low cost of living, and the short hours of labour. But the most impressive sign of a healthy national life is the readiness of the democracy to recognise the dangers inherent in its rule, and to divest itself voluntarily of some of its powers, in the interests of pure and upright government.

III

PROBLEMS OF QUEENSLAND

The agitation of Central and Northern Queensland for separation from the South—The "Kanaka" traffic—White and coloured labour on the plantations—The Sugar Works Guarantee Act—The irregularity of employment in the sugar and pastoral industries—The conditions and opinions of the shearers—Assistance to dairymen and producers of frozen meat—The Labour Party, its history and prospects—Criticisms of the Government—The principles of State action.

In the Southern Provinces of Australia, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide are not only the political capitals, but have become naturally, from their geographical position and other advantages, the points of departure of the trunk lines of railway and the centres of commercial and intellectual activity. In the case of Queensland, Brisbane, which was selected as the capital because settlement was almost confined to its neighbourhood, had to compete with several other good harbours; it is situated at the south-eastern extremity of a vast territory, and is connected only by sea with the northern parts above Bundaberg. The existence of this means of communication caused successive Governments to postpone the construction of a coastal railway in favour of

lines running from East to West which would promote the development of the pastoral resources of the interior by affording access to the nearest port; but these lines, which start from Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Townsville, and have a respective length of 483, 424, and 235 miles, have tended, by increasing the importance of the latter places, to foster in their inhabitants a feeling of jealousy at the supremacy of the former and of antagonism of interests with the South. The climatic conditions also are divergent: the Centre and South are semi-tropical; the North, which lies wholly within the tropics, contains a low fringe of fertile land along the coast, suitable for the cultivation of sugar, and the cause of the constant struggles which have surrounded the question of the employment of coloured labour.

The establishment of Queensland as a separate Province dates from 1859, and was at once followed by an extension of population to the Northern districts, and a few years later by the growth of a demand for separation, which culminated in 1871 in a petition to the Crown, in which the desire was expressed that the country to the North of the Dawes Range, which lies between Gladstone and Bundaberg, should be created into a new Province, on the ground that the absence of regular communication between the capital and the Northern settlements rendered good government and the administration of justice very difficult and uncertain. During the succeeding years the agitation flickered in the North and was latent in the Centre, which had been conciliated by the construction of its railways and appeared

to have identified itself with the South. Some ten years ago the Northern members pressed their claims very strongly, and more recently the Central members have petitioned the Crown, sent a deputation to the Colonial Secretary, and brought their case before the Queensland Parliament.

The arguments advanced by the Northern and Central separationists are similar in character, and if recognised as valid in the case of the Centre, must be doubly so when applied to the North, owing to its greater distance from the capital and the difficulty of communication with many of its outlying districts. The boundaries adopted by the separationists are those laid down by the Real Property (Local Registries) Act of 1887, under which the Province was divided into three parts, of which the Northern contains 255,000, the Central 223,000, and the Southern 190,000 square miles.

The claims of the Centre, to which I have been able to give more attention, as I spent some time in that district, are based not only upon alleged unjust apportionment of expenditure, defective administration, and financial hardships endured under the protective tariff for the benefit of Southern manufacturers, but upon the inherent and inalienable right of a community of free British people. It is pointed out that Central Queensland is in a more advanced position than were Victoria and Queensland at the time of their separation from New South Wales; that it returns less members than the city of Brisbane and the country within a radius of ten miles of it; and that the Northern and Central

members, even if unanimous in favour of separation, would only number twenty-seven as against the forty-five representatives of the South, and are bound, apart from the constitutional aspect of the question, to look to the intervention of the Imperial Government. The most important utterance from this source is the reply of Sir Henry Holland, now Lord Knutsford, to the Northern deputation, in the course of which he said that "there is no instance of recent years, since the Colonies attained the greatness they have, of the Imperial Legislature passing an Act interfering with the administration of one of those great Colonies, except at the request of the Colonial Government. Therefore I say it is difficult, if not undesirable, to deal with such a question as this unless we have the authority, on a desire expressed on the part of the Colonial Legislature, or unless there is some case made out which is absolutely overwhelming;" and Mr. Chamberlain recently stated, with reference to Central separation, that, even if local agreement had been reached, the difficulties and risks attending any attempt to divide the Province were, under existing circumstances, very great. He clearly appreciated the hostile feeling that would be aroused throughout Australia by any interference on the part of the Imperial Authorities with the internal government of an Australian Province. As the separationists do not hope to obtain a majority in the Queensland Assembly, they are likely to be ardent advocates of Federation, especially if a clause be inserted in the Constitution which would enable the Federal Government

to subdivide a Province without the consent of its Parliament.

The Southern members are influenced by the fear that, under separation, they would lose the Northern and Central markets. To meet this objection, a resolution was moved in the Assembly by one of the members for Rockhampton that the separation of Central Queensland was desirable, but on such terms that the interchange of natural products between the two Provinces should continue to be free from tax or duty; but the proposal, which was seen to be fraught with endless difficulties, has not been regarded seriously. The question has also arisen in what manner the liability for the public debt would be distributed in the case of separation, but it is contended that the matter would be settled under the Imperial Act of 1861, under which both Provinces would jointly be liable for the whole debt, and machinery is provided for arbitration as to the proportion of it which would be borne by each of the Provinces.

The necessity for some form of decentralisation has been recognised, and partially acted on, by successive Ministries since 1877, when a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the best means of bringing about a more equitable distribution of the revenue. The system of Local Government, introduced in 1878 and extended in the following year to rural districts, lessened the direct control exercised from Brisbane, and handed over to elective Municipal Councils and Divisional Boards the expenditure of the revenue raised for local purposes. In 1887 local registries of titles to real estate were established at

Townsville and Rockhampton, and Sir S. Griffiths introduced a Financial Districts Bill, to divide the Province into three districts and to provide for separate accounts of revenue and expenditure. The Bill was not passed, but separate returns have since been published, which do not, however, give a full statement of the contributions of the different districts to the revenue. In 1892 the same Minister introduced a Constitution Bill, in which he proposed to place Queensland under a federal system of Government, a General Assembly of the United Provinces, and three Provincial Parliaments. In the course of discussion the number of Provinces was reduced from three to two, to the exclusion of the Centre, which was to retain its connection with the South. The Bill passed the Assembly, and was thrown out by the Council, principally on the ground that it had not been supported by the statutory two-thirds majority. The Central Separationists were naturally opposed to the Bill in its amended form, and public opinion in the North was equally hostile. It was pointed out that the expenses of government would greatly be increased, even more than under territorial separation, and that the powers of the Provincial Parliament would be so limited, in the absence of control over the railways and the customs tariff, that the North would not enjoy the enhanced prosperity which, under an entirely separate Government, would make it indifferent to the additional expenditure. The appointment of a judge of the Supreme Court to reside at Townsville, and, since last year, at Rockhampton, has lessened the expenditure

and loss of time involved in legal proceedings initiated in the Northern and Central Districts. In the Ministerial measure dealing with the election of delegates to represent Queensland at the Australian Federal Convention, which failed to become law owing to an insoluble deadlock between the two Houses, it was proposed that, of the ten delegates, three should be elected by the Northern and two by the Central Parliamentary Representatives, a greater proportion than would be warranted by their respective populations as compared with that of the South. The Premier, Sir Hugh Nelson, defended the liberality of this proposal on the ground that "it is of the utmost importance that in any federal constitution provision should be made for the division of existing Colonies and the terms on which such divisions shall take place;" adding that "the Northern and Central districts have a perfectly legitimate aspiration: they are looking forward to the day when they will be formed into separate states."

The above remarks embody the views of many South Queenslanders who look forward to eventual separation, but are not prepared to advocate it at present; the Central separationists, on the other hand, contend that the question is ripe for immediate settlement, and, as a proof of popular feeling in the matter, point out that ten out of the eleven representatives of Central Queensland are pledged to separation, and that numerous petitions were handed to the late Governor, Sir Henry Norman, on the occasion of his tour through the district. Personal observation and inquiries directed to all with whom I came in

contact, have convinced me that the enthusiasm for separation is greatly on the wane in the Centre, owing to the strength of the Labour Party, which, in 1896, carried a majority of the Central seats, and to the inevitable reaction which succeeds a period of excitement. The owners of property and tradespeople of Rockhampton have everything to gain by a change which would make their town the capital of a province; the miners at Mount Morgan and the shearers are indifferent, though the latter, judging from a conversation which I had with some twenty of them, have a vague idea that under separation the Labour Party, of which they are supporters, would be in a stronger position; and the pastoralists, who direct the principal industry of the community, are practically unanimous in their opposition: they have obtained the railway which has opened up the Western Downs, and they dread the predominance of the Labour Party and of Rockhampton, the inhabitants of which, they maintain, have shown little regard for their interests.

As regards the feeling in the North, I have been told by one of the Northern members, himself a supporter of separation, and by others, that the agitation is at present dormant. The election of local men has been promoted by the payment of members; previously most of the Northern representatives were inhabitants of Brisbane, who were out of touch with the feelings and interests of their constituents. Material and political considerations also have exercised great influence. The sugar planters, ardent advocates of separation as long as the

importation of coloured labour was forbidden, have been staunch supporters of the Union since the removal of the prohibition and the passage of the Sugar Works Guarantee Act. On the other side, the Labour Party, who share in the hatred of coloured labour which is common to the working classes throughout Australasia, opposed separation while it was likely to lead to its legalisation, but have been encouraged by their present strength, the tenure of seven seats out of sixteen in the Northern district, in the belief that, if they obtained separation, they might hope again to exclude it, and would have an opportunity of giving effect to their general political views.

The "Kanakan" question has been so fully discussed in the press and in numerous pamphlets, that the Imperial and Provincial Acts, which first aimed at the protection of the islanders, may be dismissed with the remark that they are admitted in Queensland to have had abundant justification. The conditions have been made successively more stringent until, at the present time, it is almost impossible that any Kanakas should be taken against their will, ill-treated on the voyage, or oppressed upon the plantations. Government agents, to give a brief summary of the Acts, accompany all recruiting vessels and are bound to see that the islanders understand the nature of the agreement into which they are about to enter, as to rate of payment, and duration of service; that every return passenger is duly landed along with his property at his own village or district, and that the islanders receive the prescribed provisions and clothing on the journey,

and are otherwise treated in accordance with the regulations. Inspectors receive the vessels upon their arrival in Queensland, superintend the signature of the agreements, and, generally, are responsible for the welfare of the labourers during their residence in the country. In the case of sickness employers are bound to provide proper medicine and medical attendance, and they may be called upon to contribute towards the maintenance of a hospital. The contentment of the labourers may be inferred from the fact that a large proportion re-engage themselves upon the expiration of the term of three years, and that, of the 1,305 who were landed during the year 1895, 250 had previously been employed in Queensland. As the result of frequent intercourse, the conditions are well known in most of the islands from which the labourers are recruited. According to official figures, the number of islanders in Queensland increased in 1895 from 7,853 to 8,163, of whom nearly two-thirds are in the districts of Mackay and Bundaberg; all are employed on the cultivation of sugar, with the exception of a few at Thursday Island, who are engaged in the *bêche-de-mer* and pearl-shell fisheries.

It would seem that the only valid objection which can now be made against the system, except by those who disagree from the whole thing on principle, is, that it may lead to the gradual depopulation of some of the islands by the withdrawal of a considerable proportion of the adult males of marriageable age. It may be noted, in this connection, that the islanders have also been recruited for Guatemala, if not for other countries.

The mode of cultivation and the treatment of the raw material have been modified during the last few years. At first the cane was grown solely in large plantations, each of which possessed a separate mill and treated only its own produce; but as prices fell and the local demand was overtaken, more scientific methods began to prevail. It was found, on the one hand, that the cane could be treated most economically on a large scale; on the other, that few plantations were sufficiently extensive to keep a large mill at work during the whole season. To meet these conditions, central mills were constructed and the land was in many cases subdivided, and let or sold on a system of deferred payments to farmers, who were encouraged to cultivate it in small areas, and to send their cane to the factories. The interests of the mill-owner and the farmers should be identical; the former is anxious that his mill should be worked to its full capacity, and has every inducement to dispose of his land upon terms favourable to cultivators; the latter have a sure outlet for the disposal of their produce. In 1894, fully 40 per cent. of the 80,000 acres under cane was cultivated in areas of ninety acres and under. An impetus was given to this movement by the temporary prohibition of the importation of islanders, which compelled planters to consider the possibility of an alternative to coloured labour, and by a vote of £50,000, by means of which two central mills were erected for groups of small farmers. The success of these mills induced the Government to pass the Sugar Works Guarantee Act, under which "any company which can

give the Government security in land, has the requisite cane crops growing for a fair season's mill work, and can show that it has an area of land capable of supplying the mill with a full crop, can obtain the sanction of the Government to accept a tender for the erection of a factory, the State guaranteeing the interest and the redemption of the debentures issued in payment for it. By this measure the country has not only supplied the means for the steady development of the industry, but has taken, in its belief in the soundness of the enterprise, a direct interest in it. No surer guarantee can exist than this law, that the Parliament of Queensland will in future safeguard the prosperity of an undertaking in which the State has so keen an incentive to protect itself from loss."² The contingent liability incurred by the State in the year ending June, 1895, was £157,000, and in the preceding year £44,000: the amount is likely to be increased, as the construction of seven additional mills has been conditionally approved of, but, under an amending Act of 1895, is not to exceed a total of £500,000. The Premier sees no reason to suppose that, with proper management, any of the new factories will fail to meet their liabilities to the State.

Under these circumstances the question arises whether coloured labour will permanently be necessary, the answer to which depends upon the ability of the white man to become acclimatised in a tropical country. "If the white man," to quote

² Quoted, by permission of the author, from an article contributed to the *Australasian Review of Reviews* by Mr. J. V. Chataway, one of the members for Mackay.

a prominent Queenslander, "can live and work and bring up his children in the tropics of this continent, then assuredly the time will come when we shall require coloured labourers to cultivate our cane no more than do the continental sugar-beet farmers require coloured men to do their field work. Where can we look for proof of the European's ability to work and live in the heated North? He works on railways and in mines now, but there is an entire lack of evidence that his children and his children's children can continue to do so with unimpaired health and vigour. Again, it has to be seen what will be the normal death-rate in the North. It has been heavy, but we have yet to estimate the lowering of that rate as the malarial swamps are drained, and the dense tropical scrubs cleared away.... Time alone can solve this question thoroughly, though it may be permitted one to say that so far there is ample reason to think that the evidence is accumulating in favour of the European's ability to permanently inhabit and cultivate our tropical lands. There is some satisfaction in noting, for instance, that, despite the increased settlement in Northern Queensland, the death-rate for the Colony has fallen from 22.97 Per 1,000 in 1884 to 12.08 in 1894."³ The rate of mortality among the Kanakas is reported officially to have been 40.62 per 1,000 in 1894, and 29.64 in 1895. Their employment is absolutely prohibited in the mills, and is restricted to certain forms of work upon the plantations. The Government are anxious to replace the Kanakas gradually by white labourers and to

³ See footnote p. 66.

settle the tropical littoral with a population of small farmers. This object, however, it is contended, cannot be attained without the temporary employment of coloured labour. Another aspect of the question may be noted: granted that white men cannot at present do all the work upon the plantations, Kanakas are preferable to Orientals, whether Chinese or Japanese, who would remain permanently in the country. Even in Queensland, though less than in the Southern Provinces, such a state of things would be regarded as eminently undesirable.

A considerable demand for white labour has thus been created, the extent of which may be gauged from the figures given to me by a planter who has 3,000 acres under cane in the neighbourhood of Bundaberg. Upon land which formerly carried 800 head of cattle and gave employment to a single married couple, he now employs 300 Kanakas and 80 white men during the whole of the year, and 120 additional white men during the crushing season, which lasts, as a rule, from June to December. The latter are compelled to shift for themselves during the remaining months of the year and wander about the country in the search for casual work; many, it is said, seek it in the agricultural districts of the Darling Downs.

The people of Queensland are confronted with a serious problem in the fact that of the three principal industries of the countries, mining alone affords regular and constant employment, and that only on proved goldfields. In the sugar industry, as stated, about 40 per cent. of the labourers, exclusive

of the islanders, are permanently employed, and in the pastoral industry the proportion is even smaller. On a typical sheep-station in the Central district which carries 80,000 sheep, the permanent staff number only 19, and are supplemented at shearing time by some 25 to 30 shearers and as many more workmen who pick up, sort, and pack the fleeces. The shearers with whom I conversed bewailed the irregularity of their employment; they work at high pressure for a few months in the wool-sheds, and have no fixed occupation during the remainder of the year. I was favourably impressed by the men, and was informed that, as a class, they have much improved of late years, and that many of them have considerable savings. Allowances must be made for workmen who are herded together, good characters with bad, and lead a nomadic and demoralising existence which lacks the sobering influences of sustained industry and domestic associations. Recent Ministries have been alive to the importance of this question and have aimed at the gradual diminution of the size of pastoral properties held from the Crown. The Land Act of 1884 divided them into two equal parts, over one of which the holder was offered a fixed lease for 21 years, while the other was to be subject to resumption by the State as the demand for the land might arise. Under this provision large tracts of country have been thrown open for occupation as grazing farms of from 5,000 to 20,000 acres and have been eagerly taken up, as many as twenty applications having been received for a single farm where the quality of the soil has

been exceptionally favourable. The Act of 1894, passed by the present Government, established a new form of tenure which was intended to meet the special requirements of the shearers. Grazing homesteads not exceeding 2,500 acres in area may be acquired at a low rental, subject to the condition that the selector must reside upon the land for not less than six consecutive months in each year during the first ten years of his lease; but, under license from the Land Board, the selectors of two or more homesteads may co-operate to work their holdings as a whole, in which case residence by one-half of the whole number of selectors will fulfil the conditions of occupation. Some of the shearers may, from the force of habit, be incapable of a settled existence; but many of them proclaim their desire to occupy land and are hereby afforded an opportunity which they have scarcely at present realised. The attractiveness of this form of tenure will be increased if the Government pass their proposed legislation to authorise them to sink bores for the supply of water to the smaller holdings.

A better state of things prevails upon the Darling Downs in the south of the Province, where the shearing is done by cultivators and others who are in regular employment. This part of the country should eventually carry a large resident population engaged in the growth of cereals and in dairy-farming. To promote settlement and "in the strong belief that Queensland is capable of and will soon be supplying not only her own requirements, but also of exporting largely of her

surplus farm products, the Government have made provision in connection with the Torres Strait Service for the carriage of farm and dairy produce in large quantities, and have also submitted to Parliament a measure for the appointment of an additional Minister, to be charged solely with the development of agricultural interests, and have taken the necessary steps for the establishment of an agricultural college within a reasonable distance from Brisbane."⁴ The export of dairy produce has been encouraged by the offer of a bonus, and the construction of butter factories by loans, the funds being obtained from a portion of the proceeds of a tax imposed upon owners of sheep and cattle by the Meat and Dairy Produce Encouragement Act of 1893. The remainder is expended in advances to proprietors of meat works, and it is provided in a subsequent Act, that the amounts received in payment of interest or repayment of the principal of the loans, may be refunded to the payers of the tax. The progress of settlement has been retarded by the alienation from the Crown of much of the land that is most suitable for the purpose, both in quality and situation. The freehold has in many cases passed to financial institutions, which, having advanced upon it an amount greater than the present value as depreciated by the fall in prices, are unwilling to sell the land and to reconcile themselves to their losses. The Government have been authorised by the Agricultural Land Purchase Act of 1894, to expend a sum not exceeding £100,000 a year in the purchase, under voluntary agreement, of

⁴ Financial statement 1896, p. 14.

land suitable for agricultural settlement which is to be offered for selection in agricultural farms, and have made considerable use of their powers, but the system has not been sufficiently long in operation to enable an estimate to be formed of its results.

The irregularity of employment has engendered among the working classes a widespread feeling of discontentment, and constitutes one of the main causes of the numerical strength of the Labour vote, which amounts to about 34 per cent. of the whole. The Parliamentary Labour Party in Queensland differs from that of the other Australian Colonies in its close identification with directly socialistic aspirations. It was founded to give effect to the political platform of the Australian Labour Federation, published in 1890 under the influence of the communist, William Lane, which advocates "the nationalisation of all sources of wealth and all means of producing and exchanging wealth;" its organ, *The Worker*, writes under the motto "Socialism in our time," and several of its members publicly admit that they are Socialists. Others, however, who look forward to the possibility of an alliance with a reconstructed Opposition ask to be judged solely by the programme of the party which contains no distinctly socialistic item, in the popular acceptance of the term, except the establishment of a State Labour Department to which men may apply as a right for work at a minimum wage; but they will have difficulty in overcoming the general impression, which their opponents, not unnaturally, do all in their power to intensify.

The Party first came into prominence at the elections in 1893, when they won fifteen seats out of seventy-two, and have nothing to show in the way of practical legislation to counterbalance the undoubted consolidation of the forces of their opponents. A comparison suggests itself with the success of the Labour Parties in New Zealand and South Australia which have co-operated with progressive Ministers in the enactment of measures of social reform. In the latter case, the Labour Party have been so moderate in their programme, speeches, and actions, that they have carried a quarter of the seats in the Legislative Council, and thus prove themselves not to have alienated the householders and small owners of property who form the bulk of the electorate for that House. In New South Wales the Labour Party have been able, by opportunistic transfers of their votes, to secure electoral reform and the taxation of incomes and land values. The position of affairs in Queensland is not analogous; the coalition of Sir S. Griffith and Sir T. McIlwraith practically destroyed the Opposition, and made it necessary for the Labour Party to trust almost entirely to their own efforts, which should have been directed towards the concentration of all the progressive feeling of the community. Their policy, on the contrary, has deprived them of the support of many who are dissatisfied with the Government, and has not materially strengthened their hold upon the working classes. Though they carried twenty seats in 1896, they only polled 964 more votes than in 1893, nor have they improved their position in the House,

as, even should they be supported by the ten Oppositionists and Independents, they would be confronted by a solid phalanx of forty-two Ministerialists. It may be of interest to note that their principal successes have been gained among bushmen and miners, but that they also hold the sugar district of Bundaberg, two agricultural constituencies, two seats at Rockhampton, and three in the poorer and outlying parts of Brisbane.

The complaints of the Labour Party against the Government were directed mainly to their failure to amend the electoral laws or to pass humanitarian legislation, and to the stringency of the Peace Preservation Act of 1894. Apart from their obvious objections to the plural vote of persons holding property in different divisions, they contend that many miners and shearers are permanently disfranchised, as they are neither householders nor reside for six months in the same place, and that persons qualified to be registered are impeded by the provisions which oblige them to fill in a claim in which, among other things, they have to state their qualification, and to get the claim attested by a justice of the peace, electoral registrar, or head male teacher of a State school. The Peace Preservation Act was passed at a time when a serious disturbance had arisen from a strike of shearers in the pastoral districts of the West, on the ground that the ordinary laws of the Colony were insufficient for the prevention, detection, and punishment of crime in such districts, and was as strongly justified by some as it was condemned by others. The Act authorised the Executive to proclaim districts which should

come under its operation, and to appoint such district magistrates as might be necessary for carrying its provisions into effect. These may be summarised in the words of the Hon. T. J. Byrnes, the Attorney-General: "The first portion of this legislation is to give us power to put an end to the carrying of arms and the sale of arms in the districts that have been disturbed... It is proposed in the second part of the Bill that inquests on crime may be held... The third portion of the Bill deals with the power of arrest and detention of persons under suspicion." Under the latter heading persons suspected of crime committed in a proclaimed district could be arrested by a special or provisional warrant, in any part of Queensland, and be detained in prison; but it was provided that such persons should be treated as persons accused of crime and not as convicted prisoners, and that no person "should be held in custody under a provisional warrant for a longer period than thirty days, nor under a special warrant for a longer period than two months, without being brought to trial for the offence stated in such warrant." In justification of the measure, the same Minister quoted cases in which woolsheds had been burnt and the police and private individuals had been fired upon although no actual loss of life had occurred. A stranger cannot form an opinion upon the question and can only note, on the one side, that the operation of the Act was limited to one year, that it was most judiciously administered, not more than one district, under a single district magistrate, having been proclaimed, and that it brought about the speedy cessation of the troubles; on

the other, that no attempt was made by the Government at mediation between the opposing parties, although, to quote the Attorney-General again, they "knew that labour troubles of an aggravated nature were likely to occur." A Bill "to provide for conciliation in industrial pursuits" is included in the programme of the Government.

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