THE ROLE OF GOVERNOR-GENERAL IN AUSTRALIA

1901 - 1927

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This thesis is my own work.

C. Cunneen.
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INTRODUCTION

'The Governor-General is the Connecting link making Australia a sister nation to England instead of an independent republic'.

*Table Talk* (Melbourne), 3 January 1901.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the office of Governor-General was an important and delicate component of the Imperial system. By becoming a self-governing colony 'under the Crown' Australia was able to remain safely within the Empire without the irritation of Downing Street interference in its domestic affairs. At the same time the British Government was content to retain within the colonial executive an agent of the central authority. In this capacity his chief task was to guard Imperial interests, in addition to his constitutional and social functions as Representative of the Crown. Consequently, the first Governor-General, Lord Hopetoun, was both local constitutional monarch and Imperial diplomat.

Problems arising from this dual loyalty were aggravated by the existence in the Australian community of a persistent egalitarian strand whose discontent was frequently centred upon the institution of 'Government House'. As channel of communication with Downing Street the office of Governor-General also suffered from stresses occasioned by the working out of a federal system of government. In particular, the retention of State Governors hampered the full development of the office. But, despite setbacks, the institution
operated satisfactorily, provided that the men appointed to the post possessed the necessary qualities of experience and tact.

In the early years of the Commonwealth, political instability emphasized the monarchical role of the Governor-General in the machinery of government. But, thereafter, as the national Parliament increased in stature and political divisions became more settled the function of the Representative of the Crown as constitutional arbiter became less appropriate. The selection of British aristocrats to represent the King was at first seen to be a guarantee of political impartiality. However, gradually a movement advocating the appointment of Commonwealth citizens to Australian gubernatorial posts gathered strength.

The high point of the office of Governor-General in Australia came during war of 1914-1918, in the term of Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson. Yet, despite the vigour with which he exercised his dual functions, the latter years of his tour of duty saw a narrowing of his responsibilities. After the war, as Australia moved from colonial to full Dominion status, and the British Empire became the British Commonwealth, a new Imperial structure became necessary. In this structure the Governor-General's dual role was no longer relevant. The Imperial Conference of 1926 formally declared that the Representative of the Crown was no longer agent of the British Government. Final separation of functions did not take place until 1931 when an Australian was selected as Governor-General and a separate British diplomatic representative was accredited to the Commonwealth.
It is the object of this study to examine how the men who embodied a British official presence in the Commonwealth interpreted and discharged their duties, and to discuss their significance in the history of Australia during the first quarter of the twentieth century.
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I

Expectations of the Role of 'some Superior functionary'.

On 1 January 1901, to the accompaniment of great ceremony and celebration, the first Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia was sworn in at Sydney. His formal assumption of duty signified the inauguration of a new British nation in the South Pacific. The office itself symbolised the dual significance of the occasion. In the first place, as Representative of the Crown His Excellency signified Australia's membership of the British Empire. In the second, the title Governor-General, as distinct from Governor, emphasized the fact that the new nation was a federal organization of former colonies, now to be known as States.

The centralizing of executive authority over adjacent colonies was not generally a feature of British Colonial administration in the early years of the British Empire. The first permanent settlement in the New World, Virginia, was under the supervision of a 'Principall Governor, Commander and Captain Generall' who represented the transplanted authority of the Crown. But his jurisdiction was limited to the boundaries of the colony and each subsequent settlement in America possessed separate and diverse constitutional establishments, reflecting the variety of origins and aims of the colonists. No attempt was made to collect the continental colonies under any single executive authority.

1. He was not the first Governor-General of Australia. See below p. 15.

On the other hand, by the early eighteenth century a more or less centralized administrative system had evolved in French North America. Each of the main settlements, Quebec, Montreal and Three Rivers in the north, and Louisiana in the south boasted a local Governor, but the three last named settlements acknowledged the superior authority of a Governor-General residing at Quebec.\(^1\) The surrender of the last French Governor-General in 1760 ended the first experiment of centralized civil administration in North America. After a brief period of military rule the loose organization of British North America prevailed. It was not until the American War of Independence had forced a reappraisal of colonial management that the French tradition began to be applied to the British colonies which had remained loyal.

In 1786 Lord Dorchester\(^2\) was appointed 'Governor-in-chief' of all British North American provinces except Newfoundland\(^3\). The appointment and the title were evidence of a growing opinion among British colonial administrators that a chief executive officer with wide local powers was necessary to retain and administer colonies of settlement.\(^4\)

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2. Sir Guy Carleton, Governor of Quebec 1768-1779, Governor-in-chief of British North America 1786-1796.
4. Under the Crown Colony system which evolved in the nineteenth century a more rigid administrative organization was applied to territories acquired by cessation or conquest. This should be distinguished from the administration of colonies of settlement.
But there remained a disinclination to pursue the benefits of centralization. In Dorchester's opinion the failure to provide that the Governor-in-chief be sole channel of communication between British North America and the United Kingdom Government was a repetition of the errors of the old American system\(^1\). Another forty years of sectional bitterness and divided authority passed before a Governor-General was appointed whose commission was intended to extend over the whole of British North America.\(^2\)

From the arrival of Lord Durham in 1838 to the appointment of Lord Elgin in 1847, Governors-General of Canada were able to instigate policy in local affairs, subject to the broad control of the government in London. Lord Sydenham\(^3\), in particular, played a crucial role in Canadian domestic politics, regarded himself, in effect, as permanent Prime Minister. Under his guidance the Union of

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Upper and Lower Canada was successfully carried through in 1841. Sydenham's prestige and administrative ability brought order to Canada for a time, but it masked a basically untenable position. His successors\(^1\), unable to maintain a non-partisan attitude towards political affairs, became fatally identified with one section of the colonial community. Their involvement in the bitterness of party dissension indicated the futility of hoping that an autocratic vice-regal officer could bring harmony to a British colony of settlement and paved the way for the introduction of responsible government.\(^2\)

Lord Elgin\(^3\), Governor-General of Canada from 1847 to 1854, severed the connection between the Representative of the Crown and the British faction in Canadian politics. Under the direction of the Secretary of State, Lord Grey\(^4\), he recognized the responsibility of the Executive to the elected body. At the same time, Elgin strove to establish a new position for the Governor-General as constitutional

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3. James Bruce, eighth Earl of Elgin.

4. The third Earl Grey, formerly Lord Howick, Secretary of State for the Colonies 1846 to 1852.
monarch. He aimed to acquire 'a moral influence in the Province which will go far to compensate for the loss of power consequent on the surrender of patronage to an Executive responsible to the local Parliament'. The partnership of Grey and Elgin effected a far-reaching change in Imperial management. The role of constitutional monarch in a British self-governing colony had, however, still to be worked out.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Canadian Governors-General exercised their rights of influencing domestic policy much in the manner of a constitutional sovereign as described by Bagehot. After Elgin left Canada the elected representatives of the people were responsible for internal self-government. But while they no longer had direct control over domestic policy, Representatives of the Crown were by no means merely cyphers. Even where the political situation was stable and the ministry experienced, His Excellency could exercise some influence upon the direction of local affairs by ensuring that the colonial government recognized his rights to be consulted, to encourage and to warn. In this situation much depended upon the personalities of Governor-General and Prime


Minister, particularly after Confederation in 1867.\(^1\) In a political crisis, or when ministries were weak or inexperienced, a strong-minded Governor-General had a more than nominal role to play.\(^2\)

In addition to his functions as head of state, the Governor-General in Canada retained control of matters which were considered to be 'imperial interests'. The ill-defined borderline between these and matters of local concern was the cause of some friction. Lord Dufferin's\(^3\) actions in connection with the construction of the Esquimalt-Nanaimo railway in 1876-1877 led to stormy interviews between His Excellency and Canadian Ministers. On one occasion they 'nearly came to blows'.\(^4\) But this kind of confrontation was untypical. The years after confederation saw a narrowing of the powers of the

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3. Frederick Temple Blackwood, first Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, Governor-General of Canada 1872-1878.

Governor-General but continued opportunities for influence.\textsuperscript{1}

The high point of the office of Governor-General in Canada, 1838-1854, was also a period of change and experiment in the Australian colonies, during which the question of the Governors' powers and the citizens' rights to representative institutions were canvassed. The course of Canadian political development was observed, though at a distance in time of up to six months, in the colony of New South Wales. Canadian experience probably inspired rumours beginning to appear in Australian newspapers by the eighteen-forties, that the Colonial Office was considering the appointment of a Governor-General to centralize authority and administration in the Australian continent.\textsuperscript{2}

Reports of the likelihood of such an appointment were also linked with the Governor, Sir George Gipps.\textsuperscript{3} Prior to his arrival in New South Wales he had been on a Commission of Inquiry in Canada led by Lord Gosford. Although the problems involved in the administration of the several Australian colonies were less severe than those of British

\begin{enumerate}


\item Governor of New South Wales 1838 to 1846.
\end{enumerate}
North America, there was good reason to suppose that considerable advantage would be gained by the establishment of a central executive organization in Australia to deal with matters of common concern. This was particularly so in view of the growing demand from the inhabitants of the settlement at Port Phillip for separation from New South Wales. In December 1845 Gipps suggested to the Superintendent of the Port Phillip District\(^1\) that if separation were achieved 'there would have to be a Governor-General and perhaps a general council' for the sake of uniformity in important matters of policy\(^2\).

There were others who favoured the appointment of an officer to coordinate policies of wider than local interest. Speaking in the New South Wales Legislative Council in December 1845, representatives of the Port Phillip District considered that the appointment of a Governor-General would 'tend to preserve unity of government and ... at the same time secure all the benefits arising from a local and domestic administration'.\(^3\) This opinion represented more a wish for separation from New South Wales than any conviction of the worth of the proposal.\(^4\) But one experienced and

1. Charles Joseph La Trobe, Superintendent of the Port Phillip Settlement 1839-1851, Lieutenant Governor of the colony of Victoria 1851-1854.


4. After separation was achieved there was little evidence of any enthusiasm for 'unity of government' amongst the inhabitants of the Port Phillip District. See below p. 15.
capable official genuinely supported the suggestion. Edward Deas Thomson, the Colonial Secretary, was convinced that 'some controlling power was required' to prevent retaliatory inter-colonial tariff legislation and he hinted that this might be accomplished by a Governor-General.

In September 1846, Gipps' successor as New South Wales' Governor, Sir Charles FitzRoy, in the course of a despatch to the Secretary of State for Colonies, recommended the appointment of

some superior Functionary ... to whom all measures adopted by the Local Legislatures, affecting the general interests of the Mother Country, the Australian Colonies, or their inter-colonial trade, should be submitted ...

This despatch, probably inspired by Deas Thomson, signified the recognition by some sections of the colonial community that a central controlling authority was needed to guard British interests and supervise matters of general, rather than local, concern.

The creation of an authority competent to act for all the Australian colonies was a suggestion which appealed to the new Secretary of State, Grey, who was considering moves towards centralization of executive authority in South Africa and British North America at much the same time.

2. FitzRoy to Gladstone, Despatch no. 23, 29 September 1846, in Historical Records of Australia, Series 1, vol. xxv (Sydney, 1925), pp. 198-199.
4. See above, p. 8n.
Encouraged by the despatches from Sydney, he attempted to provide for Australia a federal structure to offset the separation of the Port Phillip District from New South Wales. But his schemes were defeated by colonial distrust of Imperial meddling and by opposition in the British Parliament, where the Government's position was too precarious to risk defeat by pressing colonial constitutional reform. Despite these setbacks, Grey did make a final, semi-defiant attempt to accomplish a measure of local co-ordination of colonial affairs. In January 1851 he despatched Commissions which named FitzRoy as Governor of Van Diemen's Land, South Australia and Victoria and re-appointed him Governor of New South Wales. By a separate Commission FitzRoy was 'constituted Governor-General of all Her Majesty's Australian possessions, including the colony of Western Australia'.

The appointment of Australia's first Governor-General did not effect the centralization of executive authority for which Grey had hoped. Had FitzRoy chosen to exercise the powers granted to him under the various Commissions issued in 1851, some unity of policy might have been achieved. But there were formidable problems. He was hampered by the lack of any central legislative or administrative machinery. In Victoria, jealous of its newly won independence from Sydney, the prevailing mood was opposed to a proposal which threatened to restore the possibility of interference from that quarter. South Australia also resented the selection of

1. Grey to FitzRoy, 13 January 1851, in Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1851, XXXV, 'Further Papers relative to the Alterations in the Constitutions of the Australian Colonies' [1303], pp. 40-41.
the Governor of New South Wales as a superior authority. FitzRoy himself, though a competent colonial administrator, was hardly an Imperial politician of the calibre of Durham, Sydenham or Elgin. Finally, Grey's departure from the Colonial Office in 1852 effectively frustrated his attempt to impose upon the Australian colonies a measure of centralized control under the guidance of a Governor-General. While the office was nominally continued during the term of FitzRoy's successor, Sir William Denison, its functions were not exercised and the title itself lapsed when Sir John Young took up his appointment in 1861. A fleeting opportunity to set up a strong central executive office on the model of the Governor-Generalship of Canada had passed; what remained was the unsolved problem of administering separate but adjacent British settlements.

When federation began to be seriously considered again, in the early eighteen-nineties, it was no longer possible for a Governor-General to act as the 'superior Functionary' of earlier schemes. The achievement of responsible government in all the Australian colonies meant that Governors no longer had that controlling influence over policy which had been characteristic of Imperial administration during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The first Governors of the convict settlement in New South Wales had been naval and military commanders. Even

1. For FitzRoy's exercise of the Governor-General's duties see John M. Ward, Australia's First Governor-General, Sir Charles FitzRoy, 1851-1855 (Sydney 1953), George A. Wood Memorial Lecture. Henry Parkes criticized FitzRoy as not being of the calibre of Canadian viceroys. See Ibid. p. 9.

2. Governor of New South Wales and Governor-General of the Australian colonies 1855-1861.
after the colony had begun to change from a penal establishment to one in which free settlers predominated, military officers continued to be sent out to govern. Besides providing an occupation for unemployed soldiers, this policy reflected the need to retain control over British garrisons in the colonies. When the implementation of Cardwell's policy of withdrawal saw the last British troops leave in 1870, 'Commander in chief' was reduced to a merely formal title.¹ Active military Governors were no longer appointed.

The administration of a self-governing colony under responsible government still gave scope for an able and energetic Governor.² Naturally, in the early years of self-government the Governor was a powerful and influential figure. Governors Denison, in New South Wales, and Barkly³, in Victoria were especially strong-minded men who participated actively in the political life of their colonies. But even twenty years later the Representative of the Crown retained an important role. Sir Hercules Robinson's career in New South Wales, from 1872 to 1879, provides an example of the influence he was still able to exercise. Since 1855 elected Governments in New South Wales

¹. See Fletcher, 'The Governor as Commander in Chief', p. 209.


³. Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of Victoria 1856-1863.
had been generally unstable and of brief duration. During Robinson's term of office there were no less than seven successive ministries. In this situation the Governor, who was unfettered by the colonial politician's fear of dispossession, provided important stability. By his regular influence at Executive Council meetings, he could urge reluctant ministers to accept their responsibilities. Robinson's relationships with leading colonial politicians were close and friendly. His published speeches reveal a willingness to use his position to affect public opinion on matters of policy. The success of the Parkes-Robertson ministry of 1878-1882 can be credited in part to the groundwork laid by this forthright Imperial official.

While Robinson's tactful and constructive exercise of office pointed to the possibilities remaining for a colonial

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1. McCormack, Victorian Governors, p. 267 notes that ministerial instability was a major problem for Victorian Governors also.


4. He was particularly interested in promoting assisted immigration and encouraging railway construction.

5. Later, as Lord Rosmead, he was a popular and successful High Commissioner and Governor at Cape Town. See P. Lewsen (ed.) Selections from the Correspondence of J.X. Merriman 1890-1898 (Cape Town, 1963), p. 56.
Governor, the experience of Representatives of the Crown in Victoria illuminated the difficulties in the situation. It was almost impossible for a Governor in Melbourne to avoid entangling himself in the disputes between the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council which persisted from the mid 'sixties until the late 'seventies.\(^1\) Governors Darling and Bowen, by their inclination to support the more democratically elected Assembly, laid themselves open to the charge of partisanship. The lesson to be drawn from their experience was that a Governor was to remain aloof from local political and administrative affairs.

Their Excellency's difficulties in the Australian colonies were accentuated by local antipathy towards the Colonial Office and resentment of any interference from that quarter in domestic affairs. The most radical expression of this opinion was that of the Reverend John Dunmore Lang, who attacked the 'political popery' of Downing Street control.\(^2\)

Another less extreme opponent of the Colonial Office was the

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Victorian politician, George Higinbotham.¹ He demanded that the British Government recognize the dual nature of the office of Governor in the Australian colonies as it had in Canada. On matters which were of Imperial concern, he was willing, even insistent, that the Governor be advised by the Secretary of State for the Colonies. But he objected to any external interference in a colony's domestic affairs. He claimed that in a colony which possessed responsible government, the only authority able to advise the Governor on domestic issues was the local ministry. Although the final implementation of Higinbotham's demands was to take some years² the confrontations over the powers of the Queen's Representatives in the Australian colonies had considerably diminished their capacity to influence domestic policy by the mid eighteen-eighties.

At about the same time there was a noticeable change in the style in which the office of Governor in the Australian colonies was exercised. Reflecting Britain's more flamboyant pride in Empire, Their Excellencies began to display a colour and ostentation not previously evident. When they drove to ceremonial functions in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide in the late 'eighties and 'nineties, they proceeded through the streets in coach and four, complete with brightly uniformed


². It was not until 1892 that the changes in the Governors' role were reflected in the official Instructions and Letters Patent. Higinbotham was instrumental in securing this change. See below, p. 24.
postilions and outriders. Resplendent in the plumes and glitter of their official uniform they would acknowledge the cheers and stares of those who turned out along the route to watch.

The increased splendour of vice-regal functions in the colonies was enhanced by a change in the backgrounds of the men selected to represent the Crown. By 1885 a new mood of interest in Empire aroused in England by a large band of writers and speakers had resulted in the appearance of young and wealthy aristocrats as Governors in the Australian colonies. One observer described them as 'untried and juvenile noblemen'. What had previously been an unwelcome banishment began to be regarded, if not always with enthusiasm, then at least without despair, by those British patricians who possessed both a sense of duty and a weakness for pageantry. Lord Curzon, who epitomized this type of

1. E.H. Collis, Lost Years: A Backward Glance at Australian Life and Manners (Sydney, 1948) is a reminiscence of the 'nineties which captures some of the character of Government House functions.


3. J.R. Seely's The Expansion of England is usually quoted as marking the new emphasis upon colonies in London. There were many others. See Mary Cumpston, 'The Contribution to Ideas of Empire of Flora Shaw, Lady Lugard', in Australian Journal of Politics and History, V, no. 1 (May 1959), pp. 64-75.

4. See article by 'Ex Governor' entitled 'His Excellency the Governor' in National Review, XV (1890), pp. 614-624.

5. According to Lord Malmesbury's Memoirs, quoted in Age 28 November 1889, Sir George Hotham had entreated the Duke of Newcastle to let him exchange his appointment to Victoria for a ship. On the eve of his departure Hotham wrote that 'he goes, alas, with a sorrowful heart'.
aristocratic imperialist, explained that in Empire he had
found 'a call to duty, to personal as well as national
duty'.

In New South Wales, Lord Carrington was the first of
the new breed of Governor. A close friend of the Prince of
Wales and a prominent member of the Marlborough House set,
his wealth and patronage brought an unwonted gaiety to
Sydney society. Government House banquets became lavish
and ostentatious affairs. Carrington boasted:

We've opened enough champagne since I've been here
to float a man-of-war in Farm Cove.

The tone of vice-regal functions such as race meetings, balls
and Government House garden parties was continued only
slightly less magnificently by Carrington's wealthy successor,
Lord Jersey.

For Victoria the height of the new era in colonial
governorships was reached between 1889 and 1895, in the term
of the Earl of Hopetoun. His triumphant entry into Melbourne

1. Speech at dinner given to Lord Milner on Empire Day
1906, proposing the toast of 'The British Dominions
Beyond the Seas'. See D.M. Chapman-Huston, Subjects
of the Day: being a Selection of Speeches and
Writings by Earl Curzon of Kedleston (London, 1915),
p. 5.

2. For Carrington's friendship with Edward see Philip
Magnus, King Edward the Seventh (London, 1964). As
Marquess of Lincolnshire he was later a Liberal
Cabinet minister, 1905-1911.

3. Quoted in Julian Ashton, Now Came Still Evening On
(Sydney, 1941), p. 39. Ashton, who painted
Carrington's portrait and was on the periphery of the
'Government House Set' describes the Carringtons'
entertainments as 'lavish'. On one occasion a thirty
pound salmon 'was sent out on ice from home'. Ibid.
p. 38. Also Charles E. Lyne, Life of Sir Henry Parkes,
G.C.M.G., Australian Statesman (Sydney, 1846), pp. 459-
461.

4. Governor of New South Wales from 1889-1892.
provides an example of the colour of such occasions. He drove in a blue and yellow State carriage, attended by bewigged postilions, footmen and outriders dressed in liveries and knee breeches.\textsuperscript{1} During his extended term of office, at a time of depression and unrest, he entertained extravagantly, treating Melbourne to several spectacular vice-regal galas. For some of the more popular public celebrations, usually during the Melbourne Cup racing season each November, there were often suites of three or more colonial Governors ensconced in Melbourne's Government House.\textsuperscript{2} Hopetoun's youthful demeanour, his obvious enthusiasm and a generosity which clearly exceeded his salary and allowance won him many friends,\textsuperscript{3} even in Sydney, where he was accorded a public banquet upon his departure in 1895.

The appearance of non-professional Governors in the Australian colonies was in part a reflection of the changing role of these officials as they came to resemble local constitutional sovereigns rather than administrators.\textsuperscript{4} But while the nature and functions of the office had changed

1. \textit{Argus}, 29 November 1889.

2. See reports in \textit{Age} and \textit{Argus}, during November 1894.

3. Mr Humphrey McQueen has shown me an article by Bertha Walker in a University newspaper, \textit{Farrago}, 1 May 1970, which reports that Hopetoun gave cases of champagne to the unemployed and used his influence to obtain work for some of them.

there had not been any alteration in the official Instructions and Letters Patent. Again it was Higinbotham who precipitated a clash. Although he had left political life to become Victorian Chief Justice, his taste for controversy was unchanged. In February 1887 he wrote to the Secretary of State\(^1\) attacking 'the unconstitutional powers' of the Queen's Representatives. Higinbotham pointed out that the Governors' formal Instructions had remained substantially unaltered since 1851\(^2\).

In 1892 the Colonial Office met the Victorian Chief Justice's demands and issued re-drafted Instructions which required the Governor to be 'guided by the advice of the Executive Council'.\(^3\) This was a formal recognition by the Imperial authorities that in the Australian colonies, as in Canada it was not the function of the Governor to become involved in local politics. If he dissented from his Ministers he was to report the matter to the Imperial authorities without delay. In this respect the Governor's position had been affected by the laying of the first overseas cable to link Australia with Britain, in October 1872. The alterations in the Instructions effected by Knutsford brought the formal instruments of office more in line with the reduced role which the Governors exercised in colonial

\begin{enumerate}
\item Sir Henry Holland, later Lord Knutsford, Secretary of State for the Colonies 1887-1892.
\item Higinbotham to Holland, 28 February 1887, quoted Morris, Higinbotham, p. 211.
\end{enumerate}
affairs by the 'nineties. However, two matters remained within their area of responsibility, namely the right to reserve assent to colonial legislation and the discretion to refuse a local Ministry's request for a dissolution of parliament. In addition, it was clear that the Representative of the Crown was still expected to act as guardian of Imperial interests.

One sphere in which the revised Instructions recognized a clear surrender of control to colonial Ministries was in respect to the prerogative of mercy. Under the old Instructions a Governor was to decide either to extend or to withhold a pardon or reprieve according to his own deliberate judgment. The exercise of this prerogative of the Crown had been the subject of discussion in several Australasian colonies during the 'eighties. In Queensland the dispute was particularly sharp. After an exchange of correspondence over Sir Anthony Musgrave's action in overruling a recommendation of mercy made by his colonial Ministers the Premier, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, submitted the Government's resignation. As had been the case with Higinbotham's campaign against the Governors' Instructions, the dispute over the prerogative of mercy was connected with local political issues. The underlying motivation in the dispute over the release of Benjamin Kitt was connected with controversy in Queensland over the crew of a blackbirding

1. Quoted in Quick and Garran, Annotated Constitution, p. 397.
2. Governor of Queensland 1883-1888.
ship, 'Hopeful',\(^1\) rather than over the general principle of a Governor's influence upon colonial justice. But the dispute illustrated the loss of his power to exercise administrative control and emphasized his position as an Imperial official. Musgrave was instructed by the Colonial Secretary to follow his Cabinet's advice. The general rule was formally established by the Instructions issued in 1892 which provided that in exercising the royal prerogative the Governor should act on the advice of his colonial Ministers.\(^2\)

Debates in the Australian colonies over the position of the Governor vis-a-vis the colonial Governments served to emphasize that colonial independence within the Empire was achieved piecemeal, and only when involved with specific domestic issues. The British Government's inclination was to rebuff vague demands for change until a specific issue stimulated a colonial Government to insist upon its point of view. The most significant controversy involving Australian colonial Governors concerned the right of the local Ministry to a voice in the appointment of such officials. The issue arose over the selection of Sir Henry Blake to succeed Musgrave as Governor of Queensland in November 1888.\(^3\)

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2. Quick and Garran, *Annotated Constitution*, p. 400. The principle that the Queen's prerogative of mercy in the Colonies was to be exercised on the advice of the local Ministry had already been established in Canada after a deal of controversy. See Neuendorff, *The Evolution of Dominion Status*, pp. 81-86.

The first moves in what became known as 'The Blake Case' were made before the issue came to a head in Queensland. In July 1888 the South Australian Government requested that in future they be informed of the name of any proposed Governor before it was submitted to the Queen for approval. No action had been taken on this request when, three months later, a similar demand was made by the Government of Queensland. This latter claim was of immediate relevance as the Ministry had been engaged in an unresolved dispute with Governor Musgrave when he died in office in October 1888. The Secretary of State refused to acknowledge the right of a colonial Cabinet to veto such appointments and proceeded, unilaterally, to announce the selection of Sir Henry Blake for the Queensland post. Amid considerable public debate the Queensland Government informed the Colonial Office that the appointment was unsuitable. In this confrontation the colonial Government's position was supported by the Opposition in Queensland and the Assemblies in New South Wales and South Australia, although not by the Legislative Assembly in Victoria. Faced with this formidable solidarity the Imperial authorities were forced to give way. Blake resigned without taking up the appointment, Sir Henry Norman being chosen in his stead. A subsequent despatch from Knutsford again refused to concede to a colonial Ministry the right to be consulted over the appointment of a Governor but the Queensland Cabinet expressed itself satisfied with the result of its action. The distasteful prospect of a similar public controversy meant that subsequently, though at first unofficially, colonial Ministers were informed of the names
of proposed appointees before they were made public.¹

Disputes over the role of the Queen's Representatives and their selection were only partially resolved when, in the early 'nineties, colonial politicians turned their attention to the question of federation. Developments in the office of Governor-General in Canada and that of Governor in the Australian colonies were frequently referred to in discussions about the role of the future Australian Governor-General at the constitutional conventions of this period. Self-consciously aware that their object was to establish a new nation, the delegates to these conventions were concerned to take advantage of the lessons provided for them by history. These lessons they interpreted in the light of then current attitudes. The result was that a variety of ideas, often conflicting, influenced the office of Governor-General as it emerged in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

One important presupposition was that the main aspects of the British parliamentary system, as it was understood at the time, would be retained. A constitutional monarchy for Australia necessitated the inclusion of the Queen in a written constitution and some definition of the role of her Representative in Australia. Immediately there arose problems associated with enunciating the historically evolved, unwritten prerogatives of the Crown.

A second assumption accompanied the first and apparently supported it. By 1890 most of the founding fathers felt that the constitution should be a federal rather than a unitary system. The head of state under such a system must be clearly above any narrow provincial loyalty. The resentment towards the appointment of the Governor of New South Wales as Governor-General in 1851 needed to be avoided. By a 'federal union under the Crown' and the appointment of a British Governor-General on the lines of the Canadian precedent, the necessary impartiality seemed secured. The problem of 'provincialism' could be partially overcome by the employment of a higher authority. Whereas Australian politicians might be suspected of representing the interests of their own colony, no such imputation would attach to an Imperial official who represented the Queen.


3. Writing to the Premier of Victoria, Duncan Gillies, on 30 October 1889 Parkes assumed that the scheme would follow that of Canada in providing for the appointment of a Governor-General, for the creation of an Australian Privy Council and a Parliament consisting of a Senate and a House of Commons'. See enclosure in Confidential despatch Carrington to Knutsford 21 November 1889, CO 201/610 folio 292. For the preliminary negotiations prior to the meeting of Colonial Premiers in Melbourne in 1890 see J.A. La Nauze, The Making of the Australian Constitution (Melbourne, 1972), pp. 6-15.
Although it was to be a federal system, Parkes was determined to avoid the mistakes of earlier attempts to federate the Australian colonies. He had criticized the Federal Council on the grounds that its members were not directly elected and that it had no executive power. The scheme he was proposing incorporated the strong central executive which was missing from the Federal Council but which had been associated with Grey's earlier proposals. The chief executive officer was to be the Governor-General.

The office of Governor-General, as it presented itself to the men of 1890, involved many facets, some conflicting, born of the various historical models upon which the constitution was based and the variety of aims held by its framers.\(^1\) He was to represent the Queen and to be the agent of the British Government. If he were to be given the strong powers to set up a central executive, as Parkes insisted, then there needed to be provision that he should not exercise these powers without the advice of his Ministers. He was able to be the lineal descendant of the former colonial Governors, but the office was required to conform to the evolving status of the colonies as they moved towards full self-government while allowing the link with the British Empire to be retained.

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The various aims and preconceptions of the men who framed the Australian Constitution were also affected by the sentiments of national consciousness and Imperial loyalty which were a feature of the Australian colonies at the time. There was a small but vocal element for which the Governor and the Imperial link was a convenient target for criticism.\(^1\) In the 'eighties national feeling had been expressed most prominently in the republicanism of journals such as the *Bulletin* and *Boomerang*\(^2\). Yet there were many whose attitude to the Imperial connection was deeply loyal. The growth of the Imperial Federation Movement in Australia from 1880 to 1890 represented the most extreme wing of a general attitude.\(^3\) Most colonists, even during the 'eighties, accepted without question what has been described as a 'schizophrenic double loyalty' to Australia and to the British Empire,\(^4\) best expressed in Deakin's phrase 'independent Australian Britons'.\(^5\)

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1. See 'Boomerang', *Australia Revenged* (London, 1894) for a contemporary criticism of Governors.


The more extreme elements of republican and Imperialist sentiment engaged in disputation, but these controversies, often over the position of colonial Governors, were, in a sense, shadow bouts. Intimate links with British churches, businesses, societies and families reinforced the inherited sense of tradition and habit amongst the majority of Australian colonists. To this section of the community the Governor was both a tangible link with 'home' and a symbol of their comforting attachment to the strength of the British Empire. The presence of the Representative of the Crown in each capital provided an essential element of continuity in colonial political life.

Moreover, in the 'nineties, besides representing 'home' and the Empire, the Governor in Australia was also the focus of local sentiment towards the Queen. Victoria's popularity had reached new heights during the jubilee celebrations of 1887 and this was sustained until her death in 1901. Her Representatives in the Australian colonies basked in the reflected affection. The office of Governor-General was also influenced by the enthusiasm for monarchy, particularly when rumours began to suggest that a member of the royal family might occupy the post.¹

The National Convention which met in Sydney in 1891 was the first opportunity for discussion of the future role of the Governor-General in Australia. When clause two of chapter one came before the full Convention in April 1891,

¹. These rumours also provoked some scorn. See Bulletin, 8 March 1890.
Sir George Grey moved that the words 'The Queen may from time to time appoint a Governor-General' be replaced by 'There shall be a Governor-General'. The intention, Grey explained, was to allow that the man who filled the office might be elected. He spoke eloquently of his hope that 'this great office shall be open at all times to that man in Australia who is deemed greatest, and worthiest, and fittest to hold so noble a post'. But the motion found little support in the Convention. Few delegates shared his distrust of the Colonial Office, rightly recognizing it as an outmoded relic of past battles. Only a handful agreed with his suggestion that an Australian should be able to fill the office. The great majority of delegates, both liberals and conservatives, opposed his amendment.

The attitude of the liberals was forcefully expounded by Alfred Deakin. He denied Grey's proposition that the post would be 'noble', claiming instead that it would be 'but a ceremonial ... little better than a glittering and gaudy toy', to which no eminent Australian would aspire. He pointed out that they were constructing a constitution on the model of the British parliamentary system, to which an

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1. *Con. Deb. Syd. 1891*, pp. 561-563. In Canada, forty years earlier, Elgin had suggested that 'the time may come when it may be expedient to allow the Colonists to elect their own Governors'. Elgin to Lord Grey, 23 March 1851, Doughty, Elgin-Grey Papers II, p. 609. Sir George Grey had advocated such a development in New Zealand a few years previously. See New Zealand Parliamentary Debates, 58 (November 1887), pp. 302-325.

elected sovereign was completely foreign. To make the position an object of ambition it would be necessary to change its character altogether. Whereas the tendency of developments in Canada and the Australian colonies had been towards a diminution in the local authority of the Queen's Representatives, the public prominence which the office would gain if it were elective would increase its importance. His hope was for the establishment of responsible government in the fullest sense:

in which the governor can take no action which is not countersigned by his responsible ministers who must answer for their conduct to their parliament, and in which the governor-general, so far as his political status is concerned, has no authority whatever except to choose his advisers subject to the approval of parliament.

In other words, Deakin proposed that the Governor-General be a local constitutional monarch.

The reaction of those whose attitudes were conservative was a fervent denunciation of Grey's motion as tending to weaken the connection which bound the British Empire together. James Munro, Premier of Victoria, had

no desire to weaken a single link binding us to that empire, whether as regards the appointment of a governor-general or anything else.¹

His desire to 'hold those links sacred' was shared by many in Australia. The Argus felt that if the Governor-General were to be elected 'the time would be near at hand for the hauling down of the national flag'.² The Advertiser, in Adelaide,

2. Argus, 2 April 1891.
branded the proposal as 'impracticable' and a 'veiled demand for practical separation'.

With the exception of two South Australian representatives, C.C. Kingston and Dr John Cockburn, whose motives were probably based on a 'desire not to see the poor old gentleman alone on the question' only the Bulletin supported Grey. Under the heading 'Constitutional Treason' it attacked the 'parasitism' of a 'Nominee Viceroyship' which, it claimed, would establish a court and encourage courtiers in Australia. In the opinion of this still republican journal, the election of the Governor-General was 'a preliminary to the final freedom of these provinces'. But, despite the fervour of its opposition to the infectious monarchism of Britain, the Bulletin's enthusiasm for separation was, like Grey's, against the prevailing spirit of the times.

The Convention rejected, firmly, Grey's attempt to change the method of appointment of the Governor-General. But there was some hesitation about the extent of the executive powers to be granted to this Imperial officer. This fear proceeded from the still unresolved disputes concerning the powers and prerogatives of colonial Governors. R.C. Baker of South Australia attempted to provide that all the powers of the Governor-General be defined by a Schedule

1. Advertiser, 3 April 1891.

2. The opinion of South Australian Premier, Thomas Playford in S.A.P.D.1891, column 219. His imputation was less true of Cockburn than of Kingston, for while the latter became an outspoken opponent of an elected Governor-General as quickly as three months after the 1891 Convention, Cockburn continued to advocate Grey's proposition throughout the decade.

to the Constitution. The matter which exercised his mind most was the royal prerogative of pardon, but his proposal had wider implications. He suggested that a schedule should define 'all the powers and functions of the governor-general which it is possible to ... reduce to writing'.

Griffith and Deakin revealed that while the Constitutional Committee had considered the matter it had regarded the difficulties of drawing up such a list as too great to be overcome. Deakin suggested that an insertion be made in the bill providing that 'the governor shall invariably act on the advice of his responsible ministers'. This proposition was greeted with general approval but no such clause was inserted. The Hobart Mercury deplored the lost opportunity. It pointed out that the discussion left the Governor-General 'in precisely the same position as the Governors ... that is to say nobody knows what they can and what they cannot do'.

Despite this omission, Convention delegates clearly assumed that the Governor-General could exercise little authority independent of his Commonwealth Executive. This was revealed in discussion of a clause providing that, after federation, all communications between State Governors and the Crown should be through the Governor-General. The argument centred on the division of responsibilities between State and Commonwealth Governments, rather than on the role

2. Ibid., p. 575.
3. Mercury, 16 April 1891.
of chief executive officer as channel of communication. Those who supported the retention of the clause did not intend that the Queen's Representative in the Commonwealth should have any independent supervisory power over State Governors. It was regarded as self-evident that to give him control over the channel of communications would allow such control to pass to his Executive Council.

The real division revealed by this debate was between 'centralists' and 'provincialists'. Deakin and Parkes represented those who, hoping for a strong Commonwealth Executive, wished to provide that it have a single voice in matters of external policy. Deakin, in particular, argued that if the clause were omitted they would 'not only deprive the governor-general of his influence, but ... will deprive the commonwealth of its influence'.¹ For the other side Gillies, Douglas and Downer spoke of the danger of too extensive Commonwealth interference in State affairs. Adye Douglas, of Tasmania, expressed the view that 'The states should retain as much power as possible, and surrender as little as possible to the federal parliament'.² When it came to a vote the clause was retained by a majority of only six, several delegates such as Griffith and Baker, otherwise strong champions of states rights, voting for the centralist, Deakinite, position. The decision was reversed in 1897 and the clause omitted from the Constitution as it emerged in 1900. But the problem of the role of Governor-General as

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2. Ibid., p. 859.
channel of communication between State Governors and the British Government was to remain a source of friction between 'provincialists' and 'centralists' well into the twentieth century.¹

Debate on the provisions in the Draft Constitution concerning the Governor-General revealed some of the divisions in the colonial society of the 'nineties. The discussion on Grey's amendment regarding the appointment of the Queen's Representative showed the remnants of earlier, albeit diminishing, republicanism ranged against the prevailing tide of Imperial patriotism. The debate on the question of channels of communication indicated a deep-seated division which was to be a feature of the first ten years' operation of the Commonwealth and in some respects was to persist much longer. A further polarization of opinion which was to persist long after federation concerned those who wanted to achieve the benefits of remaining within the Empire without expense and those who were prepared to be generous in their dealings with the Empire. The ground on which this conflict was fought was the provision of the Governor-General's salary.

Discussion about the salary to be paid to the Queen's Representative was brief at the 1891 Convention,² but sufficient to reveal disagreement over the nature of the


office and the role His Excellency was expected to exercise. Munro felt that the sum specified in the clause framed by the drafting Committee, £10,000 was altogether inadequate. He thought that,

the gentleman to be appointed ought to be equal to the ... governor-general of India ... capable of being a cabinet minister in England.¹

But other delegates disagreed. To Kingston they were erring on the side of 'excessive liberality'. Grey moved that the amount be reduced to £6,000. But again Kingston and Grey were in a minority. Most delegates agreed with Griffith that by including the salary in the Constitution they would forestall 'persons ... constantly endeavouring to earn a little cheap popularity by proposing reductions'.² Grey's amendment was defeated without division and the clause remained unaltered, although it did not in fact solve the problem of the Governor-General's remuneration.³

The end result of the Sydney Convention of 1891 was a Draft Constitution which was intended to form the basis of public discussion and in particular of debate in the colonial parliaments. A feature of the comment aroused by the Draft Constitution was criticism of the provisions relating to the Governor-General.

It was noted, shortly after the Convention had dissolved, that exception was being taken to clauses referring to the Governor-General 'on the ground that they propose to confer

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2. Ibid., p. 580.
3. See below chapter III, pp. 166-177.
"enormous" powers on Her Majesty's Representative'.  
Complaints of excessive powers were prominent in all colonies. Some who expressed these fears belonged to the more radical, republican element in the community, whose sniping at the institution 'Government House' was to remain a persistent feature of the following years but whose strength was minimal. Others seized upon the charge of an overpowerful Governor-General as a convenient ground of attack on either the idea of federation or the 1891 Draft Constitution. However, there were others, neither republicans nor opponents of federation, who expressed fears of the possible outcome if extreme powers were vested in the Governor-General.

One who felt that the Draft Constitution was objectionable on these grounds was the Victorian Chief Justice, Higinbotham. He warned that the granting of extensive powers to an officer who was 'subject exclusively to the control of the Imperial Government' would 'efface all semblance of self government'. Higinbotham's views were influenced by his long-standing distrust of the 'sinister and clandestine policy' of the colonial office. This suspicion was not resolved at least until his recommendations concerning

1. G.B. Barton, Draft Bill to Constitute the Commonwealth of Australia (Sydney, 1891), p. 15. Barton, a barrister, journalist and literary critic, was elder brother to Edmund Barton.


3. Higinbotham to Knutsford quoted in Morris, Higinbotham, p. 201, without indication of date.
the alterations of Governors' Instructions were implemented in 1892.

During discussions on the Draft Constitution which took place in the Victorian and Tasmanian parliaments the subject of the excessive powers of the Governor-General was raised but was successfully defended by supporters of federation. Deakin satisfied the Victorian Legislative Assembly that while the measure appeared 'to create a Governor-General who is almost despotic', clauses which vested control of taxation and expenditure in the hands of Parliament would protect the Commonwealth from 'aggression or oppression of the Crown or its representatives'.¹ Similarly the Tasmanian House of Assembly accepted without demur its Attorney General's assurance that the great power apparently entrusted to the Governor-General was only a 'constitutional fiction'.²

In South Australia the suggestion that the Representative of the Crown be elected was revived by Cockburn. But he was strongly opposed by his colleague Kingston, who by then had come to feel that such a proposal would be 'a standing menace to democracy'. In his view an Imperial official was tolerable only so long as he 'confined himself to the discharge of duties properly appertaining to a social and ornamental figurehead and to a political dummy'.³ In the event this view prevailed, the majority in South Australia's Assembly preferring not to experiment with the election of a Governor-General.

1. V.P.D., 1891, p. 431.
2. Debate 3 September 1891 reported in Mercury 4 September 1891.
3. S.A.P.D., 1891, column 1509.
It was in New South Wales that the most vigorous attack was launched upon the provisions referring to the Governor-General in the Draft Constitution of 1891. For various reasons, including political and personal jealousies, economic distress and a general lack of interest among politicians, the matter was not debated in the Assembly until late 1892. Discussion even then was brief and unenthusiastic. However, in the general debate, clauses referring to the powers of the Governor-General were among the most fully discussed.

The attack upon these sections had been begun in New South Wales by George Reid, a capable politician at the start of a distinguished public career. In a speech to the electors of East Sydney during April 1891 he had examined the proposed Draft Constitution in detail and spelled out his attitude to the measure. The list of complaints was long and among them was an objection that there was no provision in the Bill requiring the Governor-General to act solely upon the advice of his Executive Council.

Reid's criticism was the mild precursor of what became quite a widely voiced objection to the Draft Constitution in New South Wales. The Bulletin took up cudgels on the

1. S.M.H., 17 April 1891.
2. Reid was a Free Trader. For a Protectionist viewpoint see Archibald Forsyth, Australian National Federation on Democratic Lines (Sydney, 1891). This pamphlet offered various suggestions as to how the Draft Bill could be amended to counter objections to its 'Imperialistic and anti-Democratic spirit', under which heading he included the 'excessive and dangerous' powers granted to the Governor-General.
matter when G.B. Barton's annotated Draft Bill was published.\(^1\) The journal argued that under the proposed constitution the position of Governor-General would be 'that of a despot, restrained only by public opinion'. Barton's reassurance that there would be constitutional checks upon his actions were decried as 'pamphleteering jargon' and 'deception'. The Bulletin assured its readers that:

> Over the decrees of the Governor-General, the personnel of the Federal Executive Council, and even the acts of the Ministers of State, the Parliament will have no control whatever.\(^2\)

Having thus answered the question: how much influence would the Governor-General have after federation? the Bulletin proceeded to ask in whose interest would that influence be exercised? It suggested that:

> in the easily conceivable event of projects of vital importance to the Imperial authorities clashing with interests of equal importance to Australians, the iron hand would make itself felt under the soft glove of superficial constitutional practice.

The warning was explicit. An Imperial officer would represent Imperial interests to the detriment of Australia.

There was some pertinence in the Bulletin's claim that Imperial and Australian interests might diverge and that the Governor-General was an officer charged with protecting the former rather than the latter. Opinion in Britain recognized this. In April 1891, commenting upon Grey's attempt to make the office elective, The Times emphasized that if the colonies wished to remain within the British

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1. See above p. 40.
2. Bulletin, 1 August 1891.
Empire, they were required to admit within their Executive a direct mouthpiece of the central authority. An elected Governor-General would be unlikely to 'endeavour to maintain the policy of the Confederation in harmony with that of the Empire'.

Most Australians in 1891 were prepared to acknowledge the right of the Imperial Government to a 'mouthpiece' within their Executive in return for the benefits provided by membership of the Empire. But in the New South Wales Assembly, when Edmund Barton finally introduced the Draft Constitution, during November 1892, several members objected that the powers of the 'mouthpiece' were 'exceedingly great'.

The severest attack was made by W.H. Traill, former editor of the Bulletin, who elaborated the anxieties expressed by Reid in April 1891. Traill's arguments followed those of the Bulletin fairly closely. He objected that the Governor-General under the Constitution they were considering would 'not be at all responsible to the people of Australia'. As an officer of the Colonial Office,

he would be obliged to take any direction from that office. If he were instructed by the authorities of the British Parliament ... to propose certain amendments in a bill, he would be bound to do so, no matter what the people of this country might think about them.

Other radical members expressed similar objections. J.D. Fitzgerald vowed:

1. The Times, 4 April 1891.
3. Ibid., pp. 2499-2500.
I would tomorrow 'cut the painter', and sever this country from Great Britain if I were capable of doing it.\(^1\)

The defiant tone of this statement points to the unreal nature of the objections to the powers of the Governor-General. Fitzgerald had no illusions that his attitude towards the British connection was representative of any widespread body of opinion. The prevailing mood of the time was towards closer rather than looser ties with the Empire and the strident speeches of the small band of radicals in the New South Wales Assembly in 1892-1893 who objected to the office of Governor-General\(^2\) reveal little real anticipation that their ideals would be attained. Much of the other criticism was more a convenient point of attack upon federalists rather than the expression of deeply felt conviction.

The debate over the future role of the Governor-General in the federal schemes of the early 'nineties was left unresolved. General opposition to federation in New South Wales led to the abandonment of the 1891 Draft Constitution. Too many in the colony felt that they would lose more than they gained by federation. Perhaps even more relevant was the widespread public and political apathy towards the question. When Barton resigned from office as Attorney General in December 1893, consideration of the Draft Constitution lapsed in New South Wales and the other colonies were consequently forced to shelve the scheme also.

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1. N.S.W.P.D., (First Series, LXI) 1892, p. 2517.
2. Others who spoke against the proposals were Job Sheldon, Thomas Walker, George Black and Arthur Rae.
The six years between the Federal Conventions of 1891 and 1897 were 'doldrum years' for the federation issue, but a period of accelerated change in other spheres of colonial politics. One development which affected attitudes towards the Governor-General was an increasing sense of the value of Australia's connection with Great Britain and her Empire. By 1897 it had become generally accepted that Australian nationalism was compatible with continued membership of the Empire. The office of Governor-General, regarded by a few in earlier years as a threat to colonial self-government was, by 1897, almost universally seen as a largely formal but vital link with Empire.

One of the influences upon this consolidation of attitudes was the further decline in the political role of Governor. In 1891 it could be argued that the formal Instructions still allowed His Excellency potentially extreme powers, especially if the political situation were unstable. But by 1897 it was no longer true that the colonial Governor had an active role in policy-making. The redrafting of their Instructions in 1892 was a recognition by the Imperial authorities that the influence had declined during the


2. Carrington's refusal to accept the resignation of the Colonial Treasurer of New South Wales, McMillan, indicated that in critical circumstances a Governor's influence, judiciously used, could be decisive. See N.B. Nairn, 'A Note on a Colonial Treasurer's Resignation' in Historical Studies, 13, no. 49 (October 1967), pp. 94-96.
'eighties. Whereas it had been usual for one Governor's term of office to cover several colonial Governments,¹ in the ten years from 1890 to 1900 New South Wales had only four Premiers but five Governors. During the premiership of George Reid, 1894-1899, three Governors presided and for lengthy periods the Lieutenant-Governor, Chief Justice Sir F.M. Darley, administered the Government. As a result the Governor's influence within the Executive Council, which had steadily declined after Robinson's term of office, became insignificant in the 'nineties. Sir Robert Duff's appointment of Reid as Premier² was the last exercise of the power of almost independent appointment of his advisers which had been a feature of the 'faction system' of government in New South Wales.

The advent of the Labor party and Reid's record term as Premier, brought a new stability to New South Wales politics. In the other colonies also there was a crystallization of party politics after the crises of the early 'nineties.³

From 1893 to 1899, stable honest ministries such as those led

1. For Robinson's term, 1872-1879, see above, pp. 17-18.


by Kingston in South Australia, and Turner in Victoria, were in office. The apparent development of political maturity came at a time when Governors, chosen more for their possession of a title than for administrative ability or colonial experience, were less qualified to interfere in the domestic self-government of the colonies. These developments meant that it was unrealistic for radicals and other critics to claim that Governors or, in the proposed Commonwealth, the Governor-General, would exercise excessive influence.

By 1897 the few complaints still voiced concerning the danger of vice-regal interference in domestic affairs were without any real conviction. Colonial politicians recognized that the acceptance by Joseph Chamberlain of the Colonial Secretaryship in 1895 was a sign of that official British interest in the colonies for which they had long been hoping. To criticize the link with the newly prestigious Colonial Office would be foolish. Moreover, the financial crises had made more abundantly clear the importance of British capital to Australian development and the fostering of sympathetic influence in London was therefore widely recognized as being in Australia's material interest.

1. Note the similar lengthy ministries of Nelson in Queensland, Braddon in Tasmania and Forrest in Western Australia.

2. The old New South Wales politician, Sir John Robertson, is said to have remarked 'They send out boys now'. See B.R. Wise, The Making of the Australian Commonwealth 1889-1900: A Stage in the Growth of the Empire (London, 1913), p. 46.

3. The British Socialist Ben Tillett and the Victorian Labor journal Tocsin voiced an isolated warning. See Tocsin, 7 April 1898.
In these circumstances radicalism and republicanism were no longer the forces they had been in 1887-1890. Most of the radical members who had been elected to the New South Wales Assembly in 1891, and had spoken so vigorously against the Imperial nature of the office of Governor-General, were not re-elected in 1894. There was an element of radicalism in the Labor Party, but, motivated by the need for internal cohesion, a moderate platform had been adopted on the principle of 'the highest common factor'.

Article XII of its Manifesto, published in 1891, advocating 'the federation of the Colonies of Australia on a national as opposed to an imperialistic basis' was the furthest that the party was officially prepared to go in opposing the British connection.

The Bulletin, too, was less republican by 1897 and did not question the role of the Governor-General in the proposed new Commonwealth as it had in 1891. With the more extreme radical publications, such as the Republican and Boomerang no longer in existence, the republican movement had lost its significance in Australia by the mid eighteen nineties.


But, just as republicanism had waned, so also had the Imperial Federation movement declined in strength, both in Britain and Australia.¹ This did not indicate any decline in enthusiasm for the British connection. Rather was it a recognition that the Colonial Conference system of Imperial management went the practical part of the way towards attaining its aims. In Australia, Imperial Federationists were prepared, during the late 'nineties, to foster Australian federation first.²

In the light of the new emphases in colonial politics, opponents of federation who had utilized the vague, anti-Imperial attitudes of the early 'nineties as a stick with which to beat the 1891 Draft Bill, shifted their aim in the late 'nineties from the formalities to the financial realities of federation. Griffith noted in 1897 that,

provisions of the Bill of 1891 which aroused fierce denunciation as indicating what was called an 'Imperialistic tendency' have withstood the criticism of six years and remained unaltered.³

In discussion of the proposals concerning the Governor-General during 1897-1898 earlier attacks on the Draft Constitution for

1. The British Imperial Federation League was dissolved on 31 December 1893. Lord Brassey, Papers and Addresses: Imperial Federation and Colonisation from 1880-1894 (London, 1895), p. 234. For decline of the movement in Australia see Blackton, 'Australian Nationality'.

2. The Imperial Federation League sent a representative, H.D'E. Taylor to the Corowa Federation Conference in 1893 where he read a resolution according the movement active support and hearty sympathy. See Official Report of the Federation Conference held in the Court House, Corowa, on Monday, 31st July and Tuesday, 1st August, 1893 (Corowa, 1893), pp. 25-26.

its monarchism and Imperialism were not revived. Debates in the Constitutional Conventions and the colonial Parliaments found few who pursued the criticisms of 1891-1892 when discussing the role of Governor-General, unless it were related to practical matters, such as salary, or a question of wider controversy, such as the preservation of States' rights.

The provision of a salary for the Governor-General had been the occasion of mild disaccord during 1891 in the Sydney Convention and the various Assemblies and Councils; a pale reflection of earlier, more bitter disputes concerning colonial Governors' salaries. At the Adelaide Convention of 1897 Reid expressed the hope that they would lift the question of salary

above that incessant nagging and criticism which has given rise to some of the most discreditable episodes in our political life.¹

He emphasized that the Governor-General was the only constitutional link with the mother country and as such should be placed above 'any trafficking ... about the question of salary'. The plea fell upon stony ground.

For the next five years the question of the salaries of the Queen's Representatives in colonies, Commonwealth and States was the source of considerable 'trafficking'.² In accordance with the general desire that federal government

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2. From 1899 to 1903 there was a constant exchange of correspondence between the Colonial Office and the Australian colonies concerning the salaries of State Governors. See C.O. Confidential Print, Australian no. 172, 'Correspondence relating to the Salaries and Position of the Governors of the Australian States after the Establishment of the Commonwealth', C.O. 881/10/172.
should be cheap, some colonial politicians suggested that the Governor-General's salary should be less than the £10,000 proposed in the 1891 Draft Bill. In South Australia amendments were passed recommending such a reduction, though when put to the Convention in Sydney they were defeated. The majority view was that the salary of the Governor-General should be sufficient to attract distinguished Imperial statesmen.

There remained, however, a persistent anxiety about the extent to which this well-paid Imperial official should act on the advice of his Executive Council. Reid had asked that they

put in black and white the principle of executive action, which always is that the Governor shall act with the advice of the Executive Council.

Later, at Melbourne, Deakin expressed similar concern and recommended that in exercising the role of Commander-in-chief the Governor-General be required to act 'under the advice of the Executive Council'. But the Convention was

1. The Legislative Assembly recommended £7,000 per year, S.A.P.D. (House of Assembly) 1897, columns 355-357. The Upper House favoured £8,000, S.A.P.D. (Legislative Council) 1897, columns 74-75.


3. See above, p. 36 for Deakin's suggestion in Sydney, during the 1891 Convention that express provision be made that the Governor 'invariably act on the advice of his ministers' and p. 42 for Reid's complaint that there was no provision in the Draft Constitution requiring the Governor-General to act only on the advice of his Executive Council.


unconvinced of the danger. Douglas, of Tasmania, was more suspicious of Deakin's motives than of a Governor-General's opportunism. He felt that the discussion only showed that 'some honorable members are trying to get all the power'.

The reluctance of the majority of delegates to heed Reid's and Deakin's request that all action of the Queen's Representative be upon the advice of his Australian Ministers, revealed a prevailing opinion that the role of the Governor-General should not be altogether ceremonial or nominal.

In Downing Street, however, officials were disturbed that provisions in the 1897 Draft already allowed the Commonwealth Executive to encroach too much upon the Imperial functions of the Queen's Representative. When the 1897 Draft Bill reached London the position of the Governor-General in the Commonwealth was the subject of a worried exchange of opinion.

Six years earlier there had been a brief discussion in the Colonial Office on the Draft Constitution of 1891 largely concerning the title 'Commonwealth' and provisions restricting appeal to the Queen in Council. In 1889 John Bramston had mentioned the need 'to bring the Imperial factor into play' but more detailed comment was postponed until federation came closer to fruition. In 1897 the postponed


2. Bramston was Assistant Under Secretary in charge of Australasian affairs. For his comment see minutes on Carrington to Secretary of State, 21 November 1889. C.O. 201/610/24981 folio 281. The influence of the Colonial Office on the 1897 Draft Bill is discussed in B.K. De Garis, 'The Colonial Office and the Commonwealth Constitution Bill' in Martin (ed.), Essays, pp. 94-121.
closer scrutiny revealed to the Colonial Office staff a disturbing tendency towards 'not exactly emancipation, but to isolation'. John Anderson thought that the Draft Bill was 'a distinctly disruptive measure'.\(^1\) Behind the concern for unity of Empire was the Colonial Office's determination, similar to that expressed by *The Times* in 1891,\(^2\) that there should be a guardian of Imperial interests in the Commonwealth Executive.

The strongest evidence for their fear of Australian nationalism was found in the provisions restricting appeals to the Privy Council. But attention was also drawn to the cumulative effect of the various references to the Governor-General scattered throughout the Bill. Anderson noted that 'the Governor-General ... is to have no power of acting without advice'. He warned that if His Excellency were not to act on instructions from the Queen, but exercised all his functions on the advice of the Executive Council, the Commonwealth would become 'at once an independent state'.\(^3\) This anxiety was an understandable failure to appreciate that in the future it would be community of interests, fortified by Imperial patriotism, which would bind Australia

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1. Minute of 19 June 1897 on a despatch from the Governor of South Australia, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton to Chamberlain, 3 May 1897, enclosing Draft Bill approved by the Adelaide Convention. C.O. 13/152/12012 folios 171-172. Anderson was Chief Clerk of the Australian Section.

2. See above p. 44.

to the Empire, rather than the formal retention of control in the hands of the Imperial Government.

But the formality of control, exercised through the office of Governor-General, was what the Colonial Office was determined to retain, particularly with respect to colonial legislation. At the end of the nineteenth century the Colonial Office attitude towards the Empire was pessimistic. In the case of the new federation of Australia it was feared that unless the Imperial Government retained ultimate control over colonial legislation the unity of the Empire was threatened. Anderson minuted that if the power of the Commonwealth Executive to advise the Governor-General extended to 'his discretion as to reserving Bills, and assenting or otherwise, it can scarcely be allowed'.¹ His superiors agreed that the problem needed to be cleared up.

Australian constitution makers had always recognized the necessity of providing that the Governor-General, as the Queen's Representative, had a part in the legislative process. The monarch's assent was an integral part of the British parliamentary system, upon which the British North America Act, and even earlier colonial Constitutions, were modelled. But in the system of colonial-self-government which had evolved by the late nineteenth century the royal assent became a convenient fiction whereby the Imperial Government was enabled to exercise the final authority over legislation which might affect Imperial interests. Clauses in the 1891 Draft Bill, repeated without any significant

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¹ C.O. 13/152/12012, folios 169-170.
alteration in the 1897 Draft Bill, repeated without any significant alteration in the 1897 Adelaide Draft provided that the Governor-General could assent to a proposed law in the Queen's name, withhold assent, or reserve the law for the Queen's pleasure. It was provided that a law so reserved would lapse if the assent of the Queen in Council were not proclaimed within two years. The Governor-General could return any law to Parliament with his recommendations for any amendment. Moreover, as an additional safeguard of Imperial interests, there was a clause enabling the Queen in Council to disallow, within one year any law assented to by the Governor-General. These provisions made the Queen's Representative's role much more active, in theory, than that of a constitutional monarch. They were the remnants of the colonial status of the Australian settlements and seemed to the constitution makers part of the price to be paid in order to remain within the Empire.

Clauses retaining control of legislation in the hands of the Imperial Government and its representative in the Commonwealth were re-enactments of provisions of earlier colonial Constitutions, especially the British North America Act, with one important difference. In those which referred to the Queen's assent to legislation no reference was made to the Governor-General's formal Instructions. Previously


2. In 1891 this period had been two years. At Adelaide the Constitutional Committee reduced it to one year and despite Colonial Office objections it passed as such into the Constitution. See Quick and Garran, Annotated Constitution, p. 692.
Instructions to Australian Governors, even after amendments effected in 1892, included a direction to reserve any law which fell within one of eight specified categories.\(^1\) This contrasted with the position in Canada after 1878\(^2\) where, although the Governor-General was still empowered to reserve bills his Instructions contained no list prescribing the classes of laws to be reserved. In 1897 the Colonial Office recognized that federation of the Australian colonies meant that the practice there must be brought into line with that in the Dominion of Canada. Chamberlain and his officials were concerned, therefore, that Imperial interests be protected in the case of Australian legislation, as it was in Canada, by the preservation of the Governor-General's discretionary powers. This explains Anderson's exaggerated anxiety over the position of the Queen's Representative in the 1897 Draft Constitution. He distrusted the implication that in all cases the Governor-General act upon the advice of his Australian federal Executive.

As a result of the scrutiny in Downing Street of the 1897 Adelaide Draft Bill three memoranda were drawn up.

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1. Quick and Garran, *Annotated Constitution*, pp. 690-691, discusses and lists the classes enumerated in the 1892 Instructions. They included bills for divorce, bills affecting currency or imposing differential duties and bills interfering with the discipline and control of Her Majesty's forces.

2. As a result of representations by Edward Blake, Liberal Minister of Justice in Canada, revised Instructions were issued to the Governors-General there in 1878. Neuendorff, *Dominion Status*, pp. 77 and 79-86.
They recommended amendments to bring the Bill to a form acceptable to the Colonial Office. Among the recommendations were several suggestions aimed at preserving the discretionary powers of the Governor-General as an Imperial official and removing the implication that he act solely upon the advice of his Australian Ministers.

The Colonial Office's fears were in direct contrast to the uneasiness expressed by Reid and Deakin that there was no provision requiring that the Queen's Representative should act only upon the advice of his Executive Council. In spite of their divergent views upon this question, Chamberlain asked Reid, in the strictest confidence, to effect some of the amendments recommended by the Colonial Office when he returned to Sydney from the Colonial Conference of 1897. Perhaps the Secretary of State revealed to the New South Wales Premier tendencies in the Draft Bill which had not previously been evident to him. Possibly Reid's earlier objections were convenient but not deeply held excuses to attack a measure about which he had general reservations. For whatever the reason, Reid accepted the task. Many of the amendments suggested by the Colonial Office were incorporated in the Commonwealth Bill as it finally emerged, including most of those concerning the office of Governor-General. Anderson's fears where shown to be chimeras when Reid's amendments passed without comment at the Sydney

Convention, enabling the Governor-General to act with or without the advice of his Executive Council in exercising powers and functions previously vested in the Governor of a colony. The effects of the amendment were to leave the Governor-General in a position to exercise some limited authority independent of the advice of his Executive Council. The suggestion made by Deakin, and in earlier years by Reid, for a specific provision requiring the Queen's Representative always to act on the advice of his Executive Council was not incorporated in the final form of the Constitution. In 1899 the Colonial Office was satisfied that its main objections and suspicions in relation to the functions of the Governor-General had been overcome and that his 'position ... as an Imperial Officer is ... no longer in question'.

One matter which was not finally resolved to the satisfaction of the Colonial Office was the provision of a salary for the Governor-General. Officials in London had expressed concern at the amendment inserted by H.B. Higgins at Adelaide which stated that the salary should be £10,000 'until Parliament otherwise provides'. Chamberlain and his permanent officers were not as sanguine as those colonial

3. Lawyer and politician, later judge of the High Court and President of the Arbitration Court.
politicians who felt that a good man could still be had if the salary were reduced. But the alternatives, of insisting that the Queen's assent be obtained before any reduction, or that the Governor-General himself introduce any such bill, were too fraught with the danger of outright confrontation over the problem. The Colonial Office's suggestion that the words 'until Parliament otherwise provides' be omitted from the Bill was not complied with and, together with the problem of allowances, the question of the salary of the Governor-General was left to be decided by practice in the Commonwealth.

The result of the Colonial Office intervention in the Constitution-making process in connection with the powers of the Queen's Representative was instructive as to the Australian attitudes to the office. As with the more important question of Privy Council Appeals, the apprehension that Australia was challenging the unity of the Empire was without foundation. In spite of some misgivings of Deakin and the South Australians, and in the earlier stages of Reid, the Constitution-makers were content to leave the Imperial Government with a formal authority over certain aspects of policy which might be called 'Imperial' and to allow the chief executive officer of the Commonwealth to be the agent of that authority. However the practical matter of salary for this Imperial official was to be squarely at the discretion of the Australian Parliament. While they retained control over the salary and allowances the Australian Parliament exercised a crucial influence upon the nature and functions of the officer whom they were content to retain as a link with the Imperial Government.
In view of his role as the Imperial spokesman in the Commonwealth, the Governor-General's was the natural office through which Australia communicated with the British Government. One of the factors which the Colonial Office regarded favourably in regard to federation was the prospective reduction of the number of Australian colonial Governments with which it had to deal from six to one. However these hopes were destined to perish upon the rocks of provincialism. To the chagrin of the Colonial Office the result of federation was not that six Governments were reduced to one, but that another Government was added to make it seven. The problem of the role of Governor-General as sole channel of communication extended throughout the eighteen-nineties and many years into the twentieth century.\(^1\)

The 1891 Draft Constitution had provided that all communications between State Governors and the Queen should be through the Governor-General.\(^2\) This clause was omitted by the Constitutional Committee at Adelaide in 1897 and despite a vigorous effort by Deakin was not reinstated.\(^3\) At Melbourne in 1898 Forrest raised the question again. In addition he attempted to persuade delegates to adopt the Canadian system, where provincial Lieutenant-Governors were appointed by the Governor-General in Council. His hope was that the office would provide some 'connecting link between

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1. See Wright, Commonwealth and States, pp. 12-37.
2. See above p. 36.
the States and the Federal Government'. But it was unfulfilled. The bridging of this gap was to be a persistent problem for future Governors-General. Delegates were unwilling to allow the Governor-General influence within the sphere of States' sovereignty, for fear that he would be the creature of the Commonwealth Executive. The result of disputes over 'States rights' and the 'channel of communication' was that the Governor-General was identified with the Federal Executive rather than as an impartial buffer between the Commonwealth and the States. Moreover, his position as link with Britain was to be undermined by the absence of any provision in the Constitution for a change in the method of appointment of State Governor.

The Draft Constitution of 1891 had included a clause enabling the Parliament of a State to make such provisions as it thought fit regarding the manner of appointing its Governor. At the Adelaide Convention in 1897 this clause was omitted by the Drafting Committee, although the preceding provision that 'In each State of the Commonwealth there shall be a Governor' was retained. When the latter came up for consideration in the full Convention Cockburn moved to reinsert the earlier reference to the manner of appointment. A brief debate ensued, revealing conflicting arguments which were to be seminal to discussions about the office of State Governor for more than half a century.

2. Con. Deb. Syd. 1891, p. 877. The clause was retained by a majority of only one.
Bernhard Wise of New South Wales,\(^1\) presented the liberal attitude: He argued that it would be wasteful and absurd for each of the States to keep up a separate Government House. In the interests of economy he hoped that the practice of appointing State Governors from England would cease and that such officials would be chosen from local citizens.\(^2\) The opposite point of view was espoused by Richard O'Connor, also of New South Wales. He favoured the retention of Governors appointed from Britain on the grounds that,

> the Governor should be a person not only removed from the arena of politics but from all active sympathy of politicians on every side, and above the suspicion of being influenced by local likes or dislikes or sympathies.

While these two contentions were to have a long life, the argument which swayed the Convention was provided by William McMillan. Fearing for the sovereignty of the States as separate entities if the clause were allowed to be reinserted he advised against changing a system of responsible government which had proved so effective. In view of the prevailing opinion Cockburn withdrew his amendment on the understanding that all reference to State Governors be deleted from the Draft Bill. Thus in the Australian Constitution's final form no reference at all was made to the representation of

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1. Wise was a young lawyer and politician whose early promise was not fulfilled in his subsequent, disappointed career. See Ryan, B.R. Wise.

2. For Wise's view and other arguments in the debate see Con. Deb. Adel. 1897, pp. 992-1001. R.R. Garran, A Problem of Federation under the Crown - the Representation of the Crown in Commonwealth and States (Brisbane, 1895), had suggested that the 'quasi-judicial duties' of State Governor could be entrusted either to the Chief Justice in each State or to the Governor-General.
the Crown in the States after federation. The continued
presence in each State of a Representative of the Queen,
appointed from Britain, who had the right of independent
communication with the Imperial Government, was to reduce
the prestige of the Governor-General and hinder the
exercise of his duties.

The retention of State Governors also affected the
question of providing for the exercise of the Governor-
General's office during any temporary absence of the latter
from Australia. The 1891 Draft Constitution was silent on
this matter. A clause was added in Adelaide during 1897
providing that:

No person holding any judicial office shall be
appointed to or hold the office of Governor-
General, Lieutenant Governor, Chief Executive
Officer, or Administrator of the Government or
any other Executive office.\(^1\)

The object of this prohibitive clause, introduced by a
lawyer, J.H. Symon, was to separate the Judiciary entirely
from the Executive. Although inserted after a very brief
discussion at Adelaide it soon roused voluble opposition.
Sir Samuel Griffith attacked it in a pamphlet.\(^2\) Majorities
in both the Victorian and New South Wales Legislative
Assemblies suggested that the clause be omitted. The Colonial
Office clerks noted that it would lead to some difficulty
though they approved of the principle\(^3\) and recognized that
the problem of a Dormant Commission should at least be
considered.

2. Sir S.W. Griffith, Notes on the Draft Federal
Constitution Framed by the Adelaide Convention of 1897
(Brisbane 1897), pp. 13-14.
3. C.O. 13/152/12012, folio 165.
Clause 80 was removed from the Bill in March 1898 upon the determined insistence of Higgins. No specific provision was therefore made for the absence of the Governor-General. Although Griffiths' pamphlet had urged that Australians ought to serve as Acting-Governor-General, the absence of any provision in the Constitution enabled the Colonial Office to seize the opportunity of ensuring that the Dormant Commission should be made out to the senior State Governor. This was to have some significance within the first few years of the Commonwealth.¹

By 1900 some definition of the Governor-General's functions had finally emerged after a decade of discussion. Few of the objections concerning the excessive powers of the Governor-General had been solved by the direct inclusion of safeguards in the Constitution. The founding fathers preferred to assume that the Queen's Representative would act in the British tradition of parliamentary government. The Colonial Office was satisfied that His Excellency's position as Imperial Officer had been safeguarded. Most colonial politicians felt that local sovereignty of the Commonwealth had been secured and the link with the Empire maintained. It would be left to the operation of the Commonwealth Executive to work out how much influence this Imperial official would exercise in the Commonwealth Government.

It should be noted that in contrast with some colonial and later State Governors, the Governor-General had no responsibility for appointments to the Upper House. By

¹. See below, chapter IV, pp.195-196.
making the Senate elective the framers of the Constitution removed the Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth from the controversy which the exercise of this power had roused and was to continue to rouse in the States after federation. To some extent, the removal of a potential source of friction, increased the possibility of the Governor-General exercising that 'moral influence' which Elgin had considered desirable.\(^1\) The general opinion in 1900 was that the monarch's share in the exercise of federal legislative authority would not be 'altogether formal or nominal'.\(^2\) Few would have claimed that the Queen's Representative had a direct influence upon internal policy, though most would have agreed with Deakin about the 'tacit, the silent personal influence ... such a man inevitably exercises upon those who surround him'.\(^3\) Only a fraction of the community would have denied that on matters of external policy the Governor-General had a right to exercise a discreet but definite authority.

With the fading of the earlier objections to the 'Imperialistic' nature of clauses in the Draft Constitution, the Governor-General's role as connecting link between the Commonwealth and the British Governments was unchallenged. Retention of Colonial Office control over the nomination of the chief executive officer of the Commonwealth gave the Imperial ministry access to, and possibly influence upon, the

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1. See above, p. 10.
most confidential affairs of the new colony. This had obvious advantages for the British Government. It had almost instant advice of action pending, or about to be taken, which might affect its interests and in some cases its representative could delay that action until the British Government exercised its right of veto. It had the opportunity to influence this action, either surreptitiously by confidential instructions to its agent, or openly by instructing him to make known to his Australian ministers the attitude of the Imperial Government.

Though willing to compromise on specific points the British Government at the end of the nineteenth century was determined to retain as much control over the self-governing colonies as could possibly be sustained. The Times, in March 1898 had forecast that one of the effects of Australian federation would be the creation of 'a practically new British power in the Pacific'. It was a time when Britain's consciousness of her international isolation was awakening. One reaction to this had been a tendency to gather together the strands of Empire. By 1901 British power, challenged by larger, potentially wealthier nations, depended upon retention of both her colonial possessions and the leadership of the external policies of those possessions. The office of Governor-General was essential to this dual aim. The Australian Constitution provided for the constant presence in Australian political and social circles of an officer of British background, British interests and usually with

1. The Times, 21 March 1898.
British parliamentary experience. Such an official would naturally exercise a general influence on the direction of British policy.

For the Australian Government also there were advantages in the situation. Most colonial politicians felt that, in theory at least, the presence in Australia of an officer experienced in the operation of the British parliamentary system and able to offer the fruits of that experience was greatly to the Commonwealth's benefit. Many felt that a British official without any local, political connections would bring a necessary impartiality to the office of Head of State. Above all for the great majority of Australians the link with the power of the British Empire was retained, even strengthened. Indeed, they looked forward to an even more beneficial partnership than in the past. They hoped that the retention of the link with Britain through the Queen's Representative would aid in the sympathetic consideration of the Commonwealth's interests and continued British financial investment. Returned Governors-General who moved in high political and social circles, would exhibit attitudes shaped by their first-hand experience of Australian conditions and opinions and hopefully even voice those opinions in the House of Lords.¹

It was confidently expected that after the colonies had federated their consolidated voice would be given greater weight in Imperial councils, and that the Commonwealth

¹. Australasian confidence in the political prestige of the House of Lords was not naive. Both Rosebery and Salisbury were members of that House while holding office as Prime Minister.
Government would at least be given early indication of British policy on matters which concerned Australia. It was hoped, perhaps less confidently, that they would be able to influence that policy. One of the channels through which the Commonwealth Executive would pursue Australian policy was to be that of the Representative of the Crown. The office of Governor-General reflected the ambiguities of Australia's connection with the Empire. It enabled loyalty to the British connection to accompany a vague, diffused but undeniable sense of Australian nationhood.

1. See pamphlet by P.J. Gandon, Federation; National and Imperial (Sydney, 1890), p. 7. 'with how much more weight would come the representations of the Governor-General of the Dominion of Australia on any subject of grave national importance to us, such as the French recidivist question, the growing power of Russia in the North Pacific, the aggressive attitude of Germany towards trade in Oceania, or the irruption of pauper immigrants or alien and inferior races'.
Government House, Melbourne.

Government House, Sydney.
II

Inaugurating the Office.
It was not until the achievement of federation had become certain that the Colonial Office began to consider seriously the selection of a Governor-General for the Commonwealth. In February 1899 Lord Brassey, the Governor of Victoria, sought, as a personal favour, the opportunity to crown his public career by opening the first federal Parliament.\(^1\) This was, in the eyes of the Colonial Office, an oblique application for the position of Governor-General.\(^2\)

The appointment of an officer to inaugurate the Commonwealth was almost solely a matter for the Secretary for the Colonies. Suggestions that the office be elective had been firmly rejected at Constitutional Conventions during the 'nineties. The 'Blake Case' and its consequences had made it likely that future Australian Governments would have an advisory voice in the nomination of the Queen's Representative.\(^3\) But in 1899 there was no such Government to consult. Responsibility for the selection of the first Governor-General of the Commonwealth therefore rested with the Imperial Government.

Chamberlain's presence at the Colonial Office reinforced the Imperial aspect of the office. His inclination was to regard the federation of Australia not as a narrowly Australian event but as a step in the consolidation of Empire.

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2. Ibid. Minute by Anderson.
3. R.R. Garran anticipated that this would be the case. See his The Coming Commonwealth: An Australian Handbook of Federal Government (Sydney, 1897), p. 126.
In the preceding years the British Government had appointed as its proconsuls men with an active conception of their role in the Empire. Curzon in India, Minto in Canada, and Milner at Cape Town were considerably more than merely spectacular ceremonial figures. The Governor-General of Australia, with Chamberlain as Secretary of State for Colonies, would represent, not only the Queen but also a significant school of Imperialist thought.

Canadian precedent supported Brassey's candidature for the post. When the provinces confederated in 1867 Lord Monck, who had been Governor of Canada since 1861, became first Governor-General of the new Dominion. In the Australian colonies at the time of federation Brassey was the senior Governor having


2. Gilbert Elliot, fourth Earl of Minto, Governor-General of Canada from 1898 to 1904. Frank H. Underhill, 'Lord Minto on his Governor-Generalship', in Canadian Historical Review, 40 (June 1959), pp. 121-131; Penlington, Canada and Imperialism, pp. 141-142. Minto was Viceroy of India 1905 to 1910. For biography see John Buchan, Lord Minto: A Memoir (London, 1924).


4. The senior colony, New South Wales, had a very junior governor, the twenty seven year old Earl Beauchamp, only six months in office.
succeeded Hopetoun in Victoria in 1895. In some respects his qualifications seemed good for the position of Governor-General. A prominent member of the Imperial Federation League prior to its dissolution in 1893 and the Royal Colonial Institute, Brassey also possessed the two attributes which seemed to be pre-eminent for Representatives of the Crown in the late nineteenth century, wealth and a title.\(^1\) But his writings on naval defence, imperial federation and numerous other subjects reveal a capacity for industry untrammeled by any particular ability.\(^2\) Colonial Office opinion of his personal qualities was scathing, his despatches being treated with scant respect. Anderson's estimate of the Victorian Governor was curt. "The man is an ass" he minuted and Chamberlain agreed.\(^3\)

However, after a discussion with his Premier, Brassey gracefully waived his claim to the Governor-Generalship in favour of a member of the royal family.\(^4\) For the rest of 1899 he pressed the Secretary of State to obtain a royal

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1. The Age, 29 December 1894 denied that colonists 'dearly love a lord' but it approved the change from Governors 'of the official class' to 'younger peers ... of independent position'.

2. Brassey, Papers and Addresses.

3. Brassey to Chamberlain, 6 June 1899. C.O. 309/148/17847, folios 223-226, suggesting that the first federal Parliament be opened by Chamberlain himself. The latter minuted 'explain civilly -- tho he is an ass that the suggestion is quite impossible'.

duke as first Governor-General. Chamberlain noted that the suggestion was impossible due to the Queen's reluctance to allow her grandsons to travel to so distant a part of the Empire. Despite 'the Chief's' apparent disinterest, Brassey's suggestion was taken up enthusiastically by the Earl of Selborne, parliamentary Under Secretary at the Colonial Office, and he continued to press for the appointment of either the Duke of York or the Duke of Connaught, if not to act as Governor-General, then at least to open the first Commonwealth Parliament.

Once it had been ascertained that a member of the royal family could not be obtained as first Governor-General of the Commonwealth, several names were rumoured as likely to be considered. It was generally assumed that, as in Canada in 1867, the first occupant of the office would be one who had prior experience in the federating colonies. Names suggested in the press were usually those of previous Australian

1. Brassey was reviving a commonly mooted suggestion. See Brian McKinlay, The First Royal Tour 1867-1868 (Adelaide, 1970), p. 37 for a proposal by the Advertiser for a 'Federal Union ... under the popular leadership of' Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, then visiting the Australian colonies. During the early 'nineties the suggestion that a member of the royal family would be appointed as Viceroy drew a scornful cartoon by 'Hop' on the subject, Bulletin, 8 March 1890. In 1891 the Marquis of Lorne, an ex-Governor-General of Canada and son-in-law of the Queen, was rumoured as a possible 'royal' Governor-General for Australia. See S.M.H., 6 April 1891.


3. Ibid.
colonial Governors. The failure to confer the office upon Lord Brassey before he departed from Victoria left it likely that the nomination lay between Lord Hopetoun and Lord Jersey'.

The seventh Earl of Jersey had been a popular and successful Governor of New South Wales. During his term of office, from 1891 to 1893 he had witnessed the early years of the federation movement. Possessing a title, wealth and experience in both the family banking business and minor Government posts, Jersey's qualifications for the post seemed excellent. In 1894 he had been the British Government's representative at the subsidiary conference on trade and communications held at Ottawa. However business connections in Britain made it unlikely that he could be absent overseas for an extended period of time. For these reasons he had cut short his tour of duty in New South Wales, a practice deprecated by the Colonial Office. Anderson noted that this was 'one of the difficulties of appointing wealthy peers to these Governorships. Their private interests are bound to suffer - or they think they do, during a prolonged absence. Lord Jersey set the fashion of throwing up office after a brief term'.

1. An impression Deakin had acquired in 'the best informed circles' while visiting London. Age, 17 July 1900.


3. Minute on a despatch from Brassey, 5 July 1897, asking to be relieved after three years. C.O. 309/145/17435, folios 278-279.
The more likely candidate was, like Jersey, also a wealthy seventh Earl. John Adrian Louis Hope, Earl of Hopetoun, an aristocrat of ancient Scottish lineage, had been appointed Governor of Victoria in 1889 at the age of twenty-nine. After a successful term of office he had held minor posts in the British Government and in 1900 was Lord Chamberlain to the Queen. His successor in Melbourne, the irrepressible Brassey, having failed to persuade Chamberlain to appoint either himself or a member of the Royal family to the post of Governor-General, finally recommended Hopetoun 'as highly qualified by colonial experience and great tact in dealing with all classes'.\(^1\) At the Colonial Office Anderson noted that Hopetoun had been very popular in Victoria and had been mentioned several times in the Australian press as a probable and acceptable Governor-General. Though Chamberlain initialled the file he gave no sign of his opinion.\(^2\)

By May 1900 no announcement had been made and Barton, leader of the Australian delegation which was in England to pilot the Commonwealth Bill through the Imperial Parliament, asked\(^3\) that the appointment be made as soon as possible after the proclamation of the Commonwealth by the Queen. Eventually, on 13 July 1900, the Colonial Office announced that Her Majesty

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2. Minute on Ibid., folio 433.
3. Barton to Cox, draft, undated, in reply to a letter from Cox, 18 May 1900. Barton papers, MS 51/272, A.N.L. Cox was Assistant Under Secretary of State.
had approved the appointment of Hopetoun, as Governor-General of Australia.¹ In his submission to the Queen on 10 July the Secretary of State had said that while 'careful consideration' had been given to the 'claims of all possible candidates', Hopetoun was 'exceptionally qualified to discharge the duties of this important position with ability and efficiency'. Chamberlain believed that the appointment would be 'heartily welcomed' in Australia.²

There is no direct evidence that Chamberlain consulted the Australian delegation as to the choice of the first Governor-General. But it seems probable that its leader was informed of the selection several weeks before the name was submitted to the Queen.³ In June Hopetoun wrote to Barton mentioning his 'going out' and suggesting that they meet to have a 'friendly chat'.⁴ The implication of this letter is that the leader of the Australian delegation was aware of the appointment.

The Governor-General elect was a young man with a broad, high brow, deep set eyes and small chin. Titled, wealthy and amiable he was an excellent choice to inaugurate the office in the Commonwealth. But one cloud on his candidature was his poor health. This, rather than, as the Bulletin maliciously

2. Submission to the Queen, 10 July 1900. Ibid.
3. But see Melhuish, Australia and British Imperial Policy, pp. 351-352.
4. Hopetoun to Barton, 21 June 1900. Barton papers, MS 51/326, A.N.L.
rumoured, any failure of his Sandhurst exams, probably induced him not to embark on the military career his schooling seemed to prefigure. At his first levee as Governor of Victoria, in 1889, His Excellency had been 'somewhat overcome'. The Australian climate seemed to have suited him during his six years of office, but on his return to England his health was once again poor. His letter to Barton, already quoted, revealed that he had been anxious about his ability to undertake another term of office in Australia. He informed Barton:

I have seen Sir Wm. Broadbent & he says there is nothing to prevent my going out & that I need not fear breaking down.

As Chamberlain had anticipated in his submission to the Queen, the appointment was welcomed in Australia. The Melbourne press was smugly satisfied that a former Governor of Victoria had been selected. In Sydney there were a few who expressed the parochial sentiment that the appointment was a


2. Giving the Bulletin, 14 December 1889, an excuse to versify: 'The Vulgar herd had just begun / To form a podgy line / And greet his lordship, one by one / (Each full of joy divine): They praised his feeble form and face, / So like the blessed saints / When lo! a cry ran through the place - / "His Excellency faints!" ... Great Hevins! back upon a chair / His Lordship limply slips! / But Duncan Gillies "gives him air," / and blows upon his lips - Then orders "Water!" waves a fan, / Puts perfume on his brow - Till through the throng the ridings ran, / "His lordship's better now".

3. See Hopetoun to Deakin, 23 April 1896, Deakin papers, MS 1540/2459, A.N.L.

4. Hopetoun to Barton, 21 June 1900. Barton papers, MS 51/326, A.N.L. Broadbent was an eminent physician.
victory for 'Victorian intrigues in London' and evidence of the 'undue, predominant influence of Melbourne in Federal affairs'.¹ William John Lyne, Premier of the mother colony, thought it a mistake that 'a statesman of Cabinet rank' had not been selected.² The Sydney Morning Herald would have preferred the appointment of a stranger, free of any suspicion of political or colonial bias, to begin a new era. But, in general, even Sydney viewed Hopetoun's selection favourably. If experience of Australian conditions were a required precondition, the Sydney paper continued, then Hopetoun was the best choice available and New South Wales would have to swallow its inter-colonial jealousy. In the Daily Telegraph's opinion, 'It would be difficult ... to imagine a safer appointment' and this was typical of the reaction of the press in all the colonies. The Advertiser, Adelaide, commented, 'Australia ... is to renew its acquaintance with an old friend'.³

Although Chamberlain clearly bore in mind opinion in the Australian colonies in appointing the Commonwealth's first Governor-General, the most important factor was more likely to have been Hopetoun's acceptability to the Colonial Office. In his letter of recommendation to the Queen the Secretary of State commented that, as Governor of Victoria, Hopetoun had

1. Truth, 15 July 1900.

2. Note by Governor Tennyson in diary, 21 July 1900, p. 58. Tennyson papers, MS 479/2, A.N.L.

3. See issues of S.M.H., Daily Telegraph and Advertiser, 16 July 1900. Similar laudatory comments appear in West Australian and Brisbane Courier of the same date.
'acquitted himself to the entire satisfaction of Lord Knutsford and Lord Ripon'. His despatches had been full and informative but self-effacing, particularly when compared with the effusive reports of his successor. It was well known that in endeavouring to fulfil his duty in the colony he had spent considerably more than was covered by his salary and allowances. Unlike Jersey, he had stayed longer than the normal term of office.

The other consideration which weighed strongly in Hopetoun's favour was that he was a good party man. During his career he had been Tory whip in the House of Lords in 1883, Paymaster-General in Salisbury's Government from 1895 to 1898 and Lord Chamberlain 1898 to 1900. He did not possess outstanding ability but had always carried out his duties zealously and with unfailing loyalty. His close association with Court ceremonial augmented a natural tendency towards lofty nobility. One visitor to the colony of Victoria had described him as 'Grand Seigneur to the tips of his fingers'.

In August and September 1900 Hopetoun busied himself in London making preparations for his assumption of office. A list of questions which he submitted to the Colonial Office revealed some awareness of the likely problems he would face in Australia. Observing the lack of provision for exercise

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1. C.O. 323/459/22523, folio 103.


3. Correspondence between Hopetoun and officials at the Colonial Office during August and September 1900 is in C.O. 418/8, folios 458-484.
of the office during a Governor-General's illness or absence he asked to be informed of the proposed arrangements for such an eventuality. By this stage Chamberlain had decided that the senior State Governor should receive the Dormant Commission. Hopetoun asked for advice as to the conduct of Executive Council meetings. He was informed that this, and the difficult question of precedence, were matters to be worked out in practice with his Ministers. He also requested, and was given, instructions as to the formal steps taken in inaugurating the Confederation of Canada in 1867.¹

His Excellency anticipated that his role would be that of a Captain taking command of a new ship:

He would be privileged to ... endeavour to discourage any tendency to strain the engines, to utter a word of caution here, to apply a little lubricant there until all danger of heated bearings ... was a thing of the past ... and the great ship of state was fairly and fully started on her voyage.²

It was clear that he brought to the task of Governor-General a high conception of the usefulness of his office in the early days of the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, his impression of the style in which these duties should be carried out, was excessively grand.

Although there had been casual mention in some pamphlets that an allowance of £5,000 would be provided for the Governor-

1. Ibid.

2. Speech to the Institute of Naval Architects, reported in The Times, 2 October 1900.
General,\(^1\) the only specific reference to His Excellency's remuneration was the £10,000 salary guaranteed in the Constitution. The subject of additional expenses was probably one of the matters which Hopetoun had wished to discuss with Barton in London. When the allowance question became a subject of public controversy, in 1902, there was some indication that Barton had undertaken to provide generously for the vice-regal establishment.\(^2\) Hopetoun's suite was very extensive. It included a Private and an Assistant Private Secretary, Military Secretary, Aide-de-Camp, house steward and twenty house servants. He also arranged for seventeen horses and thirteen stablemen, together with his carriages, to precede him to Melbourne.\(^3\) He later admitted the whole of his yearly income was expended in paying off the cost of his outfit and the expenses connected with bringing out his establishment.\(^4\) These preparations reveal Hopetoun to have been out of touch with the desire in the Australian colonies that federation should be cheap.


2. See below, chapter III, p. 179.

3. See Memorandum included in Hopetoun to Ampthill, 4 September 1900. C.O. 418/8/29024, folio 473.

4. Hopetoun to Deakin 11 June 1902. Deakin papers, MS 1540/2482-2483. A.N.L.
The departure of the Commonwealth's Governor-General elect from Britain was honoured as an occasion of great Imperial celebration. Under the auspices of the Royal Colonial Institute a 'Grand Federal Banquet' was given at the Hotel Cecil on 3 October 1900. It was a distinguished gathering, although Chamberlain was unable to fulfil his earlier promise to chair the ceremony, apparently regarding the prosecution of the 'Khaki' election as more important. Selborne presided in his Chief's absence. Nearly seven hundred guests attended the function, signifying the connection with the coterie of Imperial enthusiasts in London which the office of Governor-General seemed destined to provide. At the cross table the Earl of Hopetoun was surrounded by men who had 'grown grey in the service of the Empire'. Nearly every ex-colonial Governor in England at the time was present, including Jersey, Brassey and Carrington. Colonial Office officials attended in force, as did the Australian colonies' Agents-General, banking, shipping and commercial representatives. The guests exchanged views on current topics and the evening's entertainment. The British election was particularly topical. Pritchard Morgan's defeat at the hands of Keir Hardie at Merthyr Tydvil seemed to have been the subject of general regret. Yarns flowed freely. One story concerned the christening of the guest of honour's son, Lord Hope, at which the clergyman was said to have commenced his blessing by observing that 'the world was full of blasted hopes'.

2. Ibid.
But there was no mention of blasted hopes in the addresses delivered at the banquet. The occasion illustrated the 'cloudy grandeur ... and exalted truculence of tone' which pervaded the British world at the turn of the century.¹ Speeches were heavily laced with the confident rhetoric of Empire and abounded with patriotic reference to the soldiers of the Queen fighting in South Africa. Queensland's Agent General, Sir Horace Tozer, K.C.M.G., used the opportunity of his toast to insert a carefully constructed pun. He admitted that the track of the 'Union ship' to be launched in Australia would be uncertain. But he trusted that 'with Hope as the pilot, with Faith in the people of Australia generally, and with a charitable construction on the part of the Mother Country' the ship would arrive safely at the 'port of Imperial security'.²

'The Pilot' made a characteristically tactful speech which revealed a self-deprecating public humility which sounds false now but which apparently won him admiration at the time. Twelve months later it was said that 'his clear reed-like voice, vibrating with honest emotion sways an Australian audience as perhaps no other speaker in the Commonwealth'.³

2. Supplement to British Australasian, 4 October 1900.
thinking him worthy to occupy the post'. He prayed for patience, tact and common sense - and 'above all ... for reasonably good health'. He promised homely virtue, a strong desire to do what was right, an untiring devotion to duty and an infinite capacity for taking pains, in the absence of the more brilliant qualities which he regretfully confessed he did not possess - (cries of 'No'). It was a time when 'any man may be proud to take part in the government of the Empire' and though 'khaki talk' was a forbidden subject for an officer supposedly above politics he risked a reference to the heroic defence of the Elands River post by Australians who 'had kept the flag - the good old flag that they came all the way from Australia to fight for - flying'. He took special pains to dispel any fears that his long and happy connection with the colony of Victoria might cause him to disregard his duties to the whole community. Finally he referred to the absence of any precedent for him to follow:

there are no well-worn boots for me to put on when I arrive in Australia. It will be my duty to make these boots. I shall try my utmost to make them so that they will fit my own feet tolerably comfortably, and so that it will be possible for my successors in future to wear them with dignity and satisfaction to themselves.1

This 'Grand Federal Banquet' was an occasion of gracious formality and flattering attention for the guest of honour, bolstering his conception of the office as a great Imperial pro- consulate.

Hopetoun left England on the day following his farewell dinner. In the arrangements for the journey to Australia can

1. British Australasian, Supplement 4 October 1900.
be seen some of the early difficulties of the post he was taking up. In particular they revealed that His Excellency needed to tread warily to allay intercolonial jealousy. Lyne had proposed that the Governor-General land in New South Wales.¹ The senior colony had been forced to recognize Melbourne as the seat of Government pending erection of a new capital and it was later announced that the opening of the first Parliament would be marked with proper ceremony by the presence of the Duke and Duchess of York.² Lyne was determined that Sydney should have its share of Imperial pageantry and contemplated 'great public rejoicings' to welcome the Governor-General.³ At the urging of the Colonial Office⁴ he agreed that the welcoming ceremony should be incorporated in an Inauguration festivity for the Commonwealth. The Governor of New South Wales, Lord Beauchamp, vacated Government House and

1. Agent General for N.S.W. to Secretary of State, 9 July 1900, 'It is the strong desire of my Government that the Governor-General should disembark at Sydney ... prior to landing at Melbourne'. C.O. 201/629/22087, folios 120-123. Correspondence between New South Wales and the Colonial Office can also be found in N.S.W. Parliamentary Papers, 1906, I, pp. 267-283, 'The Residence of the Governor-General in New South Wales'.

2. See draft telegram 17 September 1900, notifying that the Queen had approved the proposal in C.O. 418/8/30438, folio 280-286.


4. Telegram Chamberlain to Beauchamp, 25 July 1900 urging that 'the more important public celebrations should be postponed till establishment'. File 4/1401 'The Governor, March - July 1900', N.S.W. Archives.
returned to England to assist Lyne's arrangements. In this action lay the seeds of future difficulties over the provision of an official residence for the principal Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth.

Careful plans had been made concerning the arrival of the Governor-General in Australian waters. It was arranged that he would land in Fremantle in early December after a short holiday in India. He and Lady Hopetoun would leave the mail vessel for a one day visit to Perth and then embark on the flagship of the Australian Squadron, the 'Royal Arthur', for conveyance direct to Sydney. The object was to avoid going ashore at Adelaide or Melbourne so as not to anticipate the official welcoming ceremony planned by the New South Wales Government.

This petty manoeuvring over where the Hopetouns should first set foot on Australian soil was made even more unseemly by the unfortunate effects upon Their Excellencies' health of their visit to India. Lady Hopetoun was stricken with a severe attack of malaria and her husband suffered a bout of typhoid fever. Though he began to recover in time to leave Colombo on 25 November, the Countess was too ill to accompany him and the planned visit to Perth had to be cancelled.


2. These were the normal ports of call for the mail steamer. New South Wales suggested that a man of war convey Hopetoun from Albany to Sydney direct. See Agent General N.S.W. to Secretary of State, 18 July 1900 and 20 July 1900. C.O. 201/629/2319 and 23562, folios 126-132 and 134-138. Hopetoun did not think Sydney would resent his breaking the journey by a trip to Perth. See his letter to Colonial Office, 23 September 1900. C.O. 418/8/31141, folio 430.
Forbidden by his medical advisers to leave his cabin when he reached Fremantle, the Governor-General was forced to arrange that the 'Royal Arthur' precede the mail steamer to Adelaide before he transhipped. Although he did not land there he received official visitors and spoke briefly to reporters who noted his 'sallow face and bent attitude'.¹ From Adelaide the flagship sailed direct to Sydney, landing at Farm Cove on the morning of 15 December 1900.²

In spite of the Colonial Office advice to the contrary and the physical weakness of the star attraction, the New South Wales Government had arranged a public welcoming ceremony.³ A member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly upbraided Lyne's Government for persisting with arrangements 'to suit the pride and petty prejudices of New South Wales'.⁴ Lyne replied to the criticism by revealing that he had contacted Hopetoun on board the flagship and obtained permission to continue with a reduced ceremony. After all, Sydney Harbour provided an unparalleled setting for a harbour spectacle, ideal for the naval namoeuvres which the Admiral had arranged. In perfect weather the 'Royal Arthur' entered from the sea between two men-of-war and merchant steamers amid the flame, smoke and thunder of saluting guns. A pinnace conveyed the Governor-General to the landing stage. Though

1. *Age*, 11 December 1900.
4. *V.P.D.* 1900, 96, p. 166, comments by Mr Murray. Also *S.M.H.*, 12 December 1900.
evidently still weak His Excellency replied in a few courteous sentences to the addresses presented by the Premier and the Mayor, before moving off in a short procession from the welcoming pavilion\(^1\) to Government House.

John Norton's *Truth*, in a page otherwise taken up with the sensational Coningham divorce scandal which was at the time delighting colonial readers,\(^2\) devoted half a column to an attack on the 'gross and atrocious cruelty' of the Government's action in 'hawking ... unhappy Hopetoun around as a spectacle'. Though he inveighed against Lyne for this shabby treatment of the 'care-worn cadaverous Earl' Norton echoed the prevailing colonial opinion that the Governor-General had heroically performed his first public duty in Australia.\(^3\)

The *Sydney Mail* did not allow Hopetoun's frailty to distract it from the wider significance of the occasion:

> Isolated as we are here in the Southern Hemisphere, with common interests to defend, and a common destiny to work out, the federal idea was nothing more than the instinct of common protection and development. For Australians last Saturday all this received personal expression and embodiment in the Governor-General. He is the figurehead of the Commonwealth, the personal symbol of the union itself, and, as the direct representative of her Majesty, of union under the Crown. In applauding him we were applauding the realisation of our federal hopes, and that imperial tie which makes and keeps us part of the great British Empire, which the Commonwealth will worthily represent in this quarter of the globe.\(^4\)

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1. The pavilion displayed a regrettable lack of federal spirit by including only the names of New South Welshmen in the Arches commemorating the fathers of Federation. *Bulletin*, 22 December 1900.

2. A Catholic priest, Rev. Dr O'Haran, was co-respondent.


These words of the *Sydney Mail* illustrate the symbolic role of the Governor-General as Commonwealth head of state and connecting link with the British Empire.

Barely recovered from the effects of his illness and anxious about the condition of his wife,¹ Hopetoun's first two weeks were made even more uncomfortable by a pressing, constitutional task he had to perform. It was necessary to choose a Prime Minister and it needed to be done with despatch. The Cabinet had to be approved and ready to be sworn in by 1 January 1900 in accordance with the planned ceremonial for the Inauguration. This would be the only time in the Commonwealth that the Representative of the Crown would not be guided by the parliamentary situation in his choice of advisers. On 19 December he ended the speculation by asking Lyne to form a Ministry. Stipulating that he did not consider himself bound to 'accept any list' the Governor-General required to be satisfied that 'the proposed government contained nothing but first-class names from each of the colonies and that above all Victoria should have her proper share in quality and quantity of representation'.²

His Excellency's choice of Lyne has achieved a certain notoriety in historical accounts of the early Commonwealth as

1. Lady Hopetoun suffered a relapse on her journey across Australia. See *Daily Telegraph*, 1 January 1901.

'The Hopetoun Blunder'. Yet, on the face of it, his action in offering to the Prime Minister of the senior colony a chance to form the first Commonwealth Ministry was an unexceptionable decision. It followed the Canadian precedent set in 1867 when Lord Monck had chosen John A. Macdonald to construct a Government after Confederation. Before leaving London, Hopetoun had sought and obtained from the Colonial Office, information on the action taken by Monck in Canada. But there is no doubt that the choice of Lyne was largely unexpected in Australia and London. It was generally anticipated that Edmund Barton, though only a private citizen, would have been offered the post as acknowledged leader of the federal movement. At the Colonial Office Anderson commented 'It is a false step on Ld Hopetoun's part and probably will give him a good deal of trouble'. Chamberlain cabled on 22 December that the choice of Lyne had caused 'great surprise' and he asked Hopetoun to 'please give reasons'.

Several explanations have been advanced for Hopetoun's action. In view of his earlier action in seeking information

1. This 'humiliating label' as Professor La Nauze calls it, seems to have been first used by Deakin, a not disinterested observer. He wrote to Barton on 19 December 1900 'Who could have believed Hopetoun would make such a blunder'. Barton papers, MS 51/367, A.N.L.


3. Records of the Office of Governor-General, C.P. Accession 78, (hereafter referred to as CP 78) Series 21, bundle 58, file 26 marked 'Proclamation of the Commonwealth'. C.A.O.

about the formal steps taken in inaugurating the Confederation in Canada the most likely solution is that Hopetoun simply followed that precedent as he saw it. While Monck's reason for commissioning MacDonald was that the latter had been unanimously chosen as Chairman of the Conference of delegates in London, Hopetoun would not have been aware of this justification, which pointed to Barton, as Leader of the Constitutional Convention, rather than to Lyne. On the surface MacDonald had been chosen because he was Prime Minister of the former Province of Canada, unquestionably the senior of the confederating Provinces. Apparently, the precedent seemed to indicate Lyne. Most commentators agree that if Reid had still been Premier of New South Wales he would undoubtedly have been chosen. Reid had been replaced by Lyne. It seems logical that Lyne should therefore be given the opportunity which would in other circumstances have belonged to Reid.

Possibly the Governor-General was also impressed by the political toughness of the New South Wales Premier, whose strength and truculent character was prominent in federal politics for the next ten years. In contrast, Barton was inept and inexperienced, qualities which were to have disastrous consequences for Hopetoun within eighteen months. Federalists might argue that Lyne's previous anti-federalism disqualified him from the post of first Prime Minister, but


2. Ironically, for the whole of this period Lyne was to be a troublesome colleague of Deakin, the man who had frustrated his ambitions to be Prime Minister.
it is also possible to see Hopetoun's selection of such a man as a sensible and statesmanlike effort to bind an influential and potentially dangerous opponent to the federation.¹ But, as the days passed, it began to be clear that Lyne would be unable to fulfil the conditions imposed on him by the Governor-General. Leading Victorian politicians, encouraged by Deakin and, belatedly, by David Syme,² declined to serve with Lyne. In these circumstances the latter had no choice but to admit failure and advise the commissioning of Barton.

There is some irony in the fact that accounts of this episode in the Commonwealth's political history should preserve disparagingly the name of the man whose motives were the most disinterested. Lyne failed in his attempt to form a broadly based Commonwealth Ministry because of the secret intrigues of Deakin. It hardly seems appropriate that the result of these political manoeuvres should appear to reflect upon the action of the Representative of the Crown. One conclusion to be drawn from the events in Sydney during late December 1900 was that the office of Governor-General in Australia promised to be a post of considerable difficulty. It might

¹ For an example of an occasion on which the Prime Minister of the senior colony was not selected to lead a united Government see N.G. Garson, Louis Botha or John X. Merriman: The Choice of South Africa's First Prime Minister (London, 1969). But see John Mordecai, The West Indies: The Federal Negotiations (London, 1968) for an illustration of how the failure of the Prime Minister of the senior colony in a proposed federation to lead the united government, weakened the federal hold on the senior colony.

² Proprietor of the Age and a major political force in Victoria. He had at first supported Lyne but was persuaded by Deakin to switch to Barton. See La Nauze, The Hopetoun Blunder, p. 26.
also be concluded that a man of the lofty character of Hopetoun was likely to be less successful in dealing with Australian politicians than a practical, experienced politician, capable of assessing the political realities.

Hopetoun delayed answering Chamberlain's cable for several days. It was an anxious time for the convalescing Governor-General. But by Christmas Day he was able to inform the Secretary of State that though he had found the New South Wales Premier in a very strong position in his own state, Lyne had failed to form a representative Ministry. He reported that Barton had therefore been commissioned and that it seemed likely that he would be successful in forming a Government.¹ 'All's well that ends well', minuted Anderson at the Colonial Office.² Despite the uncertainties of the preceding week, a federal Executive was ready to take office at the Inauguration of the Commonwealth on New Years Day, 1901.

Sydney on the morning of Tuesday 1 January 1901 was wet and bedraggled. A heavy downpour had fallen on the previous evening dampening the New Years Eve celebrations³ and showers continued in the morning, causing the flags and bunting, with which the city was decked, to droop soddenly from the standards and the paint on the newly erected triumphal arches to run on to the pavement. But by nine o'clock the weather had cleared. A strong north easterly breeze dried out the banners while workmen repaired the damage to the decorations and the

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² Ibid., folio 521.
³ Age, 1 January 1901.
citizens of Sydney, armed with umbrellas and mackintoshes, began to gather in the city streets.

It was to be the start of a week-long festival to celebrate the launching of a new nation. Sydney was thronged for the occasion. Hotels had been booked out for weeks. The crowds which had begun to take up vantage points in the city from the early hours of that wet New Years Day settled down to wait for the parade. At Centennial Park large numbers were assembling to witness the formal ceremony at which the Earl of Hopetoun would be sworn in as first Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Nowadays, when mass media have rendered almost extinct ceremonial public occasions, it is difficult to appreciate the colour and emotion of the Inaugural celebrations in January 1901. The spectacle commenced at 10.30 a.m. when two hundred mounted policemen, the leading section of a procession which was marshalled in the Government Domain, trotted into Macquarie Street to commence the five mile parade through the packed streets. The cavalcade was a representative selection of colonial society. Early in the ranks came the Railway Band leading the Trades Union representatives. Overalled silver miners from Broken Hill, oil lamps in their hats and carrying picks, marched with bakers, who wore white cook's caps. Fire Brigademen, University officials and Judges took part and Commandant Booth led the Salvation Army delegation. Politicians naturally figured prominently. While most of the federal leaders from the other colonies passed unrecognized by the

1. N.S.W.P.D., First series, 1900, CVII, p. 5068.
Sydney crowd, Reid's comic figure was favoured with an especially noisy acclamation.¹

Despite the presence of colonial and federal organizations and individuals in the procession, it was predominantly an Imperial occasion. The Sydney Morning Herald reported that 'certain grumblers amongst the crowds complained of the length of the trades part of the procession'.²

Undoubtedly the major attraction of the day was the military contingent. A thousand Imperial troops from a variety of famous regiments had been sent out by the British Government to 'give eclat to the historical spectacle'³ and their vivid display was greeted enthusiastically. Interspersed with the Household Cavalry's scarlet and steel and the Indian troops in their spectacular red and emerald green regimentals were the 'khaki clad centaurs of the Australian contingents'.⁴

Odd shafts of sunlight lit the flashing breastplates and pinions of the Lancers. To one, local reporter 'the visiting troops seemed, ... as they were intended to do, to embody our unity with the mother country and identification with its Indian and colonial empire'.⁵ The highest embodiment of this

1. S.M.H. and Age, 2 January 1901.
2. S.M.H., 2 January 1901. However W.M. Hughes, who had organized this section of the procession, claimed that that was 'the outstanding feature of the procession'. Policies and Potentates (Sydney, 1950), pp. 42-45.
4. Cockburn, Australian Federation, p. 71. For composition of the force see C.O. 418/7/37154 folio 494.
5. S.M.H., 2 January 1901.
Imperial patriotism was the Governor-General. He rode in an open carriage attended by richly dressed postilions and grooms in gold embroidered livery. Also in his carriage were his private secretary and his medical adviser. In full court dress, bowing and doffing his plumed hat, Hopetoun acknowledged the enthusiastic cheers of the crowd.

This slight, youthful-looking figure, representative of Queen, Empire and Commonwealth, was the central point of the Inaugural ceremonies. The acclamation for Hopetoun was a celebration both of Australian nationhood and Imperial patriotism. Sentiments of loyalty to the Queen and the British Empire brought cheers for the Imperial officer who was to be sworn in as Australian Governor-General. Patriotic zeal was augmented by enjoyment of the occasion’s colourful theatricality. Public sympathy for the frail Representative of the Crown had been engendered by the publicity of the previous weeks. The gradual improvement in his health had been closely reported in most colonial daily newspapers. A wave of enthusiasm and affection for His Excellency engulfed Sydney.

Hopetoun colours were adapted in every possible way ingenuity ... could think of. Corsets (in shopwindows) were laced with them, so were 'Hopetoun shoes' displayed in bootmakers shops. Cakes were quartered with the buff and blue. Horses wore rosettes, dogs' tails flaunted them.1

The Governor-General's central position as the object of Australian Imperial patriotism was emphasized by the absence from Sydney of any of the Queen's Representatives in the former Australian colonies. In order to avoid problems of precedence

1. Australasian, 5 January 1901.
and residence during the early period of the Governor-Generalship and because of the uncertainty as to the continued status of State Governors, the Colonial Office had delayed appointing successors to Beauchamp and Brassey. Lieutenant-Governors also administered the Governments in Tasmania and Western Australia. Moreover, conspicuously absent from Sydney's festivities were the Governors of South Australia and Queensland and even Sir John Madden, Lieutenant Governor of Victoria. The Age reported that this was at the suggestion of the Secretary of State for Colonies who had instructed them that it would be wiser if they presided over local celebrations in their own capitals. On the contrary the initiative for this early display of inter-State jealousy had come from the South Australian Governor. In August Tennyson had telegraphed to Chamberlain, after obtaining Lamington's agreement:

It is felt that politically it would be a mistake for Governors to attend arrival or swearing in of Governor-General at Sydney ... The States would resent any appearance of subordination of Governors of States to Governor-General.

Hopetoun was left in undisputed possession of the field at the Inauguration but problems in the relations between Governors

1. The former Governor of Western Australia, Sir Gerard Smith, had been forced to resign prematurely after being involved in certain 'delinquencies' concerning mining shares. See F.K. Crowley, 'A Vice-Regal Defendant: Sidelights on Westralian Federation', in Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand, 9, no. 34, (May 1960) pp. 117-130.

2. Age, 14 December 1900.

3. Diary entry 20 August 1900, p. 67. Tennyson papers, MS 479/2, A.N.L.
and the Governor-General were foreshadowed.

The climax of the New Years Day's activities was reached when Hopetoun was sworn in as the 'first Governor-General of the newest born of nations'. The ceremony took place at Centennial Park, echoing the centenary celebrations of 1888. In September 1900 Chamberlain had stipulated that the assumption of office should 'be of a public and ceremonial nature so as to mark the inauguration of the new Constitution'. Lyne had planned the Inaugural ceremonies around this central event. At one o'clock the great crowd which had assembled in the Park saw the figure of the Governor-General mount the steps of an ornate, open pavilion erected in the centre of the park. Its platform comprised a huge block of granite, six sided to represent the number of original states and embedded into the earth to remain a permanent indication of the exact spot on which the Commonwealth came into being. The Archbishop of Sydney offered a prayer composed for the occasion by the absent Governor of South Australia. Then Hopetoun stepped to the table in the pavilion and took the oaths of office. The unfurling of the Royal Standard at the dome and a volley of cannonfire signified the assumption of office of the Governor-General and the Inauguration of the Commonwealth.

1. S.M.H., 2 January 1901.
3. S.M.H., 2 January 1901, estimated it at more than a hundred thousand.
4. Cardinal Moran, Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, had held his own Inauguration Service in St. Mary's Cathedral because of a dispute over precedence in the procession.
Commonwealth. This was followed by the swearing in of Barton and the first Commonwealth Executive. A chorus of ten thousand children voiced the hopes of the future in a song for 'Federated Australia' and the choirs and bands filled the air with 'O God our help in ages past'.

The festivities in Sydney continued for a week in a carnival atmosphere. Concerts, banquets, cycling races and a Highland Gathering were held. Sydney and the Harbour was brilliantly illuminated at night. Fireworks had been specially obtained from England.¹ The first inter-State cricket match between South Australia and New South Wales testified to colonial prowess at a sport which was in itself a strong link with the Empire. The Governor-General was as prominent as his health would allow. He visited Sydney Cricket Ground and saw Victor Trumper achieve seventy out of a mammoth first innings total of nine hundred and eighteen for New South Wales.² On Monday, 7 January, there was a reproduction of Captain Cook's landing at Kurnell. Twenty five selected aborigines, all over six feet two inches in height, were sent down by the Queensland Home Secretary at Lyne's request to participate in the re-enactment of the first display of British arms in Australia.³ On the previous Thursday there had been a grand Military Review to display the

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¹ For criticism of the cost of the celebrations see N.S.W.P.D., (First Series), 1900. CVII, pp. 5063-5099.
² S.M.H., 9 January 1901.
³ S.M.H., 5 January 1901.
latest British military arrivals. But Australian units were
now proudly observed to be mingled with the Imperial Troops.
The Governor-General inspected the Review and reported to
Chamberlain that nearly ten thousand men had been on parade.¹

In an editorial on 27 December 1900 the Age had
described Sydney as being 'full of symbols of the Imperial
grandeur of which Federated Australia forms only a part'.
Indeed, the Age believed that in the Federal celebrations the
Empire itself posed before the world. The Inaugural spectacle
had a meaning beyond 'simple parade and spectacle', they spoke
'in eloquent language of the vast strength of that Empire which
an ignorant Boer autocracy recently threatened and attempted
to overthrow'.² Newspaper reports of the Inauguration
ceremony spoke proudly of nationhood achieved without the
spilling of blood.³ But behind the glitter of the Household
cavalry was the reality of the war in South Africa. Australian
lives were being lost on the Veldt as the Australian
Commonwealth 'emerged from the dim shades of the upbuilding to
take its bright place in the world of free-born British men'.⁴

1. Hopetoun to Chamberlain, 3 January 1901. C.O. 418/9/484, folio 47.
2. Age, 27 December 1900.
3. There had been one unfortunate incident at the ceremony in Centennial Park when a horse had bolted, knocking down an Inspector of Police, George Bremner, who had died a few days later. A Presbyterian clergyman, Rev John Ferguson, in his Memorial oration, echoed a wider truth than he knew when he said: 'On the first day of the year they laid the foundation of the Australian Commonwealth and it was the will of God that the foundation stone should be sprinkled with blood'. See Presbyterian Witness (Sydney), 3 January 1901.
4. S.M.H., 2 January 1901.
The war in South Africa was the significant backdrop to the ceremonial activities at Sydney during the first week in January, 1901. The Imperial troops present at the Inauguration and the office of Governor-General securely embodied in the Commonwealth Constitution were firm signs of Australia's link with British strength in a threatening world.
III

Period of Charisma.
They would end by making him feel that either he had been specially created to occupy the position of Governor-General of Australia, or that the position of Governor-General of Australia had been specially created to be occupied by him.

Australia: "Great Scott! has it come to this?"

Bulletin, 14 December 1901.
Shortly before 4.30 p.m. on Inauguration Day, 1901, the men who were to guide Australian political affairs during the Commonwealth's first months as a federated nation drove up to Sydney Government House. The central executive authority envisaged by Grey, Parkes and others who had foreseen Australian federation, met for the first time as the Federal Executive Council under the chairmanship of the Governor-General.

Hopetoun was conscious that his term of office would be important in establishing precedents and bringing to life the Australian Constitution. Under Section 61 the executive power of the Commonwealth was vested in the Queen and was exerciseable by the Governor-General as her Representative.\(^1\) Section 62 provided for a Federal Executive Council to advise His Excellency.\(^2\) Scattered throughout the Constitution were numerous references to the power of 'the Governor-General in Council'.\(^3\) As there was no mention of a 'Cabinet' in the Constitution, the gathering of the first Executive Council, echoing the ancient ritual of a Privy Council meeting, was the formal assumption of executive authority by Barton's Ministry.

The Federal Executive Council was not intended by the makers of the Constitution to be a policy-making body.\(^4\)

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2. Ibid., p. 703.
3. See section 32, Ibid., p. 472: 'The Governor-General in Council may cause writs to be issued for general elections of members of the House of Representatives'.
4. Ibid., p. 705.
though twenty five years earlier its colonial counterparts had possessed some life. In New South Wales during the eighteen-seventies they had been utilised by Governor Robinson to draw colonial politicians into the responsibilities of policy making.¹ But by the end of the nineteenth century, as the political role of Governor declined, colonial Executive Councils had become merely formalities. Cabinets formulated policy and made administrative decisions and the Executive Council recorded and confirmed these resolutions. In Canada a similar process had been carried a stage further. Whereas Sydenham had regarded his Council as a body of advisers for the Governor 'to consult but no more',² after Confederation the Queen's Representative no longer even attended the formal meetings.³ Hopetoun was aware of this development for in August 1900 he had asked the Colonial Office whether he should attend meetings of the Executive Council, as he had in Victoria, or follow the practice of Canada 'where matters are settled beforehand and two members attend to advise him afterwards'.⁴ The matter was left to be decided after the Commonwealth was constituted but the Colonial Office anticipated that the Canadian example would be followed 'especially as the G.G. will not infrequently be absent from

2. Sydenham to a friend, 12 December 1839, quoted in Careless, Union of the Canadas, p. 38.
headquarters'. Though the regularization of procedure remained unsettled it was appropriate that for the first, ceremonial meeting the Governor-General should preside.

As there was no Commonwealth public service, clerks were borrowed from the New South Wales Government for the inaugural gathering of the Federal Executive Council. Seven of the nine politicians at the meeting were appointed to administer the Departments of State specified in the Constitution, the other two were designated 'honorary Ministers'. Considering that the meeting lasted for an hour and a half, remarkably little formal business was transacted. Perhaps the meeting was less formal than the record suggests.

Most of the members of the first Commonwealth Executive were already well-known to the Governor-General. All of them had been involved in the public and political life of their respective colonies for more than a decade. Hopetoun's long tour of duty in Victoria had been during an important period of the federation movement when Governors and politicians met at banquets and other ceremonial occasions. With his experience, personal charm and the authority of the British Government, His Excellency was in a position to exercise considerable personal influence in the early days of

2. Federal Executive Council Minute Book, 1 January 1901. Prime Minister's Department, Correspondence File CP 451, series 1, p. 1. C.A.O.
3. As a young and newly arrived Governor he had been present at the banquet in Melbourne during 1890 when Parkes had invoked the 'crimson thread of kinship' in support of federation. Age, 7 February 1890.
the Commonwealth Government. On one occasion Lyne came to him
complaining that the 'Victorian combination' in the Cabinet
'disregard him and treat him with contempt'. The Governor-
General listened sympathetically to his problems, and later
informed Barton: 'I smoothed him over'.

It was important that the relationship of Governor-
General with his Executive Council be close and cooperative.
Even more crucial was the association of Governor-General with
his Prime Minister. If His Excellency were to exercise any
personal influence in the Commonwealth this association was of
the greatest significance. Not only was Barton his chief
adviser but he was also Minister for External Affairs. As
all relations with the mother country were conducted through
the office of Governor-General there needed to be sympathy and
understanding between the Representative of the Crown and the
Prime Minister. Yet, at the beginning, it is likely that
there was a little coolness between them. Barton had expected
to be offered the first chance to choose a Cabinet; his
friends had encouraged him to hope so and the Australian press
had anticipated it. Hopetoun's action in overlooking him in
favour of a man who had been a consistent opponent of federation
had injured Barton's dignity and sense of justice. But

1. Hopetoun to Barton, undated by the writer but endorsed
'8 May '02' probably by Barton. This seems likely to be
the correct date since the letter is written on
Government House, Adelaide notepaper and Barton has noted
in pencil that it was received 'on the eve of my departure
for England/Imperial Conference & Coronation of King
Edward VII'. Barton papers, MS 51/503. A.N.L.

2. He had taken the External Affairs portfolio on Deakin's
Hopetoun's personal charm and urbanity was particularly appropriate for dealing with someone of Barton's temperament and fondness for high living. The Governor-General's attentiveness and Barton's natural respect for a British nobleman soon established a friendly working relationship.

A celebratory Banquet in Sydney Town Hall was planned to complete the Inauguration Day ceremonies but Hopetoun was too exhausted to attend. His expression of regret was genuine, for such functions were, he realized, seminal to the role of Governor-General in Australia. He later wrote: 'My job may not require extreme cleverness but it does want a reasonably sound stomach & lots of energy'. Attendance at Executive Council meetings provided, at the very most, knowledge of the details of the Australian administration but presented little opportunity for the Queen's Representative to influence events or policies. A more likely avenue of influence was in personal contact outside the Council with the leading public men. Banquets and public functions enabled the Governor-General to meet and converse casually with prominent men in Australia while small private dinners at Government House provided opportunities for more serious conversation. Hopetoun made use of these avenues of contact early in his tenure of

1. For a sympathetic biography of Barton see John Reynolds, Edmund Barton (Sydney, 1948). Barton's fondness for high living was notorious, George Cockerill, Scribblers and Statesmen (Melbourne, 1944), p. 97 comments upon this, while the Bulletin constantly referred to him as 'Toby Tosspot'.

office. Reid, as well as Barton was a popular figure at Government House while Hopetoun stayed in Sydney. The Prime Minister held office only until the election in April and there was every possibility that the Australian public might prefer another man. Dinners and banquets ensured that the Governor-General was in touch with the leading political figures whether in or out of office.

In the first weeks of the Commonwealth His Excellency came almost daily to the closed-in verandah of one of the State Government Departments in Sydney where the Prime Minister had his office. In this informal atmosphere they discussed affairs. While Barton had little experience of government office Hopetoun had presided at Melbourne during the disturbed times of the depression when Victorian Ministries had been short-lived. The experienced Representative of the Crown was a sympathetic counsellor removed from the strains of party and personal allegiances. Barton had many problems in handling a cabinet of colleagues who were used to exacting obedience rather than offering it. Hopetoun's expressed intent of 'lubricating' the machinery of the new Commonwealth was evident in his close and sympathetic relationship with the first, perhaps the weakest, of Australia's Prime Ministers.

The weeks after the Inaugural festivities were occupied with establishing the departmental machinery of the new Commonwealth. One department not mentioned in the Constitution, though its existence was assumed, had already been set up. The

1. Atlee Hunt,'Federal Memories' in Argus, 5 December 1931. See too, Reynolds, Edmund Barton, p. 173. Hunt was Barton's Private Secretary, 1901, and Secretary of the Department of External Affairs 1901-1917.
Office of the Governor-General was to be the Australian Government's channel of communication with Britain and, consequently, with other nations. The ultimate responsibility for this correspondence was the Governor-General's, but the man with direct control was his Private Secretary, Captain Edward W. Wallington.¹

Wallington was a discreet, experienced Englishman who had hovered around on the periphery of public affairs for fifteen years. As Private Secretary to Carrington and Jersey in New South Wales, Hopetoun and Brassey in Victoria and Tennyson in South Australia, he had acquired an invaluable acquaintance with most of the public men in Australia and one of Hopetoun's early actions as Governor-General had been to secure his services. Deferential and tactful, Wallington had earned the nickname 'Mr Better-Not' for his tendency to dissuade newly arrived Governors from engaging in over-ambitious schemes.² His experience in the formal and ceremonial elements of colonial government was unsurpassed and his knowledge of the conduct of correspondence with the Colonial Office expert. As Hopetoun's Secretary he was responsible for both private correspondence and the drafting, de-coding and encoding of official despatches. When, after a few weeks, the temporary clerk to the Federal Executive Council returned to his position in New South Wales, Wallington took

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² On being told how 'a certain Australian Governor had run amok' Carrington was said to have commented: 'He wouldn't have run off the track if Wallington had been driving'. Daily Telegraph, 13 May 1901.
took over his duties as Acting Secretary.\(^1\)

The situation posed problems for the future. It was inappropriate that the Governor-General's Private Secretary, an officer with no responsibility to the Australian Parliament, should be in charge of the public business of the Commonwealth. The situation was allowed to arise through the inexperience of Barton. Wallington's quiet efficiency and the graceful condescension of Hopetoun in sparing his secretary concealed the parliamentary pitfalls in the situation. Another problem was payment. Primarily Wallington was employed by Hopetoun and received a salary in that capacity. However he was also carrying out public duties for which the Commonwealth might be expected to pay. The question of an allowance for the Governor-General had been left disconcertingly vague. Wallington's salary became involved in the difficult problem of providing for the official expenses of the Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth. For the time being an allowance of £150 per annum was provided to pay for his duties as Secretary to the Federal Executive Council.\(^2\)

By early February the Governor-General's Office had been organized sufficiently for Hopetoun's attention to have been drawn to a matter which was disturbing the smooth efficiency

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1. For an excellent, brief administrative history of the office of the Secretary to the Federal Executive Council and Official Secretary to the Governor-General see A.I. Diamond, History of the office of the Governor-General and of the Federal Executive Council. Inventory No. 4. C.A.O.

2. Ibid.
of Wellington's unofficial department. On 9 February Hopetoun wrote to the Governors of South Australia and Queensland requesting that they comply with an instruction of the Secretary of State, which required them to supply the Governor-General with copies of their correspondence with the Imperial Government.¹ This request aroused a hornet's nest, reviving a controversy which was to cause difficulties for successive Governors-General.

In the Draft Constitution of 1891 there had been a clause providing that the Governor-General should be the sole channel of communication between the States and the Imperial Government. Although both Deakin and Barton urged its retention, the clause was omitted both from the 1897 Draft, and the final Constitution. Nevertheless, Chamberlain decided in September 1900 that, for the Governor-General to be in a position to discharge his duties satisfactorily, he should be aware of correspondence passing between the State Governors and the Colonial Office. An instruction was drafted requiring State Governors to 'supply the Governor-General with copies of all despatches addressed to the Secretary of State'. This direction was conveyed to Hopetoun before he left London and forwarded to all Australian Colonies on 2 November 1900.²

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At first sight it seems strange that Chamberlain and the Colonial Office officials should have ignored the tenor of the discussions at the Conventions of 1897-1898. To some extent the permanent officials would have preferred to deal with one Australian Government rather than six. But in the despatch of November 1900 Chamberlain declared that he had no wish to undermine the federal compact. His object was to provide the chief Imperial representative in Australia with complete information about affairs throughout the whole continent, so as to make his advice and the exercise of his role more valuable for the Secretary of State. In respect of the State Governors the Colonial Office still thought of the Governor-General as a 'Superior functionary'.

The Colonial Office's presumptions concerning the Governor-General met resistance from other Representatives of the Crown in Australia. In the channel of communication dispute which was to develop as a result of Hopetoun's letter of 9 February, Lord Tennyson of South Australia was a prominent advocate of the proposition that State Governors should be free from the supervision of the Governor-General. As early as Inauguration day, South Australia had given warning of its dissatisfaction with the instruction of 2 November. Hopetoun informed Chamberlain that the South Australian Government proposed to use their Agent General as channel of communication rather than send copies of
confidential despatches through the State Governor.\(^1\) Since this would reduce even further the importance of that office it guaranteed Tennyson's opposition to Chamberlain's instruction. But it was difficult for the Governor to enter into a direct controversy with his superior the Secretary of State. Hopetoun's letter of 9 February provided an opportunity to express his objections indirectly.

Tennyson's reply was abrupt.\(^2\) He dismissed Hopetoun's right to see his despatches and indicated that his Government objected to the interference of the Commonwealth in State affairs. While prepared to forward copies of purely formal covering despatches and acknowledgments he strongly opposed the suggestion that more important correspondence should be made available to the Governor-General. He especially denied Hopetoun's right to see communications relating to disputes between the Commonwealth and the States and recommendations for honours.

The Governor-General was taken aback by the vehemence of Tennyson's reaction. He referred the matter to Chamberlain with the comment that he envisaged great difficulty in administering the Government of the Commonwealth 'unless fully informed as to what is the substance of communication

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1. Hopetoun to Chamberlain, cable 1 January 1901. C.O. 418/9/54, folios 21-23, quoted in Wright, Commonwealth and States, p. 17. For a useful compilation of all despatches dealing with the channel of communication controversy see C.O. Confidential Print, Australian No. 189, 'Correspondence (2 November, 1900 to 27 July, 1908) relating to Australian Constitution Questions', C.O. 881/11/189.

between State Governors' and the Secretary of State.¹
Hopetoun acknowledged the necessity of preserving the positions, prerogatives and dignity of the Governors of the various States but he specifically disagreed with the examples specified by Tennyson as communications which the Governor-General should not see. On the contrary he thought that these were two subjects upon which 'above all others' he ought to be kept fully informed. Finally he protested at Tennyson's threat to flood his office with endless documents of a purely formal nature, which, he thought, would reduce the Secretary of State's instruction to something approaching a farce.

Hopetoun had identified the cause of Tennyson's strong expression of opinion as fear for the loss of dignity and prerogatives of the State Governors. He and the Colonial Office deprecated such an attitude.² But the position of State Governors after Federation was a difficult question. At the first Sydney Convention of 1891 there had been considerable support for the proposition that States be able to elect their Governors. But by late 1899 when Chamberlain addressed a despatch on the subject to the federating colonies this opinion had changed. The Secretary of State requested the views of colonial Ministers on the continuance of the practice of appointing Governors from Britain. He assumed that they would

1. Hopetoun to Chamberlain, cable, 26 February 1901. Ibid.
2. See minute by A.E. Collins, Clerk in North American and Australasian Department, 'It is unfortunate that Ld Tennyson shd take such a strong line in upholding the dignity of State Governors', C.O. 418/9/12336 folio 267.
still wish to secure the advantage of having at the head of affairs Governors who have had no association with local party politics and will be above suspicion of partiality, and who by their presence in the capitals of the States will emphasize and promote the close connection of the States with the Mother Country.  

Chamberlain thought that it would be difficult to find suitable Governors willing to accept posts which would 'naturally be overshadowed by the great office of Governor General' and warned that the task would be even more difficult if the colonies persisted in moves to reduce vice-regal salaries. The Secretary of State was correct in assuming that Australian Governments wished to continue the system of appointing British Governors, although his hopes concerning salaries proved less apt. The immediate result of this exchange was another change in the type of Governors in Australia. The young, wealthy peers who had held those positions since 1885 gave way to less prosperous public servants, often naval or military officers and colonial governments were consulted prior to each appointment.  

In the longer term Tennyson's attitude on the channel of communication question indicated that the continuance of State Governors would be the cause of some problems for the Governor-General.  

1. Chamberlain to Governors of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and Tasmania 27 October 1899. Copy in C.O. Confidential Print, Australian No. 172, 'Correspondence relating to the salaries and position of the Governors of the Australian States after the establishment of the Commonwealth', pp. 2-3.  

2. Ibid.  

3. In October 1901 Queensland rejected as unsuitable Chamberlain's nomination of Sir E. Callan. The Colonial Office gave way and Sir H. Chermside was appointed. See C.O. 418/12/35960, 36346, folios 627-639.
The question of States' independence within the federation was more important than that of the remaining prerogatives of the various Queen's Representatives and the channel of communication dispute quickly broadened, with the Commonwealth Government entering the controversy. By June 1901 a compromise had been reached. While copies of despatches of general interest must be forwarded to the Governor-General those dealing with 'local affairs' need not be. The discretion as to what constituted matter of general interest was left to the State Governor rather than to the Governor-General. It was evident that the attempt to impose the latter officer as a supervisory functionary had failed.

The dispute over State Governors' correspondence was an early blow to the dignity of the office of Governor-General. In 1891 Deakin had forecast that unless the Principal Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth had access to State Governors' despatches he would cease to be a Governor-General. 'He will become one governor among many, and he will lose the dignified position in which this constitution proposes to place him'. Deakin's enthusiasm for a strong central authority may have led him to exaggerate, but the pretensions of a new and untried institution, competing with established rivals, were bound to

1. Wright, Commonwealth and States, pp. 20-22.
have been harmed by such a setback.

The early experience of his office had revealed to Hopetoun the jealousies and tensions between Commonwealth and States which were an almost inevitable result of federation. In this situation the institution of Governor-General had suffered a considerable blow to its dignity. An opportunity to recover some of the initiative presented itself in mid 1901, during the visit of the Duke of York.¹ Hopetoun had promised to ease the passage of the new Commonwealth by applying 'a little lubricant'. The royal tour of 1901 provided an ideal opportunity to submerge parochialism in ceremony and at the same time emphasize Australia's membership of the larger community of the British Empire. It also promised to enhance the prestige of the Governor-General for he was formal host to the royal visitors. Furthermore the absence of Governors in Sydney, Melbourne and Hobart offered Hopetoun an unique opportunity to take their place. In this way he hoped to soothe the States' resentments towards the Commonwealth. By accompanying the Duke of York on his tour His Excellency would also be able to renew old acquaintances and establish new relationships with State leaders and politicians.

Hopetoun's prior experience as Lord Chamberlain was particularly appropriate for the task of supervising the visit

¹ Later King George V. When the tour was first announced he was Duke of York, but by the time of the visit he had become Duke of Cornwall and York. In November 1901 he was created Prince of Wales. For convenience he will be described in this chapter as Duke of York.
of the Duke of York, since close attention to protocol and
precedence was required to avoid unpleasantness or offence
during the tour. But, it was more than just his knowledge
of court etiquette which led to his becoming solely
responsible for the overall planning of the tour. His
Ministers were increasingly preoccupied with other
political and administrative matters. He complained to
Tennyson in March 1901 that it was difficult to distract
his advisers from their election campaigning.¹ Most of
the planning and administration for the tour, therefore,
fell upon himself and Wallington.

Royalty had toured the Australian continent on only
two previous occasions. In 1867 the Duke of Edinburgh had
visited all the colonies.² Fourteen years later the Duke
of York, as a boy midshipman, had visited parts of Australia
with his elder brother in the course of the cruise of
H.M.S. 'Bacchante'.³ Some royal progresses, like that of
the Prince of Wales in Canada during 1860,⁴ had been the

¹ Hopetoun to Tennyson, 21 March 1901. Tennyson papers,
MS 1963/36, A.N.L.

² McKinlay, The First Royal Tour. Also Philip M. Cowburn,
'The Attempted Assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh,
1868', in Journal of the Royal Australian Historical

³ Argus, 19 September 1900, gives a brief account of the
earlier tour.

⁴ Creighton, John A. Macdonald; The Young Politician,
pp. 298-303. A political crisis developed over the
Prince's refusal, on the advice of the Secretary of
State, who was accompanying him, to pass under an
Arch erected by the Orange Order.
occasion of unpleasant incidents. In contrast the tour of 1901 was a brilliant success, unmarred by any unseemly disloyalty, seeming to herald that closer linking of the British peoples which Chamberlain's presence at the Colonial Office encouraged.

The origins of the tour lay in suggestions during the 'nineties and earlier that Australia might have as first Governor-General a member of the royal family, or, if not, that a royal duke would open the first session of Parliament. In 1893, after the federal movement had received a temporary setback, the Premiers of the Australian colonies had officially invited the Duke of York to tour Australia. But none of these initiatives received encouragement from Britain. It therefore came as a surprise to the Australian public when, in September 1900, the Queen announced that she was 'graciously pleased to assent, on the recommendation of the Marquess of Salisbury to the visit of their Royal Highnesses ... to the colonies of Australasia in the spring of next year'. The statement made no reference to any invitation from Australia and although Lyne claimed credit for the suggestion the real author of the idea was

1. See S.M.H., 6 April 1891.
2. See reports in Age and Argus, 28 and 29 December 1893.
Chamberlain. The official announcement stated that His Royal Highness would be commissioned by Her Majesty to open the first Session of the Parliament of the Australian Commonwealth in Her name, to signify the Queen's 'sense of the loyalty and the devotion which prompted the spontaneous aid so liberally offered by all the colonies in the South African war'. The tour should be seen as associated with Chamberlain's probing of ideas of imperial federation prompted by the spectacular display of unity in the Boer War.

The practical organization of the visit was made more difficult by the melancholy intelligence received on 22 January that the monarch who had ruled Britain for sixty years was dead. The Empire plunged into public mourning. For a few days the tour seemed likely to be cancelled or postponed. But, with much emotional publicity it was announced that since the tour had been 'the Queen's wish'

1. A telegram from the Governor of New South Wales suggesting that a royal prince be present at the opening of the first federal parliament caused consternation in the Colonial Office. Chamberlain had been moving in the matter for some time and he was anxious that the suggestion 'must not spoil the spontaneous appearance of the Queen's action'. Beauchamp to Chamberlain, 13 September 1900. C.O. 201/628/29870 folio number indecipherable.


5. Three days after the Queen's death King Edward VII had cancelled the tour but he reversed his decision after receiving a strongly worded letter from his Ministers. Magnus, *King Edward*, pp. 291-292.
it would proceed. The same announcement revealed that it had been decided to include Canada and the Cape Colony in the itinerary.

The death of the Queen and the planned tour of the heir apparent focussed the attention of a large section of Australia upon the institution of monarchy and its representation in Australia. Messages and loyal addresses inspired by devotion to the late Queen flooded into the office of the Governor-General. The tour of the Duke of York took place in a welter of emotional sentiment. One Imperialist commented

the most wonderful, the most beloved, the wisest and best, of all the monarchs of the world known to history, after a reign of unparalleled length and brilliancy, has been laid to rest with a sob of heart-break girdling the whole world round.

The royal visitor was now direct heir to the throne and Australian newspapers seemed to consider this a particular

1. King's speech at opening of Parliament 14 February 1901, quoted in Joseph Watson, The Queen's Wish; How it was fulfilled by the Imperial Tour of T.R.H. the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York (London, 1902). For another narrative of the tour see G.F. Knight, With the Royal Tour (London, 1902).


3. Col J.M. Templeton, The Consolidation of the British Empire, the Growth of Citizen soldiership, and the establishment of the Australian Commonwealth (Melbourne, 1901). The pamphlet is dedicated to Hopetoun 'as a tribute of love and respect ...'.
honour. The result was that the real and historic nature of the purpose for the visit, namely the opening of the first federal Parliament, tended to be obscured by the pageantry, Imperial patriotism and enthusiasm for monarchy.

The period of mourning meant that balls and lavish public entertainments could not be indulged. Hopetoun obtained confirmation that dinner parties and levees were considered suitable in the circumstances, and in the itinerary which he planned, he set to work to mix dutiful solemnity, befitting an Empire draped in black, with public demonstrations of loyalty, befitting an Empire at War. Military ceremonies for the presentation of South African War medals helped to combine a tone of sombre gravity with enthusiastic Imperial patriotism. Australian's loyal participation in the South African war had been specifically mentioned by the Queen in announcing the visit of her grandson.

It was appropriate, therefore, that military reviews of colonial troops figured prominently in the proposed itinerary prepared by Hopetoun.

The news that the first session of the Parliament of the Commonwealth was to be opened, not by the Governor-General as

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1. See S.M.H. 6 May 1901, leading article 'The Arrival of the Heir Apparent': 'the present is absolutely the first occasion in our history when the actual Heir Apparent to the Throne has paid Australia the honour to personally visit this continent'.


had been anticipated, but by a member of the royal family was
greeted with enthusiasm by most Australian newspapers.
Colonial politicians expressed public gratification at this
unprecedented mark of favour on the part of the Queen.
Barton intimated vaguely that there had been rumours about
such a visit while he was in London, but the overall
reaction was one of surprise and delight.¹ In the midst of
the encomiums, only a few radical journals registered their
protest or their indifference. The Bulletin winced in
anticipation of 'the coming crawl'.²

Conscious that the Colonial Office and the Governor-
General would be considering questions of procedure, E.G.
Blackmore³ wrote to Anderson pointing out the problems of
precedent and precedence raised by the presence of the Duke
of York. The only appropriate precedent was the opening of
the first Dominion parliament in Canada, which had been
performed by the Governor-General, Monck. As Blackmore
pointed out, the Australian ceremony would have been simpler
without the Duke of York as the special representative of the
Queen.⁴

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¹. See comments in colonial press, 19 September 1900.
³. Blackmore, a public servant and author, was first clerk
of the Commonwealth Senate and clerk of Parliaments.
See Australian Dictionary of Biography, volume 3: 1851-
1890 (Melbourne, 1969) pp. 176-177.
⁴. Blackmore to J. Anderson, 20 December 1900 and 16
The Commonwealth Constitution had specifically included the Queen in the Parliamentary process. Section 1, following Section 17 of the British North America Act, stated that

The legislative power of the Commonwealth shall be vested in a Federal Parliament, which shall consist of the Queen, a Senate, and a House of Representatives ...\(^1\)

However, unlike their Canadian counterparts, the Australian Constitution makers had provided in Section 2 that a 'Governor-General, appointed by the Queen' should be Her Majesty's Representative in the Commonwealth and should exercise 'such powers and functions of the Queen as Her Majesty may be pleased to assign to him'.\(^2\)

The British Parliament was traditionally opened by the speech from the throne read by the sovereign. In the colonies this function had belonged to the Governor. Although Hopetoun had agreed to allow the Duke of York precedence over himself in Australia,\(^3\) he baulked at allowing him to usurp the function of reading the speech from the throne. Upon receiving Chamberlain's despatch announcing that the Duke of York would perform the act which legally opened parliament, the Governor-General wrote to his Prime Minister.\(^4\) The result was a despatch in March from Hopetoun:

\[^2\] Ibid, p. 387.
\[^3\] C.O. 323/460/39113, folios 103-116.
\[^4\] Hopetoun to Barton, 21 February 1901. Barton papers, MS 51/390. A.N.L.
Prime Minister feels clear ... that it is the Governor General and none other who should declare the causes of the summons ...¹

Chamberlain and the King acquiesced, the former noting that it was as well to keep the Duke 'entirely apart from the political programme' of the Commonwealth. The Governor-General thus retained a central function in the planned ceremonial for the official opening of Parliament.

The Duke and Duchess of York arrived in Australian waters on 3rd May 1901 when their ship, the 'Ophir' anchored off Albany in Western Australia. As had been the case five months earlier, careful arrangements ensured that the visitors did not set foot on Australian soil before landing in the city where the major ceremony was planned. A suggestion that they land at Sydney before proceeding to Melbourne had caused an immediate, indignant objection from the Victorian government.² Consequently the royal visitors first set foot upon Australian soil at St Kilda Pier in Port Phillip Bay on 6 May 1901 to a tumultuous welcome.³

The following eleven weeks witnessed the progress of the Duke and party through Australia and New Zealand. The planned itinerary was much the same in each state. Hopetoun had arranged a round of Government House dinner parties, foundation stone laying, military reviews, levees and

². S.M.H., 14 February 1901.
³. Daily Telegraph, 7 May 1901. See accounts of the landing ceremony in other newspapers of the same date.
assemblies of school-children. At the specific request of the Duke of York shooting expeditions were arranged for relaxation in most states. On 9 May he declared the first session of the Australian Parliament to be open and directed members to retire, appoint their President and Speaker and reassemble on the following day when the Governor-General would state the causes for which the Parliament was assembled. After spending eleven days in Victoria the royal tourists spent a week in Queensland before coming south again for the visit to New South Wales.\(^1\) Unfortunately the weather was most inhospitable for the three day shooting expedition arranged in the New South Wales 'outback'. From Sydney the 'Ophir' sailed to New Zealand, returning to Australia early in July for a short visit to Tasmania. On 20 July, after visiting South Australia and Western Australia the royal party sailed from Fremantle.

The success of the tour of the Duke of York in 1901 was a rededication of Australia to the institution of monarchy. It emphasized the Commonwealth's membership of the Empire and the personal allegiance of her citizens to the British Crown. Attitudes in the Australian press towards the tour were, in the main, overwhelmingly patriotic and effusive. The Sydney Morning Herald was confident that

\(^1\) The reason for visiting Queensland at this time was to allow Hopetoun time to rush to Sydney and prepare for his official duties as host there. Hopetoun to Chamberlain, cable, 15 February 1901. C.O. 418/9/5927, folio 177.
the acclamation of the thousands who thronged the line of the procession's march ... showed their recognition of the Imperial tie that binds us, and their loyalty to the person of the Sovereign and his heir.¹

The visit illustrated Australia's refusal to seize the occasion of federation to assert a claim for independence. The earliest public act of the Commonwealth was 'to acclaim with loyal enthusiasm the landing of the Heir Apparent'.²

The Sydney Morning Herald saw good reason for this, reflecting that:

In times like these, when the rumours of wars fill all ears, and when the Empire has two serious engagements actually on hand, every additional evidence to the solidarity of Empire is of value.³

Like the Inauguration ceremony, the opening of the Commonwealth's first Parliament was a striking manifestation of the spirit of anxious militarism in Australia. In an editorial commenting on a review of Imperial troops at Flemington, the Argus referred to 'possible menaces' confronting the Commonwealth and declared 'Federated Australia does not want to become a warlike nation, but it must essentially be a virile one'.⁴ The constant message in this and other comments at the time was that the Imperial connection was necessary to combat external menace.

1. S.M.H., 28 May 1901.
2. S.M.H., 8 May 1901. Its readers had a healthy Imperial diet during the royal visit. Kipling's Kim began in serial form on 1 June.
3. Ibid.
4. Argus, 10 May 1901.
Opposition to the tour expressed itself chiefly in the scorn and disgust of the radical press. The Bulletin's principal form of attack was sarcasm. It invented various nicknames for the royal visitor, such as 'The Mighty Atom' or more often 'the Jookoyork' and beseeched Australians to recognize that the visitor was obscuring the really significant aspects of the events in May, namely the opening of Australia's first national Parliament.\(^1\) The Victorian journal Tocsin also railed against the toadying engendered by the tour and carried opposition to the institution of monarchy so far as to publish a famous 'foul libel on the king'.\(^2\) But more significant than these isolated examples of anti-monarchic sentiment was their own awareness that the general Australian attitude was quite different. The Bulletin conceded, exasperatedly, that in the public eye the Duke of York was 'apparently three fourths of the pageant'.\(^3\) Commenting, sadly, that the Trades Hall Council had allowed itself to be bribed into taking part in the grovel, Tocsin reproached the young Commonwealth for starting 'its infant life with the polluting finger-marks of old-world royalty

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2. Tocsin, 20 June 1901, reprinted an article from Irish People which had been suppressed in Britain, including a virulent attack on 'Edward Rex ... the old and bald-headed roue - the "lover" of every woman of fair features who has appeared in English "Society" for forty years'. An immediate public outcry, fanned by the Argus, led both to an unprecedented demand for this issue of Tocsin and the expulsion of its manager, E. Findley, a Labor Parliamentarian, from the Victorian Legislative Assembly.

smeared over it'.

There was an air of equivocation even in the Tocsin's attitude towards the Empire. In the 'foul libel issue' it repudiated Republicanism and professed to see 'advantages in the English limited monarchy system which we fail to see in any existing republic'. Nor did it object to imported nominee Governors or the British connection. The institution it seemed to find most objectionable was 'Government House'. In May 1901 the Age had devoted several columns to a description of the royal levee held at Melbourne Government House for the Duke of York. Though its mild comment fell far short of the fatuity of Argus or Sydney Morning Herald editorials on the subject, Tocsin was stirred to issue a vigorous reply, denouncing levees as exalting and glamourizing the office of Governor. It categorized those who attended at Government House as:

the most notorious sweaters, the bank-disaster magnates, the rank and file of the Imperial Federation Scheme, the class-conscious legislative councillors almost to a man, every Assembly "smoodger", turncoat, and traitor to democracy and Australia, the unspeakable justices of the peace in shoals, and the Troglodyte shire councillors in

1. Tocsin, 2 May 1901.
2. Tocsin, 20 June 1901.
3. Tocsin, 16 May 1901.
4. Age, 8 May 1901.
5. Argus, 8 May 1901. See S.M.H., 8 June 1901 for praise of Government House as helping 'in the cultivation of such social virtues as are inculcated in companionship ... with the best available products of higher civilisations'.
crawling droves, the sad catspaws of ambitious title-hunting women, lickspittle junior officials, developing fungi from the University, and all the Procrustes who would confine the giant limbs of free Australia in the limited bedsteads of English art, religion, literature, philosophy, and polity.1

To a certain extent such sentiments were merely sniping at an obvious target. But objections to the undemocratic nature of the institution of Government House and the cultural cringeing of those who patronized it was to remain a persistent feature of Australian society during the early part of the twentieth century. Moreover in the newly elected Australian Parliament the strength of the representation of Labor indicated that the attitudes of the more democratic elements in the Commonwealth would need to be considered.

Much of the credit for the success of the royal visit was rightly attributed to the indefatigable efforts of Hopetoun as official host. Though he was careful not to upstage his royal guest in public processions, he was usually prominent at the Duke's side on other occasions. In Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania, all of which were without Governors, Hopetoun presided at official receptions, military reviews, vice-regal levees and dinner parties. One effect of this activity was to bring the institution of 'Government House' under scrutiny. Another was to encourage the Governor-General in his extravagant attitude towards his office. Partly because of the mood of euphoria associated with the Duke of York's tour the expenses of the Governor-General's first twelve months in office were very great.

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1. Tocsin, 16 May 1901.
The principal contribution to this was the cost of maintaining two Government Houses, in Melbourne and Sydney, but an additional factor was the penchant of His Excellency for costly entertainment.

There were to be unfortunate results for the Governor-General though not for the immediate success of the tour, in the situation. Both Hopetoun and Wallington belonged to the days of Australia in the boom. Wallington had been Carrington's Secretary when the expensive parties in Sydney Government House encouraged members of Sydney 'Society' to believe they were mixing with the 'Prince of Wales Set'. In Melbourne Hopetoun had commenced his term of office at the height of the boom and though he remained during the worst of the depression he had only slightly reduced his scale of extravagance and had trenched upon his private income to do so. In 1901, encouraged by the public enthusiasm for the royal visit and lacking cautionary advice from his Prime Minister, Hopetoun again spent freely. Nor did he appear to have been disturbed by the cost, for in spite of Chamberlain's urging, he neglected to insist upon immediate reimbursement for the exceptional expenditure of the tour, assuring the Secretary of State that his Ministers had promised him an adequate allowance.¹ As with the matter of Wallington's salary, responsibility for the expenses of the royal tour was left to be determined in the future as part of the whole allowance problem.

¹ Chamberlain to Hopetoun 27 March 1901 C.P. 78 Series 63 folder 1 item 1, C.A.O. Copies of this and Hopetoun's reply of 29 March 1901, are in Deakin papers, MS 1540/2465, 7 A.N.L.
When the visitors sailed from Hobart to South Australia the Governor-General's direct supervision of the tour ceased. There had already been comment on how drawn and exhausted His Excellency had seemed during the latter part of the royal progress.¹ In July his health gave way and it was announced that all official functions were cancelled.² Eventually Hopetoun obtained some relief from the Melbourne winter climate when Barton agreed to a proposal that he visit Queensland. On 7 August the Governor-General left for Cairns.

It had always been envisaged that an important function of the Governor-General was to perambulate around the Australian continent.³ His Excellency's natural desire to avoid the rest of the Melbourne winter and his wish to visit a brother-in-law in northern Queensland were, perhaps, the principal motivations for his northern journey, but he also hoped to help soothe the difficulties between Queensland and the Commonwealth.

The visit of the Duke of York had enabled Hopetoun to fulfill a function which he had regarded as of great importance, namely the encouragement of Commonwealth rather than provincial patriotism. The transition from Colonies to Commonwealth had already provided pitfalls for the Governor-General. In the early encounter with State

2. Argus, 11 July 1901.
3. The visiting power had been emphasized by Grey in his instructions to FitzRoy in 1851. See Ward, FitzRoy, p. 10.
Governors over the channel of communication problem there were obvious lessons to be drawn concerning the need for caution and tact in the difficult early years of federation. Hopetoun was confident that he could, to some extent, mediate between the Commonwealth and the States. The charisma imparted to his office by the visit of the heir apparent added to his already high prestige and popularity in Australia. The visit to Queensland was in part, an attempt to wield that renowned reputation in the State most uneasy in the federation.

In assuming the role of emissary from the Commonwealth to the States, Hopetoun was honouring his promise to act as 'lubricant' and filling a definite need in the early years of the Commonwealth. Until the federal capital was built there was very little apart from the Governor-General to remind Australians of their new unified nationhood. The task of travelling constantly around the continent promoting the essential unity of Australia was to remain an important function of the principal Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth. Not only was he to travel frequently between Melbourne and Sydney, but as chief executive officer of the Commonwealth he was required to show the flag in all the other States.

Hopetoun commented upon this peripatetic aspect of the role of Governor-General at a banquet in his honour given by the State Government at Brisbane after his return from the north of Queensland. Pledging that he would avoid any semblence of parochialism in serving His Majesty's Australian
subjects he promised that he would travel widely throughout the whole continent. He vowed not to rest until he had shown himself 'to the people of his great proconsulate' and proved 'to the many that a Governor-General really exists and that they are living under one central Government'.

His undertaking to travel broadly was carried out zealously. In eighteen months of office Hopetoun travelled a total of fourteen thousand miles. Aware of the jealousies of Sydney and Melbourne concerning the possession of the Governor-General's residence he journeyed frequently between those cities. In addition he visited each of the other States. On these official and formal perambulations or semi-regal progresses he was usually accompanied by most of his staff. Thus, as in other matters, Hopetoun's interpretation of the role and duties of his office encountered problems of cost and the responsibility for meeting his bills.

It was becoming increasingly clear after six months of the Commonwealth that the office of Governor-General was involving Australia in considerable expense. At first the States were disposed towards generosity in their attitudes towards the travelling expenses of the Governor-General. New South Wales, in particular treated the representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth with pseudo-regal munificence. A special luxurious carriage was constructed to carry the vice-

1. Telegraph (Brisbane), 23 September 1901.

regal suite upon the New South Wales Railways.\textsuperscript{1} However other States were less enthusiastic. Both the Queensland and South Australian Governors complained of the expenses of entertaining the Governor-General during his official visits, especially in view of the imminent reduction in State Governors' salaries. In addition general disillusionment with the Commonwealth Government had led to a determination on the part of State Premiers to insist that expenses incurred by the vice-regal suite be borne by the central authority. This became one of several contentious matters in relations between the Commonwealth and the States\textsuperscript{2} which lasted well beyond Hopetoun's tenure of office. Not until 1905, when the Commonwealth agreed to re-imburse the States for costs of the railway travel of the Governor-General and his entourage was the dispute settled.\textsuperscript{3}

One function which was expected of Representatives of the Crown in Australia, and which was especially anticipated from the Governor-General on tours to the State capitals, was the making of public speeches at banquets in his honour. This was an aspect of his duties which Hopetoun, with a naturally nervous disposition and often in ill-health, regarded with displeasure.\textsuperscript{4} But quite apart from his personal dislike of

\begin{enumerate}
  \item See reference in S.M.H., 18 May 1901, to 'Governor-General's state car ... specially constructed for the use of the Governor General'.
  \item See Wright, \textit{Commonwealth and States}, pp. 219-225.
  \item Ibid. The agreement provided that the Commonwealth pay annually these expenses.
  \item 'Next to making speeches I think I hate letter writing more than anything else in the world'. Hopetoun to Barton, 22 February 1902. Barton papers, MS 51/485, A.N.L.
\end{enumerate}
speech-making, the responsibility of making public pronouncements had always been fraught with danger for Australian Governors. Colonial newspapers and politicians tended to be excessively critical of such public statements, quick to take offence at any imagined slight or indiscretion. Lord Beauchamp, Hopetoun's predecessor in Government House Sydney, had found to his cost that a Governor's tact was a very real necessity. There had been an indignant reaction to a message which the young and inexperienced Governor had been importuned to telegraph en route to Sydney,¹ in which he had referred to the colony's 'birthstains'. This indelicate reference to the colony's history as a penal settlement provoked an immediate outcry and Beauchamp was never allowed to live it down.

In making public speeches a Governor had to be exceedingly careful both to avoid offending colonial sensibilities and to refrain from any topic which might be construed as politically contentious. As Governor of Victoria Hopetoun had been successfully uncontroversial in his public speeches and he began his term as Governor-General

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1. E.R. Power, later editor of the Age was the reporter who pressed Beauchamp to send a message to New South Wales from his steamer at Albany. Caught unawares, the flustered Governor-elect chose a verse from Kipling:

   Greeting! your birthstain have you turned to good
   Forcing strong wills perverse to steadfastness
   The first flush of the tropics in your blood
   And at your feet Success.

in similar vein. During his official visit to Queensland he was careful to avoid too specific references to political questions. Barton's policy concerning coloured labour had led to considerable hostility towards the Commonwealth Government throughout the northern State. Hopetoun feared that 'the feeling of unrest' would make speeches on his part rather difficult. However he promised the Prime Minister that he would

\[\text{put a very sharp guard on my tongue & try not to put you into the cart.}^1\]

The most difficult occasion during his Queensland tour was in Brisbane where, in the presence of both federal and State politicians he was obliged to speak at a banquet and avoid either antagonising his listeners or boring them. On this occasion his usual emotional style of oratory carried him through. Though it attacked statements made at the banquet by the Federal Minister, Sir Philip Fysh, the \underline{Brisbane Courier} was enthusiastic about the Governor-General's speech:

\[\text{Queensland has nothing to fear and everything to gain from union, when men as well informed and as sympathetic as Lord Hopetoun are in control.}^2\]

His speech in Brisbane was only one of several successful public speeches by the Governor-General during his first year of office. They were customarily received with great enthusiasm by his audience and closely reported by the

1. Hopetoun to Barton 12 September 1901, Barton papers, MS, 51/422. A.N.L.

2. \underline{Brisbane Courier}, 23 September 1901.
newspapers. His most common practice was to employ rather simple metaphors. The difficulties of 'fitting into new shoes', 'running a new ship' or 'driving a state coach' were employed with unvarying success. In Melbourne, particularly, his speeches were greeted with much enthusiasm.¹

However the constant need to find topical but non-polemic subjects for vice-regal speeches eventually took its toll. By the end of his first year of office conciliatory but vague admonitions to unity in the Commonwealth lacked relevance. Perhaps the eulogistic reception generally accorded to his public utterances overcame his previous caution. During a visit to Western Australia in December 1901 he allowed himself the risk of referring to the need for the construction of a trans-continental railway,² and there were some rumblings over this. But it was in Melbourne that he made a speech which was to prove a considerable political blunder.

Hopetoun was invited to speak at the annual luncheon of the Australian Natives Association in January 1902 to an enthusiastic and patriotic gathering including most of Australia's prominent public figures. The Governor-General was the first of the after-dinner speakers and he was

¹. See Age, 19 June 1901, for a report of an 'eloquent speech' by the Governor-General and Argus 22 June 1901, for an editorial on the same topic. On 12 November 1901, the Age published a report of a 'fine speech by Lord Hopetoun'.

². Joseph Cook, a prominent member of the Opposition front bench later complained of Hopetoun's reference to this 'active political subject'. C.P.D., 1901-2, VII, p. 9487.
accorded an enthusiastic welcome. However his hearers were probably surprised to hear him choose as the topic for his address the policy of his Government with regard to the Boer War. He referred specifically to accusations of backwardness which had been levelled at Barton and which he considered to have been unwarranted. He assured the guests at the luncheon that the position taken up by the Cabinet had been freely approved of by himself. After asserting that Barton and he had for many months discussed the question of the propriety of offering unasked a further supply of troops for South Africa, the Governor-General stated:

we were not of the opinion that the moment was a favourable one to ask the Australian people to make further sacrifices unless we had the assurance of the Imperial Government that such sacrifices were necessary and desirable.

Whatever the measure of blame or praise, His Excellency felt that it was his duty to share it.¹

The oration was loudly applauded. But the Prime Minister's thanks to the Governor-General for his 'manly and generous references'² exhibited some signs of uneasiness. For also present at the banquet, was the Leader of the Opposition, George Reid. If Barton's nervous assertion that the controversy about the additional contingent had practically ended were an attempted to divert Reid's attention from the impropriety of Hopetoun's intervention in federal political affairs, it failed. The Leader of the Opposition took prompt action at the next available meeting of the House of

¹. See report of speech in S.M.H., 28 January 1902.
². Ibid.
Representatives to submit a motion disapproving of the Governor-General's speech.

In the words of Melbourne Punch Reid's motion 'reproved all concerned like a cooing dove and gently belaboured the Governor-General with a feather'.\(^1\) Whilst appreciating the motives which prompted the speech, the Leader of the Opposition urged the House to declare its earnest hope that the course would not be regarded as a precedent.\(^2\) In the short debate which followed speakers revealed general agreement about the impropriety of such remarks by the Representative of the Crown. Like Reid, most were personally complimentary to Hopetoun, but adamant that he had on this occasion exceeded the proper limits of responsible government. With obvious chivalry Barton attempted to defend the Governor-General, contending that the matter had passed out of political controversy. But his argument lacked conviction. Most other speakers were united in their deprecation of Hopetoun's speech.

The debate was a revealing insight into attitudes of Australian politicians towards the role of a Governor-General. Higgins felt that, 'the most excellent governors are always governors who express the least opinions'. The ablest speech was made by the member for Indi, Isaac Isaacs, later to be the first Australian occupant of the post being discussed. He stressed that in all Australian governmental action the

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1. Punch, 6 February 1902.

2. For the whole debate in the House of Representatives on 30 January 1902 see C.P.D., 1901-2, VII, pp. 9476-9502.
Governor-General must assume no responsibility but stand clear of the whole region of debate and controversy. He must be particularly careful that he did not, even by accident, intervene between Ministers and their responsibility to Parliament and the nation. In the opinion of Joseph Cook Hopetoun's speech almost seemed like 'an attempt at unconstitutional interference with the principles of self-government as they exist in the Commonwealth'. He felt that the duty of the Governor-General was to guard Imperial interests, and to leave his Ministers to guard the interests of the Commonwealth at large. We look after our own interests here, while he takes care that we do not infringe upon Imperial interests ... that is the reason he is sent here.

As might be expected the Labor Party was strongly represented in the debate. Hughes suggested that Governors ought to be elected and Crouch criticized the monarchic principle. All except the unpredictable King O'Malley criticized Hopetoun's speech.

Isaacs' conclusion that 'the observations of Lord Hopetoun were unfortunate'\(^1\) was a fair summary of the opinion of non-Labor parliamentarians. Reid withdrew the motion in order to avoid a division which might be regarded as a censure of the King's Representative. But the implications of the debate were clear. In his somewhat embarrassed report of the affair to the Secretary of State Hopetoun commented, 'I am bound to consider that I have been guilty of an error of judgment'.\(^2\) He hoped that no serious

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1. Ibid., p. 9483.
harm had been done to the position he occupied though he placed himself in Chamberlain's hands as to whether he ought to be relieved of his post. At the Colonial Office the general opinion was that His Excellency's minor indiscretion threatened no permanent ill-affects and a soothing reply urged him to remain at his post.¹

Press opinion in Australia reflected closely the tone taken in Parliament. Though the references made by Hopetoun to the delayed contingent were reported in most newspapers, no adverse editorial comment appeared until after the parliamentary debate.² Then there was general agreement with Reid's action. The Brisbane Courier's reaction was typical. It felt that Hopetoun's 'manly and good-natured utterances were unconsciously a violation of the principles of responsible government ...'³ Most newspapers agreed that the fabric of self-government had suffered no lasting damage.

Predictably the Bulletin was more critical:

Since the day of the Governor-General's arrival he has shown a disposition to assert, and Mr Barton to allow, powers utterly at variance with the rights of a self-governing people.⁴

It attacked Reid's motion as a 'mock parade of censure'.

Stung to action by Hopetoun's ingenuous confession during his

1. See draft cable Chamberlain to Hopetoun, 15 March 1902. Ibid.
2. Although S.M.H. 29 January 1902 reports the A.N.A. Banquet, it does not criticise Hopetoun's speech.
speech that he was 'a real good old-fashioned Tory of the old school'\textsuperscript{1} the Bulletin perceived something sinister in Hopetoun's admission of 'constant and anxious consultation' on the subject of Australian troops for the war in South Africa. But the Sydney journal was one of the few public organs to oppose Australian participation in the war, and its opinions on Hopetoun's influence on Government policy were not typical of the general Australian attitude. The Daily Telegraph displayed a more common viewpoint:

the Governor-General made a mistake ... It is quite impossible for [him] ... to take from the shoulders of his Ministers any part of the responsibility, which our system of government requires them to bear. Even the King could not do so on behalf of the Imperial Ministers; But the position of the Governor-General is one which makes the impossibility still clearer. He is an Imperial officer responsible for administering the Constitution Act of the Commonwealth, not directly to the people here, but to the government of Great Britain.\textsuperscript{2}

The controversy over Hopetoun's speech to the Australian Natives Association was an instructive indication of attitudes of Australian politicians and newspapers to the role of the Governor-General in the Commonwealth. The episode re-emphasized the need for the Representative of the Crown in Australia to refrain from public comment on political policy. Although the significance of this was not fully recognized at the time the role of the Governor-General as diplomat was becoming delineated from his function as head of State.

\textsuperscript{1} See report of Hopetoun's speech in S.M.H., 28 January 1902.

\textsuperscript{2} Daily Telegraph, 31 January 1902.
This two-fold division was not clear to Australians in the first years of the Commonwealth and the lack of clarity had led Hopetoun to the blunder he made in his speech to the Australian Natives Association. In the absence of any clear definition Hopetoun attempted to claim for the office more than Australian politicians were prepared to allow. In this he had been encouraged by the presence of Chamberlain at the Colonial Office. Barton must also share part of the blame. His respect for the British nobleman and his political inexperience prevented him from warning the Governor-General that Australia was not prepared to allow the Representative of the Crown to appear to exercise any personal influence upon political policy. Deakin, writing in the Morning Post for an English audience expressed the general Australian attitude:

Emanating from one who has invariably displayed such excellent judgment in all his public addresses, which have been of a high order of merit and have exhibited a sound discernment of his important functions, his utterance in Melbourne carries great weight. But it has at once brought him into the arena of political controversy, into which it is not desirable that a Viceroy should enter.

Though both Deakin and Reid were adamant that the Governor-General should not enter the field of public political controversy, there was less clarity about the

1. For evidence of their close personal friendship see Hopetoun to Chamberlain, 14 May 1902. Chamberlain papers, JC 14/1/1/41. University of Birmingham Library.

2. Morning Post (London), 6 March 1902. Article dated 'Sydney Jan. 28'. Cutting Book in Deakin papers, MS 1540. A.N.L.
extent to which he ought to be able to influence policy in private. It was this aspect of his position to which the Bulletin objected, and about which it had warned its readers in 1891 when it attacked the inclusion of the office of Governor-General in the 1891 Draft Constitution. In defending the propriety of the Governor-General's speech, Barton specifically denied that Hopetoun had 'intended to convey the impression that the policy of the Government was carried out in conjunction and in equal terms by him and myself'. He claimed that no one who understood the principles of constitutional Government would read His Excellency's words as meaning that he was a participant in the policy of the Government. But, as J.C. Watson, the leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party interjected 'that is the only inference'. The Prime Minister did admit that 'a policy was mentioned to His Excellency by myself on behalf of the Ministry ... and that being mentioned it happened to have his approval'. He also conceded that in private conversations he had intimated what he intended to propose to the Cabinet, arguing that it was a 'courteous and benificent practice' to consult with the Governor-General, 'an officer with whom it is of the essence of success of Government that we should maintain confidential relations'. These admissions raise the question: did Hopetoun's 'close and confidential' relationship with the Australian Prime Minister influence Government policy?

2. Ibid.
The question at issue was whether the Commonwealth Government would commit an additional Australian contingent to the war in South Africa.\textsuperscript{1} Earlier, the Australian colonies had sent troops before the central government had taken over the defence forces. Such units continued to be regarded as State contingents. In December 1901 Chamberlain asked whether the Commonwealth would be prepared to receive an official request for additional troops.\textsuperscript{2} Barton's apparent reluctance to commit such a Commonwealth force had already led to considerable criticism from the more jingoistic elements in the community.\textsuperscript{3} On 15 December he instructed Hopetoun to reply to Chamberlain's cable by indicating that an official request should not be made by the British Government until the new year.\textsuperscript{4} This cable was sent. But two days later the Governor-General sent the following message to the Secretary of State:

\begin{quote}
I have ... again conferred with Prime Minister and pointed out urgency of matter with regard to suggested contingent and with his approval I am now able to say that whenever you deem it advisable to despatch an official request for reinforcements he is prepared to receive it.\textsuperscript{5}
\end{quote}

\begin{enumerate}
\item Chamberlain to Hopetoun, secret cable, 9 December 1901. CP 78, series 1, bundle 45a, quoted Ibid. Atkinson, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 117-118.
\item \textit{ibid.}, pp. 117-118.
\item Hopetoun to Chamberlain, 15 December 1901. C.O. 418/10/44234, folio 557.
\item Hopetoun to Chamberlain, 17 December 1901. C.O. 418/10/44450, folio 559. Copy also in CP 78, series 9, folio 103, C.A.O.
\end{enumerate}
Clearly, Barton had changed his mind. It has been suggested that this might have been due to the intervention of a visiting British Member of Parliament, Henniker Heaton. But, a more likely explanation is that Hopetoun himself persuaded the reluctant Barton to accept an earlier official request. The cable of 17 December, Hopetoun's speech to the Australian Natives Association and Barton's admission that he had discussed the matter with Hopetoun prior to Cabinet meetings, suggest that one of the influences in the Prime Minister's change of mind was the Governor-General.

The extent to which a Governor-General could influence federal policy depended largely upon the personality and style of the man himself and the attitude of his chief advisers, particularly the Prime Minister. Hopetoun's warm, likeable character and Barton's inexperience and conviviality suggest that in the first years of the Commonwealth the Governor-General's opinion, perhaps expressed over intimate dinners at Government House, might have wielded some force. He was very much in the position of a benevolent and experienced Imperial official supervising the early years of the Commonwealth.

1. Atkinson, Australian Defence Policy, p. 115. Heaton was an ubiquitous Imperial busy-body whose chief hobby-horse was an Imperial penny post.

2. Barton's papers include frequent invitations from Hopetoun, to dine at Government House. E.G. Hopetoun to Barton, 21 October 1901. MS 51/433, A.N.L. 'You see we treat you as one of the family in thus asking you at a moments notice & I hope you will always feel yourself quite free to accept or refuse'.

In the affair of the Commonwealth contingent for the South African war can be found an example of the dual role of the Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth. As channel of communication between Australia and the British Government he was aware of the negotiations. As representative of the British Government it was his duty to urge upon his local Ministers the view of the Colonial Office. Both Cook, in the House of Representatives, and the Daily Telegraph recognized that it was a valid part of the Governor-General's function to make representations on behalf of the home government. Their comments indicated that His Excellency's mistake lay in making those representations public. Hopetoun's successors learned from his blunder. Thenceforth normal diplomatic secrecy surrounded the Governor-General's expression of British Governmental attitudes to Australia.

One field of policy in which the Governor-General might be thought to have exercised some personal influence was the selection of a Commandant for the newly amalgamated Australian Defence Forces. At first sight, Hopetoun's Sandhurst education, his acquaintance with others of the British ruling class as well as his position as representative of the British Government in Australia, qualified him to be of some assistance to Barton in choosing a British Officer to command the Federal Military Forces. Yet, though he was not loath to proffer his counsel, it seemed to have exercised only marginal influence.

Australia's traditional reliance upon the Empire for defence, the inclination of her politicians and the need for
an experienced officer to co-ordinate hitherto scattered military forces, made it inevitable that the young Commonwealth would look to Britain for her first federal Commandant. Asked to recommend a suitable officer for the position the Colonial Defence Committee had nominated General Sir Reginald Pole-Carew.\(^1\) The Governor-General was enthusiastic about the suggestion. He informed Barton that 'Polly' was a personal friend of his, and 'one of the very best men ... that could be found for the job'.\(^2\) He trusted that the Australian Government would deal liberally with the matter of salary and allowances.

Emboldened by his acquaintance with Pole-Carew and perhaps inspired by an excessively grand vision of his own role in the Commonwealth, Hopetoun assumed the mantle of military expert himself. He urged that the choice of a Commander be expedited, as 'the manner of carrying on things in this State [New South Wales] and to some extent in Victoria leaves much to be desired'. He approved of Hoad, the Chief of Staff in Victoria, but regarded General Downer as 'antediluvian and quite unfit for his job'. Mackenzie, the Chief of Staff in New South Wales, he castigated as incompetent and though he liked General French personally he considered him to have lost 'that smartness of

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1. See Who Was Who, 1916-1928, p. 173 for biographical details. Pole-Carew had been Private Secretary to Governor Robinson in New South Wales from 1876-1877.

2. Hopetoun to Barton, 6 June 1901. Barton papers, MS 51/405, A.N.L.
In the succeeding months the Governor-General continued to urge that the Commonwealth settle this important matter. However his hope that the Government would deal liberally with Pole-Carew in the matter of salary and allowances proved unfulfilled. In the face of the overwhelming pressures towards economy in Commonwealth administration and in particular in defence expenditure the Cabinet was unable to increase its offer of £2,500 per annum, an offer which Pole-Carew felt was inadequate. Negotiations continued between the Commonwealth Government and the British War Office, and as the correspondence passed through the medium of the Governor-General he concerned himself with its outcome. On one occasion while forwarding a request made by his Ministers for Lord Roberts' opinion of General Hector Macdonald he cabled secretly to Chamberlain to recommend that Lord Roberts discourage the appointment of Macdonald which, in his opinion, would be 'most unsuitable'. In October 1901 he informed the Secretary of State that he was urging the Commonwealth Government to increase the salary offered to £3,000 in the hope of securing the services of General Hillyard. But Cabinet was not to be persuaded. Eventually

1. Hopetoun to Barton, 6 June 1901. Barton papers, MS 51/405, A.N.L.


3. Hopetoun to Chamberlain, cable, 7 August 1901. Copy in CP 78, series 9, folio 67, C.A.O.

4. Hopetoun to Chamberlain, secret, 10 October 1901. Copy in Ibid., folio 78.
the Governor-General cabled that he had reason to believe that
the appointment of General Sir Edward Hutton would be well
received by his Ministers.¹

Officials at the Colonial Office were astonished that
the Commonwealth Government should consider Hutton suitable
to command its defence forces. Although he was an able man,
his ideas of the responsibility of a Military Commander in
a self-governing colony had led to a deal of friction during
both his earlier tour of duty in New South Wales and his
term in Canada.² Notwithstanding Hutton's reputation the
Australian Cabinet agreed to his appointment as first
Commandant of the Australian Military forces in December 1901.

Before the new Commander took up his duties, the Governor-
General of Canada, Minto, wrote confidentially to Hopetoun to
urge that rumours of earlier difficulties in Canada should
not be allowed to prejudice Hutton's chances in Australia.
But he conceded that Hutton was a difficult man, whose chief
fault was an 'inclination to oratory' despite constant advice
urging restraint. Minto advised Hopetoun to exercise whatever
influence he could upon Hutton to maintain peace.³ In his

¹. Hopetoun to Chamberlain, secret, 12 November 1901,
Copy in Ibid., folio 89.

². For Hutton's career in New South Wales see Warren Perry,
'Military Reforms of General Sir Edward Hutton in New
South Wales, 1893-96' in Australian Quarterly, XXVIII,
(December 1956), pp. 65-75, also Luke Trainor,'British
Imperial Defence Policy and the Australian Colonies
1892-96' in Historical Studies, 14, no. 54 (April
1970), pp. 207-218. Hutton's Canadian difficulties are
fully discussed in Penlington, Canada and Imperialism,
pp. 132-182.

³. Minto to Hopetoun, 15 December 1901. Copy in Minto
papers, A-131, volume 3, pp. 79-80. Public Archives of
Canada.
cordial but non-committal reply Hopetoun pointed out that he had known the General very well while the latter had been in New South Wales and that he like Hutton, though 'well aware of his peculiarities'. He hoped that in Australia the new Commandant would be tactful in his public statements.\(^1\) It was clear that the first Governor-General of the Commonwealth had no intention of associating himself too closely with the senior British military officer in Australia. After Hutton took up his appointment, Hopetoun kept their relationship strictly official.\(^2\)

The appointment of a Commander for the Commonwealth Defence forces illustrated the kind of influence available to the Representative of the Crown. Barton's correspondence reveals that His Excellency felt free to offer advice, to encourage action of which he approved and to discourage if he disapproved. Hopetoun urged the Australian Government to provide a generous salary for the position, he endorsed the selection of Pole-Carew and advised against the appointment of Macdonald. Constantly he urged that the matter be settled as quickly as possible. Though the pressure he exercised was neither blatant nor decisive it should not be ignored. No longer able to command, a Governor-General retained opportunities to assert himself in the role of persuader.


\(^2\) See comments by Lady Tennyson in a letter to her mother 12 October 1902 regarding Hopetoun's refusal to allow Lady Hopetoun to call on Lady Hutton. Tennyson papers, MS 479/41/91. A.N.L.
Hopetoun's representations on behalf of the British Government were, on other occasions, more fruitful. In April 1901 the Australian Government decided not to send a delegate to a conference which Chamberlain proposed to hold on the question of establishing a Court of Appeal for the Empire. To Chamberlain the Governor-General expressed regret at the decision arrived at by his Ministers despite his 'utmost endeavours to secure a compliance with the wishes of H.M.G.'\textsuperscript{1}. Nor did he allow the matter to rest. A few days later he pressed Cabinet to reconsider its decision.\textsuperscript{2} It is difficult to assess how influential such lobbying might have been. But the Government did, eventually, decide to send a representative to the conference.\textsuperscript{3}

But, in one important policy decision during the first year of the Commonwealth Hopetoun was able to persuade Barton to amend proposed legislation in order to accommodate the views of the British Government. This was the Immigration Restriction Bill of 1901. Its introduction also raised the question of the remaining discretionary powers of the Governor-General. One of the last vestiges of Imperial control over colonial legislation was the power of the Representative of the Crown to reserve legislation for the

\textsuperscript{1} Hopetoun to Chamberlain, cable, 16 April 1901. C.O. 418/9/13322, folio 479.

\textsuperscript{2} Hopetoun to Barton, 22 April 1901. Barton papers, MS 51/399A. A.N.L.

\textsuperscript{3} For negative results of the conference see Great Britain Parliamentary Papers, 1902, LXVI, p. 621, 'Correspondence Relating to the Proposed Establishment of a Final Court of Colonial Appeal'.
Royal Assent and the power of the British Government to advise the Crown to disallow such legislation. This was one instance where gubernatorial authority exceeded that of the British monarch, for in Britain the royal power of veto had not been used since the reign of Queen Anne. During the nineteenth century there had been a number of occasions when Governors had suspended the operation of colonial legislation by reserving bills for the Royal Assent. One advantage of this suspensory power was that time was gained during which amendments could be suggested which might bring the legislation within the scope of Imperial political policy. As a final recourse the Bill might be disallowed. But there were dangers in refusing assent to such legislation. In particular, the rebuke implied in such a power tended to awaken tendencies towards progressive nationalism. Chamberlain considered that the extreme step of disallowance should be employed only to protect Imperial interests as a whole and not in local matters.


But in the important policy matter of alien immigration there was conflict between these two spheres of interest. In the Australian colonies an irrational fear of the racial and economic consequences had resulted in discriminatory legislation against Asian settlers. Fear of the offence which such legislation aroused within the Empire and outside it led to the British Government's retention of ultimate authority over this sphere of policy, and Governors were instructed to reserve such bills for the Royal Assent. As late as January 1901 Governor Lamington of Queensland had reserved the Sugar Works (Amendment) Bill on the grounds that it referred to the employment of immigrant labour.¹

In August 1901 Barton introduced the Immigration Commonwealth Restriction Bill into the Parliament. Hopetoun immediately checked his Instructions for advice as to his action if the legislation were passed. He found that, contrary to the position when he had been Governor of Victoria, there were no specific classes of legislation upon which he was required to reserve the Royal Assent. On 19 August he cabled for advice from the Colonial Secretary:

my Instructions seem to contemplate the possibility of my reserving Royal Assent to Bills; but they contain no categorical list of subjects to be so dealt with ...

He informed Chamberlain that a Bill had been introduced to

¹ On the grounds that it 'may disturb the good relations existing between' Britain and Japan the British Government objected to this Bill and declined to advise His Majesty to give Royal Assent. See Chamberlain to Lamington, 14 May 1901. Copy in CP 78, series 1, item 65. C.A.O.
restrict immigration by a 'somewhat severe education test viz. that any person who fails to write & sign a passage of 5 words dictated in English is prohibited', and asked whether under any circumstances a Bill of this kind should be reserved.¹

The Secretary of State replied that in exercising his discretion, the Governor-General should consider the broad principles governing reservation elsewhere. In cases of doubt he was instructed to communicate by telegraph with the Colonial Office. In the immediate circumstances Chamberlain advised that 'the Bill should ... be reserved if it passes in its present form ... You should therefore press for substitution of European for English language'.²

On 12 November Hopetoun forwarded to Chamberlain a copy of the Bill as it then stood in the Senate. In a long covering despatch, he drew attention to sub-section (a) of clause 4 as one which

may possibly lead to friction in the immediate future with the Government of nations with whom it is essential that His Majesty's Government should maintain relations of a cordial character.

The Governor-General pointed out that in deference to Chamberlain's suggestion, the education test had been amended to comply with that of the Natal Act. He continued:

1. Hopetoun to Chamberlain, secret cable, 19 August 1901. C.O. 418/10/29263, folios 81-86. A copy of the despatch is in CP 78, series 9, folio 69. C.A.O.

2. Chamberlain to Hopetoun, Secret, 9 September 1901. CP 78, series 1, file 65, bundle 2. C.A.O. For draft of the cable see C.O. 418/10/29263, folios 81-86.
I am aware that legislation of the character contained in this Bill, is hardly likely to commend itself to His Majesty's Government, but the feeling in Australia against the unrestricted entry into the Commonwealth of large numbers of Foreigners, and more especially of large numbers of Asiatics, is so intense that I cannot blame my Government for having introduced a measure of this kind.

He requested special instructions in respect to clause 4, informing the Secretary of State that if the Bill passed in its existing form he would communicate immediately and hoped to receive by telegram the decision of the British Government as to whether the Bill should be reserved or not.¹

This despatch was sent by sea and did not reach London until 19 December. In the meantime the Bill had been swiftly passed by both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament. Accordingly Hopetoun cabled on 12 December:

Immigration Restriction bill has passed through both Houses of Parliament. In accordance with your suggestion word European has been substituted for English in clause 4(a) and in view of your despatch ... of 18 October I do not see any reason for withholding royal assent.²


2. Hopetoun to Chamberlain, cable, 12 December 1901. C.O. 418/10/43872, folios 538-539. The despatch of 18 October, referred to by Hopetoun, had been one forwarding correspondence between Chamberlain and the Foreign Office over complaints by the Japanese Government in respect of Commonwealth Immigration and Postal Bills. In the reply to the Foreign Office, H.B. Cox, Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, had written 'Mr Chamberlain does not think either that His Majesty's Government is in a position to suggest a modification of the Australian immigration test, or that there is any prospect that the Commonwealth Government would be able to entertain such a suggestion'. Despatch no. 82 Chamberlain to Hopetoun, 18 October 1901, received 20 November 1901. CP. 78, series 1, item 65. C.A.O.
While the Colonial Office felt that little would be gained by instructing the Governor-General to reserve the Bill, they failed to reply immediately as Hopetoun had specifically requested in his surface despatch. Instead, a copy of the cable of 12 December was forwarded to the Foreign Office for consideration.

During this correspondence with the Secretary of State, Hopetoun had been carrying on a parallel exchange with his chief Australian adviser over the same issue. In August he had commented that there were no specific classes of legislation upon which he was instructed to reserve the Royal Assent and asked the Prime Minister to consider 'whether there is the shadow of a reason for my reserving the aliens immigration Bill'.

Barton had not needed any reminder about the provisions of the Governor-General's Instructions. During his stay in Britain in 1900, the Colonial Office had consulted him about their form and later, copies were sent to him. To Deakin he had expressed satisfaction that:

they are as wide as we could possibly have wished. Absolutely no stated restriction on the power to sign the Royal Assent on the spot.

In the federal parliamentary situation of 1901, the possibility of Labor Party objections to any suggestion that Britain was dictating to Australia on the question, made Barton anxious to avoid Hopetoun's reservation of the

1. Hopetoun to Barton, 8 August 1901. Barton papers, MS 51/419. A.N.L.
2. Barton to Deakin, 5 November 1900. Deakin papers, MS 1540/435. A.N.L.
Royal Assent.\(^1\) Representations on behalf of the Secretary of State pressing for the substitution of a language test in any European language rather than in the English language were probably decisive in Barton's acceptance of the amendment, to avoid an excuse for Hopetoun to reserve the Bill. He had, perforce, to keep secret His Excellency's agency in suggesting the alteration, to avoid the accusation of Downing Street control.

Even after the dictation test provision was altered, Hopetoun was careful to retain the option of reserving the Bill. On 11 November he wrote to Barton:

> The question as to whether or not this Bill will have to be reserved will have to be considered & I shall be gratified if you will... make known to me your opinions on this point.\(^2\)

At the same time he informed Barton of his intention of sending a copy of the Bill as it then stood, to the Secretary of State. A month later he was still cautious not to commit himself. When the Speaker signified his intention to present both the Pacific Island Labourers Bill and the Immigration Restriction Bill for the Royal Assent, Hopetoun informed Barton that he would receive both Bills but did not propose to assent to them immediately. He wanted an opportunity to consult the Prime Minister about them. In particular he felt

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2. Hopetoun to Barton, 11 November 1901. Barton papers, MS 51/440. A.N.L.
that the Immigration Restriction Bill 'requires careful &
earnest consideration'. He assured Barton that he was 'most
anxious to do whatever is right'.  

Rejecting a last minute appeal from the Queensland
Premier, calling upon him to reserve the Pacific Island
Labourers Bill Hopetoun assented formally to that Bill
on 19 December. However he did not assent to the Immigration
Restriction Bill, probably waiting for definite instructions
from the Colonial Office. To further complicate the
situation he was due to leave Melbourne for a four weeks
tour of Western Australia on 21 December. By the time
he left no reply had been received from the Colonial Office,
and the Governor-General had still not signed the Royal
Assent. As the delay could not continue much further
without becoming public, and Barton was obviously concerned
that His Excellency deal with the matter himself, Hopetoun
eventually agreed. On 23 December in the train at Adelaide
en route to Perth the Governor-General assented on behalf
of the King to the Immigration Restriction legislation.

Writing to Chamberlain in February 1902 Hopetoun
explained that the Bill had given him

much anxiety. But after a great deal of thought I
gave my assent to it as in my opinion the least
evil course to follow. I felt that if I reserved

1. Hopetoun to Barton, 11 December 1901. Barton papers,
   MS 51/453. A.N.L.
2. See Hopetoun to Chamberlain, 19 December 1901. C.O.
   418/10/3604, folios 583-589.
it there would be a violent agitation against what still remains of Imperial control.¹

Ironically while His Excellency was still absent from the seat of government a protest by the Japanese Acting Consul-General reached Melbourne, belatedly drawing attention to a serious conflict between the Immigration Restriction Bill and a Protocol adhered to by the Queensland Government in October 1900.² The Governor-General cabled the substance of the Japanese protest to Chamberlain on 18 January 1902 and was surprised to receive in reply an instruction requiring him to defer assent to the Bill until he had received advice from the British Law Officers of the Crown.³ As it was over a month after assent had been granted, the objection had come too late.

Hopetoun's action in granting Royal Assent to the Immigration Restriction Bill was an important confirmation of the larger independence within the Empire claimed by the Commonwealth after federation. In the absence of specific instructions from Chamberlain he had decided, on his own discretion, that reservation might encourage a reaction against the powers of the King's Representative. By avoiding a confrontation on this issue he hoped to retain sufficient influence to be able to present the point of view of the British Government in private with considerable anticipation

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3. Chamberlain to Hopetoun, 30 January 1902. CP 78, series 1, item 65. C.A.O.
of success. Although it would take a further six years for this procedure to become regularized, the power of the Governor-General to reserve legislation for the Royal Assent when his local Ministers did not advise him to do so, was to fade altogether.

Hopetoun's handling of the difficult issue of Australia's Immigration Restriction legislation showed an appreciation of local attitudes and a concern for constitutional propriety fully in keeping with the deserved popularity of the Governor-General. Yet, despite this popularity and his apparent sympathy with Australian views, he failed to recognize one important aspect of his position, and this failure was to be fatal to his career in the Commonwealth. He failed to appreciate that Australian politicians were unwilling to allow the office of Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth to be one of expensive pomp and ostentation.

Hopetoun's appointment had been made on the assumption that his previous experience in Victoria would be of assistance in setting up the office of Governor-General in the Commonwealth. However, Australia's relationship with the Empire had undergone a subtle change since the days when as a young and wealthy peer he had dispensed hospitality lavishly at Government House and exercised the office of colonial Governor with colour and gaiety. Mistaken assumptions born from this period of time were inapplicable to the Commonwealth of 1902. Despite his enormous popularity, careful constitutional propriety and the cordiality of his
relations with all Australian politicians, Hopetoun's career as Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth came to an humiliating conclusion in a dispute over money.¹

The Constitutional Conventions of the eighteen nineties had eventually settled, though not without dissension, that the salary of the Governor-General should be £10,000 per year. This was extremely generous by ordinary Australian standards,² and equalled the salary paid to the Governor-General of Canada.³ But in the latter instance the Representative of the Crown was provided with generous travelling and entertainment allowances.⁴ Although it had been generally assumed that some payment would be made by the Commonwealth for His Excellency's expenses of office no provision for this appeared in the Constitution. This omission was to lead to considerable misunderstanding.

There was a further complicating factor. The rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne over their respective claims to be the seat of the federal Government led to a protracted


2. The Chief Justice of New South Wales, in the eighteen-nineties, earned only £3,500. Later, in 1903, the Judiciay Act set the salary of the Chief Justice of the High Court at £3,500 per annum.


4. For the year 1900-1901 Canada spent the equivalent of £17,137 upon the vice-regal establishment, excluding salary. See Dominion of Canada, Sessional Papers, Session 1902, vol. XXXVI, vol. I, part 1, (pp. I.-2 to I.-4) and Part 2, (pp. V-100 to V-103 and W 52).
dispute over the residence of the Governor-General. The jealousy of these two great colonial metropolises had impinged upon the question of representation of the Crown in Australia as early as 1852. Upon FitzRoy's appointment as Governor-General a resolution had been introduced into the Victorian Legislative Council objecting to the selection of Sydney as the location for the seat of the central government. It was resolved that an address be presented to the Queen urging that Victoria be constituted the place of residence of the Governor-General.\(^1\) As a further rebuff to the claims of the senior province the Victorians voted their Lieutenant-Governor an annual salary of £10,000, which exceeded that of his nominal superior in Sydney by £2,000.\(^2\)

Nearly fifty years later, when federation had finally become settled, the Colonial Office recognized that the question of the Governor-General's allowances needed to be clarified. In August 1899 a despatch to the federating colonies requested Governors to draw their Ministers' attention to the matter. Chamberlain presumed that the Governor-General would 'mainly reside at Melbourne' until the establishment of the federal capital. Unless it were intended that the Governor-General should 'hold pro tempore a Commission as Governor of Victoria' he asked for views of colonial Ministers as to the provision which should be made

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for his residence.\textsuperscript{1}

The responses of the two rival colonies were predictable. Turner informed Chamberlain that Government House, Melbourne would be made available for the Governor-General. He undertook to provide another residence for the Governor of Victoria, but considered that a combined appointment would have 'obvious advantages'.\textsuperscript{2} In New South Wales, Lyne, only a few weeks in office, was determined that Melbourne should not steal a march upon Sydney in the possession of the principal Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth. He proposed that His Excellency should stay in Melbourne only during the sessions of the federal Parliament. At other times ample provision would be made for his residence in Sydney.\textsuperscript{3} Later, Lyne urged unsuccessfully, that the Governor-General be appointed State Governor for New South Wales also.\textsuperscript{4}

For the next twelve months Lyne continued to urge that the Governor-General's proper place was in Sydney, except

\textbf{\textsuperscript{1}} Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1905, II, pp. 1101-1118, 'Papers Relating to the Residence of the Governor-General in New South Wales'. The original draft despatch to Governors of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, 10 August 1899, and to Queensland 3 November 1899, is in C.O. 418/6/21202, folio 367.


during sessions of federal Parliament. As the general assumption was that these sessions would not be extensive, he hoped to thereby confirm Sydney as the permanent residence of the Governor-General pending the establishment of a national capital. While the Australian delegates were in London during mid 1900 the residence question remained unsettled. Communications passed between Barton and Lyne and afterwards between Lyne and the New South Wales Agent-General, Henry Copeland, on the matter. In July 1900 Copeland again urged that when the parliamentary sessions ended the Governor-General 'should take up his permanent residence in Sydney'. The State Government House in the Domain was made available, and an alternative residence was promised for the State Governor when a successor to Beauchamp was appointed.

While willing to meet the wishes of New South Wales, the Colonial Office insisted that the decision 'must be subject to provision being made to meet the extra expenditure involved by the maintenance of two, and at no very distant date three, Government Houses'. In addition Copeland was

1. At the Colonial Office, Lord Ampthill, the Parliamentary Under Secretary, felt that New South Wales was 'showing a great lack of consideration and decency in their persistent endeavours to get the Governor-General to themselves and keep him'. Minute on C.O. 201/628/27748, folio 188.


reminded that the matter was also one for the Commonwealth Government, whose wishes and convenience would mainly determine the movements of the Governor-General. The Under Secretary of State was adamant that it would be impossible for His Excellency to maintain two establishments unless either the States or the Commonwealth provided for the upkeep of Government Houses Sydney and Melbourne, for travelling expenses of himself and household, and for entertainment allowance.¹ His personal opinion was that no Governor-General could perform the duties of the office and exercise hospitality in a fitting manner, residing in two or more cities and visiting other colonies, for less than £25,000 per year. He therefore suggested that either the States or the Commonwealth guarantee an additional £10,000 annually for the upkeep of the various residences and to pay for the vice-regal staff and travelling expenses.²

At Lyne's behest, the New South Wales Parliament quickly passed a measure providing for the contribution of approximately £3,000 towards the Governor-General's allowance.³ In Victoria, Turner introduced a similar Bill into the Legislative Assembly.⁴ However, there it met with determined opposition. The proposed legislation had been

1. Under Secretary of State to Copeland, 16 July 1900. Copy in Ibid., p. 1109.
3. Governor-General's Establishment Contribution Bill. See brief discussion N.S.W. P.D., (First Series), 1900, CVIII, pp. 6227-6228.
4. V.P.D. 1900, 96, pp. 481-497.
carelessly phrased, giving the impression that at the bidding of Chamberlain, an attempt was being made to circumvent the Commonwealth Constitution. Victorian parliamentarians accused the Secretary of State of trying to raise the Governor-General's salary to £20,000. Provincial jealousy also intruded upon the debate. A significant number of politicians agreed with Thomas Bent, 'If the people of New South Wales want him in Sydney, let them pay for it.'\(^1\)

Others agreed with Lieutenant Colonel Reay, who argued that the central Government ought to take the responsibility of paying whatever charges were incidental to the working of the Commonwealth. In the face of this opposition the Governor-General's Establishment Bill was rejected by the Assembly,\(^2\) leaving a confused and troublesome question to be decided by the incipient Commonwealth Government.

Hopetoun's attention had been drawn to the problem of allowances long before he arrived in Australia. He knew of the dispute between Sydney and Melbourne over his residence.\(^3\)

In a despatch of November 9 1900 the Secretary of State instructed the Governor-General to call the attention of his Ministers to the problem of an allowance at an early date. He asked that Commonwealth Ministers consider what provisions shall be made for the Governor-General's establishment and for the expenses of entertainment. So far as your personal staff is concerned I trust

\(^1\) V.P.D. 1900, 96, pp. 491-492.
\(^2\) Result of division, Ayes 27, Noes 35. Ibid., p. 497.
\(^3\) These despatches were shown to him in London, prior to his departure.
that your Ministers will readily agree that it is impossible to provide for them out of the salary fixed by the Act.¹

In January 1901 this instruction was followed by a reminder,² upon the receipt of which Hopetoun again drew Barton's attention to the matter. The Prime Minister replied promptly. Officially he agreed to submit a measure to the Commonwealth Parliament which would meet the situation.³ Privately he informed Hopetoun that an allowance of £8,000 per year would be provided. No further action could be taken until the first Commonwealth Parliament met in May.

In his despatch of November 1900 Chamberlain had warned that hospitality in capitals other than Sydney should be limited to such official entertainment as was 'necessarily demanded, unless and until some fair and suitable provision be made by the States or by the Commonwealth for the expenses involved'.⁴ But frugality was not one of Hopetoun's virtues and the gala atmosphere during the early months of the Commonwealth mitigated against the admonitions of the Secretary of State. The visit of the Duke and Duchess of

1. Chamberlain to Hopetoun, 30 November 1900. The despatch is endorsed 'Copy to Prime Minister 7.1.'01. CP 78 series 21, bundle 13. C.A.O.

2. Chamberlain to Hopetoun, 11 January 1901. The despatch was initialled by the Governor-General on 15 February 1901 and a copy sent to Barton on 19 February 1901. Ibid.

3. A copy of Barton's minute 21 February 1901 and of the two despatches from Chamberlain are in Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1901, II, 'Governor-General's Establishment (Despatches with Regard to)', pp. 827-830.

York, with all the panoply of a State occasion was too good
an opportunity for the former Lord Chamberlain of Her
Majesty's Household to dispense that gracious hospitality
for which he was famous. The Colonial Office suggested that
he ask for a special grant from the Commonwealth Parliament
to cover the exceptional expenses during the royal tour.¹
But he replied that since his advisers intended to grant a
generous entertaining allowance of £8,000 per year and make
it retrospective to 1 January 1901 he did not feel
justified in asking for a special grant.² Still on the
threshold of his post and not fully appreciating that the
atmosphere had changed since he had entertained royally in
Melbourne in the early 'nineties, he was satisfied that
Barton's Government would treat him generously.

Foolishly, Barton neglected to act while the royal
visitors were touring Australia and when the mood of
extravagant euphoria associated with the Inauguration of
the Commonwealth was still in the public mind. Though the
subject was occasionally raised in the House of

¹ Chamberlain to Hopetoun, 27 March 1901. CP 78, series 63,
folder 1, item 1. C.A.O.  
² Hopetoun to Chamberlain, cable, 29 March 1901. Copy in
Deakin papers, MS 1540/2465-7. A.N.L.
Representatives, the Prime Minister evaded the issue, perhaps through fear of Labor Party opposition in a Parliament where the Government's position was extremely insecure. Fifteen months passed before Barton acted to redeem his promise to introduce a measure to Parliament. Admittedly the political problems were great. Apart from the administrative difficulties of establishing various departments and setting the machinery of state in motion, there were differences in his Cabinet to resolve, while the long, slow business of the tariff took up most of an extended parliamentary Session. However, Barton's dilatoriness in introducing a measure to provide for an allowance for the Governor-General was careless and inefficient. He knew from the debates during the Conventions that the matter was likely to be contentious. Had he introduced the measure at an earlier time, and allowed judicious consideration of his proposals, it is possible that the result might have been more favourable. Instead, he rushed the matter through at the most disadvantageous time he could have chosen.

1. On 21 July 1901 Sir Langdon Bonython asked whether an allowance had been provided for the Governor-General. Barton replied 'No. No allowances have been made to the Governor-General up to the present time... That ... is a matter for future consideration ... If there is any such allowance made I will inform the House. C.P.D., 1901-2, III, p. 3333. On 29 August Crouch referred to the question of providing for the Governor-General's establishment, Barton replied that the Government intended to ask Parliament to consider 'a measure for a provision within the Constitution' which would be fully explained and on which he invited the fullest discussion. C.P.D., 1901-2, vol. IV, pp. 4295-6.
The first few years of the Commonwealth were marked by an extended drought which caused a mild recession and stimulated a slightly hysterical campaign for retrenchment, particularly in Victoria.\(^1\) With this clamour for economy as a background and on the last day of the parliamentary session before a brief adjournment during which members were to inspect the federal capital site and the Prime Minister was to leave for England, Barton moved the second reading of a Bill to provide an allowance of £8,000 per annum for the Governor-General's Establishment.\(^2\)

Barton's speech in support of the Bill was half-hearted. Perhaps he had already learned that the Government Whips had failed to find one supporter of the Bill outside the Ministers themselves. Avoiding any reference to Chamberlain's despatches to Hopetoun, he reminded the House that before federation the figure of £5,000 had been suggested as being necessary to cover the Governor-General's allowances. To justify the increase to £8,000 he pointed out that the expenses of carrying on the establishments in Sydney and Melbourne had been larger than anyone had anticipated. Items such as fuel, gas, salaries to staff, breakages and printing were estimated as amounting to £4,250. The balance, £3,750 was intended as partial reimbursement for expenditure upon entertainment and other matters which the Prime Minister

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1. See H.L. Nielson, *The Voice of the People or the History of the Kyabram Reform Movement* (Melbourne, 1902). The peak of the retrenchment campaign was reached at a Conference in April 1902, which had attacked the extravagance of State and Federal Governments. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-41.

was unable to define. However, he assured Parliament that even if this measure were passed the Governor-General would still be at a considerable loss, indicating that on the royal visit alone, the Governor-General had spent £10,000 'seeing that the position of Australia was properly and worthily maintained'.

But the House of Representatives was not persuaded. Every speaker after Barton opposed the proposal. Consequently, with rather more discretion than valour, the Prime Minister weakly claimed that 'in a measure of this kind no one can say that the fate of the Ministry is involved' and indicated his readiness to accept such an amendment as would convert the Bill into one to recoup the amount of £10,000 expended by the Governor-General during the visit of the Duke of York. The leadership of the Committee stages was taken over by H.B. Higgins who skilfully manoeuvred the amended measure through the necessary stages to its third reading.

The Governor-General could be forgiven for regarding Barton's performance as at the best inept, at the worst, devious. In the face of the hostility of the House he had allowed the Bill which he had presented in fulfilment of an undertaking made in February 1901, to be amended beyond recognition. The Daily Telegraph was outspoken - the Ministry had 'left his Excellency in the lurch'.

Two days after the debate Barton and Turner conferred with the Governor-General and informed him that no allowance of any kind would be approved by Parliament. Hopetoun was

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1. Daily Telegraph, 16 May 1902.
horrified. He had spent generously in spite of warnings from the Colonial Office. In addition he was concerned that future occupants of the office would find that they could not manage without the large private fortune which was his. On 5 May 1902 he cabled to the Secretary of State:

No allowance whatever will be given. On a salary of £10,000 per annum I am expected to pay a staff, visit various states, paying all travelling expenses excepting railway, occupy two great Government Houses, paying lights, fuel, stationery, telegrams, postage other than official, dispense hospitality maintain dignity of the office.

In that generosity of spirit which had made him universally popular in Australia, he assured Chamberlain that he had no cause of complaint for himself, but he anticipated grave difficulties as to the future for himself and for his successors. He had already strained his private resources considerably. In these circumstances he concluded:

The position is impossible. After grave consideration I think you had better recall me after the Coronation.\(^1\)

The cable was despatched from Adelaide where Hopetoun was spending an official visit. From there he wrote a farewell letter to Barton which reveals that though he possibly blamed Barton for mismanaging the allowance question, he was determined to avoid recriminations:

These few lines are only written to say goodbye for I have really nothing to worry you about. Believe me my wife and I can never forget the warm affection & considerate kindness which you have shown towards us. We shall always think of Mrs Barton & yourself with feelings of sincere affection & esteem.\(^2\)

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2. Hopetoun to Barton [undated, probably 8 May 1902]. Barton papers, MS 51/503. A.N.L.
Though Barton was leaving for an extended visit to England the note of farewell in Hopetoun's letter must have sounded unduly permanent to the Prime Minister when he arrived in Fremantle where it was waiting for him. Possibly he had anticipated such an action on the part of the Governor-General for, during the debate on 1 May, he had told the House of Representatives, 'I do not think the matter is closed!'\textsuperscript{1}.  

In London, the reaction to Hopetoun's cable consisted of sympathy for the Governor-General and resentment at the action of Barton's Government. Exasperatedly, Anderson minuted:

\begin{quote}
It must be brought home somehow to the Australian mind that all the peers of the realm are not dying with anxiety to take the post of Governor-General in order to provide him with lavish entertainment.\textsuperscript{2}
\end{quote}

No effort was made to dissuade His Excellency from the course of action he proposed, partly because when offered the appointment Hopetoun had asked to be allowed to return prematurely should his health deteriorate or his financial situation be disadvantaged. In addition it was felt that the loss of so popular and successful a man might persuade the Commonwealth Government to treat his successor more generously.

It was not until 14 May, when Hopetoun returned to Melbourne after his visit to Adelaide, that the Acting Prime Minister, Deakin, was informed of the Governor-General's decision. As the Senate was still in session the public announcement was made immediately in that House and Hopetoun's

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\textsuperscript{1} C.P.D., 1901-2, IX, p. 12230.
\textsuperscript{2} Minutes on C.O. 418/18/17447, folio 525-532.
\end{flushleft}
cable of resignation was tabled, together with Chamberlain's reply. The Government braced itself to withstand the storm of controversy which followed, in Deakin's words 'a veritable cyclone'.

Barton, conveniently absent, bore the brunt of the blame. His departmental head, Atlee Hunt, explained:

The public regret is sincere and there is of course a tendency to blame somebody, that somebody is for the present yourself, 'les absents ont toujours tort'.

The *Daily Telegraph* regarded the Ministry's action as 'weakly maladroit'. *Truth*, unrestrained by the normal courtesies of respectability, blamed both Hopetoun's 'own love of lucre and the cowardly unconstitutional conduct of ... [his] chief constitutional counsellor, Boozer Barton'. The more circumspect *Argus* considered that Ministers had 'incurred a great responsibility in first allowing affairs in connection with the pecuniary position of the Governor-General to drift'.

The *Brisbane Courier* accused Barton's cabinet of 'conspicuous supineness'.

But the Prime Minister was not the only public scapegoat. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reminded its readers that New South

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2. Deakin to Barton, 20 May 1902. Barton papers, MS 51/505. A.N.L.
3. Hunt to Barton, 21 May 1902. Barton papers, MS 51/507. A.N.L.
6. Argus, 16 May 1902.
Wales had been willing to shoulder its share of the cost of His Excellency's establishment, but that the other States had refused to follow the mother colony's lead.¹ On the other hand Melbourne's Punch thought that as Sydney was so anxious that it should be the seat of Government it ought to vote the necessary money for the upkeep of the Governor-General's establishment while he resided there.² In Perth, distance lent a wider perspective. The West Australian blamed both Sydney and Melbourne. The 'lamentable lack of a federal spirit' in these two cities had, in its opinion, been primarily responsible for the quarrel over who was to house the Representative of the Crown.³

The Bulletin seized the opportunity to castigate those colonial politicians and others who demanded that the Governor-General should be 'a circus and a travelling show, humping at enormous expense the pomp and glory of his establishment round the continent and entertaining at various cities'. It identified the primary cause of the quarrel as 'a haughty clique which dines and dances at Government House ... and is mad in its paltry little soul because one city sees more of a certain ordinary looking man than another'.⁴

Some, like the Hobart Mercury, felt that the Governor-General himself was primarily at fault. The Tasmanian

¹. S.M.H., 16 May 1902.
². Punch, 15 May 1902.
³. West Australian, 20 May 1902.
newspaper believed that his appointment had been 'a mistake' and that Hopetoun had been a 'show Governor-General' when 'what really was wanted was a plain strong capable man, one who would have set an example of that rare but valuable thing, republican simplicity'. ¹ Though some Labor Party members also criticized the Representative of the Crown,² these attacks were unrepresentative of the general press and parliamentary opinion. Most newspapers expressed perturbation at the retirement of 'so able and excellent a vice-regent'.³ Even the Bulletin felt that there would be 'disappointment at losing the services of a gentleman who, as a figurehead, was always amiable and dignified'.⁴

Throughout this furore Hopetoun himself maintained a dignified reticence. 'He is as courteous as ever to all of us' Deakin informed Barton, '& makes not a word of complaint'.⁵ But underlying this kindnesses Deakin felt that Hopetoun blamed the Ministry and especially Barton for the fiasco.⁶

¹. Mercury, 19 May 1902. See too Launceston Examiner, 24 November 1902: 'Lord Hopetoun seemed to possess somewhat extravagant notions as to the permanent lines upon which the Governor-Generalship was to run'. Press cutting in Tennyson papers, MS 429/2/230. A.N.L.


³. Register (Adelaide), 15 May 1902.


⁵. Deakin to Barton, 10 June 1902. Barton papers, MS 51/515. A.N.L.

⁶. Ibid.
While this was undoubtedly the case, Hopetoun went to pains to assure Barton that he bore no ill will. In addition to his friendly letters to the Prime Minister en route to Britain, he wrote privately to Chamberlain asking the Secretary of State to ensure that Barton was not made to feel that he was 'in any way responsible for my debacle'.

When informed of a comment in The Times which reported dissension between him and his Ministers he cabled to Barton, authorizing publication of an unqualified denial. Whatever His Excellency's private feelings may have been, in public he condemned only himself. In an emotional letter to Deakin, meant for publication, Hopetoun singled out his own ambition for the office as the prime cause of his error. He explained that he had placed the office:

on a pedestal ... not for my own sake but because I believed it to be the best way to make it an office of real usefulness to the Empire and one acceptable to the people of this country ... I set to work to overbuild myself, and ... if one day, I found myself sitting on the ground

1. The inner strain showed a little in a letter to Tennyson in which he suggested that 'the two Govt Houses had better be turned into lunatic asylums'. Hopetoun to Tennyson, 19 May 1902. Tennyson papers, MS 479/2/201. A.N.L. See too his private letter to Chamberlain, 14 May 1902: 'I am on terms of affectionate friendship with [Mr Barton] ... but I do think I have a distinct cause of complaint against the Government for their procrastination and delay in this matter'. Chamberlain papers, JC 14/1/1/41. University of Birmingham, Library.


3. For Times comment see 16 May 1902. He referred to it in a letter to Deakin, 20 June 1902 and when writing to Barton, 7 July 1902. See Deakin papers, MS 1540/2486 and Barton papers, MS 51/527. A.N.L.
surrounded by the ruins of my own ideal, I have no reason to complain, for I have myself alone to blame.¹

Despite differing explanations for Hopetoun's unhappy fall from the 'pedestal' an almost unanimous conclusion emerged. Tennyson, who held the Dormant Commission and therefore seemed likely to succeed Hopetoun, at least temporarily, noted: 'The Commonwealth do not want their Governor-General to keep up a great deal of State'.² Not everyone approved of this. The Argus, forced to the conclusion that the Representative of the Crown 'must be simply a Government administrative officer' confined to one residence, compelled to exercise the strictest economy and unable to travel about the Commonwealth felt that it was 'not an agreeable outlook for a great and loyal community'.³ But this assessment was too alarmist. When the House of Representatives resumed, the Treasurer, George Turner, persuaded the House to authorize the expenditure of £5,000 for the Governor-General's past official expenses.⁴ Although in future ostentation must be avoided, certain official expenses would be met by the Australian Parliament. Government Houses at Sydney and Melbourne continued to be maintained for another decade⁵ and vice-regal tours continued

1. Hopetoun to Deakin, 1 July 1902. Deakin papers, MS 1540/2494-9. A.N.L. The letter was published in Australian newspapers 16 July 1902. E.g. see S.M.H. of that date.

2. Tennyson to Chamberlain, 12 May 1902. Draft in Tennyson papers, diary entry 12 May 1920, p. 20, MS 479/2. A.N.L.

3. Argus, 16 May 1902.


to be a vital element in the role of the Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth.

The whole allowance affair had undoubtedly been grossly mismanaged. But the confusion was itself partly due to uncertainty in Australia over the role to be played by the Governor-General. In the absence of clear guide-lines Hopetoun had allowed his naturally extravagant personality\(^1\) to influence his concept of the office. He came to the post with visions of it as being analogous to that of Governor-General of Canada or Vice-Roy of India. Barton, his chief adviser, was not the man to disabuse him of these erroneous preconceptions. It is evident that the first Prime Minister was himself unsure of the proper role of the Governor-General in Australia.

Since 1885 wealthy peers had endowed colonial capitals with an aura of Victorian magniloquence. Hopetoun's appointment showed that it was thought to extend this to the Commonwealth sphere. His rebuff checked, temporarily, any grandiose concept of the office. Neither Tennyson nor Northcote had the manner or wealth of courtiers. Far from hindering them, this less ostentatious role assisted in the exercise of their functions. Australia was not prepared to spend a great deal of public money upon the Governor-General's

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establishment, particularly as the expensive institutions of State Governors were destined to be retained. The shearing away of the trappings with which Hopetoun had attempted to deck the post allowed those of his successors who were astute enough to understand the position to operate more efficiently and with less friction than might otherwise have been the case.

In the debate over the Governor-General's resignation some Labor Party members seized the occasion to revive earlier suggestions that future occupants be elected. But most politicians expressed satisfaction with the system of British appointments. A classical statement of the conservative point of view was provided by Sir William McMillan in an attack on the Government for its handling of the matter. He stressed that as the Representative of the Crown was the one visible link remaining between Australia and the Empire, he ought to be given the facilities to visit various states and come into contact with the people as much as possible. He continued:

Brilliant young men belonging to the upper classes in England, and, as a rule, taken from the House of Lords, are appointed to these posts ... because their position as the apex of our political and social system will be beyond cavil.

1. The West Australian, 20 May 1902, concluded 'it might be well to encourage a more Spartan simplicity of living on the part of our Vice-Regal representatives'.


The argument that the Governor-General, as apex of the political system, ought to be impartial, and that this was best secured by continuing with British appointments, was to persist for thirty years, and in some circles for long after that. As a second reason for the system of British Governors-General McMillan raised what had been and was to remain, an abiding concern of Australian politicians, the need for sympathetic consideration of an Australian point of view in London. In McMillan's opinion, men who had become acquainted with Australian conditions were added, year after year, to the political life in England. These showed themselves 'the friends of Australia whenever political discussions regarding us arise there ... we should give them every facility to make themselves acquainted with the conditions of Australia and so help to remove the false impression which so often prevails in regard to this country on the other side of the world'. ¹ He, and others in Australia, were concerned at the adverse publicity in Britain created by the undignified retreat of the Commonwealth's first Governor-General.

Though pressed by many to reconsider his decision, Hopetoun was determined to return to England. His departure from Australia was a sad affair. The popular and emotional viceroy was reduced to tears at farewell ceremonies in Melbourne.² There and in Sydney sympathetic crowds witnessed his final processions through the streets. In the early

₁. Ibid.
₂. Argus, 18 July 1902.
morning of 17 July, on board a mail steamer bound for Canada, he sailed from Brisbane.\(^1\) Though honoured by the King, and elevated in the peerage as Marquess of Linlithgow, there was little doubt that he had been less than successful in the great test of his public career.\(^2\) As he sailed for home it was clear that his concept of the vice-regal office in Australia had been rejected by the people he had hoped to serve.

Contemporary sympathy for the first Governor-General has only partly been echoed in subsequent accounts of the early years of the Commonwealth. Historians have preserved his name, humiliatingly, in connection with his selection of Lyne as Prime Minister. The conventional explanation for his discomfiture has been ill health.\(^3\) It is true that he was unwell for much of his term of office and never regained complete health after his return. But there were other reasons for the unfortunate conclusion to what had seemed a promising gubernatorial career. In some senses his failure was personal, in others it was related to the ambivalent nature of the role of Governor-General in the early years of federation.

Hopetoun's administration had opened with extravagant and enthusiastic demonstrations in the Commonwealth

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1. *Age*, 18 July 1902.

2. Political developments in England and continual ill-health prevented Linlithgow from attaining what would have been the supremely satisfying post for him, Viceroy of India. He was Secretary of State for Scotland during the last months of Balfour's struggling ministry in 1905. He died at Pau in France in 1908.

Inauguration ceremonies at Sydney. Caught up in the jealousies of Sydney and Melbourne over possession of the seat of Government and a slightly bewildered central figure in the channel of communication controversy, he also suffered from the weakness of his chief adviser. His term of office was at a difficult transition period in the relationship of Australia to Britain, as the Commonwealth reached towards what was to become known as 'Dominion status'. In the Imperial structure which was to prevail for the first two decades of the twentieth century the functions of the Governor-General were not those of a supervisor, administrator or even figurehead, but rather those of a specially privileged ambassador. However, before the latter role could be exercised satisfactorily the over-ambitious pretensions of the first Governor-General and the associated panoply of ersatz royalty needed to be abrogated. The royal tour in mid-1901 had been a spectacular personal triumph for the Governor-General, but thereafter the setbacks had outweighed the successes. Reid's public though gentle rebuke over the speech to the Australian Natives Association indicated that Hopetoun had been in error in making obvious his role as intermediary of the British Government. Eventually, in May 1902, the Parliament which he had triumphantly opened twelve months previously, refused to provide him with a suitable allowance. Mortified by this public humiliation the first Governor-General resigned office.

Hopetoun had attempted to utilize his personal popularity to make his position that of an active, ostentatious viceroy.
Chamberlain's presence at the Colonial Office had supported these ambitions and Barton, vacillating and over-deferential, did not discourage him. His recall ended the period of charisma for the office of Governor-General and provided a frame of reference, albeit a negative one, for his successors. Deakin, writing in the Morning Post for an English audience, drew the lesson from Hopetoun's experience:

Our first Governor-General may be said to have taken with him all the decorations and display and some of the anticipations that splendidly surrounded the inauguration of our national existence ... we have ... revised our estimate of his high office, stripping it too hastily, but not unkindly, of its festal trappings. The stately ceremonial was fitting, but it has been completed. Now that the fête is over we are once more obliged to resume business.¹

Writing to Barton, Deakin abandoned the rhetoric. In future, he thought, Australia wanted a Governor-General who would be 'purely a political officer & not a social functionary except within narrow official limits'.²

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¹. Morning Post (London), 2 September 1902, dated 'Sydney, July 22'. Cutting book in Deakin papers, MS 1540. A.N.L.

². Deakin to Barton, 10 June 1902. Barton papers, MS 51/515. A.N.L.
Lord Hopetoun,
Governor-General of Australia
1 January 1901 to 9 January 1903

Lord Tennyson,
Acting Governor-General of Australia
17 July 1902 to 9 January 1903
Governor-General of Australia
9 January 1903 to 21 January 1904
IV

Bureaucratic Consolidation
The man who was to replace Hopetoun in somewhat confused and difficult circumstances was the Governor of South Australia, Lord Tennyson. In 1902 Hallam Tennyson was approaching fifty years of age. Physically and temperamentally he was markedly dissimilar to his elegant forerunner. A sober, stolid man, he lacked Hopetoun's refined charm and aristocratic confidence. Photographs emphasize his sterner aspects - burly figure, dark beard, heavy browed forehead and features which seem naturally arranged into a scowl. Nevertheless his delicate, spidery handwriting reveals another, softer side to his nature, and he had published a volume of children's poetry. His public character seems generally to have been gruff and abrupt, perhaps because he, too, was in ill-health during his term as Governor-General. But, in contrast to the nervous disability which had afflicted Hopetoun, Tennyson's discomfiture was gout.

In his antecedents he also differed from his aristocratic predecessor. Hopetoun's grandfather was a Scottish nobleman of property and position in society. Tennyson's was a drunken rector from Lincolnshire. The Marlborough College education he had obtained, and the Eton training he was concerned to provide for his three sons had been won by the phenomenal poetic abilities of his father, the most popular poet in English literary history who, during his own life time, had become a symbol of the Victorian age.

3. Tennyson papers, MS 479/41/157, 190. A.N.L.
Hallam Tennyson lived more than half his life in the shadow of his father's awesome presence. Born in 1852 and named after Arthur Hallam, the poet's brilliant friend, whose early death had been commemorated by the poem, 'In Memoriam', he went through Marlborough, Cambridge and the Inner Temple. In 1874 Hallam abandoned his own career to become the Laureate's reader, secretary and constant companion. After his father's death in 1892 he devoted himself to the task of writing an official, two-volume biography, published in 1897. His Memoir of the first Lord Tennyson is a careful but uninspired account of the poet's life, showing no more insight into the nature of the man than was usual in the standard literary or political biographies of the time. But it does reveal the son's reverence for the patriotic values of his father's later years.

In the eighteen eighties the poet had become converted to the grand Imperial Idea. One of his verses became an anthem for the Imperial Federation League. Its oracular, declamatory style is a reminder of the peculiar fervour of late Victorian Imperialism - a fervour with which the second Lord Tennyson was deeply imbued.

Sharers of our glorious past
Shall we not through good and ill
Cleave to one another still?
Britain's myriad voices call
"Sons, be welded, each and all
Into one Imperial whole
One with Britain, heart and Soul!
One life, one flag, one fleet, one throne!"
Britons, hold your own!

1. At Cambridge he became a friend of Reginald Brett, later Viscount Esher, the most distinguished courtier of his time. See Maurice Brett (ed.), Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher (London, MCMXXXIV), p. 12.
2. Richardson, The Pre Eminent Victorian, p. 199.
In 1883, Hallam Tennyson had become a member of the Council of the Imperial Federation League and he remained interested in the British colonies. It was because his father would have approved, duty called and he had nothing else to do that in January 1899 he accepted when Chamberlain offered him the Governorship of South Australia.

His appointment to Adelaide was Tennyson's first experience of public office. He did not possess the great wealth which had previously been regarded as a pre-requisite, but the imminence of federation seemed to foreshadow a change in the type of colonial Governor sent to Australia. Representatives of the Crown in the States were expected to be overshadowed by the Governor-General.

Tennyson and his family took up residence at Government House, Adelaide, in April 1899. A Governor's home life in 1900 was an extension of his public life. He was required to entertain the colony's public men, their ladies and visiting celebrities in Government House. His wife was expected to be a prominent figure too, opening bazaars, visiting hospitals and chairing worthy causes. Tennyson had, in 1884, married Audrey Boyle, the niece of a family friend. By the time they arrived in Australia they had three young sons. One of these boys became an English test cricketer and in his autobiography gives a glimpse into their home life in Adelaide.

Lady Tennyson, an intelligent, active woman, enjoyed her public work as Governor's Lady. But she regarded her stay in Australia as an exile and she had an abiding horror that her three boys would develop the local schoolboys' 'terrible twang'. Her long, weekly letters

2. Lionel, Lord Tennyson, From Verse to Worse (London, 1933).
3. See letter to her mother, 20 October 1902. Tennyson papers, MS 479/41/192. A.N.L.
home provide an engaging account of family routine and public duties in the rarefied atmosphere of an Australian Government House.

There was a deal of uncertainty about Tennyson's suitability for the post of Acting Governor-General. Centralists in Barton's Cabinet suspected him of a too vigorous provincialism. As Governor of South Australia he had boycotted the Inauguration ceremonies and refused to forward copies of his correspondence to the Governor-General. Liberals and nationalists also suspected his close involvement with Chief Justice Way. He had been associated with the latter's campaign against the Privy Council Appeal clauses in the Commonwealth Constitution and in so doing earned the disapproval of his Premier, Holder. Deakin told Barton he feared that they would 'have trouble with Tennyson'.

In Britain, too, there were misgivings about his fitness to act as Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth. Twelve months earlier Colonial Office officials had been chary of issuing the Dormant Commission to so inexperienced a Governor - only doing so to forestall any Australian proposal that the Chief Justice of the Commonwealth High Court should exercise that office. Upon Hopetoun's resignation, Chamberlain delayed confirming that the Dormant Commission should come into effect

1. See Tennyson papers, MS 479 series 41. A.N.L. Extracts from Lady Tennyson's letter journal appear in Harold Tennyson R.N.: The Story of a Young Sailor put together by a Friend (London, 1918). The Tennysons' youngest son was killed in action 29 January 1916 and their second son was killed in France 23 March 1918.

2. For Way's campaign against Section 74 of the Constitution see A.J. Hannan, The Life of Chief Justice Way (Sydney, 1960), pp. 184-193. For Holder's accusation that Tennyson took Way's side against the Government see Tennyson papers, diary entry 5 October 1900, p. 80. MS 479/2. A.N.L. But Tennyson was not the only Governor to oppose abolition of Privy Council Appeals. See S.M.H., 18 June 1900, for a report of an outspoken speech by Beauchamp on the subject.

3. Deakin to Barton, 24 June 1902. Barton papers, MS 51/520. A.N.L.

for several weeks. But no permanent appointment could be made while the problem of an allowance was still unsolved. So on 4 July the Secretary of State authorized the South Australian Governor to assume, temporarily, the administration of the Commonwealth Government. Tennyson remained as Acting Governor-General until the following January, when, with the agreement of Australian Ministers, he was confirmed in the post. At his own wish the appointment was for one year only.

Though Deakin and others feared problems, the Australian press applauded the choice. Melbourne Punch considered him 'a gubernator of the rare, common-sense order, one who can be absolutely relied upon never to say a foolish thing or to do the wrong thing'. His rule in Adelaide had possessed 'an easy home-like quality' which Punch found at once 'piquant and comfortable'. Other newspapers were just as complimentary. Even the Bulletin, never one to congratulate Governors, had in the past expressed sarcastic approval of 'the persistency with which ... Lord Tennyson dodges public functions' and commended his frugality. It was confidently felt that these characteristics were appropriate after Hopetoun's ostentation.

The first problem facing the Acting Governor-General was the allowance question. His predecessor had hoped that resignation would shame parliament into making generous provision for entertainment and other official expenses. There was certainly some shame in the political furore which had followed Hopetoun's recall. But public opinion eventually resolved that both Hopetoun and Barton had been at fault. In both press

1. Chamberlain to Tennyson, telegram 4 July 1902, copy in Deakin papers, MS 1540/2493. A.N.L.
2. Punch, 27 November 1902.
and Parliament the opinion was expressed that Hopetoun had been far too extravagant but shamefully treated by Barton. The conveniently absent Prime Minister was universally criticized for undertaking to provide for the Governor-General a yearly allowance of £8,000 in addition to the £10,000 salary provided by the Constitution. However only the extremists opposed any allowance for the Governor-General. The problem was to reach a figure acceptable to the Commonwealth Parliament and also adequate from the point of view of the Governor-General.

Tennyson, frugal and unostentatious by nature, agreed that Hopetoun's immoderate display was unnecessary. But there was no doubt that the maintenance of two Government Houses was an expensive business. He, Deakin and Turner examined the public functions of the Governor-General in detail. They arrived at a figure of £5,500 per year for the costs of maintaining Government Houses at Melbourne and Sydney.¹ In addition an 'official Secretary to the Governor-General and the Executive Council' would be appointed and paid by the Commonwealth.

Deakin presented this proposition to Parliament in August 1902.² Despite objections from the Labor Party, the new arrangement obtained Parliament's approval.³ Several politicians who had voted against an allowance for Hopetoun supported Deakin's measure. Some claimed that their earlier stand had been due to the insufficient time for consideration allowed by Barton and inadequate information as to the details of the

¹. Tennyson to Chamberlain, secret, 5 August 1902. C.O. 418/19/37459, folios 91-100.
². C.P.D., XII, pp. 15356-15405.
³. The House resolved that 'an expenditure upon Government house of £5,500 a year ... is approved during the term of office of the next Governor-General'. Ibid., p. 15405.
proposed expenditure. But Hopetoun's surprise resignation had evidently been a contributing factor in their reappraisal.

Some difficulty arose over the position of Official Secretary. Deakin explained that this appointment was intended 'to take out of the hands of the Governor-General's staff all the public duties connected with the office of Secretary to the Executive Council'. He proposed that this officer also take charge of 'the whole of the correspondence which is transmitted from the Commonwealth through the Governor-General to the Secretary of State for Colonies, to foreign powers and to the Governments of the States'. The man selected to carry out these duties was His Excellency's Private Secretary, Wallington. Labor parliamentarians objected to the appointment as providing a sinecure for a 'society favourite'. But Deakin was insistent that he was establishing an important matter of principle. He explained that for some time he had felt that an official who was responsible to the Commonwealth should be in control of the public business associated with the office of Governor-General. In particular he considered that the bureaucrat who handled the Australian Government's correspondence with Great Britain should be paid by and therefore accountable to the Commonwealth.

Though this aspect of Deakin's proposal may have been misunderstood by the Labor Party its implications were clear enough in Downing Street. Anderson minuted that Wallington was, no doubt, an excellent person for the post, but if he were replaced by 'an Australian nominee of Ministers', it would be 'impossible for the Gov-Gen. to use him for the personal and

1. Ibid., pp. 15177-9.
2. Ibid., p. 16180.
confidential purposes for which a Gov. requires a Private Secretary'.

The Permanent Under Secretary, Ommanney, agreed that the proposed arrangement was impossible. He considered that Australian officials, from Ministers downward, 'had exceedingly lax ideas on the subject of secret and confidential communications'. Several despatches were addressed to Tennyson requesting clarification of the position of Official Secretary. But the Acting Governor-General apparently failed to grasp the situation. He seemed too concerned to congratulate himself on the settlement of the allowance question and on the Australian satisfaction with his thriftiness.

In December 1902 the difficulty foreseen by the Colonial Office came to a head when Wallington resigned, to take up a position on the staff of the Prince of Wales. Tennyson and his family were spending the hot summer months in the familiar comfort of Marble Hill, the South Australian Governor's country residence. On Christmas Day the man chosen to replace Wallington as Official Secretary began duty in Melbourne.

At the time of his appointment George Steward was Chief Clerk in the Department of External Affairs. Barton had evidently regarded him as reliable, for in January 1902 he had been entrusted with the delicate task of conveying to Brisbane's Customs Inspector secret and incriminating instructions under the Immigration Restriction Act. Trustworthy and with

2. Sir Montagu F. Ommanney, Permanent Under Secretary from 1900-1907.
4. Born in Scotland 1866, Steward had joined the Commonwealth Civil Service early in 1901 after ten years experience in the Tasmanian Public Service.
considerable administrative and secretarial experience, his chief drawbacks were an unfortunately brusque manner and an over-developed concern for his own dignity. Though he worked comfortably with later Governors-General, with Tennyson relations were sometimes strained. In a letter to Barton shortly after Steward had taken up his appointment His Excellency complained that the new Official Secretary was 'too big for his boots'.

The crisis which arose over this appointment was partly the result of Steward's agitation. During Tennyson's absence in South Australia a list of 'Rules of Procedure' drawn up by Wallington was left for Steward in Melbourne. Steward complained to Atlee Hunt that these rules subordinated him to the Governor-General's Private Secretary. Hunt must have informed the Prime Minister, for, three weeks later, Barton wrote to Tennyson asking that Steward's instructions be amended. He suggested that as they stood the 'Rules of Procedure' conflicted with Parliament's intention that the Official Secretary 'was to have charge of all communications which pass between the Commonwealth and the Imperial or State Governments'. In the meantime, Hunt refused to supply postage stamps at Commonwealth expense to anyone on the Governor-General's staff apart from Steward.

1. Tennyson to Barton, 26 December 1902, draft in Tennyson papers, MS 479/2, diary entry 26 December 1902, p. 52. A.N.L. As no copy of such a letter appears in Barton's papers it is possible that the letter was not sent.
2. La Nauze, Alfred Deakin, 1, pp. 255-7, gives an account of this dispute which emphasizes Deakin's role as peacemaker.
3. Steward to Hunt, 23 December 1902. CP 78, series 21, bundle 50, secret file 'Conduct of Governor-General's Correspondence'. C.A.O.
4. Copy of these Rules, undated, is in Barton papers, MS 51/574a. A.N.L. Tennyson's Private Secretary was Lord Richard Nevill.
5. Barton to Tennyson, 8 January 1903. Copy in CP 78, series 21, bundle 50. C.A.O.
Barton's letter was stiffly polite but firm. So was Tennyson's reply. He quoted a communication from the Imperial Government instructing the Official Secretary to take charge of all public despatches but requiring that all secret and confidential communications be dealt with by the Private Secretary. The Prime Minister reacted indignantly, interpreting Tennyson's proposal as an attempt to set up his office as an intervening authority between the Commonwealth and United Kingdom Governments. He feared that the Governor-General would be able to withhold some possibly vital correspondence from his Australian advisers or otherwise interfere in the rights of the Commonwealth as a sovereign state. With long-winded constitutional umbrage he reminded the Governor-General that it was his duty to accept the advice of his Ministers.

Tennyson was not prepared to accept this admonition quietly. The correspondence increased in vehemence until, eventually, Deakin's mediation was sought. He advised them to stop writing sharp letters to each other and find a compromise at a private meeting. On 5 February such a confrontation took place and the misunderstanding was smoothed over. Barton agreed that some of the Governor-General's correspondence with the Imperial Government was necessarily private. Tennyson had received from the Colonial Office a concession that their earlier instruction had been too wide. The Governor-General suggested that the use of two cyphers would provide a way out of the difficulty. One code would apply to His Excellency's private correspondence, a second, kept by

2. Barton to Tennyson, 24 January 1903. Copy in Ibid., folios 59-61, draft in Barton papers, MS 51/563. A.N.L.
the Official Secretary, would be used for official communications between the Commonwealth and Imperial Governments.¹

The effect of this dispute was to separate more clearly than before the two functions of the King's Representative – constitutional Head of State and agent of the British Government. From March 1903 a Commonwealth public servant, responsible to the Department of External Affairs, was in charge of correspondence between the Australian Government and the British Government. Deakin's initiative, Steward's officiousness and Barton's righteous indignation emphasized the Australian demand that it be treated as an equal state and not a subordinate colony.

In these circumstances it was becoming increasingly clear that diplomatic abilities rather than administrative efficiency or social leadership were the qualities most necessary in a Governor-General if he were to exercise his role to the satisfaction of both Australia and Britain. Unfortunately Tennyson, fired with ideas of Imperial federation and lacking the personal unction of an ambassador, was not able to recognize this. Stirred by Barton's assertion of the principles of responsible government, he sought from the Professor of Law at Adelaide University, J.W. Salmond, a definition of the Governor's powers in a self-governing colony. The predictably legalistic reply was seized upon by Tennyson as a justification, for a wide interpretation of those powers and he secretly circulated the memorandum to all Australian State Governors. In a covering letter he deprecated any suggestion that a Governor was merely an agent of the Imperial Government and denied that his position was analagous with that of a Minister Resident at a Foreign Court. A copy of the correspondence was sent to the Secretary of State.²

¹. See Tennyson's 'Minute for Prime Minister', 6 February 1903 and letter of same date. Barton papers, MS 51/573-4. A.N.L.
². Tennyson to Secretary of State, 25 February 1903 and enclosures. C.O. 418/26/12824, folios 115-122.
By this time the Colonial Office was becoming somewhat irritated with the meddlesome Governor-General. Anderson minuted acidly, 'Lord Tennyson and his constitutional pedagogue should really try and mind their own business'. The memorandum was, in his opinion 'misleading and mischievous'. The Australian Governor-General did not seem to appreciate that:

> the day of personal governorship has gone and that the one cardinal fact for a Governor to bear in mind that [sic] for every official act a minister must be responsible... Where Imperial interests are concerned, if a Governor differs from his Ministers and cannot bring them round to his view, he should apply to his chief - the S[ecretary] of S[ate] - for instructions.'

From the point of view of the Colonial Office, the Representative of the Crown was to avoid unnecessary interference in local affairs. Too rigorous an interpretation of his powers in these matters might hinder his efficacy as an advocate for Imperial concerns. Chamberlain sent Tennyson a stiff remonstrative despatch which specifically rebutted Salmond's interpretation of the Governor's role.²

In his capacity as representative of the British Government, Tennyson was still expected to provide the Secretary of State with strictly confidential reports independent of his Ministers. This had been the basis of the difficulties surrounding Steward's appointment. Tennyson interpreted this responsibility widely. In his reports to the Colonial Office he commented freely on Australian affairs and frequently offered his own suggestions. He was, for example, genuinely interested in the Australian aborigines and their welfare. In Adelaide he had spoken publicly for a more humane treatment and he corresponded privately with

1. Ibid.
2. Chamberlain to Tennyson, 24 April 1903. Draft in Ibid.
administrators and anthropologists like Dr. Roth. He was convinced
that control over aborigines was a matter which ought to be a Commonwealth
responsibility.  

In April 1903 the Governor-General informed the Secretary of
State that a great deal of dissatisfaction was being caused by the
'disloyal attitude' of Cardinal Moran, Roman Catholic Archbishop of
Sydney, who he charged, was continually 'stirring up ... sectarian strife'.
His Excellency praised the Roman Catholic Archbishops of Adelaide and
Melbourne as 'excellent leaders of men and thoroughly good citizens' but
he felt that it would be greatly to the advantage of Australia if the
Cardinal were 'removed from the Commonwealth', and he suggested that the
authorities in Rome be approached to this effect. Though in Anderson's
opinion there was no doubt that Moran was 'a mischievous ill-afflicted
citizen', the Colonial Office was understandably unwilling to interfere
in what was so patently an internal matter for the Commonwealth Government.
Fortunately, perhaps, for Tennyson's public image, the suggestion remained
undiscovered.

On one occasion His Excellency was embarrassed when a comment
which he had made in what was intended to be a confidential despatch was
made public by the British Government. In the course of transmitting a
letter from the Acting Prime Minister concerning a petition from natives

1. Advertiser, 27 August 1901, reports a public meeting at which a letter
from Tennyson was read, pleading 'the cause of the blackfellows'.
For Roth's career see Serle, Dictionary of Australian Biography, II,
pp. 290-1.

2. For two undated drafts of letters to Chamberlain on this subject see
Tennyson papers, MS 479/2/77 and 192.

3. Tennyson to Chamberlain, 6 April 1903. C.O. 418/26/16921, folios 296-301.

4. Minutes on Ibid.
of the Pacific Islands residing in Queensland, the Governor-General questioned the consistency of Deakin's stated policy.¹ Nine months later the despatch was published by the Colonial Office. Deakin immediately wrote to Tennyson denying that he had contradicted himself. He remarked pointedly that he had seen no portion of the despatch and had been unaware that Tennyson purposed to make the representations he had made. He warned, indirectly, that if the correspondence were referred to in Parliament he would not support the Governor-General.² Though a short item referring to this disagreement did appear in the press³ and the Labor Party raised the matter in the House of Representatives⁴ Barton was able to deflect most of the criticism.

If immigration policy were one sphere in which the Governor-General was entitled to ensure that Imperial interests were protected, an even more significant responsibility was defence policy. Tennyson's term of office was during an important period in Australian and Imperial defence planning. During 1902 and 1903 tentative signs of a national defence policy within the aegis of Empire began to emerge in the Commonwealth. The Representative of the Crown felt himself to be a vital link between the Australian and Imperial Governments in these negotiations.

Barely a month before Tennyson had taken office the Treaty of

2. Deakin to Tennyson, 22 June 1903. Tennyson papers, MS 1963/176. A.N.L.
3. Daily Telegraph, 23 June 1903.
4. Fisher asked the Prime Minister whether he had communicated with the Governor-General 'in such a way as will protect the rights of responsible government'. Barton replied that the despatch was confidential and that with respect to such communications it was not the practice to consult Ministers. Though Crouch utilised the occasion for an attack on the Governor-General the matter was not pursued. C.P.D. 1903, XIV, pp. 1402, 1435.
Vereeniging had finally brought to a close the war in South Africa. To those who were clear-sighted enough to see it, this war had revealed serious deficiencies in British and Imperial defence strategy. At the same time, the loyal and generous participation of the British self-governing colonies had led Chamberlain and others to hope for that closer union which Imperial Federationists had preached for twenty years. This hope was destined to perish on the rocks of colonial nationalism and British liberalism. In the process the Australian insistence that its own priorities might conflict with those of Great Britain was to prove an early indication of Dominion autonomy within the Empire, especially in the sphere of naval defence.

Under the Naval Defence Agreement of 1887, negotiated at the first Colonial Conference, Australian colonies contributed towards the maintenance of a Squadron of the Royal Navy stationed at Sydney. The development of colonial sea-going forces was discouraged but the British Squadron was tied to Australia's neighbouring seas. During the following decade this stipulation came under attack in the course of a controversy over the relative merits of naval dispersal or fleet concentration. By 1902 the latter point of view had begun to prevail. At the Colonial Conference of that year it was expounded by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Selborne, to the assembled colonial Ministers.

The 1902 Conference was destined to be a disappointment to those who hoped that an Imperial Council might develop from the colonial unity displayed in the Boer War. Moreover, Canada obdurately refused to contribute towards naval defence of the Empire. For Imperialists the only light seemed to be provided by Australia and New Zealand. Both agreed to renew the 1887 Naval Agreement. Both agreed to scrap the earlier condition that the Royal Naval Squadron remain permanently in Australasian waters, a provision which was anathema to fleet concentration theorists like Selborne. In acceding to Admiralty pressure Barton was probably influenced by the conviction that Australia could not at that stage afford the expense of establishing a naval nucleus of her own. But there were others in Australia who disapproved strongly of the terms negotiated in London. To many, a straight out subsidy to the Royal Navy smacked of vassalage and guaranteed no definite local protection. For a time the passage of the new Naval Agreement through the Commonwealth Parliament remained in doubt. One of the avenues of influence which Selborne utilized in an attempt to persuade Australian politicians to ratify the Agreement was the Governor-General. A correspondence arguing the merits of the naval proposals passed between Tennyson and the First Lord of the Admiralty. At the same time Tennyson discussed this vital aspect of policy with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence and the Leader of the Opposition. When the

3. Forrest, the most Imperialist of Barton's ministers, was particularly susceptible to the sort of influence a Governor could wield. He regarded Government Houses as 'oases in the desert where the light of refinement and civilised manners ... had been kept burning'. Forrest to F.D. North, 8 August 1902. Forrest papers, microfilm reel G 660. A.N.L.
4. In a secret cable, 24 April 1903, Tennyson informed the Secretary of State: 'Reid ... has promised me support of Naval Agreement but asked me not to inform Cabinet of this ...' C.O. 418/26/15044, folios 331-334.
Agreement was finally ratified by the Commonwealth Parliament, Selborne wrote to thank the Governor-General for his assistance. He complimented Tennyson on his influence upon the Australian politicians, without which, he suggested, it was doubtful if the Agreement would have passed.¹

Though some of this must be attributed to formal courtesy on Selborne's part, the passage of the Naval Agreement did illustrate the opportunities available to an intelligent and well-informed Governor-General. Not only did he provide a useful advanced listening post for the British Government, he also had, by virtue of his unique private access to Australian politicians, special means of persuasion and influence. Tennyson's inexperience and obvious lack of prestige in Imperial circles made it unlikely that his personal views were very significant to Australian politicians. Had he been more of an expert, such as the Victorian Governor, Sir George Clarke,² his opinion could have carried more weight. Had Hopetoun remained until 1903 he may have been a more influential advocate. In 1902 he had prepared a memorandum for Barton urging the advantages of continuing to contribute to the Imperial Navy.³ As it was, Tennyson was only one of a circle of Imperial officials, such as Clarke

1. Selborne to Tennyson, 14 August and 5 September 1903. Tennyson papers, MS 479/2/317 and MS 1963/233. A.N.L.
2. Later Lord Sydenham. Clarke was a distinguished soldier, who, finding his career at an apparent cul de sac, had accepted the post of Governor in Victoria and had ambitions to succeed Tennyson as Governor-General. In 1903 he returned to England to serve on the Esher Commission and subsequently became first Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence. For autobiography see Lord Sydenham of Combe, My Working Life (London, 1927). In 1904 Reid enquired whether there were objections if the Commonwealth Government consulted Governors of States 'gentlemen of high Naval and Military experience' upon matters pertaining to the defence of Australia. See Reid to Northcote, 23 November 1904. CP 78, series 21, bundle 59, item 8. C.A.O.
3. Hopetoun to Barton, 29 April 1902. Barton papers, MS 51/497. A.N.L.
and the Admirals of the Australasian Station, who urged the Commonwealth to agree with Admiralty doctrine.

In a typical piece of self-aggrandisement, Tennyson allowed himself to claim, in 1914, that he had 'worked hard that Australia should have a fleet of her own'. An examination of his correspondence reveals that in fact his counsel was in the opposite direction. However his Governorship in Adelaide had brought him into contact with the most voluble exponent of a local navy, Captain W.R. Creswell, and they continued to correspond after Tennyson had become Governor-General. Tennyson's correspondence reveals that the Representative of the Crown had unique access to a whole range of opinions and attitudes. Barton, Forrest, Reid, Creswell, Clarke, Selborne and Chamberlain received the benefit of Tennyson's opinions on the question of renegotiation of the Naval Agreement. His influence was probably marginal. But an abler, subtler, more diplomatic Governor-General would have utilized the opportunities to greater effect.

In the sphere of military defence the Governor-General was no less active in making known his views. Tennyson quickly became close to the Commandant of the Federal Forces, Hutton, who was a constant visitor to Government House. But, as Minto had discovered, the General could be an embarrassing associate. Tennyson soon became embroiled in difficulties between the single-minded soldier and the economy-minded Australian

1. Rear Admiral Sir Lewis Beaumont, succeeded in 1903 by Vice Admiral A.D. Fanshawe. For their advice to Forrest see Atkinson, Australian Defence Policy, pp. 199-203, 216-8.
3. See Tennyson papers, MS 479/5/37, 38 and 77. A.N.L.
4. Lady Tennyson wrote to her mother, 12 October 1902: 'Sir Edward constantly comes in to talk over things with H[allam]'. Tennyson papers, MS 479/41/191. A.N.L.
Government, over military reorganization. Tennyson's letters and conversations with his Ministers, especially with Forrest, urging compliance with Hutton's plans for a field force,\(^1\) were well-meant but, like Hopetoun's efforts regarding the choice of Commandant, ineffective.

It was not only in Australia that the defence reorganization planned by Hutton encountered opposition.\(^2\) In February 1903 a Colonial Defence Committee Memorandum, criticizing the field force scheme, was forwarded through the office of Governor-General for the information of the Commonwealth Government. Tennyson, probably at the instigation of Hutton, withheld this document from his Ministers. Explaining his action to the Secretary of State, the Governor-General stated that the General's plans were already encountering sufficient opposition within the Commonwealth, and that if the Committee's memorandum were transmitted to the Cabinet, Imperial interests would be harmed.\(^3\)

This was a serious intervention by the Representative of the Crown in a matter of vital concern to the Commonwealth Government. Tennyson was mistaken in attempting to withhold from his advisers the views of British experts on Hutton's schemes. Fortunately a more realistic view of the situation was taken by the Colonial Office. The Governor-General's caution was brushed aside and he was instructed to forward the memorandum in question to his Ministers.\(^4\) Though he did show it to Barton and Forrest, His Excellency did not retreat from his position and in a personal letter to Chamberlain expressed his disapproval of any action which tended to make

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the Commandant's position more difficult than it already was.¹

Though the contretemps over the Colonial Defence Committee Memorandum was an indiscretion on the part of the Governor-General, some of his reasoning was realistic. He pointed out with admirable insight that Australia regarded herself as an ally of Great Britain, but as a self-governing community she refused to bind herself. Britain must be content to trust to Australian loyalty. Tennyson assured the British Government that if the mother country became involved in any grave national crisis, Australian support would be unstinting.² In these assertions His Excellency's judgment was sound. Yet he badly misread Australian opinion regarding Imperial Federation. He remained convinced that Australian leaders were becoming more favourably inclined towards closer union, and in a speech on the eve of his departure he expressed the hope that this would soon be achieved. The Daily Telegraph chided the Governor-General for his remarks, asserting that 'Representation in the Imperial Parliament or in any Imperial Council with power to do anything, would deprive us of a corresponding amount of our existing autonomous rights, and would therefore be a backward step on the road of British destiny'.³

In the conduct of Executive Council meetings Tennyson was more scrupulous than his predecessor. In August 1901 Hopetoun had delegated to the Vice-President of the Council authority to conduct business during the Governor-General's temporary absence.⁴ Tennyson renewed this practice but he secured from the Prime Minister an undertaking that he would be

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2. Ibid.
4. Copy of authority signed by Hopetoun, 7 August 1901 in CP 290, series 12, bundle 1. C.A.O.
given advance notice when important business was to be discussed. His Excellency made a point of being present on such occasions. His written delegation of authority stipulated that only business of a formal or routine character was to be dealt with in his absence. These arrangements remained the basis of the Executive Council machinery for at least the next quarter of a century.

Tennyson left Australia in January 1904. In contrast to the departure of his predecessor, press opinion concerning his term of office was universally enthusiastic and complimentary. His occasional indiscretions had been kept remarkably quiet, while his frequent assertions that a Governor-General need not entertain extravagantly seemed to provide what most Australians required of him. One magazine, reflecting upon the terms of office of the early Governors-General a few years later, commented: 'Lord Tennyson departed almost as unobtrusively from the Commonwealth as he had come'.

In several respects the end of Tennyson's career in the Commonwealth had coincided with significant developments in Australia's relationship with Britain. The departure of Chamberlain from the Colonial Office in October 1903 and his replacement by Alfred Lyttelton signified the end of that department's most energetic phase of existence. In local political affairs, Barton had, in September, been replaced by the more decisive Deakin. But prospects for political stability were poor. The

1. See translation of cable to Secretary of State, 5 September 1903. Copy in Ibid. Also Deakin to Tennyson, 19 October 1903. Copy in CP 78, series 19A. C.A.O.
2. Tennyson to Deakin, 30 November 1903. Subsequent Governors-General reproduced the delegation drafted by Tennyson. Copies are in Ibid.
4. Lyttelton was Secretary of State for Colonies from October 1903 to December 1905.
December elections had returned a Parliament with three parties evenly divided. In such a situation the Governor-General needed qualities of judgment and experience which Tennyson clearly did not possess.

There was some irony in the general public satisfaction with Tennyson's period of office for he had been far less capable than his predecessor. As Governor in Adelaide he had been successful and he had brought to the office of Governor-General a timely consciousness of the jealousies of the States towards the Commonwealth. He was neither extravagant nor ostentatious. Moreover, though in private he was generous with advice to his Ministers, he was shrewd enough to refrain from any public comment on Australia's affairs until his last few days in office. The positive side to his administration was less than the 'conspicuous success' which the Advertiser applauded⁴ but there had been some resolution of the ambiguities of his office during his term.

Control of the public correspondence of the Commonwealth had been transferred to a public servant responsible to the Department of External Affairs where it remained for a further twenty five years. Though Tennyson himself failed to recognize the development, both the Colonial Office and the Australian Government had clarified their concept of the role of Governor-General. In matters of domestic concern he was to act as impartial constitutional sovereign, independent of any British suzerainty. In matters which affected Imperial interests he was to act on the instructions of the Imperial Government. The extent to which he was successful in these two capacities depended upon His Excellency's tact, prestige and diplomatic skills. Tennyson's tour of duty had seen the

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consolidation of the office of Governor-General as an institutional framework which assisted in maintaining the Imperial connection.

His subsequent career is easily summarized. Though he lived until 1928 he never again held any public office.¹ On his return to England he took up residence in his father's house, Farringford on the Isle of Wight, which he preserved as it had been when the poet lived there.² Though in the exercise of his role of Governor-General the second Lord Tennyson was pompous and inflexible it was perhaps to have been expected. He was an ordinary man of no particular talent, thrust by his father's eminence and the accident of Hopetoun's resignation into higher public prominence than his capacities warranted. The delicate relationship of colony to Empire, developing towards 'Dominion Status', was too subtle for his imagination, which had remained rooted in the high Victorian ideas of his father. But he had enjoyed his life as Governor-General, and in his subsequent, long, empty, career looked back with affection and self-satisfaction to those few years in his life in which he was Lord Tennyson and not 'the son of Lord Tennyson'.

1. In November 1905 he was offered the Governorship of Madras but refused. See Brodrick to Tennyson, 15 November 1905. Tennyson papers, MS 479/21 volume 2, p. 70-1. R.N.L

2. The Times, in an obituary on 3 December 1928, commented: 'To cross the threshold ... was ... like returning as if by some magic into that Victorian Age which now seems so remote. Time in that house in the hollow seemed to have stood still'.
clear insight and cautious sagacity
Governor-General
of Australia
21 January 1904
to 9 September 1908

Bulletin, 4 February 1904.
On 21 January 1904 in the Queen's Hall of Melbourne's Federal Parliament House, Australia's leading politicians, judges and other public figures were gathered to witness the assumption of office of the Commonwealth's third Governor-General. To many in Australia the swift succession of Representatives of the Crown in the Commonwealth had been an unsatisfactory feature of the early years of federation. The Australasian recalled earlier expectations that 'the office would be coveted as one of comfort as well as high honour and that the term of five years at least would be ... regularly served by its occupants'. Instead, as the West Australian pointed out, they had so far averaged one a year. It was hoped that the coming of Sir Henry Stafford Northcote, first Baron Northcote, would be 'the commencement of a stable era'.

In the choice of a successor to Tennyson the Commonwealth Government had exercised only nominal influence. Barton had requested, in October 1902, that the names under consideration be made known to the Australian Cabinet before an appointment was made, but the Colonial Office had been unsympathetic to the suggestion. In July 1903 the Secretary of State cabled to ascertain whether Northcote's appointment 'would be acceptable'. The matter was considered in Cabinet a few days later and Northcote's selection was approved.

1. Australasian (Melbourne), 23 January 1904.
2. West Australian, 14 January 1904.
4. Tennyson to Secretary of State, 26 October 1902. C.O. 418/19/44392, folios 361-2. See copy of Barton's letter to Tennyson, 25 October 1902 in CP 78, series 21, bundle 50. C.A.O.
5. Tennyson to Barton, 27 July 1903. Barton papers, MS 51/646. A.N.L.
6. See note in Barton's diary for 3 August 1903, 'Northcote ... Yes'. Barton papers, MS 51/951. A.N.L.
The new Governor-General, short, with a swarthy face and bushy moustache, was fifty-seven years of age at the time of assuming office. In many ways his temperament and experience fitted him particularly well for the post. He had no previous connection with Australia, but his close friendship with both Jersey and Beauchamp probably influenced his decision to accept the nomination. Though a peer in his own right, his public prominence in Britain was largely due to his father, Lord Iddesleigh, whose conscientious, efficient and virtuous character he had inherited. Northcote had a great deal of practical experience in the workings of British bureaucracy and politics. Following the customary Eton and Oxford education, and forced, as a second son, to make his own way he had joined the Foreign Office. After a time as private secretary to his father, he entered politics in the Conservative interest as representative for Exeter. Twenty years in the House of Commons gave him an understanding of parliamentary forms and political conventions which was to be invaluable during his term of office in Australia. He gained some experience of minor office in Britain as Financial Secretary to the War Office and Surveyor General of Ordnance. He also saw work abroad, accompanying a mission to arrange the Alabama Treaty in 1871 and serving as Private Secretary to Lord Salisbury in Constantinople five years later. Finally a successful term of office as Governor of Bombay from 1899 to 1903 had endowed him with a conscientious attention to the details of administering the overseas Empire without that hardening of opinion which a longer term of duty in the Raj might have effected. This varied


2. Better known as Sir Stafford Northcote, Disraeli's second in command.
experience and his own temperament provided him with the qualities of
tact and diplomacy which were the most important requirements for an
Australian Governor-General.

By 1904 the ambassadorial nature of the office was becoming
generally recognized. A few years earlier the Age had described a
Constitutional Governor as 'an English official at the other end of the
wire ... an intermediary between his constitutional advisers on the spot
and his official employers at home'. ¹ Even the Argus, whose attitude
towards the British Empire was more often emotional than dispassionate,
recognized the diplomatic function of the Representative of the Crown:

The Governor-General is, no doubt, expected to act as confidential adviser to the Imperial Government on all
Australian matters, and to keep the Colonial Office
informed of everything that goes on, just as the head of a
diplomatic mission regularly sends private advice that
does not appear in ordinary despatches.

But in addition to this role as representative of the British
Government, as the Age pointed out,

A Colonial Governor, even of the most modern type, does not pass his time "in a swoon of dreamful ease"... he has a considerable amount of routine work of the goose step order to get through, from which there can be no reprieve, and much of his popularity will depend upon his
capacity for looking cheerful upon an unsucculent diet of
official addresses and municipal congratulations.

Northcote proved to be conscientious in fulfilling these mundane
gubernatorial duties. Though the unhappy conclusion to Hopetoun's term
of office had indicated that federal politicians were not prepared to pay
for an extravagant, ostentatious head of State, a Governor-General still
had a great many calls upon his time for official or public occasions.

¹ Age, 22 January 1901.
² Argus, 8 February 1904.
³ Age, 22 January 1901.
During the first four months of office, Lord and Lady Northcote acquainted themselves with the social functions of Governor-General in Melbourne. For most of this time Victoria was without a State Governor, so he was able to undertake a constant round of vice-regal activities without fear of offending or slighting the incumbent at State Government House. Their Excellencies visited hospitals, held small dinner parties and presented trophies at a Polo Gymkhana in Kooyong. Lacking the seigneurial charm of Hopetoun and the pomposity of Tennyson, Northcote's reserved, punctilious manner did not always impress. To Sir John Forrest he seemed 'slow'.¹ But Chief Justice Way of Adelaide felt that while he was 'not showy, everybody recognizes that he is safe, sincere, and honest' and on occasion he had exhibited a 'pleasant flavour of dry humour in his speeches'.²

To Deakin, however, there was no question of Northcote's personal qualities. Himself a man careful to preserve his 'inner life' in spite of a public career, Deakin appreciated Northcote's restrained public manner and inner shrewdness. Moreover, the Governor-General was a welcome, discreet friend, fresh from that world of Imperial politics in which Deakin was so interested. They became close personal friends, and remained so irrespective of whether Deakin was in or out of office. Ten years later Deakin still thought of Northcote in terms of affection and respect. Comparing him with Lord Dudley he commented that Northcote's 'tactful, patient friendliness and modesty had given him not only knowledge but power among politicians and over the much wider area in which he was

². Way to Tennyson, 12 October 1904. Tennyson papers, MS 1963/281. A.N.L.
trusted and warmly liked'.

More practically, Northcote's contacts with British society, and his friendship with British politicians provided an opportunity for Deakin's own views, and Australia's, to be conveyed through a persuasive confidante. Deakin had always considered that an Australian viewpoint was too often unavailable in London. This had been one reason which led him to write anonymous articles for the *Morning Post*. He realized that if Australia were to have a voice in international affairs, it must be in London that it was raised. Australian Governors who returned to England provided a circle of men there with first hand knowledge of Australia and, presumably, sympathy for its special problems and needs. The *Sydney Morning Herald* expressed this opinion in a leading article on the day Northcote was sworn in. His predecessor, Tennyson, would, it hoped, become 'one of that growing number of ex-Australians, if the term may be used, who represent Australian feeling with understanding as well as sympathy at the centre of the Empire'. Deakin's care to maintain contact with ex-Governors reflected his hope that they might provide useful avenues of influence in London. Through Northcote many of his ambitions and

2. See J.A. La Nauze, 'Alfred Deakin and the Morning Post', in *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand*, 6, no. 24 (May, 1955), pp. 361-375. Also La Nauze (ed.), *Federated Australia*. He explained to Richard Jebb, in May 1907 that his first aim was 'to inform English readers of the inner meaning of Australian politics'. La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, 2, p. 353. He wrote these articles from 1900 to 1914.
4. During 1905 Deakin corresponded with Clarke, then Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, on problems of naval defence. See La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, 2, pp. 520-2.
hopes for Australia reached Balfour and the British Cabinet.  

In turn the Prime Minister found a ready admirer in the Governor-General. He regarded Deakin as 'a chivalrous gentleman' and 'a very nice fellow'. The Australian leader's advice and friendship were to be of considerable assistance to Northcote in the confusing political situation which confronted him in the following five years. On occasion there were differences of opinion, but these were always accompanied with respect and restraint on both sides. Compared with the too deferential attitude of Barton towards Hopetoun, and the sometimes strained relations between Tennyson and his Prime Minister, the association of affectionate but independent mutual admiration of Deakin and Northcote was both positive and fruitful.

While privately His Excellency was on the closest terms with Deakin in public he was strictly impartial. Reid, Watson and other politicians were frequent guests at Government House. Because of the political instability which existed for much of his term of office it was vital that Northcote keep abreast of the political situation. He was a shrewd observer of events and trends, and a conscientious examiner of parliamentary debates and official papers, 'with the English trained official's respect for blue books'. His own parliamentary experience made Australian political developments particularly absorbing for him, and in both official and private communications with the British Government he transmitted his assessments of events and personalities. The Governor-General was only

1. Northcote corresponded, privately, with Balfour, Chamberlain and Elgin. See Balfour papers, Add.Mss.49697 British Museum;and Northcote papers, C.O. Gifts and Deposits, P.R.O. 30/56/1.


3. Punch (Melbourne), 17 September 1908.
a few days in Australia when he heard, at a luncheon of the Australian Natives Association, the Prime Minister liken the state of parties in the Commonwealth Parliament after the 1903 election to 'three elevens in the field'. It was to be a political dilemma for the Governor-General who was to a certain extent required to act as umpire. Three months after he arrived Northcote received Deakin's resignation and was required to exercise his constitutional role as head of State and select a chief adviser to carry on the Government of the Commonwealth.

The defeat of the Deakin Government over an amendment to a clause in the Arbitration Bill, bringing State public servants within the scope of the legislation, placed the Governor-General, *prima facie*, in a difficult position. Normally when a Government was defeated the Leader of the Opposition could be expected to be called on to form a Ministry. But in this case Reid had voted with the Government in the vital division. Moreover the motion had been moved, not by Watson, the leader of the Labor Party in the House, but by Fisher, his deputy. Though the *Argus* continued to scout the possibility that Reid would be asked to form a Government, most Australian newspapers agreed that the Governor-General ought to call on the leader of the Labor Party. It was generally known that if Deakin's advice were requested, he would suggest that Watson be invited to be Prime Minister. Even the *Argus* commented that 'as a general rule, if the leader of a Government on leaving office is consulted [as to his successor] his opinion carries considerable weight'.

The political crisis came to a head during the fourth week in

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1. See report in *Age*, 2 February 1904.
April 1904. Melbourne was agog with rumours and speculation about the situation. Added irony was provided by the fact that the chief protagonists were the guests of the Governor-General at a Government House luncheon on the day that Deakin submitted his Ministry's resignation. In the midst of all the public fuss, with perfect constitutional propriety, Northcote asked Deakin for his advice. Acting upon it, he commissioned Watson to form a Government.¹

Though most of the credit for this action, which gave the Labor Party in the Commonwealth its first vestiges of respectability, must go to Deakin, a certain amount of recognition ought to be accorded the Governor-General. Notwithstanding his conservative instincts he invited Deakin's advice aware that this meant entrusting the Government to a party which must have appeared to have had more than a modicum of extremism about it to the British Governor-General. Another might have as easily refrained from asking for the retiring Prime Minister's advice, or have regarded Deakin's advice as being nothing more than an indication of the distrust with which he viewed Reid. Tennyson, for example, had constantly denigrated the Labor Party and criticized Barton's dependence upon its support in the first Commonwealth Parliament.² Reid's comments after Watson was commissioned suggest that had he been offered the opportunity he would have accepted.³ However consideration of other courses open to the Governor-General merely lends weight to the

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2. In January 1903 Tennyson wrote to Barton, concerning the 'six hatters' controversy: 'the course of policy advocated by the Trade Hall people would be fatal'. Draft in Tennyson papers, diary entry 1 January 1903. MS 479/2. A.N.L.
3. See interview with Reid, Argus, 30 April 1904.
constitutional propriety of Northcote's action in asking Deakin's advice. It seems that he also required to be satisfied by Deakin that a Labor Government would not be immediately defeated. Writing to the Secretary of State he explained 'Mr Deakin ... will certainly wish to give the new Ministry a fair trial'.

Relations between the new Prime Minister and the Governor-General were cordial and seemed to indicate mutual respect. Two weeks after Watson had taken office Northcote wrote to Balfour in amused but commendatory fashion, describing the new regime.

The situation has a distinctly comical side. The Labour Ministers words are a mixture of honey & butter - no extreme measures - bow to the will of the House - take into consideration, etc - in short all of the orthodox phrases of the most respectable of Administrations.

Though this comment was distinctly patronising it was accurate and indicated a certain amount of goodwill on the part of the Governor-General towards the Labor Government.

No longer benefiting from Deakin's counsel in an official capacity, Northcote continued to regard the ex-Prime Minister as unofficial adviser, in matters not directly related to party or political affairs. One subject about which Northcote asked Deakin's advice concerned the perambulatory duties of Governor-General. In June 1904 he asked Deakin's opinion 'as to the advisability of spending a considerable part of the summer in Tasmania'.

1. Northcote to Secretary of State, secret, 23 April 1904. C.O. 418/31/19140, folios 239-242.
2. Northcote to Balfour, 9 May 1904. Balfour papers, Add Mss 49697, folios 43-4. British Museum. He also wrote, 'of course it is a pity that the Federal Parlt. should be more Radical than the State Parliaments ... but such is life'.
3. Northcote to Deakin, 19 June 1904. Deakin papers, MS 1540/3903. A.N.L.
The need for a Governor-General to travel extensively around the continent had been firmly established before Northcote assumed office. He entered into the spirit of this aspect of his duties with zeal. During his four and a half years of office he visited every State\(^1\) and travelled regularly between Melbourne and Sydney. At first there were objections from the States at the cost of this use of their services, but eventually Deakin agreed that the Commonwealth should meet His Excellency's travelling expenses. To some extent climate, and a concern for his own comfort influenced Northcote's enthusiasm for this aspect of his role. In 1904, the Governor-General had no intention of staying in Melbourne during the months of June, July or August. Consequently he moved his residence to Sydney in May and on 30 June set off on a three weeks tour of Queensland.

It was while he was on his tour of Queensland that Northcote encountered the first practical problem to arise during his term. As his predecessors had discovered before him, there were hidden dangers in apparently inoffensive public remarks made by the Representatives of the Crown in Australia. In his public speeches since he had arrived Northcote had been judiciously non-committal. He had discerned that it was better for a Governor-General to be uncontroversial, even dull, in his speechmaking, than to risk commenting on current affairs. Avoiding the emotional nervous oratorical style of Hopetoun and the pompous self-assurance of Tennyson, Northcote tended to err rather on the side of triteness and caution. Generally he chose non-controversial topics and frequently expounded in public on the need for a Governor to maintain

\(^1\) He also visited Northern Territory in May and June 1907. See 'Notes on the Governor-General's tour' by Samuel Mauger M.P. in Review of Reviews for Australasia, XXXI, no. 3, 1 September 1907, pp. 232-240.
strict political impartiality. He tended to urge conventional Victorian virtues, such as thrift and self sufficiency. The Australian Magazine, comparing the early Governors-General in 1909, commented that, as a speaker, Northcote had

that ponderous style which seems ingrained in Englishmen. He was not eloquent. But he had a sustained consecutiveness of expression which made him exceedingly easy to follow...
There were no fine periods, no striving after phrase making. But he talked pleasantly and with fine diplomacy of whatever was uppermost in his mind.¹

Yet even so careful and uncontroversial a speaker as Northcote found himself under attack for some of his public statements, mostly from members of the Labor Party. During his tour of Queensland in 1904, confronted with a deputation of kanakas who presented a petition protesting against their prospective deportation, he expressed sympathy for their plight.² There were murmurs from some Labor parliamentarians, though W.M. Hughes, then Minister for External Affairs stated publicly that the Government took no exception to the Governor-General's remarks. As the Argus pointed out, 'words of sympathy convey no expression of opinion as to the justice or policies of the law under which the deportation may take place'.³

Northcote's most controversial speech, also made on a vice-regal tour, occurred in September the following year. On this later occasion, an address to Officers of the Commonwealth Military Forces in Perth was made the subject of debate in the Senate. W.G. Higgs, a Labor Senator, moved that:

in the opinion of the Senate it is contrary to the established

². Argus, 11 July 1904.
³. Ibid.
principles of constitutional and parliamentary government that the head of the Executive should in public express himself on matters of public policy unless advised to do so by his responsible Ministers.

Specifically, he objected to those sections of the Governor-General's speech referring to the adoption of a citizen military force for the Commonwealth. The possible introduction of a military system along Swiss lines was at the time the subject of debate. Northcote had warned that Switzerland's situation was not entirely parallel with Australia's. On the surface it was hardly a profound remark, but Higgs interpreted it as an unacceptable interference in a current political controversy. He pointed out that only a few days previously Hughes had recommended that Australia adopt the Swiss military system.

Replying on behalf of the Government, Senator Playford, Minister for Defence, agreed with Higgs that it was the duty of the Governor-General to hold the balance evenly. Certainly he ought not to enter the public arena and express opinions favorable to his Government's proposals any more than he should express opinions hostile to their proposals.

But he denied that Northcote had exceeded the proper bounds of action for a constitutional monarch.

Among the other speakers opinion was divided. Some disapproved of the Governor-General's remarks. Others, such as the Labor leader in the Senate, George Pearce, could not see that His Excellency 'in this or any other speech had transgressed the liberty that should be accorded to him'. On the contrary Pearce considered that the Governor-General had 'rendered Australia a service in directing public attention to an important question, without involving himself in party politics'. As a result of the attitude

1. C.P.D., XXVII, pp. 3438-3453.
taken by Pearce and two other Labor Senators, in the final division the Senate rejected Higgs' motion by a narrow majority.¹

Though precluded from replying in public to the implied censure involved in Higgs' motion, the Governor-General vehemently justified the propriety of his speech in a private letter to Deakin. To deny to the Representative of the Crown a right 'to express himself on matters of public policy', Northcote felt, was far too sweeping.² But he was careful in speeches thereafter never to sail as close to the wind of political controversy again. Significantly, his reputation had emerged relatively unscathed from the brief debate in the Senate.³ Senator O'Keefe, though he disapproved of the Governor-General's action, felt that, generally speaking, His Excellency had 'pleased the people of Australia more than had any of his predecessors'.⁴ Complimentary references to the Northcotes' popularity seem to have been more than merely polite formalities. Even Higgs, on occasion an outspoken republican, conceded that the Governor-General, as a man, had impressed him favourably and he believed that 'no Vice-regal couple ... have been more anxious, and more successful, in placing people whom they have met at their ease and un-embarrassed...'.⁵ He was not to be so complimentary to Northcote's successor.

¹. Ayes 8, Noes 10. Higgs had linked Northcote's speech in Perth with a recently published despatch of the Governor of South Australia, Sir George Le Hunte, in which he had reflected upon such highly controversial subjects as Australia's racial policies and the relative merits of free trade and protection. Pearce regarded this interference as 'criminal' though at the urging of the President of the Senate he substituted first 'culpable' and then 'injudicious'. C.P.D., XXVII, p. 3451.

². Northcote to Deakin, undated. Deakin papers, MS 1540/3918. A.N.L.

³. In 1909 the Australian Magazine stated that 'never all through his term' did Northcote give 'the remotest chance to any fault finders to discover party sympathies or personal predilections'. 2 August 1909, p. 670.

⁴. C.P.D., XXVII, p. 3450.

⁵. Ibid., p. 3439.
That Northcote was held in high esteem among politicians in October 1905 was a significant reflection of the notably successful exercise of his constitutional functions. During the previous eighteen months, on several occasions, he had been required to play an active role in Australian political affairs and in so doing had been exposed to the light of controversy. It is a tribute to his tact and good-sense that not even among Labor members of Parliament was any rancour expressed. This was despite his refusal, in July 1904, to follow the advice of the first Commonwealth Labor Government.

During the winter of 1904 the political situation had gradually worsened for the minority Watson Ministry. From the day that he had become Prime Minister, the press had constantly reported rumours of a coalition between elements of Deakin's Protectionists and Reid's Free Traders. Eventually an unofficial combination of these elements succeeded in narrowly defeating the Labor Government over a clause in the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill. The Governor-General hurried to Melbourne from his winter residence in Sydney to meet Watson. No doubt he had read the press reports of the somewhat sharp debate which had preceded the downfall of the Government. The angry recriminations may have interested the experienced ex-member of the House of Commons, but they did not concern him directly. However the action taken by the Watson Cabinet subsequent to their defeat brought His Excellency once again to the centre of the political arena. On 13 August Watson called on the Governor-General and requested him to exercise his constitutional power to dissolve the Parliament. Northcote promised that he would consider

1. C.P.D., XXI, p. 4264.
this advice. For 48 hours those Australians who followed the manoeuvrings of the Commonwealth Parliament awaited the Governor-General's decision.

The right to dissolve Parliament was the most powerful prerogative of the Crown remaining to colonial Governors in 1904. In normal cases where Parliament had expired by effluxion of time, its dissolution was a formal step in which the Representative of the Crown acted upon the advice of his Cabinet. But, in the British parliamentary system, the Crown was not obliged to act upon the advice of Ministers where the life of the Parliament had not expired. In 1784 Edmund Burke had warned that to concede to the Ministry of the day a right to dissolve Parliament at any moment it pleased could 'end in nothing less than the destruction of the dearest rights and liberties of the nation'. Over a hundred years later, custom and precedent had somewhat modified this power of the British monarch. Queen Victoria, encouraged from time to time by Lord Salisbury, considered that she had the inherent right to refuse Ministers advice to dissolve Parliament on her own initiative but in fact she never did so. Bagehot was of the opinion that 'The Queen can hardly

1. Northcote to Secretary of State, confidential, 15 August 1904. Copy in CP 78, series 9, vol. 1, p. 337.C.A.O.
2. Quoted in Eugene A. Forsey, The Royal Power of Dissolution of Parliament in the British Commonwealth (Toronto, 1943), p. 9. This monograph is an exhaustive discussion of the subject, and in particular of the refusal of a request for a dissolution by the Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie-King in 1926. Though he establishes that in this case the Governor-General of Canada, Lord Byng acted within his legal rights, he fails to justify Byng's action in the wider sphere of growing Dominion independence. See below chapter X, pp. 481-482.
3. In 1846 Queen Victoria wrote 'She considers the power of dissolving Parliament a most valuable and powerful instrument in the hands of the Crown, but which ought not to be used except in the extreme cases and with certainty of success'. Quoted in E.R. Hopkins, Confederation at the Crossroads (Toronto, 1968), p. 24.
now refuse a defeated Minister the chance of a dissolution...'. But in the colonies no vagueness attached to the right of a Governor to refuse a request for a dissolution made by his local chief Minister.

Though Watson's request in 1904 was the first occasion on which a Governor-General had been faced with the problem in the Commonwealth, it had been a regular occurrence in the various self-governing colonies prior to federation and in Canada. At the 1887 Colonial Conference an attempt by New Zealand to restrict the Governor's power in this sphere had received little support. Indeed, Griffith, representing Queensland, had asserted that there was a need for 'some superior and calmer authority to determine whether a dissolution is necessary or not'. The Representative of the Crown thus retained his unfettered discretion to refuse or accept such advice. But there were no clear rules governing the situation. If Northcote checked prior Australian precedents he would have found that there had been occasions in the recent past when a Governor had granted a dissolution to a Prime Minister, although the life of Parliament had not expired and it was probable that an alternative Government would be found. Lord Carrington had granted a dissolution to Sir George Dibbs in January 1889 only two years after the previous election and despite the extreme likelihood of another Protectionist leader being able to carry on the Government.


3. Forsey, Royal Power of Dissolution, p. 275, mentions this occasion briefly. The Governor dissolved Parliament despite a resolution passed by the Assembly asserting that an alternative Government could be found. See N.S.W.P.D., 1888-89, (First Series), XXXVI, pp. 1644-1659.
But Carrington's action in 1889 had been strongly criticised at the time. It was more commonly thought that, unless there were a vital question of public policy at issue, upon which the electors ought to be given the opportunity to express an opinion, all reasonable combinations of Parliament ought to be attempted before a dissolution were granted. In 1899 Governors in three of the Australian colonies had refused requests for dissolutions.¹ The grounds upon which such decisions should be reached remained vague. The leading text book in 1904, Alpheus Todd's Parliamentary Government in the British Colonies² stipulated that 'the Governor must be himself the judge of the necessity for a dissolution'.³

If Northcote scanned the Australian press he would have found only the Age supporting the contention that Parliament ought to be dissolved. Syme's ardent Protectionist bias precluded his support of any action which allowed the arch-Free Trader, Reid, to form a Government. The Age editorial of 13 August commented:

If Mr Watson asks for a dissolution it should not be refused... Mr Reid does not and cannot represent the Commonwealth. He does not even represent the Opposition.⁴ The House has exhausted itself and ought to be dissolved.

The less fiscally prejudiced Argus was of the opinion that Reid ought to be called for by the Governor-General, who would thus have to refuse Watson's request for a dissolution. Leading Sydney and Adelaide newspapers supported Reid. There was, therefore, general newspaper acclamation of Northcote's action, when on 15 August he notified Watson that 'a General

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². The second edition was published in London in 1894. A reference in Northcote's despatch to the Secretary of State of 15 August 1904, CP 78, series 9, vol. 1, p. 337, C.A.O., indicates that Northcote did consult this text.
⁴. Age, 13 August 1904.
Election at the present moment does not appear to ... be essential in the public interest'. On the same day he called upon Reid to form a Government.

In a private letter to Balfour a week after the crisis had been resolved, Northcote praised Watson's behaviour and conceded that:

He had considerable Constitutional claims to a Dissolution, viz. that he was only beaten by 2 in a full House, & that a House not elected under his party's regime. Also that the whole trend of elections throughout Australia during the past eight months go to show that he would have come back strong enough to carry his arbitration Bill as it stood.

Thus Northcote revealed himself sympathetic to the main arguments pleaded by Watson and the Labor Party Cabinet in support of their request.

'However', he continued, 'I warned him when he came in that he must not count on a Dissolution if a stable Government could be formed without one'.

Watson accepted Northcote's decision without demur. Though Hughes and others said harsh things about their political opponents, they were not aggrieved with the Governor-General over his refusal of the request for a dissolution. Nor have subsequent commentators considered this decision as remarkable. Although H.V. Evatt, in his standard work on the reserve powers of the Crown, did not have access to full evidence connected with Northcote's refusal of Watson's request for a dissolution, it is clear that he considered Reid's success in forming an alternative

3. Ibid.
Ministry as justifying the Governor-General's action.¹ A. Berriedale Keith commented that 'the possibilities of carrying on the Parliament were not exhausted'² while Forsey notes that 'Supply had not been voted'.³ It is clear that in the death of the first Labor Government in the Commonwealth, no less than in its birth, the Governor-General acted with commendable insight and consideration, exercising his still significant role with tact and propriety.

The swearing in of George Reid as Prime Minister in August 1904 meant that within seven months of assuming the office of Governor-General, Northcote had witnessed no less than three Prime Ministers. Whether it was this experience of the instability of Australian politics and the relative permanence of his own tenure of office, or the natural result of his native self-assurance, Northcote showed himself more determined to press the independence of his functions as Governor-General during Reid's term of office than he had been with either Deakin or Watson.

The chief cause of concern during the brief Free Trade-Protectionist coalition was the troublesome Arbitration Bill. Exhibiting his usual nimbleness of political footwork, Reid himself secured the final passage of this Bill through Parliament. But, after the measure had finally received parliamentary approval, sudden and unexpected opposition was raised by the Governor-General. In his stand on the granting of Royal Assent to the Arbitration Bill, Northcote risked opposition from both his Australian advisers and the British Secretary of State for the Colonies.

¹ Ibid., p. 50.
³ Forsey, Royal Power of Dissolution, p. 36.
A few days before the Arbitration Bill passed the Senate, Northcote telegraphed to Downing Street an expression of disquiet at the publicly expressed opinion of his Attorney General, Sir Josiah Symon, that the inclusion of State Public Servants in its scope was unconstitutional. He informed the Secretary of State that, as the usual certificate from the Attorney General advising that he might constitutionally accept the measure would be inconsistent with this public statement, he proposed 'to require [a] special and satisfactory certificate from him' before he assented. He asked if the Law Officers of the Crown would suggest an appropriate form upon which he should insist. He also suggested that another possibility would be for him to 'reserve Bill for transmission home on these grounds, and as laying down most important and novel precedent for future bills of doubtful constitutionality'.

At the Colonial Office the permanent officials were in no doubt that it would be highly impolitic to advise His Majesty to refuse assent 'on a matter in which no imperial interest is involved'. Though in the past the Colonial Office had taken on the mantle of advisers to colonial Governments, and encouraged amendment to measures which might be later declared to be unconstitutional, the practice had long since ceased. Moreover the Colonial Office had always been reluctant to use this power of administrative review of colonial legislation when

1. Confidential cable, Northcote to Secretary of State, 2 December 1904. C.O. 418/31/40895, folios 672-4. Copy also in CP 78, series 1, item 1/828. C.A.O.
2. Minute by H.B. Cox, C.O. 418/31/40895, folios 672-4. Ommaney, the Permanent Under Secretary, agreed.
3. See Swinfen, Imperial Control of Dominion Legislation, pp. 5-6.
Imperial interests were not directly affected. Lyttelton's reply to Northcote's telegram pointed out that 'no imperial interest appeared to be involved' in the Arbitration legislation. Consequently, if the Attorney General were able and willing to advise Northcote to assent, this advice should be acted upon. Any question as to constitutionality could be subsequently decided by the High Court. The Secretary of State also commented that there seemed no reason for obtaining any special form of certificate from the Attorney General, or for consulting the Law Officers of the Crown in Britain.  

Northcote proceeded to ignore this despatch. Three days after it arrived he wrote to Symon indicating that he was reluctant to assent to the measure. He specifically referred to 'one very important provision ... which two Attorneys-General believe to be outside the Constitution which the Governor-General has sworn to maintain'. Northcote's mistake lay in his lack of legal knowledge. No measure of Parliament could be unconstitutional until it was declared so by the Australian High Court.

Symon's response to the Governor-General's interference was a long explicatory memorandum. He claimed that while he still regarded the provision to which Northcote referred as beyond the scope of the legislative power conferred upon the Commonwealth, no legislation was unconstitutional until the High Court had so decided. Nor did he think that Northcote was justified in withholding assent because part or all of a Bill appeared to the Governor-General to exceed the powers of the Commonwealth. In all the circumstances, the Attorney General was not

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1. Lyttelton to Northcote, secret cable, 6 December 1904. Copy in CP 78, series 1, item 1/828. C.A.O.
2. Northcote to Attorney General, 10 December 1904. Copy in Ibid.
prepared to advise His Excellency to withhold assent. Yet the receipt of this clear communication still did not persuade the Governor-General. He transmitted copies of his correspondence with Symon to the Prime Minister, asking whether "Ministers are prepared to advise him to give his assent". It was only after he received a terse reply from Reid that the Governor-General finally gave way.

Throughout this curious correspondence it appears that Deakin was privy to the Governor-General's actions from the very beginning. The day before he first communicated his doubts about the Arbitration Act to Lyttelton, Northcote wrote to Deakin:

Assuming that I find Sir J.S. to have expressed these views would you favour me with your opinion confidentially as to whether inclosed telegram is sufficiently clear & comprehensive.

It seems probable that the telegram referred to was his cable to the Secretary of State, and that 'Sir J.S.' was Sir Josiah Symon. Deakin's reply is not known. Properly, he ought to have counselled the Governor-General to follow the opinion of his constitutional advisers. However three months later Northcote was still consulting him about the matter. At the Governor-General's request he composed a series of questions which Northcote intended to have asked in the House of Lords concerning the assent to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act.

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1. Symon to Northcote, 14 December 1904. Ibid.
2. Northcote to Reid, 14 December 1904. Ibid.
3. Reid returned Northcote's letter with the following endorsement: 'Ministers advise Your Excellency to give your assent to the Bill as passed by Parliament'. Ibid.
4. Northcote to Deakin, 1 December 1904. Deakin papers, MS 1540/3908. A.N.L.
5. Deakin papers, MS 1540/3910. A.N.L. The incident is referred to in La Nauze, Alfred Deakin, 2, p. 380n.
It seems extraordinary that Northcote, previously so constitutionally correct in his relations with his Australian Governments should have allowed himself, not only to interfere in a matter of purely domestic politics, but to consult an ex-Prime Minister about one of his opponent's measures. Both actions were ill-advised; yet they reflect the concern Northcote felt that the office of Governor-General should be more than a mere rubber-stamp. In justifying his actions to the Secretary of State he disagreed with the assertion by Symon that the Governor-General's discretion to interfere in the passage of a legislative measure should be limited to cases in which Imperial interests alone were concerned. He agreed that in practice this would 'almost invariably' be the case, but he did not think that it 'should be laid down as a principle'. To do so would, in his opinion, further restrict the Governor-General's already limited constitutional powers. As his action would be a precedent for future holders of his office, and in view of his opinion that the constitutional question was a serious one, he asked to be favoured with the views of His Majesty's Government on the position he had adopted.¹

But the British Government was reluctant to engage in any dispute with the Commonwealth over Northcote's concern for the narrowing role of the Governor-General in domestic affairs. Lyttelton's reply was concise. He expressed entire agreement 'with the views of the Attorney General of the Commonwealth...'.² A few months later the Governor-General received unofficial advice from Sir R. Findley, law officer of the Crown,

1. Northcote to Lyttelton, 15 December 1904. Copy in CP 78, series 1, item 1/828. C.A.O.
2. Lyttelton to Northcote, 2 February 1905. Copy in Ibid.
agreeing with the Colonial Office instruction.\textsuperscript{1} Northcote's attempt to establish the office of Governor-General as a constitutional board of review for Commonwealth legislation was against the current of colonial development. Indeed it was exceedingly out of place in the wider sphere of self-government achieved long before federation in the Australian continent. The extraordinary thing is that Deakin did not point out to Northcote the anachronistic nature of his views. H.B. Cox's comment that Lord Northcote was 'taking too much upon himself'\textsuperscript{2} neatly summarized his abortive but persistent action over the Arbitration Bill.

The Governor-General was to prove anxious to take upon himself much more. One matter upon which he also took vigorous action during December 1904 concerned the procedure for recommending honours for Commonwealth citizens. Colonials, no less than Englishmen, had a weakness for titles and pursued them with diligence, but the system by which they were awarded was somewhat different. From about the middle of the nineteenth century colonial Governments submitted to the Crown recommendations of local citizens for British honours. But these lists had to pass through two intermediate authorities. The first was the local Governor, who could make additional suggestions of his own or subtract from the list names which he considered undesirable. The second was the Secretary of State for Colonies, who was hampered by restrictions on the number of honours available for colonial citizens. In these intermediate stages the lists of recommendations could be altered considerably or ignored completely, reflecting the restricted sovereignty

\textsuperscript{1} Northcote refers to this private letter in writing to Deakin on 24 March 1905. Deakin papers, MS 1540/3910. A.N.L.

\textsuperscript{2} Minute on Northcote to Lyttelton, confidential cable, 2 December 1904. C.O. 418/31/40895, folio 673.
of self-governing colonies in the Victorian age.

The establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia introduced a further complicating factor. After 1901 there was a seventh Australian Government hoping for the patronage which the conferring of honours provided. Chamberlain's inclination, strongly supported by Hopetoun, was to centralize the system for recommending honours for Australian citizens, just as he had hoped to make the office of Governor-General sole channel of communication in other matters. State Governors were instructed to forward such recommendations through the Governor-General.¹

Though clearly a convenient arrangement for the Colonial Office, this suggested procedure immediately encountered opposition from the Governors and the Governments of all Australian States. Again it was Tennyson, then still Governor of South Australia, who led the opposition. He objected to this new attempt to whittle away the prerogatives of the State Governors, and threaten the States' sovereignty. As a compromise, he suggested that though recommendations for the bestowal of honours for purely State services should continue to be sent directly to London by State Governors, copies could be sent simultaneously to the Governor-General for his information. Chamberlain accepted this solution, consoling Hopetoun with the assurance that he would still wish to have the advantage of the Governor-General's observations, and would defer acting upon States' recommendations until he had received an expression of the Governor-General's views.² By thus establishing the Governor-General as an advisory authority Chamberlain was sowing seeds of discord for the future.

1. For a close examination of this matter see Wright, Commonwealth and States, pp. 90-98.
So long as Hopetoun and Tennyson were administering the Commonwealth Government the compromise functioned fairly smoothly.\(^1\) But to Northcote's tidy mind the procedure was unsatisfactory and confusing. In the first place State Governors were not complying with their instructions to forward copies of their lists for the information of the Governor-General. In addition he felt that there was a disconcerting vagueness about the respective responsibilities of Premier, Prime Minister, Governor and Governor-General.

In 1904 Northcote was reproved by Lyttelton for submitting a Queensland honours list to Deakin.\(^2\) Such lists, he was told, were forwarded for His Excellency's personal observations, not for those of his Ministers.\(^3\) The Governor-General was stirred to take action on his own initiative to clarify the procedure. In December 1904 he wrote to all State Governors urging the adoption of a uniform system for honours recommendations, and submitting for their consideration a plan which he had discussed with the Prime Minister.\(^4\) He and Reid had agreed that State

1. But, despite his experience in Adelaide and his sympathy with the States' position, even Tennyson encountered difficulties. In 1902 New South Wales' Government asked that the Mayor of Sydney be granted the title 'Lord Mayor'. The Commonwealth Government, consulted by the Colonial Office, agreed, provided that the distinction was also conferred on Melbourne. This was done, but without prior enquiry as to the Victorian Government's attitude, an oversight which led to coolness between the Governor and Tennyson and a protest from the Victorian Government. See Wright, Commonwealth and States, pp. 93-4.

2. Northcote to Deakin, 18 April 1904. Deakin papers, MS 1540/3900. A.N.L. Quoted in Wright, Commonwealth and States, p. 95.

3. Lyttelton to Northcote, 8 July 1904. CP 78, series 4, vol. 1. C.A.O.

4. Northcote to all State Governors, 2 December 1904. Enclosure in Northcote to Secretary of State, 10 January 1905. Copy in C.O. Confidential Print Australian No. 189, 'Australia - Correspondence (2 November 1900 to 27 July 1908) relating to Australian Constitutional Questions', C.O. 881/11/189, pp. 22-3. I have not been able to find the original correspondence in the Colonial Office records copied by the Australian Libraries' Joint Copying Project.
and Commonwealth Premiers should submit names to the Governor or Governor-General, who should send the entire list, without deletions, to the Colonial Office. In so doing the Representatives of the Crown should communicate their own views of the recommendations made by Ministers. As this was an Imperial and not a local obligation, the Governor-General was of the opinion that a Governor was not obliged to reveal to his Ministers the advice he had tendered to the Secretary of State.

All except the Victorian Governor replied favourably to the Governor-General's suggestions, and he then forwarded the correspondence to the Colonial Office. A few months later the Colonial Office circulated a set of rules which specified that recommendations for 'Imperial or Municipal services or public services of a charitable, literary or scientific character' could be initiated by a Governor-General or Governor as well as by his Prime Minister. By also following Northcote's proposed procedure for awarding such honours, this despatch clarified what had been a confusing situation.¹

Though some order had been achieved, the dissension of the Victorian Governor, Sir Reginald Talbot² involved Northcote and the Commonwealth in a long controversy over States rights. At first the dispute centred on whether it was proper for the Governor-General to comment upon recommendations for State honours, without providing his State counterparts with his reasons. But later the area of contention widened to include the whole question of the Governor-General's competence to comment on States' honours lists. Lyttelton had instructed Governors to ensure that the Governor-General was afforded 'an adequate opportunity of expressing his views in regard to State honours'.³ Talbot objected to this

¹ Lyttelton to all State Governors, 17 April 1905. Copy in Ibid., pp. 28-9.
² Talbot was Governor of Victoria from April 1904 to July 1908.
as an interference in State concerns. Behind his stand on this issue there was a practical cause for complaint. Northcote persistently refused to endorse Talbot's recommendation of Victoria's Premier, Thomas Bent, for a knighthood. A curious three-way correspondence passed between the Federal and the State Government Houses in Melbourne, via the Colonial Office, over the respective roles of Governor and Governor-General.

Talbot, like other State Governors before and after him, was concerned that if the Governor-General could review and practically neutralize his recommendations where no question of national interests were involved, the position and privilege of the Governor, as direct Representative of His Majesty, would be seriously affected. He felt that acquiescence on his part would be tantamount to the abandonment of certain principles for which Victoria as well as other States have strenuously contended, namely, that they are independent Governments with the Governor as representative of the Crown at their head, and that they are not subordinate in any way to the Commonwealth Government.

He hastened to assure the Secretary of State that relations between himself and Northcote were, despite the 'peculiar position', most cordial.

The Colonial Office was in the invidious position of being unable to please either Governor-General or Governor. Its continued insistence upon receiving the Governor-General's views on States' honours lists antagonised the States, while by occasionally ignoring an adverse endorsement by the Governor-General on a name submitted by the State Governor, it incurred the wrath of the Commonwealth Government and the Governor-General. In May 1906 Northcote was so frustrated by the situation

1. Talbot to Secretary of State, secret, 27 June 1905. Copy in Ibid., pp. 31-32.
2. Copies in Ibid., pp. 29-65.
as to consider resigning.¹

Behind His Excellency's stand on the question of honours there was more than just a desire for personal aggrandisement. Throughout his letters runs a fundamentally centralist attitude to Australian federation. In one despatch he exhorted the British Government to do all it could 'to make Australians realize what Federal citizenship means; and to induce them to feel that they are Australians first, and New South Welshmen, Victorians, & c, only in the second place'.² Though this sentiment exposed Northcote to the criticism that he was interfering in the delicate federal balance³ it was a logical position for an Imperial officer sent to supervise a growing nation, especially in view of Deakin's known attitudes. The corollary of this argument was that the post of Governor-General should be maintained as a superior authority in the Commonwealth. It seemed to Northcote to be against the 'best interests of Australia' for the British Commonwealth 'to issue instructions which would be taken as lowering the position of the Head of the Federal Government in deference to the susceptibilities of State Ministries'.⁴

Though the Governors agreed, in May 1906, that no objection could be taken to the procedure, provided that the Governor-General refrained from communicating States' lists to Commonwealth Ministers⁵

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1. Elgin refers to Northcote's offer to resign in his letter to the Commonwealth Governor-General of 9 August 1906. Northcote papers, C.O. Gifts and Deposits, P.R.O. 30/56/L folios 97-100.
3. Wright, Commonwealth and States, pp. 28-31 accuses Northcote of not understanding 'the business in which he was meddling'.
5. See Minute by Sir Harry Rawson, Governor of New South Wales, enclosure in Rawson to Elgin, 29 May 1906. Copy in Ibid., pp. 64-5.
the State Governments remained dissatisfied with the situation. In 1908 Victoria took the dispute to the Premiers' Conference, which resolved to object to the practice of passing recommendations for honours through the Governor-General.¹ Lord Crewe² declined to disturb the compromise reached earlier. He informed the States that the Governor-General's views would continue to be sought on all Australian honours, but he rejected Northcote's claim to a right of absolute veto.³

The dispute over honours provided another illustration of the conflicting roles of Governor-General and State Governor after federation. It had been a problem for Hopetoun and was to be so for Northcote's successors. Tennyson had been able to reconcile these differences only by conceding that the Governor-General was 'primus inter pares'⁴ a concession which his successor was not inclined to repeat. Northcote felt that as federal figurehead he was obliged to assist in making federalism work; to promote nationalism as opposed to provincialism. In the process he asserted the superior function of the Governor-General and aroused the defensive reaction of State Governors. In these confrontations His Excellency was to receive strong support from Deakin, who, in July 1905, replaced Reid as Prime Minister.

Once again the instability of Commonwealth politics thrust the Governor-General into the limelight, and publicised his constitutional

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1. Rawson to Secretary of State, confidential, 2 June 1908. Copy in C.O. Confidential Print Australian No. 190, 'Australia. Further Correspondence (June, 1905 to December, 1910)' C.O. 881/11/190, pp. 10-12.

2. Secretary of State 1908-1910.


4. Tennyson cautioned Northcote in a letter of 16 September 1903: 'The fact of his being "primus inter pares" cannot be too often remembered'. Tennyson papers, MS 479/2/320. A.N.L.
responsibility as head of state. Reid's fall from office was swift and controversial. Interpreting a speech by Deakin in June as a 'notice to quit' he threw the newly reassembled Parliament into confusion by omitting from the Governor-General's speech any policy proposals for the session. Behind this manoeuvre lay a determination to force a vote of confidence leading to a dissolution of Parliament. Reid hoped to convince Northcote that, as all party combinations had been exhausted, a new House of Representatives should be elected. But Deakin's political skill was equal to these transparent tactics. The expected censure motion, carried by a large majority, was worded so as to indicate Parliament's intention to proceed with the business of the session.

Consequently, when Reid called to see the Governor-General, and requested a dissolution, it was clear that an alternative Government could be found to carry on the business of the Commonwealth.

Nevertheless the first weekend in July was an anxious time for some Parliamentarians. The press was divided fairly evenly, albeit along party lines, as to whether the Governor-General should grant the dissolution. The Sydney Morning Herald, Daily Telegraph and Argus all emphasized that the House had exhausted its usefulness and ought to be dissolved. On the other hand the Age, with characteristic vigour, warned the Governor-General that 'a dissolution would be such an outrage as would probably lead to an almost instant reform of the constitution'. As usual, less prejudice was evident in the Adelaide press. Both the Advertiser and Register agreed

1. For an account of the fall of Reid's Government see La Nauze, Alfred Deakin, 2, pp. 381-404.
2. Argus and Register, 3 July 1905, comment on anxiety among Protectionists.
3. See comments in these newspapers from 30 June to 5 July 1905.
that after Deakin's successful censure motion, His Excellency would be unlikely to sanction an early election, so long as there was a reasonable prospect of the House proceeding with the despatch of business. The *West Australian* was 'fairly certain' that Reid's request would be refused.

Knowing Northcote's high opinion of Deakin's qualities, it is not surprising that he declined Reid's advice, and sent for the former Prime Minister. However, as on earlier occasions, the Governor-General acted throughout this crisis with cautious good judgment. Before reaching a decision on whether to grant a dissolution, he asked Deakin how the situation differed from that of 1903. The Protectionist leader was able to assure Northcote that Watson had pledged the support of the Labor Party for the remainder of the session. With this written submission in his possession, Northcote then proceeded to set out his reasons for refusing Reid's advice in a courteous memorandum of impeccable constitutional propriety. He informed Reid that he was unwilling to put the country to the 'trouble and expense of a General election' when the House of Representatives had indicated 'its readiness to go on with public business'. Reid immediately resigned and Deakin was commissioned to form a Government. Throughout these events Northcote had maintained a calm and confident demeanour, and acted with admirable discernment. As a result his decision was accepted with good grace even by those who had counselled an opposite course.

1. Advertiser and Register, 3 July 1905.
2. West Australian, 1 July 1905.
3. For Deakin's letter of 3 July and Northcote's memorandum of the same date see copies in Northcote to Secretary of State, 4 July 1905. C.O. 418/36/28156, folios 274-284.
4. S.M.H., 5 July 1905.
By refusing, on two occasions, to follow his Ministers' advice to dissolve Parliament, Northcote drew attention to the important powers of the Governor-General in the machinery of the Commonwealth Government. In a letter to the Advertiser under the pseudonym 'One of the King's Subjects', a correspondent compared the function of Governor-General with that of a mechanical governor in a steamship's engine; 'ornamental in fine weather, but necessary to control and regulate the engines in a heavy sea'.

It was a strained metaphor but it did express an essential truth. During its early years the Commonwealth required a constitutional monarch to act with decision in times of political crisis. In 1904 the rules by which the Governor-General was guided on such occasions still allowed him considerable discretion. The fact that Northcote exercised such admirable good sense in the exercise of his constitutional functions does not derogate from the important discretionary role the Governor-General had to play in the political developments of these years of instability.

Northcote's obvious success during his first eighteen months of office must have strengthened the good opinion held of him by the newly re-instated Prime Minister. Not only had the Governor-General acted throughout the recent political crisis with formal correctness, but he had also adhered closely to Deakin's advice. Their close and productive relationship was to continue for almost the whole of Deakin's second, most successful, administration. There was a unity of purpose on most issues and a trust in the other's integrity. One issue on which the Prime Minister and Governor-General were in accord was the persistent dispute with the States over the channel of communication with Great Britain; a controversy which from the first had involved the definition

1. Advertiser, 4 July 1905.
of the role of Governor-General in the Commonwealth.

As early as two weeks after he assumed office, Northcote had complained that State Governors were not forwarding copies of their correspondence with the Colonial Office to him.\(^1\) On that occasion the Secretary of State had declined to interfere and risk contention. In June 1905 Northcote reiterated his allegation. His Excellency thought that there were good reasons for State Governors continuing the practice of sending copies of their correspondence to the Governor-General, but in any case he thought that the time had arrived 'when the instruction should either be repeated or cancelled'.\(^2\) In pressing his point of view he emphasized that in this function the Governor-General was independent from the Commonwealth Executive.

If, as would seem likely, Northcote showed Deakin this despatch when the latter had settled into office again, the Prime Minister must have been delighted at the centralist position proposed by the Governor-General. It accorded closely with his own point of view, expressed in Adelaide in 1897\(^3\) and also with that taken by Barton and Hopetoun in 1901.\(^4\) Compared with Tennyson's cautious federalism, this bold assertion of Commonwealth ascendancy over States encouraged Deakin to revive his aim of achieving Commonwealth supervision of State correspondence with the Colonial Office on matters of Commonwealth interest.

After consulting the State Governors, Elgin, who had replaced

\(^1\) Northcote to Secretary of State, confidential, 8 February 1904. C.O. 418/31/9044, folios 82-87.

\(^2\) Northcote to Secretary of State, confidential, 30 June 1905. C.O. 418/36/28154, folios 251-262. Copy in CP 78, series 21, bundle 50. C.A.O.

\(^3\) Wright, Commonwealth and States, pp. 13-14.

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 21.
Lyttelton in December 1905, decided not to disturb the existing compromise, leaving it to the State Governors to judge which correspondence concerned Commonwealth affairs. But as such a solution was unpalatable to Northcote, he enlisted Deakin's support for his earlier request. In a long memorandum urging a reappraisal of the decision, the Prime Minister advanced an interpretation of the independent role of the Governor-General which departed noticeably from his rejection of claims at the Constitutional Conventions that the Representative of the Crown could act independently of his Executive.

Elgin had admitted that, to enable the Governor-General to discharge the duties of his office properly, he should be made aware of the contents of all despatches which bore in any way on federal interests. Deakin agreed, but objected that, under the system as it had operated since 1901, the authority to decide whether or not a despatch was one concerning federal interests belonged to the Governors of the States. He pointed out that they had not proved capable of judging correctly in the few cases of the kind which had arisen during the first years of the Commonwealth. To Deakin it was essential for the smooth working of the federal Constitution that there should be an authority in Australia capable of deciding whether State despatches affected federal interests or not.

1. Victor A. Bruce, second Lord Elgin. Secretary of State for Colonies, December 1905 to April 1908.
2. Elgin to Governor-General and all Governors, 11 January 1906, draft in C.O. 418/40/44464, folios 568-575.
In his opinion, 'the only person at once capable and impartial who can discharge that duty is the Governor-General'.

He listed the qualifications of the Governor-General to act in this capacity:

By virtue of his office as leader of society, he comes into contact with men representing every class and is in a position to understand public opinion in all its shades. His jurisdiction extends over the whole of Australia, he pays periodical visits to every important centre of the Commonwealth, and thus acquires a wide and intimate knowledge of Australian affairs, including State politics and parties in their larger aspects as well as those of the Commonwealth. No-one else has so many and so various sources of information.

In view of these considerations, Deakin requested the Secretary of State to vary the then existing practice so as to enable the Governor-General to exercise the role of arbiter with a right to receive all State communications to the Colonial Office, and decide in the first place which of them require to be classed as having a federal bearing, and further which despatches included in such category he will communicate for the information of his Ministers.

In so acting, Deakin considered that the Governor-General would be 'entirely independent of Government, Ministers and parties'.

At first sight this was a bold attempt to establish the Governor-General's office as an independent authority in the federation. Deakin appeared to have allowed his enthusiasm for a central authority to override his earlier fears for Australia's independence if the Governor-General were allowed to act other than on the advice of his Ministers.¹ From later actions, however, it is clear that Deakin only intended the Governor-General

¹. Wright accuses Deakin of fallacy and inconsistency. There is no doubt that the Prime Minister wished to promote the superior of the Governor-General over State Governors. In the Morning Post, 8 January 1908, Deakin wrote, 'As our sense of Australian unity grows the influence of the Governor-General grows too, while that of his associates diminishes'. See Cutting book in Deakin papers, MS 1540/71. A.N.L.
to exercise such an independent authority in this narrow field of Commonwealth-State relations. In the event, the attempt to set up the office of Governor-General as a superior functionary was destined to fail once again. The States were too jealous of their threatened sovereignty to allow any interference in their right to communicate with Great Britain. Elgin did not reject Deakin's ambitious proposal, but his suggestion, that the Governor-General should himself consult the State Governors, effectively ended the dispute.¹ It was clear that the States would never voluntarily retreat from their firm line on the subject and Deakin advised Northcote to allow the matter to rest.²

Though Deakin was in favour of strengthening the role of the Representative of the Crown as channel of communication, in other respects he was zealous in preventing any regression in the independent status of the Commonwealth within the Empire. To him the vague but still current power of the Governor-General to reserve the Royal Assent to Commonwealth legislation was an anachronism which needed elimination. Hopetoun had considered invoking the powers under section 58 of the Commonwealth Constitution in connection with the Immigration Restriction Act, but eventually decided to assent to the controversial legislation himself, rather than reserve it for the King's pleasure.³ It was the last real opportunity a Governor-General had to exercise his discretion in this regard. During Northcote's term of office, the discretionary powers of the Governor-General to reserve such legislation in Australia, or indeed

1. See Wright, Commonwealth and States, p. 34, 'The Colonial Office had no time to waste on hopeless causes'.
2. Deakin to Northcote, 23 October 1906. Copy in CP 78, series 21, bundle 50, folder 1, file P.M. 06/4440. C.A.O.
3. See above, chapter III, pp. 158-164. Note too, the Queensland Government's request, in December 1901, that Hopetoun reserve the Pacific Islands Labourers Bill.
in any self-governing colony, finally became obsolete. In this important constitutional development Northcote allied himself with his Australian advisers and against the Colonial Office.

Once again it was in connection with legislation discriminating against Asians that the issue of Royal Assent was raised. By November 1905 the British Government was becoming disturbed at the colonies' racially discriminatory legislation. In this development can be traced the intervention of the India Office in Colonial affairs. In September 1905 the Secretary of State for India had drawn Lyttelton's attention to Section 46 of the Western Australian Factories Act, which prohibited a person of 'Chinese or other Asiatic race from registering as the owner or occupier of a factory unless he had carried on such business or was employed in such a factory before November 1903'.

The Colonial Secretary's response to this representation was a confidential despatch, circularized to all self-governing colonies in November 1905, advising that if a measure imposing disabilities upon Asiatics were passed by the colonial Parliament, it should be reserved for the signification of His Majesty's pleasure. Early in the following year Northcote learned that the Government of New Zealand planned to enter a public protest against the circular on the grounds that it was an unacceptable limitation of its constitutional independence. The Australian Governor-General informed Elgin of Seddon's intention, adding that he felt sure that the Commonwealth Government would be in complete agreement.

2. Ibid., p. 227.
3. Richard John Seddon, Prime Minister of New Zealand, 1893-1906.
In the circumstances he suggested that 'Undesirable discussion could be avoided by withdrawal of despatch temporarily or finally'. Though this was sound advice the Colonial Office neglected to follow it. Consequently, in April 1906, Elgin received a typically aggressive memorandum from Deakin demanding the withdrawal of the offending circular.

The Australian Prime Minister considered the instruction a 'new departure of grave constitutional importance' implying 'a serious diminution of the Constitutional powers of all self-governing dependencies'. He devoted some effort to refuting the legality of the despatch in connection with the Commonwealth's legislation.

The Constitution ... sets out, inter alia, the powers and authority of the Governor-General, and it is submitted with all respect that its provisions in that regard may no more be overridden by instructions from one of His Majesty's Secretaries of State than may any other sections.

Unlike the constitutions of Canada, the Australian States and New Zealand, the Commonwealth Constitution, Section 58, conferred 'absolute and unfettered' discretionary power on the Governor-General, to give the Royal Assent. Deakin submitted that the instruction in Lyttelton's despatch was contrary to the Constitution in that it purported to control the discretion expressly and directly conferred by the Imperial Parliament upon the Governor-General. The attempt to restrict, by confidential instructions, the discretion which had been publicly reposed in an officer of the high standing of the Governor-General was, he concluded, extremely undesirable.

In asserting the discretionary power of the Governor-General,

2. Enclosure in Northcote to Elgin, confidential, 7 March 1906. C.O. 418/44/12370, folios 188-195.
3. Ibid.
Deakin was not setting him up as an irresponsible sovereign. As would be indicated in a subsequent dispute, the Government still had the ultimate weapon of resignation to fall back upon. Nor was he denying the basic constitutional rule that a Governor-General must find advisers to support whatever action he might take. Rather was he asserting the old principle, adumbrated by Higinbotham and others in the nineteenth century, that the Governor was a constitutional monarch, and as such, for him to receive instructions from any-one other than his Australian advisers was illegal.

This ranging shot from the Commonwealth was followed shortly after by a broadside from the State Premiers, assembled in Conference at Sydney in April 1906. They resolved unanimously that 'any increase in the power of reservation at present held by the Governor-General of the Commonwealth or the State Governors, would be viewed with disfavor'.

In the face of this opposition and New Zealand's earlier stand, Elgin was obliged to withdraw his predecessor's circular and cancel the instructions. It was no longer possible for the British Government to coerce colonial Governments into softening their restrictive legislation against Asiatics. It was also no longer possible for the Colonial Office to hold the threat of reservation over the heads of self-governing colonies. If changes were desired in colonial legislation, it would have to be accomplished by negotiation, as befitted sovereign states.

In his despatch of May 1906, summarizing the situation, Elgin

3. Ibid.
salvaged what remnants of influence the Imperial Government still retained, and its character was revealed to be essentially quasi-diplomatic. The crux of the problem was that, if assent to colonial Bills affecting the relations of the Empire with foreign powers or other matters of Imperial interest, were not reserved, the British Government had no opportunity of considering how their interests could be protected or of suggesting amendments which they thought desirable. It was true that the King could be advised to exercise his powers of disallowance, but Elgin considered, with considerable justification, that these powers should be exercised as seldom as possible. Consequently the best solution to the difficulty lay in formalizing the practice already in operation informally in the Commonwealth. Colonial Ministers in all self-governing colonies were asked to furnish the Governor-General or Governor with copies of any Bill touching upon Imperial matters, for immediate transmission to the Secretary of State. Though this arrangement did not meet the difficulty of Bills which were passed rapidly through both Houses or of amendments introduced during their passage, such problems could be overcome by the action of the Governor-General or Governor. These officers were instructed to keep the British Government fully informed, by telegram if necessary, when any legislation touching upon Imperial matters was before Parliament.

The British Government's attempt to regain some of the initiative over colonial legislation imposing restrictions upon Asiatics had been short lived. Though the Indian Government protested at amendments to the Immigration Restriction Act in March 1906, and requested that the Royal Assent be withheld, they were persuaded by the Colonial Secretary not to press their objection. The final resort, in any matter of concern to the

British Government had to be the diplomatic role of the Governor or Governor-General as its representative in a sovereign State.

The Customs Tariff (British Preference) Bill introduced in September 1906 raised a similar, though less emotionally charged, problem. The Bill, as it was first envisaged, had the effect of making British goods, imported in foreign ships, dutiable at a higher rate than the same goods imported in British vessels. It was Deakin's attempt to implement unilaterally a policy of Imperial trade preference. However the Bill was altered materially by the Labor Party, so as to provide that this preference would only operate if the British vessels were manned exclusively by white seamen. Though this was an unforeseen complication, it was not the major obstruction. In October the Secretary of State pointed out to Northcote that, by imposing restrictions upon foreign shipping, the bill ran counter to certain treaty obligations of the Imperial Government.¹ Attempts to amend the Bill and make it more acceptable to the British Government were defeated by the Senate. Consequently the Prime Minister had little alternative but to advise Northcote to reserve the Bill. The Attorney General, Isaacs, tendered written advice to this effect, as did Deakin, and the Bill was reserved on 17 October. When it reached Downing Street in November consideration was deferred by the Colonial Office until after the Colonial Conference due to be held in April of the following year.²

The 1907 Colonial Conference, like others of its type, was a

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1. Elgin to Northcote, cable, 4 October 1906. Draft in C.O. 418/45/36425, folios 291-297. This was read to the Commonwealth Senate on 11 October 1906. See C.P.D., 1906, XXXV, pp. 6474-5.
2. Minutes on Northcote to Elgin, 17 October 1906. C.O. 418/45/42460, folios 353-365. This reference also has copies of Isaacs' and Deakin's advice to the Governor-General to reserve the Bill.
disappointment to both colonial nationalists and closer unionists. Yet it was another shuffling step forward in the developing sovereign status of the self-governing colonies, or as they were thenceforward called, Dominions. The major item discussed at this Conference concerned an attempt by the colonial Ministers to convince Britain of the merits of a scheme of Imperial Preference. Deakin conducted a vigorous publicity campaign in favour of this, but he was aware that he had little prospect of persuading Britain's Liberal Government to alter its trading policy. In the circumstances there was no point in pressing his Customs Preference Bill, particularly in view of the amendment forced upon him by the Labor Party. Accordingly he asked Elgin not to take any action with regard to the reserved Bill which was allowed to lapse.

However Deakin's conviction that it was generally undesirable for the Governor-General to withhold Royal Assent to Australian legislation was unchanged. This was revealed in a brief but decisive confrontation over Australia's Judiciary Bill, 1907. Once again in this dispute Northcote tended to support his Australian Ministers rather than his British masters.

In October 1907 A. Berriedale Keith, then still a Colonial Office clerk, drew the attention of Sir Francis Hopwood to the Commonwealth's

1. Kendle, The Colonial and Imperial Conferences, pp. 83-106, gives a succinct account of this Conference and its effect upon Imperial organization. For 'Minutes of Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907', see Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1907, LV, [Cd. 3523].
3. La Nauze, Alfred Deakin, 2, pp. 493-514.
4. The affair is described in Ibid., pp. 488-9.
5. Later Lord Southborough. Hopwood was Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Colonial Office from 1907-1911.
Judiciary Bill. This Bill was intended to make the High Court of Australia the final authority in all cases involving the division of power between Commonwealth and States. Its immediate object was to resolve a deadlock resulting from the conflicting judgments of the Privy Council and the High Court on the question of the State power to impose income tax on Federal Officers.¹ The Colonial Office decided to seek the opinion of the Lord Chancellor upon this legislation. Though he expressed himself to be in favour of the Bill, Lord Loreburn preferred to await the decision in a case pending before the Privy Council before offering his observations. Elgin thereupon telegraphed to Northcote 'Perhaps you will consider whether Bill should not be reserved'.² The Colonial Secretary's suggestion was interpreted by the Governor-General as an instruction. He replied that he would reserve the Bill.³

When first informed of Northcote's intention to reserve the Royal Assent, Deakin did not seem disturbed by the implications. However, on second thoughts, he decided to take a firm stand and oppose any such action. He informed the Governor-General that this change of attitude was the result of agitation by one of his parliamentary supporters, who asked him what had become of the Customs Tariff (British Preference) Bill 1906, and threatened to put a formal question on the subject to the Government. As Northcote related the incident to the Secretary of State, this caused the Prime Minister to reconsider his attitude on the Judiciary Bill; and he came to the conclusion that he

2. Elgin to Northcote, secret and personal cable, 2 October 1907. Copy in C.O. 418/56/33318, folio 300.
3. Northcote to Elgin, secret cable, 5 October 1907. Copy in Ibid., folio 303.
could not defend either mine or his own position if he acquiesced in my reservation of a Bill, formally recommended to me by himself, without my assigning some specific reason for my action.  

It is not exactly clear why Northcote refused to communicate his reasons to Deakin. His explanation was that the telegraphed despatch was marked 'secret'. But, whatever the motivation, the outcome of the dispute was a strongly worded memorandum from Deakin. The Prime Minister submitted that, while the Governor-General's full power of reservation was not challenged, Ministers could not retain office if His Excellency rejected their advice without assigning strong reasons for his actions. He warned that, if the Cabinet resigned, Northcote 'could not hope for a Ministry that would take a different view of the Constitutional position of the Governor-General'. His fear was that the reservation of such a bill would be 'misunderstood and would lead to all sorts of wild rumours of sinister intentions of the Home Government towards the Commonwealth'.  

Consequently Northcote despatched a secret and confidential telegram on 10 October conveying Deakin's emphatic protest at the Governor-General's proposed action against the advice of his responsible Ministers. Fearing that the Cabinet would resign if he ignored this warning, Northcote postponed his decision pending further instructions. His own opinion was that the Secretary of State should give him leave to assent or permission to explain to Ministers his reasons for reservation.  

This despatch caused a considerable flurry in the Colonial Office.  

2. Ibid.  
4. Ibid.
Keith thought that Deakin had raised 'a very serious matter of principle' by attempting 'to limit the discretion of a Governor'. He accused the Australian Prime Minister of seeking to set up a 'new and dangerous precedent'. The Ministry's threat of resignation, in Keith's opinion, was 'hardly serious (as it would hardly get in again)'. He suggested that the Governor-General be instructed to reserve assent but to explain his reasons. Others at the Colonial Office agreed with this advice. But more sensible counsel prevailed. Cox substituted a milder telegram, stalling action until the Lord Chancellor was consulted.\(^1\) On 11 October Northcote was informed by telegraphic despatch that the Lord Chancellor had no desire that he should exercise his discretion in favour of reservation.\(^2\) The relieved Governor-General immediately assented to the Bill.\(^3\)

The exchange over Deakin's Judiciary Bill confirmed the lesson drawn from the earlier dispute over Lyttelton's withdrawn circular. The Australian Government's indignant attitude towards British interference in Commonwealth legislation reminded the Colonial Office that the ultimate weapon available to a colonial Cabinet was to resign and force His Excellency to seek alternative advisers. Downing Street was always reluctant to suggest such a confrontation, and Northcote was too sensible to blunder into such a position on his own accord. Consequently the Governor-General's discretionary authority to reserve Royal Assent to

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1. The telegram dated 10 October pointed out that the question of reservation was entrusted to Northcote's personal discretion by the Constitution Act Section 58. For minutes on Northcote's telegram of 9 October, see C.O. 418/52/35967, folios 564-75.


3. Northcote to Secretary of State transmitting copies of the Act to which he had assented, 21 October 1907. C.O. 418/52/41344, folio 607.
Commonwealth legislation lapsed in practice, though not in theory. There were still a few subjects upon which the Representative of the Crown had no authority to grant the Royal Assent locally,† but in such cases he would act upon the advice of his Ministers.

Though, in retrospect, it is evident that the office of Governor-General had been stripped of one of the last vestiges of its former power, the Colonial Office was reluctant to concede this in principle. In a long memorandum drawn up as a result of these disputes over reservation of the Royal Assent, Keith summarized the position as he interpreted it.‡ He conceded that 'the Governor will never withhold assent except on the advice of Ministers'. But neither he nor the Colonial Office admitted Deakin's view that in any question of reservation the Governor-General was bound to accept his Ministers' advice or to satisfy them that his reasons for reserving a Bill were adequate. It was clear, however, that if a similar case arose again Deakin and probably other Australian Prime Ministers would be ready to resign unless the Governor-General could assign strong reasons for his action. Keith concluded by suggesting that when a Governor-General considered it desirable to reserve a Bill, he should communicate with the Secretary of State to ensure that he did not place himself in conflict with his Ministers unless the Imperial Government desired reservation of the Bill.

In February 1908 Deakin heard 'with alarm and regret' that the Governor-General proposed to retire after the completion of four and a

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1. For example, by Section 74 of the Australian Constitution. Also in legislation affecting merchant shipping.

2. 'Memorandum on the Subject of the Reservation of Bills of the Commonwealth Parliament' in C.O. Confidential Print, Dominions No. 4, dated 29 June 1908.
The Prime Minister's regret was genuine. He recognized that the Commonwealth was losing the services of an able official who had gathered valuable experience in the exercise of his role. It was a fundamental problem in the system. No matter how successful a Governor-General was in exercising his role, he lacked one essential function provided by a constitutional monarch, namely permanence. Bagehot had remarked on this as an advantage to the Imperial authority. He considered that a Governor who overstayed his normal time would identify with the colony too much and therefore lose some of his value as guardian of Imperial interests. To Deakin, on the other hand, this tendency was more to be hoped for than deprecated. He urged Northcote to stay on longer, but the Governor-General felt unable to alter his plans. In September 1908, after acting as host at ceremonies connected with the visit of the Great White Fleet, Northcote left the Commonwealth to return home to England.

Northcote was the most successful Governor-General to hold office in the first decade of the Commonwealth. His tour of duty had provided the stability and consolidation which had been generally hoped for upon his appointment. Though there had been complaints from Sydney about the length of time each year during which its Government House was vacant, these were becoming almost an unavoidable and routine criticism. The general satisfaction with Australia's third Governor-General enabled Deakin to settle, temporarily, some of the more troublesome problems raised by his predecessors. The Governor-General's Residences Bill 1906

1. Deakin to Secretary of State, cable, 4 February 1908. C.O. 418/68/9951, folio 196.
4. Act no. 2 of 1906.
had at last established a workable and business-like agreement between
the Commonwealth and the two senior colonies over the occupancy of
Government Houses in Sydney and Melbourne. Though this was to prove only
a temporary solution pending the building of a national capital, and the
delay in achieving this ambition was to lead to further difficulties,
there seemed no cause for concern in 1907. In addition an agreement had
been reached whereby the Commonwealth repaid the States for the Governor-
General's use of State railways.¹

In his assessment of the practical aspects of his post as Head of State, Northcote had been cautious and realistic. He was not a rubber
stamp and held strong, sometimes stubborn views. But his strength of
class was tempered by prudence. He had never had any serious
disagreement or confrontation with his Ministers. On the one occasion
when his view of the role of Governor-General had differed from that of
his Australian advisers, in the matter of the Arbitration Bill, he had
kept the affair secret and, in the end, given way with grace. When the
Colonial Office had come into conflict with the Australian Government,
he had usually supported the latter, though never with foolish or partisan
provocation. When supported by Ministers he was prepared to assert the
independent function of the Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth
with vigour, as in the disputes over honours and the channel of
communication with Britain. When called upon to exercise his emergency
constitutional functions in the machinery of government he did so with
judgment and propriety. Though not a man of commanding personality he
was widely liked and respected in Australia. His retirement to England

¹ Wright, Commonwealth and States, pp. 219-226.
encouraged hopes for further assistance to Australia in the future. \(^1\)

In a tribute to Northcote at a farewell banquet in Melbourne, the Prime Minister echoed the anticipation that the ex-Governor-General would prove a valuable friend to Australia in Britain. \(^2\) Deakin's regret at His Excellency's departure was also a personal sadness. Northcote had been a welcome friend and ally for him during the political instabilities of the early years of the Commonwealth. Though his speech was appropriately light-hearted in tone, the compliments were sincere. The Prime Minister forecast that when the history of the previous four years of the Commonwealth was written, it would be found ... how friction had been avoided; how popular feeling when it rose to too great a height had been calmed and how Australia had been guided with clear insight and cautious sagacity. In the darkest and most difficult hour they had always one man who never despaired of Australia - trusted its people and even its politicians.

Historians have neglected to give to this capable though retiring statesman the credit which Deakin forecast. It was the touchstone of Northcote's success that he took decisions which might have been controversial but are now, as they were then, considered unexceptionable. That they were so is the best tribute to this unassuming Englishman who, with solid, rather melancholy dignity, exercised the role of Governor-General for nearly five formative years of the Commonwealth.

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1. S.M.H., 7 September 1908. Unfortunately illness prevented his taking a prominent part in British politics after his return. He died on 29 September 1911. See obituary in The Times, 30 September 1911.
2. See report of Banquet in Age, 15 July 1908.
3. Ibid. The Victorian Lieutenant-Governor, Sir John Madden, also spoke. He attempted to quote Shakespeare in his valedictory address. 'He hath borne his faculties with meekness as well...' he began, but forgetfulness set in and after an awkward pause the quotation was left unended. It is from Macbeth, (Act 1, scene vii, lines 17 to 18), and continues 'he hath been so clear in his great office'.

VI

'A Sham Australian Court of St. James'
Lord Dudley,
Governor-General of Australia
9 September 1908 to 31 July 1911

Lord Denman,
Governor-General of Australia
31 July 1911 to 18 May 1914
Though Queen Victoria had died three years before he took office, she, rather than Edward VII, had been the inspiration for Northcote's concept of the Governor-General's role. Restraint and decorum were the hall-marks of his exercise of the duties of Representative of the Crown in Australia. His natural public reticence conformed with the general Australian desire, discovered painfully by Hopetoun, that the Governor-General be unostentatious and inexpensive. In contrast, William Humble Ward, second Earl of Dudley,¹ was a man in the mould of the former Prince of Wales; his ideas of monarchy had been shaped by the colourful and ceremonial court of Edward VII.

At the age of seventeen, while still a schoolboy at Eton, Dudley had inherited great wealth, landed estate and social position. His family owned 30,000 acres in Britain including profitable iron-works and also had estates in Jamaica. Relieved of the necessity to provide for himself, in 1885 he set out, 'like the hero in a boy's novel',² on an adventurous around the world in his yacht, 'Marchesa', during which he stayed for some months in the Australian colonies. Returning to England in 1886 the young Earl became a prominent member of the wealthy nobility.

During the latter years of Victoria's reign, many British aristocrats displayed an ostentation and self-indulgence which scandalised the old Queen.³ At the apex of this society, typifying its tastes and exemplifying its hedonistic values, was her son, the Prince of Wales. The

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2. S.M.H., 7 September 1908.

3. Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, pp. 74-5, 89 and 101.
future Governor-General of Australia was closely associated with the patrician society which surrounded the heir to the throne. In 1891, Dudley's marriage to Miss Rachel Gurney, cousin and protegee of the Duchess of Bedford, was one of the great social events of the year.\textsuperscript{1} Subsequently, their splendid homes in Worcestershire and London joined the select circle of fashionable residences where long, weekend house parties helped to relieve the boredom engendered by great wealth and excessive leisure.\textsuperscript{2}

It was a society which prided itself, under Royal patronage, on its handsome women.\textsuperscript{3} Dudley's mother, Georgiana, Dowager Countess, a prominent and successful hostess in this competitive social set, was reputed to be the most beautiful woman of her generation.\textsuperscript{4} Her association with the Prince of Wales\textsuperscript{5} led to high placed patronage for her eldest son. Lord and Lady Dudley's appearance in Australian society was certain to bring a flutter to the heart of the most distinguished Melbourne hostess. Compared to the homely Northcote, Dudley was a handsome man. Photographs reveal him to have been tall and broadshouldered with a condescending smile and a haughty posture. The Wards were reputed to have been an athletic family, but Dudley was prevented by a slight lameness from excelling in cricket, rowing, or the other gentlemanly sports. Though at one time he had ambitions in the sphere of horse-racing, success on the turf eluded him and he sold his valuable stud. In spite of his physical

\begin{enumerate}
\item The Prince of Wales was among those present. \textit{The Times,} 15 September 1891.
\item The hothouse atmosphere of this society is captured marvellously in V. Sackville-West's novel, \textit{The Edwardians} (London, 1930).
\item Quoted in \textit{S.M.H.,} 7 September 1908, allegedly quoting Lady Randolph Churchill
\item Magnus, \textit{King Edward the Seventh,} p. 254. For a recent account of the Prince's lady friends, including the Countess of Dudley, see Anita Leslie, \textit{Edwardians in Love} (London, 1972).
\end{enumerate}
disability, he achieved some reputation as a successful competitor in big
yacht racing, a sport lifted to unprecedented prestige by the patronage of
the Prince of Wales.¹

Like others of his class, Dudley believed that inherited
ownership of land conferred upon the British nobleman a superior fitness
for public office. For a time he toyed with politics, always a congenial
occupation for a gentleman. He began to speak in the House of Lords and
was rewarded with a post as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade
in Lord Salisbury's Government of 1895, the 'last government in the
Western world to possess all the attributes of aristocracy in working
condition'.² But he lacked the fixity of purpose for a successful
political career. The army offered an alternative interest for an
energetic aristocrat. Responding impulsively to the mood of the time,
Dudley hastened, in 1899, to serve in the South African War. But his lack
of professional training³ was a bar to any significant achievement in the
military field and he returned to England in 1900. A vice-regal career
seemed the best way to achieve the prominence he desired. It was possibly
due to the support of his high-placed friends, including the King himself,
that in 1902 he was appointed to the post of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.

In Dublin Dudley distinguished himself not only by great
extravagance,⁴ but also by an independence of spirit unusual in one of
such a conservative background. He was much criticised by some British

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¹ Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, pp. 244-5.
² Barbara Tuchman, The Proud Power; A Portrait of the World Before the
War, 1890-1914 (London, 1966) p. 3.
³ He was a Yeomanry Officer and had never attended Sandhurst.
⁴ Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, p. 318, states that Dudley's annual
expenditure upon the social duties of his office as Viceroy exceeded
his salary by £30,000.
politicians for support of a policy of devolution for Ireland and a speech in which he asserted that 'the only way to rule Ireland was to rule it by Irish ideas'. It was a platitudinous enough statement but it aroused the wrath of extreme Unionists who used it to attack the tottering Balfour ministry. However this, probably accidental, display of moderation was not regarded unfavourably by the Liberal Government which took office shortly thereafter. Accordingly, when the King suggested Dudley as a possible replacement for Northcote in Australia, a position which was proving difficult to fill from Liberal ranks, Campbell-Bannerman acquiesced. Dudley accepted, with the firm intention of using Australia as a springboard for the greater Imperial proconsular posts of Canada and India.

His decision to take up the Governor-Generalship of the Commonwealth was possibly influenced by other, personal motivations. By 1908 Lord and Lady Dudley were badly estranged, their marriage an elaborate and hypocritical facade. Yet, like others bound by the same social code, they concealed unhappy differences behind the appearance of unity. Ten years later Lady Dudley commented that 'though a deeply injured wife' she had accompanied her husband to Australia 'hoping that matters would

1. S.M.H., 7 September 1908.
2. For Dudley's involvement in this dispute over Irish policy, which led to the resignation of George Wyndham as Chief Secretary, see Brett (ed.), Journals and Letters, pp. 78-81.
4. Dudley wrote to Elgin, 15 March 1908, 'I told you that the position of Governor-General of Australia held out no attraction for me on its own account'. But he was 'eager to serve in India or Canada', and experience in Australia might increase his qualifications for those appointments. See C.O. 418/68/9477, folios 229-244.
It was a mistaken anticipation, for, while the mask of respectability may have been maintained in the bosom of Edwardian society, it was to prove impossible to conceal impropriety in the exposed conditions of vice-regal life in Australia.

On 8 September 1908, having visited Canada en route to Australia, Dudley arrived in Sydney, where he was able to meet Northcote before the latter departed. After an impressive swearing-in ceremony in the New South Wales capital he proceeded to Melbourne to enter upon his duties with splendid pomp and ostentation. Bewigged postilions, outriders and footmen in livery escorted the fourth Governor-General as he drove ceremonially through Melbourne in a handsome, four horse carriage which, as the Australasian remarked, 'recalled the splendour of the late Marquis of Linlithgow's term of office'.

Linlithgow had died only seven months previously and an appeal had been launched in Melbourne to erect a status to his memory. But this burst of sympathy for the Commonwealth's popular first Governor-General was in no way evidence of any change in the Australian determination that the Representative of the Crown should exercise restraint in his public appearances. The Daily Telegraph welcomed Dudley with the advice that

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1. The Times, 7 and 9 November 1918.
2. He had represented Australia at Quebec tercentenary celebrations, in company with the Prince of Wales, later George V.
3. 'Dudley's reception was a gorgeous affair - gold braid galore'. Labor Call, 10 September 1908.
4. Australasian, 12 September 1908.
5. An equestrian statue to the first Governor-General was erected outside the gates of Melbourne Government House and unveiled by the second Marquess of Linlithgow. See Argus, 16 June 1911.
the duties which devolve upon a Governor-General are of a nature that does not bring him into the limelight. His most valuable work the people never hear of, for the most successful Governor of an autonomous colony is the one under whom the wheels of Government run without creaking and without calling any special attention to his presence. In part this comment referred to the constitutional role of the Representative of the Crown. But a shrewd reader could discern there a gentle warning against vice-regal over-ostentation. The Worker was less restrained in its reproof. In a leading article, headed 'A Sham Australian Court of St. James' it rejected any suggestion that the flamboyant, regal ceremonial of Edward VII should be transplanted to Australia:

The objective of the Australian should be that of a robust, sturdy manhood. The courtier is not a man! The ideas of the courtier are not compatible with those of a vigorous and progressive democracy.

By 1908 the Bulletin's attitude towards vice-regal pretension was more gently sardonic than vitriolic, but the Worker's diatribe was one indication that earlier antipathy towards those 'malign influences of the old world' which tainted Australia egalitarian society survived into the twentieth century. Another sign of this was the hostility expressed by some parliamentarians, particularly in the Labor Party, towards excessive expenditure upon the Governor-General's establishment. Northcote's judicious restraint had subdued but not eliminated the sort of criticism which had driven the Commonwealth's first Governor-General back to England. After 1908, parliamentary disapproval of increased vice-regal allowances

1. Daily Telegraph, 9 September 1908.
2. Worker (Sydney), 17 September 1908.
3. On 24 September 1908 the Bulletin noted that 'The Dudley appears to delight in pageant and pomp'.
again rose to a significant level. A factor in this development was Dudley's grandiose style, reflecting a fundamental misunderstanding of the function of his office.

In Britain, where the monarch's public image had been refurbished by Edward VII, the Crown was an embodiment of the nation in a way which was never possible for the office of Governor-General in the Commonwealth. The most important reason for this was that the King was as much a national symbol for Australians as he was for Britons elsewhere; his Representative consequently attracted only reflected homage as a national symbol. Northcote's recognition of this fact\(^1\) prevented him from taking his own role as Viceroy too seriously. But his successor was unable to discern the nature of Australian loyalty. Like his royal mentor, Dudley delighted in pageantry and ceremonial.\(^2\) He failed to appreciate that spectacular vice-regal display was out of place in Australia.

It was not wholly Dudley's fault that he failed to recognize the need for public restraint. In spite of Hopetoun's problems, Tennyson's strictures and Northcote's example, British politicians remained convinced that the Commonwealth required its chief executive officer to be enormously wealthy. Dudley had been chosen in the first place because Elgin had thought that there was not a sufficiently wealthy peer of the appropriate background in the ranks of the Liberal party.\(^3\) Moreover there was still a small but prominent group in Australia who 'aped the English aristocracy

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3. 'Where on our side are we to find the requisite position & means?' Elgin to Ripon, 2 March 1908. Ripon papers, Add. Mss. 43,552, vol. LXII, folios 44-47. British Museum.
and reproduced on a less magnificent scale the manners of the English landed families'. To this element Dudley's air of nobility was alluring and his ambitions for the social role of the Representative of the Crown admirable.

The new Governor-General found an early opportunity to display these ideas in early November, during the Melbourne Cup Carnival, as close an equivalent to the 'London Season' as could be obtained in the antipodes. Balls, receptions, race meetings and banquets followed each other in swift succession and the Dudleys' conscientiously displayed themselves to those who came to ogle. Government House in Melbourne, customarily the meeting-place for expatriate British officials during cup-time, was, during November 1908, even more than usually redolent with the atmosphere of an exclusive vice-regal club. If Dudley considered that he was required to cut a figure at the apex of this society, it is perhaps not to be wondered at, but his attitudes promised a confrontation with those Australians who objected to vice-regal extravagance. In particular it threatened difficulties with the Labor Party.

Two months after Dudley's arrival the festivities at Government House were interrupted by affairs of State. In the middle of the Melbourne season the Labor Party Caucus decided to withdraw the parliamentary support it had given the Deakin administration since 1905. On 10 November the Government was defeated on a procedural motion which it rightly chose to

interpret as a question of confidence. The following day Deakin called at Government House to tender his resignation.

Dudley's role in the events surrounding the fall of Deakin's Ministry was formal, though central. It was clearly his constitutional duty to commission the leader of the Labor Party, Andrew Fisher, to form an administration. Fisher had become Party leader upon the resignation of J.C. Watson in 1907 and since then had led his party in opposition cautiously but constructively. He had moved the amendment which brought down the Deakin Government, and accordingly he was summoned by Dudley to form his own administration. On 12 November, after Caucus had elected the Cabinet and Fisher had allocated portfolios, the second Commonwealth Labor Government was sworn in.

Relations between the Governor-General and Labor members during Fisher's first Government were unremarkable. But, during this period, there were signs of an opposition to Dudley's gubernatorial style that was to culminate in an open clash with members of the second Fisher administration during 1910.

In pursuance of his grandiose concept of vice-regal duty, Dudley set out to change the residential pattern established by his predecessors. They had resided mainly in Melbourne, and, less regularly, in Sydney; paying the other State capitals rather fleeting visits during parliamentary recess. Dudley determined to reside in the State capitals for extended periods of time. To this purpose he decided to accept the South Australian Government's invitation to visit Adelaide during January and February 1909, when the vice-regal residence of Marble Hill was temporarily unoccupied.

1. C.P.D., XLVIII, pp. 2137-2141.
2. Argus, 12 November 1908.
Dudley admitted to Elgin that his scheme involved 'rather
greater personal expenditure on the part of the Governor-General' than
had hitherto been the case, but he thought that any such disadvantage was
'more than outweighed by the opportunities such a plan affords of meeting
people who hardly, if ever, come to Melbourne or Sydney', and he thought
it 'quite probable that in years to come, when the finances of the
Commonwealth are in a more settled condition it may be possible to obtain
for the Governor-General a somewhat larger salary than is now paid, in
view of his obligations over the larger area'.

In this analysis of Parliament's attitude Dudley was badly
misreading Australian opinion. In June 1902 Deakin had gauged that
Australia wished the Governor-General to be 'purely a political officer
and not a social functionary'. After Hopetoun's departure Parliament had
approved the expenditure of £5,500 per year on Government Houses during
the term of office of the next Governor-General. Since then, the amount
spent annually upon salary and expenses for the Representative of the Crown
in the Commonwealth had increased markedly, reaching £22,553 for the year
1908-9. This had not been without occasional protest, particularly from

1. Dudley to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 18 April 1909. C.O.
418/70/17665, folio 276.
2. See above, chapter III, p. 189.
3. C.P.D., XII, pp. 15356-15405.
4. The following figures were quoted by W.G. Higgs in the House of
Representatives on 23 November 1910. C.P.D., LIX, pp. 6675-86:

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<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
<td>1902-3</td>
<td>£14,631</td>
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<td>1903-4</td>
<td>£16,793</td>
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<td>1904-5</td>
<td>£17,170</td>
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<td>1905-6</td>
<td>£23,759</td>
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<td>1906-7</td>
<td>£18,611</td>
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<td>1907-8</td>
<td>£18,927</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908-9</td>
<td>£22,553</td>
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(these figures include the 10,000 salary provided for in the
Constitution). See, too, Commonwealth Year Books, 1907, p. 795; 1908,
p. 962; and 1909, p. 937.
Labor Party members. Dudley's hopes for a 'somewhat larger salary' were destined to be dashed in the following two years.

Expense was one obstacle to Dudley's concept of his role as roving Viceroy. But his ambitions also conflicted with the determination, in most States, to retain the institutions of State Governors. This had been a delicate problem for Governors-General since the Inauguration of the Commonwealth. Yet Dudley entered into battle with clumsy self assurance, informing the Secretary of State in April 1909:

it seems to me quite clear that if the various States are to be encouraged to adopt the Canadian system of Government, and to agree to the abolition of State Governors, the more the Governor-General resides in all parts of the country, the more will he be able to assist in bringing about such a change. 2

His Excellency was mistaken in thinking that any action of his could alter the system whereby rival Imperial officers represented the Crown in each capital city of the Commonwealth. But during his term of office there was some agitation within the States to effect such a change.

It had been assumed by many that the establishment of the office of Governor-General in 1901 would render obsolete the office of State Governor and that thereby a considerable saving would be effected in expenditure upon the establishments for these officials. By 1908 the salaries of Governors in all the States except Western Australia had been lowered. 3 But, insofar as State Government Houses continued to be occupied

1. E.g. C.P.D., 1908, XLV, p. 9882.
3. The following table shows the salaries, in £s, of State Governors in 1907, compared to those of colonial Governors in 1893. Figures are from Victorian and Commonwealth Year Books.

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<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>£10,000</td>
<td>£7,000</td>
<td>£5,000</td>
<td>£5,000</td>
<td>£4,000</td>
<td>£3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>£5,000</td>
<td>£5,000</td>
<td>£4,000</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
<td>£4,000</td>
<td>£2,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
by British officials, it was evident that federation had not produced the change that radicals and liberals had anticipated. Reduction of Governors' salaries appeared to be the furthest that State Parliaments were prepared to go towards change.

Nevertheless there was a spasmodic but persistent movement during the first decade of federation aiming to abolish the office of State Governor altogether, or to end the importation of British officials to fill these posts. Dudley's despatch of April 1909 indicated that, as such a change would increase the prestige of his own office, he supported these attempts, which, by 1908, had tended to become identified with the policy of the Labor Party. ¹ Though in the Commonwealth Parliament Labor members generally limited their concern with these matters to occasionally tilting at vice-regal expenditure, a more radical spirit was evident in State Labor Parties. Proposals calling for the abolition of the office of State Governor were high on the Party platform in every State. ² Generally, the constitutional difficulties involved in fully implementing this object led to the pursuit of a more attainable goal, namely the selection of Australian citizens for these posts. In Victoria, both the Age and the Australian Natives Association supported this contention. ³ During the first decade of the century the question of appointing local Governors

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1. In 1897 an item calling for the election of the Governor-General, all State Governors, Judges and magistrates had appeared upon the platform which the New South Wales and Tasmanian branches of the Party had prepared for the Federal Constitutional Convention. However this somewhat ambitious proposal was never put before the Convention. An interstate Labor Party Conference in January 1900 adopted a more moderate Federal platform, containing no reference to Governor-General or State Governors. See Appendix in Spence, Australia's ... Awakening, pp. 597-628.
2. Ibid.
3. Age, 5 August 1908.
was debated, usually briefly, in several State Assemblies and at occasional Conferences of State Premiers. The first real attempt to implement Labor policy in this respect, and probably the inspiration for Dudley's attitude, was that made by the South Australian Government at this time. At the 1907 Premiers Conference in Brisbane a motion declaring that 'the present is not an opportune time to alter the system of appointing State Governors' was opposed by the South Australian representative, Thomas Price. Shortly afterwards, while he was in London, Price discussed with Elgin the possibility of appointing Australian Lieutenant-Governors instead of British Governors. The consummation of these moves came in August 1908. In a carefully worded despatch to the Secretary of State the Premier requested that the next South Australian Governor be selected locally.


2. Some discussion took place at the 1905 Premiers Conference in Hobart. But, although the Victorian M.P. Toutcher attended to put the case in favour of abolition of the office, he received little support. See Herald (Melbourne), 9 February 1905, for reference to Toutcher's trip to Hobart. No record of the discussion appears in the published proceedings of the Conference.

3. Premier of South Australia from 1905 to 1909. For the 'Report of the Resolutions, Proceedings and Debates of the Premiers' Conference held at Brisbane May 1907' see N.S.W. Parliamentary Papers, 1907 (Second Session), 1, pp. 1115-1124.

4. Agent-General for South Australia, J.H. Whiting to Under Secretary of State at the Colonial Office, 11 April 1908. C.O. 418/65/13318, folios 226-7. Elgin informed Northcote, 20 March 1908, that Price was 'red hot to get rid of the "Governor" - & to appoint "Lt. Governors" ... I pointed out that he must get the concurrence of other States...'. See Northcote papers, C.O. Gifts and Deposits, P.R.O. 30/56/1, folios 123-4.

Price's assertion that there was no position of honour in South Australia which should be regarded as beyond the reach of its most distinguished citizens, was a moderate and reasonable proposition. Yet, when the despatch was tabled in the Adelaide Legislative Assembly¹, there was an immediate outcry from conservative groups and imperialists in several States, reflecting the slightly hysterical nature of opposition raised by such proposals for the following fifty years.² In Adelaide the Legislative Council debated the question at length, and declared that in the opinion of a majority of its members the current method of appointing non-Australian Governors was satisfactory. These members criticised the representations in the Premier's despatch as mistaken and unauthorised.³

Press reaction was generally unfavourable, only the Age supporting Price's proposal.⁴ In South Australia neither of the two major newspapers approved of the despatch.⁵ The Argus in Melbourne and the Mercury in Hobart vigorously denounced what they regarded as an attempt to sever Australia's Imperial ties, deprecating the 'tendency among Labor politicians' to 'let the Empire be whittled away'.⁶ The Sydney Morning Herald contented itself with a gentler editorial reproof, but it stressed the value as a link with the Empire which the system of appointing distinguished Britons to Australian State Governorships provided.

2. As late as 1947, R.G. Menzies considered the appointment of William McKell as Governor-General of Australia to be 'shocking and humiliating'. L.F. Crisp, Ben Chifley A Biography (Melbourne, 1961), p. 279.
4. Age, 23 September 1908.
5. Register and Advertiser, 16 September 1908.
6. Argus, 26 September 1908; Mercury, 30 September 1908.
Reflecting the pervading cynicism about local politicians most papers felt that the office would become a political party prize if local celebrities were appointed.\(^1\)

At the Colonial Office the despatch was given short shrift. Crewe politely rejected Price's suggestion on the grounds that any change in the system of appointing Australian Governors could only be made at the unanimous insistence of all State Governments.\(^2\) Almost immediately a suitable replacement for Le Hunte was suggested for the consideration of the South Australian Cabinet.\(^3\) Had the South Australian Premier insisted upon the appointment of an Australian it is possible that he might, eventually, have been successful. But, leading a coalition Ministry and lacking the support of any other State Government, Price was unable to bring any effective pressure to bear upon the Colonial Office and he acquiesced in the selection of Bosanquet.\(^4\)

The reaction to Price's attempt to implement Labor policy indicated that for most Australians national consciousness was still firmly within the Imperial mould. Those who urged that Australian citizens be selected to represent the Crown in the States and who resented the implication that an Australian would lack the necessary impartiality of judgment, remained in the minority. Agitation for local appointments

1. S.M.H., 17 September 1908.
3. On 20 November 1908 Crewe nominated Admiral Sir Day Bosanquet, an affable, experienced naval officer who had served for some years with the British Navy in Australian waters. C.O. 418/68/42685, folio 500.
4. Le Hunte to Secretary of State, cable 26 November 1908. C.O. 418/63/43268, folios 482-3.
continued in the legislatures of Victoria\(^1\) Western Australia\(^2\) and
Queensland\(^3\) but without effect. In 1913 the Western Australian Labor
Ministry of J. Scaddan\(^4\) forwarded a resolution petitioning for
reconsideration of the question.\(^5\) But Harcourt, the Secretary of State at
the time, was unwilling to disturb the ruling made by Crewe and there the
matter rested until after the Great War. Part of the reason for the
failure of these attempts lay in a general reluctance to alter a system
which seemed to be working well enough. State Governments were also
disinclined to reduce the prestige of their Governors lest in doing so
they surrendered more of their sovereignty to the central Executive. In
addition, the declared Labor policy of abolition tended to divide opinion
along party lines. Such a polarization allowed critics to claim that
this item of Labor policy reflected the fundamentally disloyal attitude
of the Party towards the British Empire.

During the first decade of the Commonwealth the gathering
strength of the Labour Movement had provoked considerable alarm about
its attitude towards the Imperial connection. The political and
industrial developments of the late nineteenth century had produced a
Party whose aims were practical, social and industrial rather than

1. V.P.D., 1910, 124, pp. 375-384.
2. W.A.P.D., 1908-9, XXXV, New Series, pp. 1138-1146. In February 1913
Forrest joined the ranks of those publicly advocating local State
Governors. See West Australian, 25 February 1913. But Governor Sir
Gerald Strickland was of the opinion that Forrest coveted the post for
himself. Strickland to Secretary of State, 1 March 1913. C.O.
418/116/10565, folios 363-381.
4. Premier of Western Australia from 1911 to 1916.
5. Scaddan to Governor, Sir Harry Barron, July 1913. Enclosure in Barron
to Secretary of State, 25 July 1913. C.O. 418/116/29547, folios 406-
417. For the discussion in parliament see W.A.P.D., 1912, XLV, New
Series, pp. 3921-3947.
theoretical or doctrinal. For this group local issues were of prime importance, the subtleties of the Imperial relationship of less than vital concern. While containing many who were staunchly loyal to Britain, in the absence of any other effective radical political party in Australia, the Labor Party had attracted to its banner a small band of independent minded reformers and anti-Imperialists who helped to keep the radical conscience alight, if only flickering. As a result the Party's attitude towards the British Empire was a hybrid thing, neither rejection nor whole-hearted acceptance. Yet, more by accident than by design, and partly as a reaction to the extreme attitudes of Imperialists, a coherent policy of national self-sufficiency within the Empire did emerge. While far-sighted men might have foreseen that this policy would lead to complete independence in foreign affairs, Labor politicians usually disclaimed this goal. The most significant area in which this development occurred during the first decade of the Commonwealth was in defence policy and particularly naval defence policy. To a certain extent the implementation by the Labor Party of its declared policy for an Australian Navy was stimulated by an agitation generally known as the Naval Scare.¹

Revelations during a House of Commons debate on the Naval Estimates in March 1909 caused a chill of alarm to spread throughout the Empire; a fear that Germany had passed Britain in the naval race. Australia's isolation had resulted in a particular dependence upon the British Navy. Faced with the frightening possibility of Britain's loss

of naval supremacy, the Age\textsuperscript{1} and soon most other Australian newspapers proposed that Australia assist Britain immediately by offering the British Government a battle cruiser of the 'Dreadnought' type.\textsuperscript{2} New Zealand, also affected by geographic isolation, did so with despatch. A wave of Imperial patriotism, fanned by public meetings and excited speeches, engulfed the Commonwealth. The flavour of the public mood is captured by a description of one demonstration in Sydney which coincided with the festival Empire Day, on 24 May 1909. At a stupendous gathering on the great cricket ground at Moore Park ... ten thousand school children massed and drilled to form the giant letters of the words:

\begin{center}
One Flag
One Fleet.\textsuperscript{3}
\end{center}

Even Deakin, previously a supporter of the concept of an Australian Navy, hastily endorsed the proposal that the Commonwealth give a Dreadnought to Britain.\textsuperscript{4}

To this public pressure on Fisher, was added the private counsel of the Governor-General. Though he quite properly refrained from openly endorsing the widespread clamour, Dudley suggested to the Prime Minister in private that 'the moral effect of presenting a Dreadnought might be very great, as illustrating the solidarity of the Empire'.\textsuperscript{5}

In the face of this considerable agitation, the Labor Government remained calm and moderate. Fisher and his colleagues considered that the funds of the Commonwealth would be more usefully spent

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Age}, 19 March 1909.
\item \textit{Admiral Fisher's 'Dreadnought', built 1906, was the largest, most powerful battleship in the world.}
\item Poore, \textit{Recollections}, p. 85.
\item La Nauze, \textit{Alfred Deakin}, 2, pp. 553-7.
\item Dudley reported this conversation to Crewe, 18 April 1909. C.O. 418/70/17665, folios 274-7.
\end{enumerate}
in creating a local flotilla than by the gift of a warship to the Imperial Navy. In February, one month earlier, the Government had placed orders for three destroyers which were intended to form the first elements of an Australian naval force which Labor, and for that matter Deakin, had advocated for several years. In late March, goaded by the naval scare, Fisher announced Labor's ambitious plans for a fleet of coastal destroyers.

The proposal for a local Navy was an important sign of the Commonwealth's tentative steps towards international maturity. But the Labor Government carefully endorsed the continuing attachment to the Empire. The Prime Minister reassured the Governor-General that there need be no fear that Australia's loyalty to Britain was in any way diminished. Dudley's representations on behalf of the British Government elicited the following statement from Fisher:

Re our conversations on subject of Naval Crisis, I desire to formally convey to Your Excellency that the attitude of the present Government is that, whilst its policy is to provide for its own defence, still, in the event of any emergency, the resources of the Commonwealth would be cheerfully placed at the disposal of the Mother Country.

It was a pledge which was to come up for redemption in only five years time.

The Governor-General's cautious advocacy of the Dreadnought proposal was unauthorized by any specific instruction from Britain.

1. For this purpose Fisher utilised a sum of £250,000 set aside by Parliament in May 1908 under the Surplus Revenue Bill 'for such naval expenditure as Parliament may hereafter approve'. See La Nauze, Alfred Deakin, 2, pp. 517-530, also G.L. Macandie, The Genesis of the Royal Australian Navy (Sydney, 1949).
2. In an important policy speech at Gympie. See Argus, 31 March 1909.
There was no indication in March 1909 that the British Government welcomed
the offer of a battle cruiser. Dudley can therefore be criticized not
only for interfering in a matter of Australian concern, but also as
exceeding his diplomatic instructions. But he had been prudent in not
pressing his point of view in public and it was undoubtedly true that the
offer of a Dreadnought would have illustrated signally the solidarity of
the Empire. In the event, that solidarity was to be unveiled in a new
guis at the Imperial Defence Conference which was held in London during
1909, at which a practicable and effective system of co-operation on naval
defence was evolved.¹

One question associated with Australian naval defence which had
been troublesome was that of control. At the 1907 Imperial Conference
Deakin had been concerned to ensure that constitutional control over the
local naval force should be vested securely in Australian hands.² Yet
it was clear that 'unity of control' was of great strategic importance in
the disposition of fleet units. In April 1909 Fisher prepared a memorandum
on the control of Australian war vessels in time of war or emergency.
When shown a draft of this document Dudley objected to a clause which
provided that the consent of the Commonwealth should be obtained before
any Australian vessel were placed under British Command. Though again
this was without specific authorization from Britain, the Governor-General's
action was in accord with the 'watching brief' which it was his duty to
hold over Imperial interests. On this occasion the Cabinet bowed to the

2. 'Deakin proposed the creation of local defence forces, under the control
of the Commonwealth government as to finance ... subject to naval
discipline and open to the inspection of the Commander of the Royal Navy's
Australian Station... The Australian government would retain control of
these ships in time of war ... (but) the Admiralty could not regard any
such force as part of the Navy except when it was placed under their
control'. Ibid. p. 211. See too La Nauze, Alfred Deakin, 2, p. 525.
Governor-General's wishes and the clause was re-drafted, largely by Dudley himself, to make the transfer automatic.¹

By 1909 the Governor-General was regarded principally as a diplomatic representative of the British Government. His access to Australian Ministers was of an intimacy which far surpassed even the usually confidential intercourse between ambassadors. As the Australian Commonwealth edged towards international, as distinct from local, independence, the office of Governor-General was thus providing a useful medium for confidential negotiations. But there was still an anomaly, inconsistent with the development of the office's diplomatic character and the Commonwealth's growing self-confidence. The Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth retained the power to refuse his Australian Minister's advice in one respect, namely that of dissolution of Parliament. In May 1909, for the third time in a decade, the Governor-General was advised by his Ministers to dissolve Parliament, and for the third time such advice was refused.

The seeds of Fisher's defeat and the formation of Deakin's third, Fusion Ministry had been sown six months earlier.² In November 1908 the retirement of Reid from the leadership of the Free Trade Party in favour of the colourless but pragmatic Joseph Cook, opened the way for discussions between Deakin's followers and the elements opposing Fisher's Ministry. These negotiations culminated in a joint meeting on 26 May 1909 which elected Deakin as Leader of an united Opposition. The following day saw

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1. Dudley to Crewe, 18 April 1909. C.O. 418/70/17665, folios 279-88. However Fisher declined to implement other suggestions made by the Governor-General.

the defeat of the seven months old Labor Government; a defeat which Labor regarded, justifiably, as being ill-mannered in its haste and unnatural in its parentage. For two days while tempers ran high Parliamentary invective in Australia reached unprecedented heights.1

Following its defeat the Cabinet resolved to appeal for a dissolution from the Governor-General. Over the last weekend in May William Morris Hughes, Fisher's volatile Attorney General worked feverishly on a memorandum which the Prime Minister presented to Dudley on Monday.2 The gist of the argument in this document was that there were sound constitutional precedents for the grant of a dissolution and that the electors deserved an opportunity to test the new alignment of parties. There was, however, no suggestion that the Governor-General was bound to follow his Ministers' advice.3

There was very little speculation in the press upon Dudley's likely answer to Fisher's memorandum. It was considered almost a foregone conclusion that Deakin would be commissioned to form a Government. Not even the radical press ventured to suggest that the Governor-General ought to follow his Government's advice, although a few, admittedly small, voices raised the possibility. The Tamworth Observer pointed out, 'Mr Fisher ... is His Excellency's responsible adviser. As such, it is quite conceivable that his advice may be taken'.4 And while the Hobart Mercury suggested without elaboration that there was a chance that the Governor-

4. Tamworth Observer, 1 June 1909.
General might grant an immediate dissolution, these were isolated opinions, the overwhelming expectation was that the request would be refused.\(^1\)

On re-assessment there seems considerable weight in the Government's case.\(^2\) But there were strong arguments to the contrary. The coalition ranged against the Labor Party in the House of Representatives was numerically powerful and gave every indication of stability. Though the last election had been two and a half years earlier there were approximately twelve months before Parliament was bound to go to the electors again. Moreover, if an election for the lower House were held then, Senate elections would become out of step. It was a difficult problem for a Governor-General who was not only ignorant of Australian politics but lacked any experience of the operation of the House of Commons. In the circumstances it was not surprising that Dudley should turn for assistance to the most eminent constitutional authority in the Commonwealth, Sir Samuel Griffith.\(^3\) The Chief Justice advised His Excellency to decline Fisher's request.\(^4\) On 2 June 1909 the Labor Government resigned and Deakin formed his third and last Ministry.

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1. Mercury, 31 May 1909. For other press opinion see issues of same date.
2. Forsey, Royal Power of Dissolution, p. 117, comments, 'If two opposition parties, both at issue on some great question of public policy, drop their opposition to each other and fuse, then it certainly seems reasonable for the minority Government to challenge the new, fused party in the country'.
3. Griffith's clear judicial mind and capacity for industrious draftsmanship had made him the obvious choice for Chief Justice in 1903 when Deakin came to fill that high office. He retained that position until 1919.
4. Griffith drafted a memorandum for Dudley setting out reasons for refusing Fisher's advice, but the Governor-General seems not to have conveyed his arguments to the Prime Minister. For draft of the memorandum see papers of Sir Samuel Griffith, Mss. 363, 8X, pp. 36-39. Mitchell Library.
Subsequent judgments of Dudley's action have usually been confined to comments that it was 'in accord with previous Australian practice'. But Keith thought it was *prima facie ... contrary to constitutional usage*, and the proximity of the Dreadnought controversy prompted him to suggest that the Governor-General's action might have been influenced by 'the desire to see effective aid rendered to the Empire'. Though there is insufficient evidence to determine whether or not His Excellency was influenced by such a motivation, the implication was likely to arise in the future, as the Commonwealth grew in status, if the role of the King's Representative as independent arbiter continued to be exercised. This point was raised in a letter from an anonymous 'Politician' which was featured prominently in Melbourne Punch. The writer expressed his disapproval of a situation where an officer appointed by the British Government possessed discretionary influence upon Australian political affairs. He suggested that 'the substitution of the Chief Justice of the High Court for the Governor-General would relieve the situation of all risk and all unfairness'.

The proposal that the Chief Justice should exercise a

3. Not even the radical press at the time suggested that this might be so. A search through the columns of the Worker (Sydney), Worker (Brisbane) and the Bulletin failed to find any criticism of Dudley's decision, though frequent abuse of Deakin and Cook.
4. Punch (Melbourne), 3 June 1909: 'It is not difficult to imagine a situation in which it might be of the greatest political importance to the party in power in Great Britain that a certain statesman or a certain party should not obtain office in Australia. Can it be expected that the knowledge of this would fail to influence - even unconsciously - the judgment of a Governor-General whose very position was the reward for faithful service to the ruling party in Great Britain?'.

discretionary role in the political affairs of the Commonwealth was impracticable and contrary to British parliamentary practice. But the feeling expressed by the contributor to Punch that the Representative of the Crown was not the proper repository for such authority, foreshadowed an implication which the still relatively immature Australian Parliament was unwilling to draw. His Excellency was provided with constitutional advisers. It was time that his confidence in such advisers was extended to incorporate the dissolution of Parliament. The situation was to rise again in the subsequent history of the Commonwealth and though at times some argued that the Governor-General's discretionary power to refuse his Ministers' advice remained, in practice the refusal of Fisher's request in June 1909 was the last such occasion in the Commonwealth.

In reporting the events of late May and early June to the Secretary of State, Dudley paid credit to the attitude of Fisher and his colleagues. During the whole affair they had been 'most loyal and considerate ... (and) carefully refrained from saying a word which might have the effect of exciting popular hostility against the decision which in the course of my constitutional duty I had been called upon to make'. He assured Crewe that he himself held the Labor Party in high regard and that their relations had been 'most cordial'. He complimented Fisher's Cabinet as 'very earnest, painstaking and well meaning men'. But a contributor to Punch suggested that the Governor-General's refusal to dissolve Parliament had 'convinced every Labour man in the Commonwealth that the Earl of Dudley is the most uncompromising foe Labour ever had'. Whether this were true or not, during

2. Punch (Melbourne), 10 June 1909.
His Excellency's next experience of a Labor administration few of the signs of cordiality about which he had written to Crewe were to be in evidence.

Deakin's Fusion Ministry of 1909-1910, which took office on 3 June 1909, lasted less than eleven months. It was an energetic session, many measures of considerable importance to Australia's future passing with the sure majority guaranteed to Deakin for the first time in the Commonwealth's history. But it was a relatively quiet time for the Governor-General. In December 1909 Their Excellencies left Australia on a cruise to Columbo. During their vacation the Commonwealth was administered by the Governor of New South Wales, Lord Chelmsford. Dudley returned to Australia on 27 January 1910, but his wife, for both personal and public reasons, proceeded to England.

In the nineteenth century the ladies who accompanied their husbands to govern in the colonies were occasionally more than merely ornamental. Lady Jersey, upon her return to England from New South Wales, was co-founder and first President of the Victoria League. In the twentieth century this tradition was continued by the wives of the Commonwealth's Governors-General, most of whom were active and intelligent in their public duties.

Lady Hopetoun, it is true, was not regarded as having been especially successful, particularly compared with her affable and popular husband. She was shy in public and disliked the social activities which her position as leader of society obliged her to take while Hopetoun was

1. La Nauze, Alfred Deakin, 2, pp. 576-605. Deakin considered his legislative achievements of 1909 'the finest harvest of any session'.

2. Frederick John Napier Thesiger, Baron Chelmsford, later Vice-roy of India 1916-1921. See Dictionary of National Biography, 1931-1941, pp. 854-855. This and Tennyson's earlier term as Acting Governor-General were the only occasions in the first thirty years of the Commonwealth that the Dormant Commission came into operation.

3. This association, aimed at organizing Imperial sentiment, was set up in 1901 and continued to be successful for many years. Its Secretary, Miss Talbot, visited Australia in 1909. See interview with her in Herald (Melbourne), 9 November 1909.
Governor of Victoria, and illness had curtailed her public duties during the eighteen months that she spent in Australia after federation. In contrast her successor had relished her public duties as Governor's wife in Adelaide and was only restrained from continuing to do so when Tennyson became Governor-General by the conviction that if she were too prominent, she might offend the wives of State Governors. In a letter to Lady Northcote she explained the difficulties:

Having been in both positions I must candidly own that I infinitely prefer being Governor's wife to Governor-General's, for in the one everything is open to you and you take part and interest in anything you like, - whereas as G.G.'s wife there is very little you can do without encroaching on the rights of the State Governor's wife, which even if she herself does not mind, the Governor minds for her... Both Lady Clarke and Lady Rawson have been extremely nice and kind to me and we are all great friends but I have always steadily refused to do anything that they would consider State and therefore their work. You will find that people will be always asking you to open things, preside at meetings etc. etc. - my advice is if you want to keep peace, explain to them from the first that you would love to do it - and hate refusing but that they must remember you are Federal and not State and that you would not like to encroach on the rights of the Governor's wife.

It is a position, I can assure you, that requires an enormous amount of self denial and tact.

Lady Northcote seems to have taken her predecessor's advice to heart.

Though a quiet, friendly hostess at dinner parties, she said and did little in public, seeming keener to devote her attention to the cultivation of the garden at Melbourne's Government House.

Possessing a more out-going nature than the wives of either the

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1. The Bulletin, 30 March 1895, commented on Hopetoun's handsome but unsociable wife. In Freemans Journal, a correspondent wrote that though 'the Earl ... was most popular with all classes ... her ladyship was inclined to be a little exclusive, especially with the "upper" classes in Melbourne'. 22 December 1901.

2. Lady Tennyson to Lady Northcote, (draft), 25 September 1903. Tennyson papers, MS 479/37/4. A.N.L.

3. Dudley to Denman, 5 March 1911. Denman papers, MS 769/7. A.N.L.
first or the third Governor-General, and less conscious of the need for
public reticence than Lady Tennyson, Lady Dudley determined to assert
herself in the public forum. She was a strikingly beautiful woman of
considerable intelligence and drive. A visitor to the Dudleys in Ireland
later described Lady Dudley as 'the cleverer of the two' with 'great
imagination'. But she was said to have a 'reserved, even absent manner'.
Ada Holman's memoirs described the Governor-General's wife as being rather
haughtily disdainful:

Lady Dudley [was] beautiful as is a marble statue, expressionless
and almost dumb, keeping her long white gloves on throughout
as was her wont even at dinner; toying with one salted almond
and one cheese wafer at supper... She was the goddess Artemis,
a carved lily...

Perhaps the Countess' manner on this occasion was exacerbated by her
proximity to the effervescent Mrs Holman. A more sympathetic portrayal
is given by A.B. Paterson, who described Lady Dudley as 'beautiful,
cultivated and altogether feminine', and as 'a singularly beautiful woman,
graceful and with a voice that had the range of an organ and had been
carefully trained by professors of elocution'. But even 'The Banjo'
commented upon the 'steel in her composition'.

In May 1909 Her Excellency had accompanied her husband at the
formal ceremony opening the Commonwealth Parliament. The writer of
Melbourne Punch's Ladies Letter remarked on this with approval. 'In solemn
truth' the correspondent continued 'the Countess of Dudley is something
of a politician. She is a talker herself - a conversationalist and a

speech maker'. Certainly the Governor-General's wife was interested in politics. Her elegant figure had graced the public gallery in May 1909 when the Deakin Government was defeated. The sphere in which she chose to exercise her abilities was exceedingly appropriate. The provision of health services outside city centres was, in those days before aviation, less than adequate. In a speech to the Women's National Council meeting in Brisbane on 21 August 1909, Lady Dudley urged the extension of the existing district nursing scheme so that patients in the outback could obtain the benefits of trained nursing care.

Having embarked upon the project, it was not in Lady Dudley's nature to leave the implementation to others. During the next two years she laboured to put her scheme into practice. In Melbourne she summoned a public meeting which decided that expert opinion should be obtained to consider the merits of a practical scheme. In early 1910, during a visit of several months to England, she set out to attract support from British Nursing Institutes and King Edward himself. On her return to Australia, and after the visit of 'two distinguished representatives of the largest organisation of district nursing in the world' a Federal Constitution was presented for public approval. This proposed to set up a Federal Council with the Governor-General's wife as Patroness, and six State Councils each under the patronage of the wife of the State Governor.

1. Punch (Melbourne), 3 June 1909.
2. Smith, Thirty Years, p. 103.
5. After her departure from Australia Lady Dudley published an account of her scheme in Lone Hand, 1 August 1911, pp. 293-301.
Lady Dudley's Bush Nursing scheme was an ambitious project recommended by both Deakin and Fisher as a philanthropic exercise. But neither devoted any of the Commonwealth's public funds and the scheme failed to secure the public support that it needed to become effective. A suggestion that it be set up as a memorial to the late King Edward VII was dropped when the public showed a preference to erect a statue. Finally opposition from the Australian medical profession meant the end of the proposal as it was originally conceived. Some State Associations survived but not until after the First World War did a rationalisation of Australian Nursing organisation occur.

By September 1910 Lady Dudley was forced to conclude that her Bush Nursing scheme was 'not wholly acceptable' to Australia. This was a matter of some disappointment for her. But more embarrassing was the problem that her hopes for an improvement in her marital difficulties had 'not been fulfilled'. Ada Holman notes that 'It was common knowledge that the Governor-General and his wife were on very distant terms ... were seen together only at strictly official functions'. By October 1910 matters had degenerated to the stage where 'terms of arrangement were embodied in a document'. To add to this delicate situation John Norton published in Truth an article charging the Earl of Dudley with 'concupiscent capers ... libidinous lecheries and lascivious lapses'.

2. Argus, 1 July 1910.
5. The Times, 7 November 1918.
7. The Times, 7 November 1918.
8. Truth, 18 September 1910.
Shortly before the *Truth* article had appeared a Sydney evening newspaper, the *Sun*, published a report headed 'Lord Dudley - Trouble with the Ministry - Sharp Notes Sent to Government House'. It claimed that, for some time past, 'the happiest relations have not existed between the Governor-General and the Labor Ministry' which had secured office at the elections of April 1910. The *Sun* instanced several reasons for the lack of cordiality. One was the appointment of Reid as Australian High Commissioner and the corresponding reduction in the importance of the Governor-General as channel of communication. Another was alleged discontent at His Excellency's infrequent residence in Melbourne, which, the *Sun* asserted, had led to delay of assent to certain legislation which the Government wished to hurry through. Finally the failure of Lady Dudley's Bush Nursing scheme was cited as an additional reason for the trouble.

In at least one respect this report had a kernel of truth. The Governor-General had been disturbed about the effect upon his position of Reid's appointment as High Commissioner. In June he had written to Fisher expressing the hope that he would not be 'superseded as the recognised channel of communication between the Commonwealth Government and the Imperial authorities'. This was the first indication of what was to be an increasingly serious problem for his successors as Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth. But it had not reached the stage that could be described as 'strained' in 1910.

Though Fisher strongly denied any friction between his Cabinet and the Governor-General there was no doubt that their relations were

hardly as cordial as had been the case in Dudley's earlier experience of a Labor Government. Perhaps, as Punch had hinted, some Labor parliamentarians held grudges as to the refusal of a dissolution in 1909. If so the problem of paying for the vice-regal establishment provided an ideal opportunity for dissatisfaction to make itself felt. In November 1910 Higgs, a Labor back-bencher, made a vigorous attack upon the amount which the Government proposed to expend upon the Governor-General and or the two Government Houses. In a brief but lively debate many Labor parliamentarians expressed agreement with Higgs. J.H. Scullin was one who commented upon the 'growing scandal in the increasing expenditure upon Government Houses'. Eventually the Acting Prime Minister intervened. Only after Hughes had promised to give every consideration to exercising 'proper economy ... with a view to curtailing unnecessary expenditure' did Higgs withdraw his amendment.

Fisher had not needed this warning as to feeling in Parliament on the matter of expenditure on the office of Governor-General. A few months earlier Dudley had received a rebuff from the Prime Minister on this account. His Excellency had wanted to circumnavigate the continent by sea and had proposed that the Commonwealth Government should charter a steamer-yacht to do so. He had urged that the cost would not be excessive, and in any case he ventured to submit 'that some expenditure is justifiable to enable the Governor-General to visit the more distant parts of the Commonwealth in a convenient and dignified manner'. At first

1. In the debate on Estimates he moved that the amount of £9,520 be reduced by £1. C.P.D., 1910, LIX, pp. 6675-6686.
2. Later Prime Minister of Australia, 1929-1932.
4. Ibid., pp. 6685-6.
Fisher was disposed to regard the suggestion favourably. But when the cost for the journey was presented to him he decided against the proposal.¹ Punch, in an article which revealed details of the abortive scheme, commented, 'even a Governor-General has his disappointments'.² But there was more involved in the problem of vice-regal expenditure than the gratification of Dudley's whim to circle Australia by yacht. The problem was to come to an embarrassing climax during the term of office of Dudley's successor.

In the face of the several public setbacks which Their Excellencies had received and their personal difficulties, it was clear by December 1910 that they could not remain much longer in the Commonwealth. Apparently Deakin had been relating the scandals and difficulties to his friend, Northcote, for by 16 December the ex-Governor-General informed him, 'As regards Lord D. Crewe told me privately that they would bring him home as soon as possible'.³ In March 1911, after months of rumours about His Excellency's impending retirement, it was announced that, for personal reasons, Dudley was returning to England.⁴

Relations between the Governor-General and the Labor Government in the last months of Dudley's term of office continued to be strained. In June 1911 Dudley was furious when none of his Ministers attended a levee held to celebrate the coronation of George V. An account of his vexation is given by Deakin who attended the levee in his capacity as Leader of the Opposition and, upon walking accidentally into the Governor-General's room,

1. Fisher to Dudley, 5 and 8 July 1910. Copies in Ibid. Fisher noted that the cost would be £2,500 at least.
3. Northcote to Deakin, 16 December 1910. Deakin papers, MS 1540/3993. A.N.L.
4. Argus, 3 March 1911. For rumours of retirement see Sun, 8 September 1910.
received 'an angry denunciation of Ministers for their absence which he took as a direct reflection upon him and an insult to the King... He was openly fuming and pacing up and down his room, quite forgetting the exhibition of himself he was making'.

Though on the following day Hughes apologised, claiming that the absence of Ministerial representation had been an oversight, it was evident that relations between the Government and the Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth had deteriorated to an extent unprecedented in the decade since federation.

Dudley relinquished office on 31 July 1911. His departure from Australia, a few days later, was 'unmarked by any official ceremony' and Hughes, the Acting Prime Minister, was prevented at the last moment from carrying out his original intention of being present in the farewell party.

Even after his return to England Dudley aroused controversy in Australia. In October 1911 a speech in which he condemned the system of payment for Members of Parliament in Australia was criticised by Labor Ministers and provoked Higgs to renew his attack upon the unfortunate ex-Governor-General for 'neglect of his duties' in addition to other 'vagaries'.

Even the Argus found little on which to compliment Dudley in a speech to the Colonial Institute in which he recommended, mildly enough, that Australia needed fewer Parliaments.

The death of his Royal patron, the degeneration in his marriage and his unsatisfactory experience in Australia had brought Dudley's public

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1. See comments in foolscap Minute book, three pages from the end, elaborating a note in Rough Diary 1911. Deakin papers, MS 1540/19/275. A.N.L.
2. Argus, 26 June 1911.
3. Argus, 10 August 1911.
5. Argus, 11 January 1912.
career to a close. He never again held public office. A deed of separation drawn up in October 1912 marked the formal end of his marriage. In 1920 Lady Dudley died in a bathing accident.\(^1\) Four years later Dudley married the former musical comedy actress, Gertie Millar. He died in London on 29 June 1932.

There was no doubt that Dudley’s exercise of the office of Governor-General in Australia had been unsuccessful. His concept of the role as ceremonial and ostentatious was badly out of touch with Australian public opinion. Conflicts with his Commonwealth Ministers and scandal about his unhappy private life reduced the influence which the British Government felt that a Governor-General ought to have on his Cabinet.\(^2\)

Deakin, whose experience of office under both Dudley and Northcote had enabled him to compare the two, summed up the failures of the Commonwealth’s fourth Governor-General:

His ambition was high but his interests were short-lived and subordinate to those belonging to what may be termed his private life, though there was little privacy as to much of it... He did nothing really important, nothing thoroughly, nothing consistently... He should have been an 'impossible' Governor-General. He remained to the last a very ineffective and not very popular figurehead.

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1. The Times, obituary, 28 June 1920.

2. C.P. Lucas, head of the Dominions division of the Colonial Office, remarked in September 1911 that 'Lord Dudley's case has not been a very happy one' and was inclined not to write the conventional valedictory despatch. See C.O. 418/88/24751, folios 349-354. For a sharp attack on Dudley's exercise of office in Australia, penned by A.B. Keith when he was a Clerk in the Colonial Office, see minutes on Denman to Secretary of State, 28 February 1912. C.O. 418/99/10240, folios 134-8.

3. Note in Minute book, previously cited. Deakin papers, MS 1540/19/275. A.N.L.
VII

Eviction
'That matter of Sydney Government House. The second expulsion from Paradise. And there seems to be more fuss about this second expulsion than there was about the first one!'

Bulletin, 18 January 1912.
'It puts the clock back so', lamented Northcote,\(^1\) concerning the failure of his successor's regime in Australia. Dudley's personal inadequacies had added to the already considerable setbacks previously suffered by Governors-General. By 1911 it was clear that, far from being a sinecure, the post was beset with difficulties. 'Gov. Gen. of Australia is a thankless task', minuted Anderson at the Colonial Office.\(^2\) Melbourne Punch considered it 'not a pleasant position for any man ... one is on a pedestal, not for aggrandisement, but as a fair mark for public inspection, criticism and eventual judgment'.\(^3\) To a great extent the office had become the focus of much discontent with federation. Rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne; concern at the cost of central government; opposition by the States to further Commonwealth incursion on their sovereign rights; and difficulties over the changing relationship of the Dominion with Britain; these issues had all contributed to the problems of the Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth. Only Northcote had negotiated the difficult path successfully. Yet even he proved unable to fulfil what many had hoped would be an important function. It had constantly been anticipated that when a Governor-General returned to London he would exercise a strong influence in Australia's favour at the centre of the Empire. Northcote was ideally suited to such a role and would have combined excellently with the newly appointed High Commissioner, Reid. But ill-health and eventually his death in 1911 prevented the

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1. Northcote to Deakin, 7 September 1911. Deakin papers, MS 1540/3999. A.N.L.
2. Minute dated 6 September 1911 on discussion as to whether a congratulatory despatch should be sent to Dudley. C.O. 418/88/24751, folios 349-354.
3. Punch (Melbourne), 3 August 1911.
the realization of these anticipations. Hopetoun had died in 1908. Tennyson lacked influence in British governing circles. Dudley was out of sympathy with Australian aspirations. It was evident that those constitution makers who had hoped that the Governor-Generalship would be a 'great office' and its incumbent 'equal to the ... Governor-General of India ... capable of being a cabinet minister in England' were astray in their anticipations. Australians did not even seem to want him to be a 'ceremonial ... a glittering and gaudy toy' if Commonwealth taxpayers were expected to pay for the glitter. In these circumstances it was not surprising that those leading British politicians who were prepared to leave home to govern in the colonies, preferred the less remote and more satisfying posts in South Africa or Canada. Lord Gladstone, appointed as first Governor-General of South Africa in 1910, had been a Cabinet Minister. In 1912 a Royal Governor-General, the Duke of Connaught, was to take office in Canada. In contrast Dudley's successor in Australia was a very minor political figure.

Thomas, third Baron Denman, was only thirty seven years of age upon his appointment as fifth Governor-General of the Commonwealth. Educated for a military career at Sandhurst, he had served for a short

1. Deakin had hoped for Northcote's sympathetic help in London and his succinct diary entry: 'Lord Northcote's death - Alas!' expressed more than sadness at the loss of a friend. Deakin papers, MS 1540, box 50. Rough Diary, 30 September 1911. A.N.L.

2. For these comments at the 1891 Convention see above, chapter I, pp. 32-39.

3. Formerly Herbert Gladstone. Garson, The Choice of South Africa's First Prime Minister, p.11, suggests that Asquith was 'seeking to rid his Cabinet of a weak link'. See Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, pp. 542-3 for the King's opposition to the appointment.


5. Biographical details from Argus, 5 April 1911.
time in a regiment of the Royal Scots before turning his attention to politics in the House of Lords. Like Dudley he remained interested in military affairs throughout his career and saw action in a Yeomanry unit during the South African War.\(^1\) He had obtained a minor Court appointment in Campbell-Bannerman's administration of 1905 and at the time of his selection for Australia was acting as chief Liberal Whip in the Lords. But Liberal strength in this House was notoriously low and it was evident that Denman lacked both political and administrative experience. Moreover his health was poor and his personal qualities uninspiring. Dudley regarded him as 'pleasantly casual, narrow, ineffective & likely to have little influence on either ... politics or politicians'.\(^2\) Northcote, too, had little confidence in Denman's abilities apart from his proficiency on a horse.\(^3\) Youth and fondness for polo were not necessarily disadvantageous for a vice-regal Representative in Australia. In the previous century, young and wealthy Governors such as Carrington, Hopetoun and Beauchamp had proved popular and, upon their return to London, had attained considerable influence in British affairs. But Denman lacked their personal vigour.

In 1903 he had married Gertrude, the only daughter of Sir Weetman Pearson. His father-in-law was a wealthy Yorkshire contractor whose international business activities and generous donations to party funds had raised him to prominence in Liberal circles and were eventually to

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1. Where he was wounded in action and invalided home.
2. Note in Deakin papers, Minute book previously cited. Deakin agreed with Dudley's assessment of Denman. MS 1540/19/275. A.N.L.
3. 'As regards the new G.G. I will say nothing, as I hardly know him, - except that the appt caused general surprise. The idea here is that large private means form an indespensible or "the" indispensible condition... Of course Lady Denman has all the money - he is a good rider; & keen about soldiering'. Northcote to Deakin, 31 March 1911. Deakin papers, MS 1540/3996. A.N.L.
secure him a Viscounct. Lady Pearson, an ambitious, single-minded woman, had successfully bridged the social gap between Bradford and London to become a leading hostess in late Victorian and Edwardian society. She, too, was an active worker in the Liberal cause and a generous benefactor to various humanitarian institutions. Her daughter inherited the considerable talents of both parents. Lady Denman was tall and slim, with an aquiline nose and red hair; in appearance the complete antithesis of the classically beautiful Rachel Dudley, though she lacked none of her predecessor's strength of character. Possessing far more drive, intelligence and physical strength than her sickly husband, and aged only twenty six, 'Trudie' Denman was unlikely to take readily to the stuffy routine of vice-regal life in the colonies, especially as their marriage was unhappy. Matters were not to be improved in Australia where the climate aggravated Denman's disposition to hay fever and asthma.

In spite of difficulties, the Denmans arrived in Australia on 31 July 1911 'keen to work hard'. They found the Commonwealth 'lapped by a flood of prosperity'. The droughts which earlier in the decade had held back pastoral industry had given way to seasons of plenty. It was a period of steady growth. The population, after declining in the first years of federation, began to increase markedly in the years 1911-1913. Politically the country was more stable than at any other time.


3. Northcote to Deakin, 7 June 1911, by which time he was hoping for the best from the new Governor-General and his wife. Deakin papers, MS 1540/3998. A.N.L.

4. Age, 3 July 1911.

since federation. A strong Labor Government was firmly in control of the Australian Parliament and pursuing vigorous, progressive, national policies. The Ministry was experienced and well-balanced. Fisher's cautious leadership, and the administrative strength of G.F. Pearce as Defence Minister were supported by the more spectacular showmanship of the Attorney-General, Hughes, and the flamboyant unpredictability of the Minister for Home Affairs, King O'Malley. Though the Cabinet was weakened in October 1911 by the death of E.L. Batchelor, a wise and experienced Minister for External Affairs, its competence and confidence contrasted strongly with the ageing opposition front bench, which, as a visitor observed, was 'singularly destitute of captains'.¹

Deakin, whose political skill and intellect dominated the first decade of the Commonwealth, was only a shadow of his former self. Of his former Protectionist colleagues only Forrest and Groom remained to sit with him in the ranks of men who had for years been his political opponents. As leader of the erstwhile Free Trade group, Joseph Cook attempted without conviction to fill the breeches of the sadly missed Reid, assisted by W.H. Irvine, a narrow, cold figure and the diligent but ineffectual E.D. Millen.

"The people I like best' wrote Lady Denman to her brother, 'are the Labour people. They are very simple and nice'.² Lord and Lady Denman's relations with Fisher and his Ministers were to be remarkably cordial throughout their whole period in Australia. Even after an election in 1913 returned Cook's Liberal Party with a narrow majority it was no secret that the Governor-General remained in close contact with

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2. Quoted in Huxley, Lady Denman, p. 44.
Labor leaders. Denman displayed no inclination to interfere in political affairs. Nor did he expect to be recompensed by the national Parliament for his vice-regal entertainment. The Denmans were generous though not ostentatious, having been guaranteed financial support from Lord Cowdray. 'We spend money like water', commented Lady Denman. The Bulletin remarked in November 1912, 'the joyous Denmans hand out their money with both hands on the slightest provocation'.

Their Excellencies' popularity with Labor parliamentarians owed much to the way in which they struggled against the excessive formality of their official position. Younger and politically more progressive than earlier vice-regal Representatives, they introduced a more relaxed atmosphere to vice-regal activities. Punch complimented Lady Denman on refusing 'to adopt that pose of haughty disdain which has been so characteristic of some Vice-Regal ladies in the past'. In spite of constantly poor health, Denman won praise for his readiness to engage in the Australian enthusiasm for sport. His wife, too, was prominent

1. S.M.H., 18 April 1914.
2. Cowdray promised to make good 'all shortage up to £50,000' to enable 'them to do the thing as well as it could be done - within reason'. Huxley, Lady Denman, p. 39.
3. Ibid., p. 45.
5. Punch (Melbourne), 23 November 1911.
6. Ibid., 3 August 1911.
7. Though there was some criticism too. See Labor Call, 17 April 1913: 'I do wish G.G. Denman would knock off playing games and things and do some work ... it's good to see an exalted personage, representing a still more exalted personage, proving that he's some good at sport, but then what's wrong with Harry Trott or Warwick Armstrong, Victor Trumper, McNamara, Marchbanks or Jack Wells? If cricket and football are too vulgar, what price Norman Brookes as a Vice-regal Excellence?'. Henry Lawson wrote to a friend, 22 September 1911: 'The new Vice-regal nobs ... took it that Australians thought of nothing but sport, and tried to jump into their favour'. Colin Roderick (ed.), Henry Lawson Letters 1890-1922 (Sydney, 1970), p. 206.
in public. She followed her predecessor's lead in lending support to the Bush Nursing project. Spurred on by a somewhat naive enthusiasm for the Australian bush¹ she zealously visited outback towns to install nurses in this scheme, which, largely due to her efforts, did achieve some measure of operational success between 1911 and 1914. Both the Governor-General and his lady were bravely prepared to travel extensively throughout the continent in what had become the obligatory gubernatorial fashion.² They officiated at innumerable ceremonies in every State; opening anything from an agricultural show to the trans-continental railway. This activity had its repercussions. Denman found that relations with the Representatives of the Crown in the States were 'often difficult ... the Governors themselves are difficult to deal with'.³ In March 1913 Denman laid the foundation stone of the future national capital at a dusty but picturesque rural site which Lady Denman, with much ceremony, named 'Canberra'.⁴

Although it was to be many years before the national capital was to take shape, its establishment was indicative of the growing self-assurance of the Australian Government in both internal and external affairs. Though attempts to extend its powers under the Constitution were defeated in two separate referenda between 1911 and 1914,⁵ other measures such as the establishment of the Commonwealth Bank⁶ and the institution of Maternity Allowances were permanent and substantial legislative achievements. In 1911 the Commonwealth Government created a

2. See Dudley to Denman, 5 March 1911. Denman papers, MS 769/4-5. A.N.L. 'Travelling about visiting country towns and districts is one of the principal functions of the Gov. Gen and there is no doubt that the more a Gov. Gen does that the more he is appreciated and liked'.
3. Denman to Munro Ferguson, 11 May 1914. Novar papers, MS 696/7393-7400. A.N.L.
4. Huxley, Lady Denman, pp. 50-54.
citizen military force for home defence under a system of universal compulsory training. A Navigation Act to provide additional protection for Australian shipping and Australian seamen was enacted despite opposition from British shipping interests. The Fisher Government also brought to fruition plans to establish an Australian Navy.

At the Imperial Conference of 1911, being held in London when Denman arrived in Australia, there was evidence of further change in the relationship between the Dominions and Mother Country. This Conference, the first attended by a representative of the newly established Union of South Africa, was an important step in the evolution of the British Commonwealth. The meeting was chaired by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom instead of by the Secretary of State for the Colonies as had been the case since 1887. Reluctantly, the British Government recognized that the self-governing Dominions could no longer be completely excluded from the fields of Imperial Defence and international affairs.


Though Asquith was not prepared to concede to them any direct role in
the conduct of policy, awed Dominion Ministers were vouchsafed audience
to an extensive exposition of Imperial Defence and Foreign policy more
comprehensive than had been revealed to the British Cabinet. For the
future they gained access to the Committee of Imperial Defence \(^1\) and a
recognition that they would be consulted on matters affecting their
external concerns and defence needs.

These changes in the status of Australia as a Dominion within
the British Empire had a significant effect on the role of Governor-
General. The emergence of the Colonial and Imperial Conference as a
central co-operative organ in the Empire, albeit a limited and
discontinuous one, had left the Governor-General and his superior, the
Secretary of State for the Colonies, rather on the periphery. In little
over a decade since federation Australian leaders, by means of such
Conferences, had come into contact with British statesmen far more
intimately and regularly than had ever been the case in the nineteenth
century. As British Cabinet Ministers lost some of their remoteness the
Governor-General lost some of his prestige. The Representative of the
Crown was also hindered by his close association, in the minds of
Australian politicians, with the Colonial Office. For years Australian
leaders had claimed that this institution was an unsatisfactory
intermediary for communications between the self-governing colonies and
the Imperial Government. It was also becoming clear to colonial statesmen
that the Colonial Secretary was not as important a member of the British

\(^1\) F.A. Johnson, *Defence by Committee*, the British Committee of Imperial
Committee by Dominion Ministers see John P. Mackintosh, 'The Role of
the Committee of Imperial Defence before 1914', *English Historical
Cabinet as had been the case during Chamberlain's tenure of office. At
the 1907 Conference Deakin had attempted to transfer Dominion affairs
from the responsibility of the Colonial Office, which he regarded as
inept and impenetrable, to a Conference Secretariat. But lack of
support from the Canadian Prime Minister, Laurier, and skilful
manoeuvring by the Secretary of State, Elgin, had defeated his proposal.
A Secretariat was set up, but it was securely under the control of the
Colonial Office. Consequently the Governor-General remained the principal
channel of communication between Australia and the British Government.

Nevertheless, despite their irregularity and the lack of a
permanent independent Secretariat, Imperial Conferences did enable
Dominion politicians to put their case personally to the British Government.
In addition, by 1911 each Dominion had stationed in London High
Commissioners, charged with important quasi-diplomatic responsibilities.
In 1910, after considerable delay, Australia had appointed Reid as its
first such official. Behind this appointment was the constantly
expressed wish that Australian national interests be represented in
Britain. The High Commissioner was a potentially formidable agent of
the Commonwealth in London, particularly when as enthusiastic and energetic
as was Reid. There soon arose conflicts between his office and that of
the Governor-General over their respective responsibilities.

The Colonial Office regarded with suspicion any evidence that
Dominions were utilising the High Commissioner as an alternative channel

1. La Nauze, Alfred Deakin, 2, pp. 484-492, 503-4. Also Kendle,
Colonial and Imperial Conferences, pp. 83-106.

University, 1972.
of communication. Early in 1911, after incidents involving New Zealand and South African representatives, the Secretary of State had emphasized to his Cabinet colleagues that the sole intermediary between British and Dominion Governments should be the Colonial Office. But the problem persisted, particularly with regard to defence matters. The most intransigent offender was the Admiralty in its negotiations with the Dominions over the establishment of Dominion Navies. During 1911 a new Naval Agreement, conceding to the Dominions their right to flotillas of their own, took shape at meetings between Admiralty and Dominion representatives in London. Significantly, the Colonial Office was not represented at these negotiations and the Bill to carry the Agreement into effect was drafted without its concurrence. The Agreement provided, amongst other things, that communications concerning technical matters such as equipment and armament should be channeled through the Australian Government's representative, Reid.

The Colonial Office was prepared to countenance such correspondence in routine matters. But in August 1912 Harcourt drew

2. See Harcourt to Denman, 6 October 1911, MP 84/1, item 1850/1/93, C.A.O., (Melbourne), concerning communications between High Commissioner and the War Office. Also Prime Minister to Minister for External Affairs, 19 August 1912, urging conduct of correspondence through the correct channel. A copy of this circular was sent to all Ministers. Department of External Affairs, Correspondence, CRS A1, item 15/16430. C.A.O.
the attention of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, to several instances of direct communication between the Admiralty and the Dominion Governments, via the High Commissioners, which had involved policy, not routine. The Australian Governor-General had complained that communications between the Admiralty and his Ministers had passed without his knowledge. Harcourt pointed out to Churchill that this practice placed His Excellency in an unfortunate position. Seeing nothing of the correspondence he would not be in a position to understand the nature of the Admiralty's policy. In the case of an emergency he would not be able to 'exercise the personal influence which he should have with his Government' in favour of those views.¹

Churchill agreed that in policy matters within the sphere of 'Colonial diplomacy', it was essential that the Colonial Office should be the Admiralty's Ambassador. But he pointed out that 'a large and multiplying series of questions mostly of technical detail', were arising, many of which required to be dealt with by telegraph, while others had to be 'discussed verbally with the High Commissioner or with the naval representatives of the Dominions on the High Commissioners' Staffs'.² Though he suggested an Inter-Departmental Committee to consider the principles to be observed in dealing with the problem, it was becoming clear that the growing independence of the Dominions and their establishment of institutions such as local Navies, threatened to reduce the influence of the Colonial Office and the Governor-General. In Australia, the Official Secretary, Steward, was also concerned at the

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'direction in which things are drifting'. On 9 July 1912 he had forwarded to M.L. Shepherd, the Prime Minister's Private Secretary, a memorandum objecting to the tendency to 'transfer portion of the functions of the Governor-General to the High Commissioner's Office'. But, despite protests in London and in Melbourne, irregularities continued.

The development of alternative channels of communication between Britain and the Dominions led a contributor to Round Table to suggest, in 1913, that the Colonial Office had become no more than a 'clearing house', with other Departments, especially the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade, dealing with the more important aspects of Dominion affairs. While it was true that the appointment of a British Trade Commissioner to Australia in 1908, who reported direct to the Board of Trade, added yet another avenue of contact between the two countries, it was premature to suggest that the traditional channel of communication was superseded. The focal point of the Empire was still Downing Street and Whitehall. In the existing system of two-way despatches there was a permanent, reasonably efficient, instrument for the transmission of communications to that focal point. Without foreign services, the

1. Steward to Shepherd, 9 July 1912. Prime Minister's Department Correspondence. CRS A461, item E334/1/2, part 1. C.A.O.
2. See minute by Keith on Denman to Harcourt, 22 February 1913: 'Lord Denman has already protested against his being ignored'. C.O. 418/110/11617, folio 129.
3. Unsigned article, 'Downing Street', in Round Table, III (December 1912 to September 1913), p. 590. Also mentioned in Cross, Whitehall and the Commonwealth, p. 38.
4. Johnson, Defence by Committee, p. 111, asserts that the Committee of Imperial Defence Secretariat was, by 1911, replacing the Colonial Office as channel of communication in defence matters. Cross, Whitehall and the Commonwealth, p. 38, points out that apart from the times when Dominion Ministers were in London, there is no evidence to support this claim.
5. Henry L. Hall, Australia and England: A Study in Imperial Relations (London, 1934), pp. 47-8, claims that the delays of which Dominions, especially Australia, complained, occurred less in the Colonial Office than in other Departments, such as the Foreign Office or Board of Trade.
Dominions and Dominion Governments still depended upon those despatches, or upon press reports also emanating from London, for their information about foreign affairs. Except for the special occasions when Dominion Ministers were attending Conferences in London, the office of the Governor-General remained the most convenient channel for any representation which the Commonwealth Government wished to make to Britain or any other country. Moreover, Dominion Cabinets were reluctant to grant their High Commissioners any authority to bind the distant Government. Consequently the Governor-General retained his function as principal connecting link with the Mother Country and his role as ambassadorial representative of the British Government.

To the consternation of the Colonial Office Denman appeared not to recognize this aspect of his role. In particular his ready acceptance of Australian views on the establishment of a local flotilla led to disapproval in London. Perhaps unduly influenced by his friendship with Labor Ministers in the Commonwealth His Excellency made the Dominion Navy the subject for enthusiastic public addresses. Anderson, who had become Permanent Under Secretary at the Colonial Office, thought that it would be much better if Denman left 'matters of policy alone, unless he has explicit instructions in regard to them'. Harcourt agreed. In March

1. In 1914 Canada's appointment of Sir George Perley as Cabinet Minister in residence at London was the first attempt to give the High Commissioner effective responsibility. But the outbreak of war almost immediately thereafter ended this experiment. In the case of Reid, whose term in London coincided mainly with a Labor administration in the Commonwealth, it would have been politically impossible for the Government to allow him extra-territorial authority.

2. Minute, dated 9 January 1913, on Denman to Secretary of State 4 December 1913. C.O. 418/100/510, folios 324-343. The speech in question merely encouraged New Zealand to co-operate with the Australian naval force. Anderson saw no reason why 'the provincialism of Australia is as good as the Imperialism of New Zealand', which had continually supported the concept of naval unity. See C.O. 418/106/15885, folios 50-53.
1913 Denman welcomed Australia's cruiser, the 'Melbourne', to the Commonwealth by asserting that 'in view of Australia's sacrifices of men and money and her isolated position in the southern Pacific no-one could question her right to complete control of her own fleet unit'.\(^1\) But, by 1913 the British Government was less satisfied with the proposition of Dominion Navies than it had been only a few years earlier.\(^2\) In this situation Anderson considered Denman's speech of March 1913 'most ill timed and injudicious'.\(^3\)

The Governor-General's difficulties over the Australian naval force was an indication of the sort of problem caused by the dual role he was expected to fulfil. As the Commonwealth emerged from colonial dependence upon Great Britain it became more difficult for the Representative of the Crown to reconcile his function as agent of the British Government with his role as Australian Head of State. Australians wanted His Excellency to be a constitutional monarch, sympathetic to Australian aspirations and able to make influential representations on their behalf in London. The British Government saw him more in the role of diplomat. On matters such as immigration and tariff policies, which had passed to local control before 1910, the Governor-General was expected


2. Writing to Harcourt on 9 September 1912, Churchill referred to 'the principle of one Imperial Navy' as 'the goal at which we should aim'. C.O. 418/106/26651, folio 106. A speech by Churchill in March 1914, provoked a spirited response from the Commonwealth Government defending the local flotilla. See *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, 1914, II, pp. 205-9, 'Naval Defence: Memorandum by the Minister for Defence dated 13th April, 1914; together with Speech of the First Lord of the Admiralty as Reported in Australia'. A vigorous attack on the concept of Dominion Navies, which defended the British Government's attitude, was made by Archibald Hurd, 'The Imperial Muddle: Admiralty and Dominions', in *Fortnightly Review*, XCVI, new series (July 1914), pp. 68-84.

to act as guardian of Imperial interests. As Australia and the other Dominions began to make cautious advances beyond their own boundaries the Representative of the Crown was required to keep a watchful eye upon Dominion policies concerning defence and foreign affairs and, in Harcourt's words, 'exercise the personal influence which he should have with his Government' in favour of the British Government's policy.

For the Governor-General to exercise such an influence it was imperative that he should possess considerable personal prestige and strength of character. Unfortunately, though popular and conscientious, Denman was ineffectual and inexperienced. He was unable to arrest the declining prestige of the position and, like his predecessor, was unable to realize the potentialities of the role. In addition his whole career in Australia was overshadowed by a dispute which damaged the dignity of both the office of Governor-General and its occupant.

The quarrel over occupancy of Sydney Government House which reached its climax during Denman's tenure of office was the culmination of a wrangle which dated from the very inauguration of the office of Governor-General. Prior to federation, the Premier of New South Wales, Lyne, had undertaken to make ample provision for the Governor-General's residence in Sydney. For this purpose he offered the existing Government House and arranged for the lease of 'Cranbrook', a smaller house at Rose


Bay, as a residence for future State Governors. The last colonial Governor, Beauchamp, returned to England prematurely to enable the first Governor-General, Hopetoun, to move into the premises in Sydney Domain. These moves reflected the inter-colonial jealousy which was to bedevil the problem of vice-regal residences until the erection of the federal capital. There was considerable resentment in the colony of New South Wales that Melbourne had secured the honour of possessing, temporarily, the seat of Government. Reluctantly conceding that the Governor-General must reside mainly in Melbourne during sessions of Commonwealth Parliament, Lyne's offer of Sydney Government House was intended to establish the principle that during Parliamentary recess the Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth should live at Sydney.

The problem faced successive Governors-General. It was an important contributing factor in the difficulty over allowances which drove Hopetoun back to England. As sittings of the national Parliament were more prolonged than had ever been anticipated, the Representative of the Crown tended to spend more time in Melbourne than in Sydney. Most Governors-General regretted this development. The picturesque Gothic pile in Sydney Domain, with its magnificent setting and fine Harbour views, was a far more comfortable residence than the large draughty mansion on the banks of the Yarra. Even when Parliament was in recess, visits to other

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1. Formerly the home of Tooth, the brewer, it was purchased by the State Government in 1907. For history of the property see Cranbrook, The First Fifty Years 1918-1968, by A.C. Child (Sydney, 1968). I am grateful to Mr Alan Lawson for this reference.

2. Lady Tennyson had complained to Barton on 20 May 1903 that Melbourne Government House was 'bitter cold'. Barton papers, MS 51/617. A.N.L. On the other hand she had found Sydney Government House 'very comfortable and well-arranged'. Lady Tennyson to Lady Northcote, 25 September 1903. Copy in Tennyson papers, MS 479/37/4. A.N.L.
States cut into the time which could be devoted to Sydney. As early as December 1902 Barton advised Tennyson to pay longer and more frequent visits to that city as murmurs were arising to the effect that it was suffering from vice-regal neglect.¹

Tennyson attempted to comply with Barton's advice during the remainder of his term and he advised his successor to follow suit and 'spend at least four and a half months in Sydney ... if possible and four and a half months in Melbourne'.² As far as he was able Northcote attempted to continue this practice. But in July 1905 J.H. Carruthers, Premier of New South Wales, reopened the issue. In a strongly worded letter to Deakin he expressed his State's dissatisfaction with the fact that 'the Vice-Regal residence has for all practical purposes been permanently fixed in Melbourne'. On his estimate the Governor-General had spent on the average only eighty nine days yearly in Sydney since federation. For 'the greater portion of the year the ... Government House ... is empty and unused' while in providing other quarters for the State Governor, large expense was incurred without adequate return. He asked if the Commonwealth was prepared to 'hand back Government House, Sydney, to New South Wales, and accept other arrangements for the occasional residence of the Governor-General' in that State.³

Carruthers' complaint about vice-regal residences was only one aspect of general discontent with the Commonwealth. Federation had proven

1. Barton to Tennyson, 11 December 1902. Tennyson papers, MS 1963/99. A.N.L.
2. Tennyson to Northcote, 16 September 1903. Copy in Tennyson papers, MS 479/2/320. A.N.L.

costlier and more damaging to States' sovereignty than had been expected. Faced with the tendency of Commonwealth Governments to increase their power still further, the States fought back with what methods they could. One way was to retain Governors as channels of communication with Britain. Another was to insist that the Commonwealth make adequate recompense for property it had acquired from the colonies as a result of federation. In this atmosphere the delay in establishing a federal capital made it inevitable that the question of vice-regal residences should cause difficulties. The tendency of most Governors-General to identify themselves closely with the centralist ideas of the Commonwealth Government added weight to the State Governments' demands that the Commonwealth pay for the residence of its chief executive officer. In May 1906 the Victorian Premier, Thomas Bent, joined New South Wales in requesting that the central Government pay rent for Government House.¹

Replying to Carruthers in July 1905 Deakin produced figures to prove that, since Northcote's assumption of office, the Governor-General had spent no less time in Sydney than in Melbourne.² He pointed out that absences from the capitals of the two most populous States must continue if His Excellency were to keep in touch with other parts of the Commonwealth. In these circumstances he hoped that Government House Sydney could be retained for the use of the Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth.³ After further correspondence a temporary solution was found. The earlier informal arrangements, whereby His Excellency occupied

1. Bent to Prime Minister, 28 May 1906. CRS A2, file 06/3881. C.A.O.
2. The figures were 179 days in Sydney and 182 days in Melbourne. See Deakin to Carruthers, 24 July 1905. Copy in Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1905, II, p. 1117.
3. Ibid.
both premises free of charge, were replaced by more business-like leases, under which the Commonwealth Government entered into a five-years tenancy. No rent was paid but the Commonwealth undertook to maintain the house and grounds of both properties.\(^1\)

It was an ad hoc arrangement which postponed rather than solved the problem. As the federal capital was unlikely to be erected within five years the quarrel threatened to reappear when the time came to renegotiate the leases. This likelihood increased in early 1911 when a Labor Government came to office in New South Wales. Nominally under the leadership of J.S. McGowen,\(^2\) its intellectual driving force was the energetic and resourceful Attorney General, W.A. Holman.\(^3\) In May 1911, while McGowen and Fisher were both absent in London, Holman, as acting Premier, informed the Commonwealth that he proposed to resume Government House for public purposes.\(^4\)

To some extent Holman's action reflected the general dissatisfaction in Australia with Lord Dudley's style of office.\(^5\) In New South Wales the complaint was again raised that the Governor-General was paying insufficient attention to Sydney. Though figures were published to show that Melbourne was obtaining no more vice-regal patronage than

\(^{1}\) C.P.D., 1906, XXXI, pp. 876-892.
\(^{2}\) Premier of New South Wales from 1910-1913.
\(^{3}\) Attorney General from 1910-1914. Later Premier from 1913-1920.
\(^{4}\) An earlier letter, 23 March, had enquired whether the Commonwealth wished to renew the lease. Hughes, the acting Prime Minister had replied by asking that the lease be renewed. But Holman stated, in his letter of 23 May 1911 that, as he proposed 'to resume the property for public purposes' he declined to renew the agreement. For copies of this correspondence see N.S.W. Parliamentary Papers, 1912, 1, pp. 683-694, 'The Residence of the Governor-General in New South Wales'.
\(^{5}\) Melbourne Punch considered that the Dudleys could 'thank themselves for the sudden termination of the Governor-General's tenancy of Government House in Sydney'. 15 June 1911.
Sydney\textsuperscript{1} it was undeniable that for over half the year both residences were unoccupied. Holman's justifications for his action varied. From the beginning he claimed that his motive was to enable the Sydney public to have more access to the magnificent site occupied by Government House. It was suggested that the grounds be added to the Domain as a park, while proposals mooted for the House itself included a Library, hospital, Museum of Arts or Conservatorium.\textsuperscript{2} But in addition Holman stressed that the matter was simply a business proposition between the Governments of New South Wales and of the Commonwealth. The \textit{Surplus Revenue Act} of 1910 had effected the complete separation of Commonwealth and State finances. Holman considered that the Governor-General was a federal rather than an Imperial officer, and that the time had gone when it was the duty of the State 'to find the appliances with which the Federal [Government was] to carry out its functions'.\textsuperscript{3}

Although the lease expired in August 1911, the New South Wales Government agreed to enable the newly arrived Denman to occupy the old Government House until December. Subsequently, this period was again extended while negotiations between the two Governments continued. In July 1912, McGowen offered to make available to the Commonwealth the House and all excluding about twenty-five acres of the grounds at an annual rental of $3\frac{1}{2}$% of the capital value, on condition that the arrangement

\textsuperscript{1} See \textit{S.M.H.}, 11 July 1911. During the first two years of his term Dudley had spent 44 weeks in Sydney and only 40 weeks in Melbourne.

\textsuperscript{2} See \textit{Argus}, 8 June 1911, for Holman's suggestion that it might be used as a hospital. The old stables, built by Governor Macquarie, became a Conservatorium of Music. \textit{Bulletin}, 16 May 1912, comments on the welter of tentative suggestions made for the property.

\textsuperscript{3} Quoted in Wright, \textit{Commonwealth and States}, pp. 216-7.
would terminate when Denman returned to England. But Fisher, aware of the Commonwealth Parliament's persistent unwillingness to sanction expenditure on the Governor-General's establishment, refused McGowen's offer. Consequently, on 7 October 1912, after a final farewell levee the previous day, Lord and Lady Denman left Sydney. An enormous crowd gathered at Central Railway Station to watch them depart.

The State Government's action aroused a barrage of criticism in New South Wales. Both major Sydney newspapers were indignant at the treatment accorded to the Representative of the Crown. The Sydney Morning Herald feared that, deprived of Government House, the Governor-General might refrain from visiting Sydney altogether. The Daily Telegraph regarded 'the eviction' as 'boorish' and 'shabby'. Even the Worker criticized the treatment of the Governor-General as 'inhospitable and un-Australian' and blamed the Government's concern for 'States Spites' for its 'precipitate action'. At the farewell ceremony on Central Station Sydney's mayor had castigated the Labor Government for its 'wanton act of disloyalty ... [and] personal insult to the highest representative of the King in Australia'. A censure motion was initiated in the State Legislative Assembly. Public protest meetings were held in Sydney and country centres. One of these meetings set up a Citizens Committee with

2. See report in various newspapers, 8 October 1912, and Bulletin, 17 October 1912.
3. S.M.H., 2 June 1911. See also editorials on 3 July, 17 July and 18 July 1911.
4. Numerous Daily Telegraph editorials during October to December 1912, e.g. 16 and 25 October 1912.
5. Worker (Sydney), 10 October 1912.
6. Reported in Daily Telegraph, 9 October 1912.
7. N.S.W.P.D., 1912, (Second Series), 48, pp. 2326-2379.
Sir William McMillan as its Chairman, to consider the most effective form of opposition.¹

Though much of the motivation for what the Bulletin called 'an amazing Tory uproar'² stemmed from narrow political motives, there was a real under-current of concern about the attitude of Labor towards the Empire. The Government House issue was revived at a time when Australia's place in the Empire was the subject of considerable scrutiny. The accession to power of Labor parties in Commonwealth and State Parliaments and growing world tensions prompted careful attention to the details of Australia's links with Empire and Labor's attitude to those links. Despite Australia's distance from London, the Coronation of George V in 1911 was an opportunity for a renewal of spiritual fervour. Fisher's attendance at the Imperial Conference was watched very closely. An indignant outcry in Australia greeted a reported interview in London in which the Prime Minister was alleged to have envisaged a time when Australia might be 'free to either take part in or to abstain from British wars as it thinks fit - and ... to haul down the Union Jack, hoist our own flag, and start on our own'.³ Fisher immediately repudiated the reported interview and the Australian press breathed its relief and approval.⁴ The incident revealed that Labor politicians needed to be constantly on the defensive

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1. McMillan reported that fifty-three Municipal Councils in N.S.W. had passed resolutions deprecating the action of the State Government. However, these were far from spontaneous. McMillan had toured country districts drumming up support for his campaign and had sent circulars to the Councils asking that meetings be arranged to protest against the eviction. See Daily Telegraph, 6 and 22 November 1912.


3. See outraged editorials in most Australian newspapers in late July 1911, e.g., S.M.H., 24 July 1911.

regarding their attitude towards the Empire. The action of the New South Wales Government in precipitating the removal of the Representative of the Crown from Sydney Government House raised genuine fears in New South Wales concerning the links which that officer provided with the British Empire.

The office of Governor-General was, in 1911 no less than in 1901, the focus of Australian attachment to the Empire. Labor politicians tended to be pragmatic about such links and whenever occasions arose where it was felt that this pragmatism threatened the Imperial attachment, the opposition tended to assert its attitude as maintaining a spiritual bond. The Sydney Morning Herald, in July 1911, put the case for the loyalists accurately, if somewhat clumsily: 'There is a body of opinion - and one worth considering even by a Government situated as this is - which believes enthusiastically in sentiment as of the very fibre of the national as of the individual life'.

It deprecated the action of McGowen's Government which 'for the sake of a popular cry ... would sacrifice an ideal'. Though the Daily Telegraph editorial on Denman's departure from Sydney reads as alarmist and exaggerated today it expressed a widely held sentiment in 1912:

At a time like the present when clouds gather quickly on the international horizon and when other parts of the Empire respond to the vague menaces that fill the air by approaching the British Government with new pledges of loyalty and spontaneous offers of assistance in the work of national defence, it ill becomes the parent State of the Commonwealth ... to deprive the Governor-General of his official residence in Sydney.

The affair created little disturbance outside New South Wales.

1. S.M.H., 3 July 1911.
2. S.M.H., 18 July 1911.
3. Daily Telegraph, 9 October 1912.
Most newspapers in other States either ignored the incident or referred slightingly to Sydney's 'petty and discreditable' attitude.\(^1\) The Argus, smugly self-righteous, congratulated Melbourne on its treatment of the Governor-General.\(^2\) The Age applauded McGowen's Government for 'ending an untenable and utterly false position'. It considered that 'there never was any reason why the Governor-General should have had two vice-regal residences in Australia' and, somewhat illogically, utilised the occasion to press once again for ending the system whereby 'Downing Street officials' filled State vice-regal offices.\(^3\)

The overwhelmingly conservative nature of the Sydney press ensured that the public controversy should continue there throughout the latter part of 1912. Appropriately, the climax of the furore was reached in the grounds of Government House itself. On Saturday 14 December the gates were opened to allow the public to inspect the gardens and peer through the windows of the gubernatorial residence. Ministers had hoped for a demonstration of support and a crowd of two to three thousand gathered to witness what had all the signs of developing into an outright confrontation. Premier McGowen, obviously worried by the accusations of disloyalty being flung at him and his Ministers, clutched a miniature Union Jack in his hand as he formally declared the grounds open for inspection. Holman too spoke, but when several speakers tried to put the opposing view, police removed the speakers' platform. As Ministers hastily retreated, scuffles broke out in the crowd and the proceedings ended in a near riot.\(^4\)

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1. Advertiser, 17 December 1912.
2. See Argus, 14 October 1912.
3. Age, 8 June 1911 and 10 October 1912.
4. See reports of the incident in various newspapers in all States on Monday, 16 December 1912. e.g. the Age, where the disturbance was described as 'uproarious scenes ... not unlike a mild riot'.
Though he had stubbornly clung to the State's demand that the Commonwealth either pay for the residence of its chief Executive Officer or relinquish its occupation of Government House, Holman was forced to retreat from his original proposal that the House be made available to the public. The old stables were transformed into a Conservatorium of Music, but Government House remained empty and unused while a lengthy Court action, initiated by McMillan's Citizens' Committee, proceeded in State, Commonwealth and eventually Imperial Courts, to determine whether the New South Wales Government's action was constitutional. It was not until 1915 that the Privy Council verdict upheld the State Government's right to put the house and grounds to any use it saw fit.\footnote{In June 1913 the Australian High Court reversed a New South Wales Supreme Court decision and held that the 'Executive of the State of New South Wales was entitled to put the house and grounds in question to any use not impliedly forbidden' by any of its laws. See Attorney General (N.S.W.) vs. Williams. 16 C.L.R. 404. This decision was upheld by the Privy Council on 25 January 1915, see 19 C.L.R. 343.}

By then doubts about Holman's loyalty to the Empire had been dispelled. In October 1915, to the disgust of the Bulletin and the satisfaction of the remainder of the New South Wales press, the State Governor, Sir Gerald Strickland, moved back into the house vacated by his counterpart, Beauchamp, fifteen years earlier.\footnote{Bulletin, 26 August 1915. See Governor of N.S.W. to Secretary of State, telegram, 21 October 1915, C.O. 418/136/48651. 'Cranbrook' was sold in 1918 and became a prestige Church of England Secondary School.} At about the same time the Commonwealth secured possession of Admiralty House, in Kirribilli, for the Governor-General.\footnote{The occupation of Admiralty House by the Governor-General was the subject of even more controversy. It was included with other properties formerly occupied by the British Navy in Sydney which were handed over to the Commonwealth Government in 1913. Confusion arose out of a mistaken assumption by the new Commander of the Australian Fleet, Admiral Patey, that he would be provided with an official residence. It was not until Patey relinquished his appointment that the Governor-General obtained possession of the old house at Kirribilli. See various correspondence 1913, including C.O. 418/110/1555, folio 26, and C.O. 418/110/8600, folios 196-205. Later a further dispute over ownership arose with the New South Wales Government. See Australian Encyclopaedia, article on Government Houses, cited in Wright, Commonwealth and States, p, 218.} Although this beautiful house, which faced the rival vice-regal
residence across Sydney Harbour, was too small to hold large entertainments, it was rent free, and provided a useful pied a terre for the Governor-General on his visits to the New South Wales capital. But this resolution of the lengthy dispute concerning vice-regal residences in Sydney was not effected until well after Denman had returned to England.

The controversy over Sydney Government House, as Denman himself remarked, had 'tended seriously to impair the prestige and position of the Governor-General'.¹ It was undignified for the Governor-General, when he was obliged to visit Sydney, to have to remain in his railway carriage or make do as a guest of the Admiral in the absence of an official residence. Unfortunately Denman himself had exacerbated the regrettable situation. Instead of remaining discreetly aloof from the debate he had publicly associated himself with McMillan's Citizens' Committee. A memorandum which he prepared setting out his views of the necessity of retaining Government House for the Governor-General, prompted one Colonial Office functionary to minute: 'he should not have meddled'.² Although Keith sympathised with the Governor-General 'in his loss of what is probably the finest Government House in the whole Empire'³ Denman's tactless memorandum earned him a warning from the Secretary of State not to give any encouragement to the Citizens' Committee.⁴ Lady Denman, too, was guilty of a certain indiscretion with regard to the matter. After the State Government had resumed the premises she expressed a wish for

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1. Denman to Secretary of State, 17 June 1912. C.O. 418/99/22887, folio 323.
2. Minute on Ibid.
4. Personal and private letter, Harcourt to Denman, 20 August 1913. Denman papers, MS 769/57-8. A.N.L.
certain furniture from the drawing room of the old building. This only occasioned further humiliation, as the Premier declined to accede to her request.¹

The eviction of Denman from Government House in Sydney signified the lowest point reached by the Governor-General since Hopetoun had been forced to return to England in mortification, ten years earlier. Though the reasons behind Holman's action were complex, involving dissatisfaction with the Commonwealth rather than with the Representative of the Crown, the effect was to reduce the influence which the Governor-General might be expected to bring to bear upon Australian Ministers. Moreover Denman's relations with the Government of Joseph Cook, which came into office in 1913, never reached the cordiality that had existed while Fisher had been Prime Minister. Denman found himself involved in a dispute with the Liberal Minister for Defence, Millen, over his exercise of the role of Commander-in-Chief.² Although the details of this minor dispute have not been preserved it seems to have centred upon an inclination to become too closely involved with senior Australian military staff, a natural enough mistake, considering his Sandhurst education and interest in military affairs.³

At the Colonial Office the 'extraordinary deterioration in the

¹ Daily Telegraph, 23 December 1912. Also Colonial Office comment on Chelmsford to Secretary of State, 6 January 1913. C.O. 418/112/4870, folios 43-4.
² Munro Ferguson informed Harcourt, 1 June 1914, that the Minister of Defence, Senator Millen, considered Denman to have taken this aspect of his office 'rather seriously, in so far as regarded his relationship with the Chief Officers'. Novar papers, MS 696/543. A.N.L.
³ On 23 April 1912 he had sent to the Secretary of State a private report on the military forces of the Commonwealth, in which he was critical of the standard of Australian officers. C.O. 418/99/16296, folios 209-217.
position of the Governor-General' under Dudley and Denman caused some concern. The Government House affair was but one symptom of a general decline. Another particularly troublesome aspect of the same problem had been exercising the minds of Colonial Office officials for several years. This concerned the position of Steward, the Governor-General's Official Secretary. After ten years in the post, Steward had come to exercise a strong influence upon successive Representatives of the Crown. In matters concerning Australian political affairs his experience was invaluable to a new Governor-General. But it was his potential influence upon His Excellency's role as representative of the British Government that disturbed the Colonial Office. By May 1911 it was felt in London that 'far too much rests with the Official Secretary'. Twelve months later Keith composed a long memorandum in which he noted the tendency for the Governor-General to become 'a somewhat expensive and useless figurehead'. He dated this development from Dudley's time. Keith claimed that Dudley had 'completely neglected 'the official side of the Governor-General's work, on occasions signing documents in blank and leaving them to be completed by the Official Secretary. Nor had matters improved noticeably under Denman. Keith considered the situation whereby 'Major Steward continues to enjoy the unofficial position of Governor-General' to be 'profoundly unsatisfactory'.

Keith's memorandum raised the whole question of the dual role of the Governor-General. The 'official' work to which he was referring was

1. Minute on Denman to Secretary of State, 28 February 1912. C.O. 418/99/10240, folios 134-138.
the representation of the interests of the British Government. The Colonial Office had always been concerned with this aspect of the Governor-General's role. By February 1914 Keith considered that experience was tending 'more and more to show that Governors-General are not of much assistance in dealing with difficult questions'. Steward's influence upon Dudley and Denman, and his access to confidential instructions from Downing Street, was seen as a restriction upon the usefulness of the Representative of the Crown as diplomatic agent of the British Government. These were the first tentative signs of doubts about the Governor-General's ability to exercise such a role effectively. With regard to the position of the Official Secretary, Anderson felt that little could be achieved while Denman remained in office. Careful instructions were given to his successor in an attempt to retrieve the position.

Colonial Office dissatisfaction with the manner in which Denman was exercising his office was revealed in correspondence surrounding his premature retirement. In mid 1913 Lady Denman had returned for a short visit to London. There, at a meeting with the Colonial Secretary, she had hinted that her husband was determined to resign. Though Harcourt urged the Governor-General to remain for his full term, Denman replied in November 1913 that, for private reasons, he must ask Harcourt to accept his resignation. Probably the unhappy state of his marriage and

1. Minute on C.O. 418/122/4580, folios 101-137. Keith minuted, 26 May 1913: 'We have not received any help from Lord Denman in dealing with difficult questions'. See Strickland to Secretary of State, 31 March 1913. C.O. 418/112/15306, folio 183.
2. See Munro Ferguson's acknowledgement of secret letter from Harcourt. C.O. 418/122/4580, folio 137.
3. Harcourt to Denman, 20 August 1913. Denman papers, MS 769/57-8. A.N.L.
4. Ibid.
5. Denman to Secretary of State, cable, 11 November 1913. Copy in Denman papers, MS 769/102.
Lady Denman's dislike of their life in Australia had been the chief cause of the Governor-General's decision to resign prematurely. But he had been constantly ill with colds, asthma and hay fever throughout his term of office, and Australia's national flower, the wattle, had caused him considerable discomfort. In January 1914 he announced at the annual luncheon of the Australian Natives Association that he intended to return to England.

In his cabled resignation of 11 November Denman had asked that he be allowed to stay until July 1914. This was to enable him to complete three years service and handle the threatening constitutional crisis. But Harcourt insisted that he leave in May. Lady Denman's biographer suggests that the most likely explanation for such cavalier treatment was the Home Government's disapproval of the support His Excellency had given to the Commonwealth's naval policy. But this was only part of the problem. The Colonial Office's dissatisfaction with Denman's exercise of office was a general, not a particular attitude. The London Mail judged that 'Lord Denman, the evicted of Melbourne, was a bad failure from the first'. The haste with which he was recalled indicates that this was a

3. Argus, 27 January 1914. Denman left Australia 18 May 1914. His later career was unexceptional. See Huxley, Lady Denman. He died on 24 June 1954, three weeks after his wife. See obituaries in The Times, 3 and 25 June 1954.
5. Though the Bulletin, 9 April 1914, cites this comment as having appeared in the London Mail of 28 February 1914, I have been unable to trace it. Huxley, Lady Denman, p. 62, attributes the quote to the Daily Mail. He adds that the Conservative Morning Post was also derogatory.
truer version of the official British view than the vaguely congratulatory tone of The Times.¹

Nevertheless, in the sense that Australians judged the role of Governor-General, Denman had been a success. The Sydney Morning Herald felt that he had 'justified his selection to a degree which those who appointed him are probably not fully aware'. It complimented him for 'seeing eye to eye with Australians in their national policy of defence' and for winning 'the confidence of the Ministry which he found in office on his arrival'.² Other Australian newspapers echoed these comments. The Advertiser felt that regret should be tempered with 'satisfaction at the thought that we shall have hereafter at the seat of the Empire a man ready to show interest in and sympathy for the Commonwealth when its affairs are discussed by the outside world'.³

A more surprising source of approbation was the Bulletin, in which one contributor pronounced His Excellency, 'the most successful Governor-General since Lord Tennyson's day', justifying this with a string of negative achievements which were a fair indication of the difficulties faced by Representatives of the Crown in Australia:

Denman has neither irritated nor scandalised any one section of society ... his private life has been ... flagrantly blameless ... He has not exasperated either political party ... His sporting tastes have not been sufficiently marked to depress Wowserdom. No one knows for certain if his sympathies lie in the direction of Orangism or Hibernianism... Add to these things the fact that he has travelled and speechified conscientiously, despite ... rotten health and you get a very admirable record.

1. The Times, 27 January 1914: 'He has had abler predecessors no doubt, ... but he has been exceedingly popular'.
2. S.M.H., 18 April 1914.
3. Advertiser, 15 May 1914. See Daily Telegraph, 17 April 1914, for a similar expression of hope that Denman would prove to be 'a champion of eminence and irrepressible enthusiasm' for Australia.
Even the Labour newspapers, such as the *Westralian Worker*, though its tone was hardly effusive, felt that Denman had carried out his duties adequately. ¹

Denman had proven to be the type of Governor-General most Australians wanted. He had been an unostentatious but visible link with the British Empire. He had carried out the ceremonial and social functions of head of state as required. In the absence of any political crises he had not been called upon to exercise any discretionary power. Relations with political Parties, especially the Labor Party, had been amicable. But he had failed to provide the representation which Britain still felt it should have in the Commonwealth. The Colonial Office considered that, in addition to his monarchical functions, His Excellency should safeguard Imperial interests by an active influence upon Australian Ministers. Both Dudley and Denman had seemed to be less successful in this aspect of their role than had Northcote; Dudley because he lacked influence over Australian politicians; Denman because he identified himself too closely with Australian national aspirations rather than with Imperial attitudes. A Governor-General of Canada, Lord Dufferin, expressed succinctly the dilemma of his office. 'A Colonial Governor' he wrote, 'is like a man riding two horses in a circus'. ² A man needed to be exceptionally resourceful, politically experienced and diplomatic to hold together the diverging roles of the Governor-General's office in the Commonwealth by 1914.

¹. *Westralian Worker*, 30 January 1914.
². Dufferin to Carnarvon, 18 September 1874. de Kiewiet and Underhill (eds.), *Dufferin-Carnarvon Correspondence*, p. 74.
VIII

Revival of Influence: the Empire at War.
Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson,
Governor-General of Australia
18 May 1914 to 6 October 1920
By 1914 the office of Governor-General in Australia had diminished in prestige. Neither Dudley nor Denman, the previous two incumbents, had been personally successful in the exercise of their role. Of the five occupants who had held office since federation, only one, Northcote, had served a full term, indeed only he could be said to have been a success in the post. There had been constant setbacks to the hopes of those who considered that the post would be one of prestige and importance both within the Commonwealth and in the Empire as a whole. Several newspapers regretted that past Governors-General had not filled full terms. The Argus conceded that 'five years in so remote a country as Australia may to many men of position seem an unduly long period of exile from the scene of their permanent interests and ambitions' but it continued to hope that a British official of distinction could be found to fill an office which it considered to be of 'high dignity and importance'.

From the beginning of federation a section of the Australian community had hoped that experienced statesmen would be sent out from Britain as Governors-General. Such anticipations were generally disappointed. What lay behind these hopes? If the Governor-General were to be a mere cypher then a distinguished statesman would be out of place. Yet in 1888 Parkes had considered that in the Australian colonies the office of Governor 'ought to be an object of the same kind of ambition as the object to serve the state as a cabinet minister'. In 1900 Lyne regretted that a 'statesman of cabinet rank' had not been appointed as

1. Advertiser, 27 January 1914; Advocate, 31 January 1914.
2. Argus, 2 February 1914.
first Governor-General of the Commonwealth. In 1903 Tennyson recognized that some Australians wished the Governor-General to be a man of affairs with wide experience in the Empire, and he wrote to Lord Milner to urge that he take the appointment. The key to these attitudes lay not in the undoubtedly important monarchical role which the Representative of the Crown had to play, but in the growing concept of the office as being quasi-ambassadorial in nature. The more prestigious a statesman appointed Governor-General, the more likelihood that he could exert an influence sympathetic to the Commonwealth in Imperial councils. However, as the Argus had recognized, Australia's distance from Britain had to some extent defeated these anticipations prior to 1914. The result was that by 1914 the effectiveness of the system was beginning to be questioned.

One element in the Australian community had no hesitation in asserting that Governors and Governors-General appointed from Britain were no longer necessary. Echoing the arguments of their predecessors in the nineteenth century, radicals persisted in regarding the office simply as that of a constitutional figurehead. Such a point of view allowed little scope for personal qualities of individual occupants. To the Westralian Worker 'one rubber stamp is very much like another'. With this attitude there often went the assertion that the functions still retained by the Representatives of the Crown in the Commonwealth should be exercised by Australian democrats rather than by British aristocrats.

1. Note by Tennyson in diary, 21 July 1900. Tennyson papers, MS 479/2. A.N.L.
2. See Milner to Tennyson, 14 July 1903, acknowledging a previous letter from the Governor-General. Tennyson papers, MS 479/2/300. A.N.L.
3. Westralian Worker, 13 February 1914.
But this was the view of a minority. The very remoteness of Australia, which made distinguished British statesman reluctant to venture so far from home, was, for the majority of Australians, the most pressing argument for retaining the office of Governor-General. In an editorial in early 1914 the *Sydney Morning Herald* emphasized that,

> although the wide ocean may sunder us physically, we are members of the same great family of nations... The representative of the King typifies the bonds which unite us in these distant seas to both mother country, upon whose power we still depend in a large measure for our liberties and peaceful development, and to the sister dominions...

According to this point of view the office of Governor-General was Australia's link with the power of the distant British Empire, an important post which required a man of ability and influence sympathetic to Australia's point of view.

Melbourne *Punch* considered the ability of the men who filled the office of Governor-General to be of considerable significance. *Punch* reflected, in July 1914, that so many qualities went to the making of a Governor-General that it had proven extremely difficult to fill the post satisfactorily. Although he was the Representative of the King he was not the King but a paid servant of the Commonwealth. A monarch had personal, charismatic advantages which a Governor-General lacked. In general, a King's appointment was for life whereas a Governor-General's tenure of office was usually brief, and in the Commonwealth had been extremely brief. With these disadvantages and other drawbacks a Governor-General needed to be a 'model of tact and urbanity, with a figure sufficiently commanding to inspire respect and maintain the dignity of the

1. S.M.H., 9 February 1914.
high office'. Punch's judgment of previous occupants was that though some had been singularly successful, others had been 'mere colourless personages' and still others 'arrant failures'. A Governor-General needed to be well versed in politics so that he could avoid being used as a party tool in local political disputes. He required special qualities of judgment of men and affairs to enable him to deal not only with politicians, but with every other kind of person. He must have the knowledge and experience necessary to handle them all, to manage them all, and yet keep himself apart, so that he avoided identification with any one class or section. Though these were rare gifts, Punch considered that they could be found in the person of Ronald Craufurd Munro Ferguson who, in February 1914, was chosen to succeed Lord Denman as Governor-General.

To some in Australia there was a distasteful air of political manoeuvring in the appointment. A few days prior to the announcement, the Argus commented on the impression created that 'the office is being hawked about and that no one who would be considered as at all eligible is particularly anxious to take it'. The more radical organs of opinion suspected that Denman had been eased out of office because of his alleged sympathy with the Labor Party. To the Brisbane Worker, the new

1. Punch (Melbourne), 23 July 1914.
2. Munro Ferguson was knighted after his selection for Australia, but declined the offer of a peerage. See Argus, 9 and 19 February 1914. He was, therefore, the first untitled Governor-General of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Government had been informed of the proposed appointment before Munro Ferguson's name had been submitted to the King. See Harcourt to Denman, cable, 30 January 1914. C.O. 418/122/4580, folios 133-4.
3. Argus, 2 February 1914.
4. Australian Worker (Sydney), 19 February 1914.
appointee was 'a rabid politician of a retrogressive type', a 'cantankerous politician' sent to Australia to avoid his proving embarrassing to Asquith in the next election campaign. It concluded that Australia had become the 'happy hunting ground of the party dumpings of Britain'.

Even the more circumspect Brisbane Courier was inclined to view these charges with uneasiness. More in hope than in confidence, the Courier assured its readers that 'the days have passed when [British] Governments sent either difficult colleagues or impecunious friends to govern in the overseas dominions'. With other like-minded newspapers the Courier stressed that it was essential for the 'closer weaving of the Imperial fabric that the Governor-General of Australia should have strength, experience, and the true appreciation of the wider British sentiment'.

At the time of his arrival in Australia, Munro Ferguson was fifty-four years of age. A tall, handsome man, he had more energy and strength of character than any of his younger predecessors. His family was wealthy and Scottish with large landholdings and a strong military and political tradition. A Sandhurst education and service in the Grenadier Guards had provided him with an imposing military bearing and an interest in military reforms. Unlike Hopetoun, Dudley and Denman he had neither knowledge of nor interest in sports and games; politics were his life-time pre-occupation. In 1886 he had entered the House of Commons, and for nearly thirty years he represented his own Scottish constituency of Leith Burghs as a Liberal.

1. Worker (Brisbane), 9 February 1914.
3. Hopetoun was 39 when he assumed office, Tennyson 49, Dudley 41 and Denman 37. Only Northcote, at 58, had been older than Munro Ferguson on appointment.
4. Biographical details from The Times, obituary, 31 March 1934.
From very early in his political career Munro Ferguson identified himself with the Liberal Imperialists, that element of his Party which had donned 'Dizzy's suit of Imperial spangles'.¹ He became a Council member of the Imperial Federation League in 1888,² two years after he had been appointed as private secretary to its first President, Lord Rosebery. In this latter capacity he had visited India with his mentor. In India he had met his future wife, Lady Helen Hermione Blackwood, daughter of the Viceroy, Lord Dufferin. It was his close political and personal connection with Rosebery which shaped and stunted Munro Ferguson's subsequent public career. In 1892 he again became private secretary to the Liberal Imperialist leader and two years later was appointed Lord of the Treasury in the Liberal Government which took office upon Gladstone's final resignation. During the Boer War he was a prominent Liberal supporter of the Unionist Government's war policy.³

This background was not out of place in Australia where Rosebery was popular and his Imperialist sentiments regarded highly. As the West Australian discerned there were two shades of Imperialism in Australia. In addition to a 'deep red jingo fury of enthusiasm' there was the 'sober conviction that in the loose confederation of self-governing States working out their individual destinies within the sheltering folds of Empire is found the surest augury of the advance not only of the Anglo-Saxon peoples, but of the world'.⁴ This confidence in the mission of the British Empire reflected both Australia's inherent race patriotism and its deep feeling

¹. Wilfred Scawen Blunt quoted in Thornton, The Imperial Idea, p. 49.
². Lord Brassey, Papers and Addresses, p. 284.
³. See Denman's comments on his successor, reported in Advertiser, 9 February 1914.
⁴. West Australian, 5 February 1914.
of insecurity. The Empire Day movement was one manifestation, fear of the 'Yellow peril' was another. Australia's enthusiasm for the Boer War had been yet another. The new Governor-General's espousal of the Imperialist creed was not inappropriate in Australia.

Munro Ferguson's Lib-Imp attitudes and a tendency to independence characteristic of his Whiggish brand of Liberalism made him less than satisfactory to the radical Campbell-Bannerman Government of 1905. Nor was his relationship with Asquith, Campbell-Bannerman's successor as Prime Minister, particularly close. His chances of preferment to Cabinet post were defeated less by lack of ability than by attachment to the erratic star of Rosebery and a certain reluctance to adhere to strict party discipline. In June 1913 he voted against the Asquith Government in the

4. R.R. James, Rosebery (London, 1963), p. 420, describes Munro Ferguson as 'probably the most vehement of the opponents' of Campbell-Bannerman.
5. In 1907 he had described Asquith as 'a raw middle-class radical, with a character deteriorated by a vulgar society of another sort and by a free use of wine which he cannot carry'. Munro Ferguson to Rosebery, 21 December 1907. Quoted in Stephen E. Koss, Lord Haldane: Scapegoat for Liberalism (New York, 1969), p. 54.
Commons, indicating a shift from the Liberal Party which eventually ended with acceptance of a Cabinet post in a Tory Government in 1922. But in May 1914, when he arrived in Australia to take up the post of Governor-General, his political affiliations were with the Liberal Ministry then in office in Britain.

The Sydney Morning Herald saw in this fact encouragement for its concept of the role of Governor-General as diplomat.

His close political association with the present Imperial Government will not be without its value in promoting an adequate and sympathetic understanding of those important Imperial problems (associated with defence and other matters) on which Australian opinion has not always in the past been understood accurately, or appreciated at its full worth.

There was no mistaking the persistently held Australian hope that Munro Ferguson would represent the Commonwealth point of view with sympathy and influence in the Councils of the Empire.

In May 1914 most conservative newspapers expressed some such long-term anticipations of the newly arrived Governor-General. They also looked forward to a more immediate, practical exercise of his role, not as representative of the British Empire, but as local constitutional monarch. In all except a few editorials commenting upon his arrival reference was made to the role he was expected to play in the current political controversy. The 1913 elections had returned Joseph Cook's Liberal or Fusion Party with a majority of one in the House of Representatives but hopelessly outnumbered in the Senate. Consequently Government legislation faced the continual threat of amendment or delay.

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1. The Times, 30 June 1913. The occasion was a debate upon Ministers' share transactions in the Marconi contract.
2. S.M.H., 9 February 1914.
3. See also Advertiser, 6 February 1914, for editorial comment upon the lack of adequate consultation with Dominions.
at the hands of the Labor majority in the upper House. There was almost universal anticipation that Cook would attempt to end this situation by seeking an early dissolution of both Houses of Parliament. Two Bills were drafted which were calculated to create a confrontation between the House of Representatives and the Senate. As it was only the Governor-General who could actually dissolve Parliament the political crisis involved his exercise of this constitutional function.

During the first decade of federation the question of the Governor-General's power to grant or refuse a Prime Minister's request for a dissolution had never been far from the surface. On three occasions the Representative of the Crown had exercised his discretionary authority in times of political crisis to refuse the advice of his Ministers to dissolve Parliament. One who had suffered from such action, Reid, noted that the 'practice in the Dominions is quite different from that in Great Britain. His Majesty's Ministers in England have their own way in such matters. It is not so in the Dominions'. This discretionary power of the Governor-General in the matter of dissolution of Parliament was one of the last vestiges of earlier gubernatorial authority remaining in the Commonwealth. It reflected the feeling, before federation, that some constitutional guardian was needed to curb the possibly irresponsible action of colonial politicians. The pertinent question in 1914 was, had the Commonwealth gained sufficient maturity and political stability to dispense with such a protector? It was ironic that in the ensuing public controversy the radical element in Australian political life claimed for


2. G.H. Reid, My Reminiscences (London, 1917), p. 246. Reid is referring to his own case, in 1905. It is doubtful whether his judgment still applied in 1917 when his memoirs were published.
the Governor-General an independence from his constitutional advisers which belied their frequent assertions of his role as that of 'rubber stamp'. In the camp of those who claimed that the Governor-General acted solely upon the advice of his Cabinet were the more conservative men of affairs.

Section 57 of the Commonwealth Constitution was inserted expressly to provide a process to solve a deadlock between the House of Representatives and the Senate. It states that if a bill passed by the House of Representatives is not agreed to by the Senate, it could be presented again after an interval of three months. If the measure were again rejected, the Governor-General was empowered to dissolve both Houses simultaneously. The makers of the Constitution had envisaged that the electorate would be able to express an opinion upon the specific piece of legislation which was at issue. If an election failed to resolve the deadlock, further action was stipulated to lead to that end. 1 But from the political position which arose in 1914 it was clear that the section could be utilized for a quite different purpose, namely to resolve a discrepancy between party forces in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Most of the founding fathers had failed to anticipate that party groupings rather than sectional loyalties would determine political affairs in the Commonwealth Parliament. Consequently they made no provision for the situation which arose in 1914. 2 The two brief Bills which were introduced and forced through the House of Representatives on

2. La Nauze, The Making of the Australian Constitution, pp. 188-91, discusses the misconceptions of the founding fathers about the future political structure of the Commonwealth Parliament. Deakin was an exception.
the Speaker's casting vote were not vital issues of public policy but merely convenient measures to establish the formal conditions required by Section 57 before a double dissolution could be granted. On 2 June 1914, shortly after Munro Ferguson's arrival in Melbourne, the Prime Minister waited upon the Governor-General and asked that as a result of the action of the Senate, both Houses of the Commonwealth Parliament be dissolved simultaneously.

Though he had been in the country only three weeks, the new Governor-General was well prepared for the decision which was now his to make. The very wording of Section 57 meant that for at least three months the likelihood of such a request had existed and the Australian press had regularly canvassed the position. On several occasions Denman had warned the British Government of the approaching crisis thus enabling Munro Ferguson to seek advice before he left England.

There was some speculation in the Commonwealth that the Governor-General had been given special instructions by the Colonial Office regarding the expected request for a double dissolution.¹ This was not so. It was true that he had asked for such instructions but the permanent Under Secretary, Anderson, had specifically declined to advise him.² The prevailing Colonial Office opinion, at least as conveyed in a memorandum by Keith,³ was that the Governor-General should exercise his own discretion based on his opinion of the political situation.

1. E.g., Advertiser, 6 June 1914.
2. Replying to a letter from Munro Ferguson of 22 March 1914, Keith wrote 'Sir John Anderson considers that it will be impossible to advise you as to your attitude with regard to the question of double dissolution' though he agreed to talk the matter over. Novar papers, MS 696/5089. A.N.L.
3. Keith to Munro Ferguson, 27 February 1914 enclosing 'a short note on the situation'. Novar papers, MS 696/4648, 4650-54. A.N.L.
But there was one man in England whose knowledge of the Australian Constitution and in particular its practical political application, was unique. In 1910 Sir George Reid, after a long political career, had been appointed first Australian High Commissioner in London. Munro Ferguson did not hesitate to ask for Reid's advice, and the old campaigner was, characteristically, happy to proffer it.

At their interview in April 1914 Reid confirmed Denman's forecast that Cook would undoubtedly demand a double dissolution and he warned the Governor-General elect that whatever decision he made there would be keen criticism. Munro Ferguson's political career had equipped him to deal with criticism. But it had also endowed him with a respect for the British system of responsible or parliamentary government. He asked Reid several questions on the practice in Australia. Could he see the Leader of the Opposition without the consent of the Prime Minister? Reid agreed that it would be necessary to see Fisher but he did not anticipate any objection from Cook. In 1905 when Reid himself had requested a dissolution, the Governor-General had not considered it necessary to obtain the Prime Minister's consent before consulting Deakin, then Leader of the Opposition.

Munro Ferguson's respect for parliamentary institutions and his lack of experience with written constitutions prompted another crucial question. He asked the High Commissioner whether 'according to the constitution, in the case of a deadlock, the Prime Minister had not almost a right to expect a double dissolution'. Superficially Reid's reply

1. A pencilled account of this interview in Munro Ferguson's handwriting is in Novar papers, MS 696/3985-92. A.N.L.
2. See above, chapter V, p. 248.
3. Munro Ferguson may have been influenced by Quick and Garran's comment upon Section 57: 'This power would be exercised by him, as the Queen's representative, in the same manner as other prerogatives of the Crown; viz., according to the advice of Ministers who have the confidence of Parliament'. See their Annotated Constitution, p. 685.
supported the principle that the Governor-General was an independent authority. Though 'in the first place the Governor-General must rely on his Ministers and act by their advice' Reid conceded that a definite proposition by the Opposition would have to be considered 'if the Leader could show his capacity to form an alternative and stable Government without putting the country through a double dissolution, i.e. if the Opposition could show that it could draw sufficient support from the Government'.

Reid's advice involved considerable restriction upon the Governor-General's independence of action. On this view a definite proposition by the Leader of the Opposition could only be considered if that leader could guarantee being able to form a Government without a dissolution. Reid was less concerned with preserving for the Governor-General an active independent role in political affairs than with the principle that the Representative of the Crown must treat both parties alike and never allow any advantage to either. Thus, though according to the Constitution a Governor-General had discretion to grant or refuse a dissolution, he was in practice a referee with little freedom of movement. Applying this principle of absolute impartiality to the situation in 1914, Reid felt that Cook could not be refused a double dissolution if a single dissolution were later to be granted to Fisher. This would be to give one side what the other had been denied. The High Commissioner's advice supported Munro Ferguson's natural respect for parliamentary government grounded in thirty years experience of the House of Commons.

1. Novar papers, MS 696/3985-92. A.N.L.
2. In 1902 Reid had criticized Hopetoun's speech to the Australian Natives Association on the grounds that it favoured one party. See above, chapter III, p. 143.
On his arrival in Melbourne on 18 May, the new Governor-General found waiting for him a long letter from Denman which dealt with several problems of the office, including the prospect of a double dissolution. Denman's brief political experience in Britain had been in the Lords, not the Commons, and his attitudes as expressed in this letter, reveal rather less concern for the conventions of responsible government than for the necessity to maintain the position of the Governor-General. Although he did 'not presume to advise' his successor, he felt constrained to submit certain considerations evolving from his three years experience of the Commonwealth. He cautioned that the Australian press was overwhelmingly pro-Liberal while the Labor Party had 'practically no press behind them, so cannot so well voice their opinion'. Revealing a shrewd appreciation of the political climate, he expressed a doubt whether Liberals stood to gain very much by a double dissolution. He thought that while the Liberals might gain a few seats in the Senate, that House 'would almost certainly be returned Labour', and the Labor Party might easily obtain a majority in the Representatives. Looking at the question from the level of expediency Denman suggested that it might be more profitable for the position of the Governor-General to avoid offending the Labor Party 'undoubtedly the most powerful political organisation in Australia'. He concluded by suggesting that the Governor-General seek advice from the High Court Judges, recommending Barton in particular as having political as well as legal knowledge though that description fitted all

1. Denman to Munro Ferguson, 11 May 1914. Novar papers, MS 696/7393-7400. A.N.L.

2. Though Munro Ferguson noted that it was not his duty to speculate upon the outcome of an election, the climate of opinion was a relevant consideration if it were argued that the Governor-General had an active discretionary role as guardian of the Constitution.

3. Griffith, Barton or Isaacs.
of them. Denman's attitude, resulting from three years experience of Australia accorded the Governor-General more responsibility than had Reid. His sympathy with the Labor Party, a fact occasionally commented upon in the Australia press, reveals itself in this communication to his successor. It is idle to speculate on what course of action he would have taken had he been allowed to remain to deal with Cook's request. However to a certain extent Denman's advice, if Munro Ferguson accorded it any weight, counterbalanced Reid's insofar as it considered the Labor point of view and regarded the Governor-General's role as less restricted by constitutional custom.

Munro Ferguson's first intimation of the proximity of the approaching crisis came on 29 May at a Ministerial dinner. The Prime Minister there expressed a wish to see the Governor-General in a day or two. On 2nd June he arrived for an Executive Council meeting with W.H. Irvine, the Attorney General, and two other Ministers, remaining after they withdrew to proffer the long-awaited advice. He made a general statement giving the reasons for a double dissolution and presented three memoranda which were put aside to be read later. The Governor-General then put certain questions to the Prime Minister. Cook stated that his Government would resign if their request were refused and that 'there was not the slightest chance' of Fisher being able to form a Government out of the current parliamentary situation. Like Reid, the Prime Minister

1. Bulletin, 9 April 1914; Worker (Sydney), 19 February 1914.
2. His Excellency describes the sequence of events in several despatches from which this account is extracted. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 9 June 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/556-60. A.N.L. See official despatches of same date in C.O. 418/123/25528 and 25972, folios 13-44. The three memoranda are in Novar papers, MS 696/4441-4493. A.N.L. Although the communications between Cook and the Governor-General were later published in Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1914-1917, V, pp. 127-136, the memoranda were altered slightly and read as one document instead of three.
stressed that if Fisher were later granted a dissolution of the House of Representatives, the Governor-General would be giving to the Opposition that which the Government had been refused.

This advice was, strictly, not accurate. Cook was not requesting a single dissolution because that would not solve his Party's problem of a hostile majority in the Senate. It could be charged that Cook's difficulty arose from his determination to utilise section 57 of the Constitution for a purpose other than that intended by its drafters. On such a view, the Governor-General, as constitutional guardian, might have refused the Prime Minister's request to dissolve a Parliament which had two years to run. At least there seemed a case for obtaining the Opposition's interpretation of the situation, if the Governor-General were to be allowed to make an independent judgment. But when, towards the close of the interview, Munro Ferguson expressed a wish to see Fisher, the Prime Minister indicated that he opposed such a course. This was clearly contrary to established procedure and indicated either that Cook was unsure of the weight of his arguments in favour of a double dissolution, or that he was determined that the time had come when Australia conformed to the British system of parliamentary government.

Probably both reasons were pertinent. While political expediency was partly behind Cook's advice, the Government was also concerned with establishing a constitutional principle. When Munro Ferguson came to read the documents presented by the Prime Minister in support of his request, he found that one memorandum, apparently drafted by Irvine, argued strongly that the Governor-General was constitutionally bound to follow his Prime Minister's advice. Relying heavily on Keith's
Responsible Government in the Dominions\textsuperscript{1} for his analysis of the practice of monarchical government in Britain, the Attorney General claimed that the Representative of the Crown in Australia, like the King in Britain, could act only on the advice of his Cabinet except when the Ministry was defeated in the Lower House. If such a view of the role of a constitutional monarch sounded strange from the pen of a conservative such as Irvine, it was no less than had been claimed by radicals since the late nineteenth century. The second generation of Commonwealth parliamentarians were becoming confident in the maturity of the national parliament; they no longer considered it necessary to preserve the function of Governor-General as constitutional guardian.

Munro Ferguson was reluctant to accept Irvine's interpretation of the role of the Representative of the Crown. There was no unanimity among constitutional authorities in 1914 that the action of the British King was as restricted as both Keith and Irvine assumed. But quite apart from that, the role of Governor-General in Australia, particularly in respect of dissolution of Parliament, had hitherto been clearly independent of the advice of Ministers. Munro Ferguson's instincts were against the surrender of such a position, and, significantly, he soon found one eminent authority who disagreed with the Attorney General's proposition.

Though at the interview on 2 June, Cook had opposed Munro Ferguson's intention of seeing Fisher, he had not been averse to His Excellency's proposal to speak to the Chief Justice. Griffith came to lunch

\footnote{1. First published 1909, but a second edition substantially rewritten and published in 1912 (Oxford, Clarendon Press) was the reference used by Irvine. In 1928 a revised and extended version was published incorporating subsequent developments.}
at Government House the next day. He obviously impressed the Governor-General who later described him as standing 'head and shoulders above all Australians in knowledge, decision, and quickness of vision'. His Excellency was also likely to have been impressed by Griffith's opinion as to the discretionary role of the Representative of the Crown. But, while the Chief Justice believed that the Governor-General was 'in the position of an independent arbiter', in the immediate case at issue he considered that Cook was entitled to a dissolution. Somewhat illogically, Griffith concurred with the Prime Minister's advice against seeking the opinion of the Leader of the Opposition, an action which, surely, was within the competence of an 'independent arbiter'.

The influences upon Munro Ferguson were thus Reid, Cook and Griffith. He seems to have given scant attention to Denman's advice, and, in view of what both Cook and Griffith advised, he decided against speaking to Fisher. As a Liberal, fresh from the constitutional battle with the Lords, his own sympathies were with the difficulties Cook's Australian Liberal Party faced with a hostile majority in an upper House. He seems never to have taken into consideration the role of the Senate, envisaged by the makers of the Constitution, as a States'  

1. Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law, 1901-1929, p. 122, suggests that it was improper for His Excellency to obtain an opinion from the Chief Justice who might be called upon to decide upon the legality of such an executive act.

2. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 24 March 1915. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/674. A.N.L.

3. See Novar papers, MS 696/4494-8, A.N.L. for memorandum from Griffith, 5 October 1914, embodying 'with substantial accuracy the views which I expressed when you did me the honour to ask my opinion on 3rd June'. Covering letter is at Novar papers, MS 696/4508. A.N.L. Another copy of Griffith's memorandum is in Griffith papers, M.L. Mss. 363/8X, pp. 49-50. Mitchell Library. Griffith's attitude in 1914 was consistent with his view, in 1887, that there should be 'some superior and calmer authority to determine whether a dissolution is necessary or not'. [C. 5091], p. 557, quoted above, chapter V, p. 232.
In the event, although he declined to accept the Government's interpretation of the Constitution, he accepted Cook's view of the political situation and came to the conclusion that the only solution to the existing deadlock lay in a double dissolution.

For his interview with Cook on 4 June, Munro Ferguson armed himself with a brief pencilled memo concealed in his desk diary. Taking pains to retain for the Governor-General a discretionary role he specifically denied the proposition put forward by Irvine that he was bound to act according to his Ministers' advice. Some measure of his determination not to be a cypher is evident from his unwillingness to grant Cook a promise of a double dissolution in two or three months time, and his requirement that Cook obtain supply before proroguing Parliament. But the essential substance of his decision was that, as the Parliament was unworkable, if Cook wished an immediate double dissolution, it would be granted. Cook assured him that the Government intended to dissolve Parliament immediately after the necessary formalities, including parliamentary approval of supply, had been completed. An exchange of formal communications confirmed these arrangements, and on the following morning the decision was conveyed to both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

1. Probably, he failed to grasp the difference between the intentions of the founding fathers as to the role of the Senate and the political practice since federation. See West Australian, 8 and 9 June 1914, for discussion of the assertion by Pearce, that the Governor-General's decision 'destroys absolutely the Federal system'.

2. Novar papers, MS 696/4513. A.N.L.

3. Murdoch, Joseph Cook, p. 273, interprets Munro Ferguson's action as 'refusal' to promise a dissolution in advance.


Munro Ferguson was prepared for 'some ebullitions of wrath from the Opposition'.¹ One of the strongest expressions of dissent came from the pen of W.M. Hughes, Attorney General in the previous Fisher administration. Hughes viewed the decision to dissolve both Houses of Parliament as 'constitutional butchery'. However his righteous defence of the Senate as the repository of States' rights and his lofty assertion that 'the discretion of the King's representative as to the dissolution of the Lower House is unfettered (while)...Section 57 makes him the defender of the Constitution'² sounds specious. In the Senate the Governor-General's action was criticised vigorously but without personal abuse, and an attempt was made to obtain publication of the correspondence preceding the decision.³ But Supply was granted. There was some justification for the strictures of the Opposition. Fisher could justifiably have expected at least to have been able to put the Opposition's point of view to the Governor-General personally, a right later supported by the Secretary of State.⁴ But some of the arguments for the Governor-General's independence of action were more expressions of pique than of principle.

1. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 21 June 1914. Novar papers, MS 696/574. A.N.L.

2. Age, 9 June 1914; Worker (Brisbane), 18 June 1914. The Daily Telegraph, 10 June 1914, considered that Hughes' memorandum displayed 'the peevishness characteristic of Labor when denied its own political way, but lacks its author's customary plausibility'.

3. C.P.D., 1914, LXXIV, pp. 2088-2102 and 2169-2184. His Excellency, acting on Cabinet's advice, declined to do so. Ibid., pp. 2419-2420. The Senate also petitioned the Governor-General to authorize a referendum to be held simultaneously with the election. Again acting upon the Cabinet's advice, Munro Ferguson refused the request. Ibid., pp. 2246-60 and 2420. Also Novar papers, MS 696/4529-4590. A.N.L.

4. Harcourt to Munro Ferguson, 11 July 1914. The Secretary of State considered that 'a Governor-General is free to use his discretion as to seeing the leader of the Opposition even though the F.M. be adverse to such an interview'. Novar papers, MS 696/1298. A.N.L.
Forgetting their earlier allegations that the Representative of the Crown was a 'constitutional dummy' the radical press in Australia launched quickly into an attack upon the decision of this 'rubber stamp' to follow the advice of his Ministers. To the Bulletin the Governor-General was 'technically, if for no other reason ... utterly wrong in granting the double dissolution'.\(^1\) The Westralian Worker discerned a more sinister fact. Noting that the Governor-General dined with the President and members of the Melbourne Club on the evening of 7 June, it concluded that 'the imported viceroy has proved loyal to the interests of his class'.\(^2\) The Australian Worker criticized the decision as 'ludicrous'.\(^3\) Labor Call accused His Excellency of 'partisanship' and 'unfairness',\(^4\) while the Brisbane Worker considered that 'lack of knowledge' had led to Munro Ferguson being 'misled by his constitutional advisers'.\(^5\)

These were the opinions of a minority only. With the notable exception of the Age and Melbourne Punch,\(^6\) Australian newspapers supported the Governor-General's decision.\(^7\) But if the overwhelmingly conservative press anticipated that in future confrontations the discretion of the Representative of the Crown could be utilized in favour of the conservative point of view they were mistaken. Munro Ferguson's granting of a double dissolution of the House of Representatives only.

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2. Westralian Worker, 12 June 1914.
3. Australian Worker (Sydney), 11 June 1914. C.f. its opinion, 19 February 1914: 'Even his value as a rubber stamp is of inferior importance'.
5. Worker (Brisbane), 11 June 1914.
6. Age, 3 June 1914, and Punch (Melbourne), 7 May 1914, favoured a dissolution of the House of Representatives only.
7. E.g. West Australian. On 2 June 1914 it considered that there was 'no shadow of doubt as to what the Governor-General will do'. On 9 June 1914 it remarked that 'every reasonable person in the Commonwealth' had expected Cook's request to be granted.
dissolution to Cook was a crucial step in the continually narrowing role of the Governor-General in the Commonwealth. The Constitution of 1901, reflecting the lack of confidence among its drafters in the maturity of the colonial parliamentary institutions, had allowed the principal Representative of the Crown some discretion in local political affairs. Some commentators after 1914 claimed that Munro Ferguson's action pointed to an acceptance of the doctrine that the Governor-General must act upon the advice of his Ministers.

The chief exponent of this point of view was A.B. Keith. In a volume published in 1916 he hailed Munro Ferguson's action as a 'landmark in the history of responsible Government in the Commonwealth'. According to Keith's argument it indicated that Australia had in 1914 finally become a constitutional monarchy on the British pattern and sloughed off the remaining vestiges of colonial status. Though this point of view was challenged both at the time and later, it had considerable force. Prior to 1914, Australian Ministries had not possessed the right to dissolve Parliament at will. Keith's earlier book, Responsible Government in the Dominions, published in 1912, had emphasized the 'serious responsibility devolving upon a Governor by discretion in matters of dissolution'. Four years later Keith considered that this no longer held true, and that in acting upon the advice of the Cook Government Munro Ferguson had established a significant precedent.

Keith's opinion echoed the arguments of Irvine in his memorandum of 2 June, and supported the comment in Quick and Garran. Sir John Quick, undisputably an authoritative constitutional commentator, developed this

2. p. 209.
opinion in a later work. Munro Ferguson struggled manfully to correct what he considered to be a misinterpretation of his action. He gathered opinions from distinguished legal authorities such as Griffith and Professor Harrison Moore and continued to emphasize that he had granted Cook's request on his own discretion in view of his own interpretation of the parliamentary situation. His reliance on the extra-parliamentary advice of Reid and Griffith, unknown at the time, supports this view. In later decades Munro Ferguson's view of his action found weighty champions, notably H.V. Evatt and E.A. Forsey. Evatt denies Keith's conclusions and asserts that in coming to a decision based on the 'parliamentary situation' Munro Ferguson was exercising the customary discretionary role of the Governor-General. This argument would be stronger had the opinion of the Opposition Leader been obtained. By failing to see Fisher the Governor-General had, to a certain extent, compromised his independence of action. It was undoubtedly true that in strict legal terms His Excellency's power of discretionary action in the matter of dissolution of Parliament, still remained. But the significant fact is that no Commonwealth Governor-General has since refused a Prime Minister's request for either a single or double dissolution. Munro Ferguson's action was

1. Legislative Powers of the Commonwealth and States of Australia, (Melbourne, 1919), pp. 639-641: 'The Governor-General has little if any discretion left in such a great crisis'. Quick wrote to Munro Ferguson, 9 September 1920: 'as a constitutional writer I have been forced to take the view that this, like other powers and perogatives [sic] of the Crown is exercised according to the advice of responsible ministers'. Novar papers, MS 696/8560.

2. Griffith forwarded to Munro Ferguson, on 4 September 1916, a memorandum challenging Keith's assertion. Novar papers, MS 696/4703-16. A.N.L.


4. The King and His Dominion Governors, pp. 37-49.

undoubtedly a step in this direction. It was unlikely that any subsequent Governor-General would have had sufficient confidence in his discretionary power to put it to the test by refusing his Ministers' advice. The longer this power remained unused the rustier it became. In practical terms Keith's 1916 judgment was correct. Even Harcourt considered that the Governor-General's decision had been on the ground that his 'constitutional duty', under all except very exceptional circumstances, was 'to act on the advice of ... responsible ministers'.¹ Munro Ferguson's action in granting Cook a double dissolution was significant in reflecting not only the political stability of the Commonwealth Parliament, but also the growing status of Australia.

By 1914 the Commonwealth had less need of a constitutional guardian than in 1901. Characteristically this change in Australia was accomplished without any overt signs of friction. Twelve years later the issue was finally resolved and the Governor-General's discretionary powers in regard to dissolution shelved, but the battleground was not in Australia but in Canada.² In 1854 Baron Stockmar had warned the Prince Consort of the danger that the British monarch would become 'a mandarin figure which has to nod its head in assent, or shake it in denial, as his minister pleases'.³ Sixty years later there were many who would have argued that such a comment described the role of the King's Representative

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1. Harcourt to Munro Ferguson, 11 July 1914. Novar papers, MS 696/1298. A.N.L. The Australian correspondent for The Times thought that His Excellency had 'accepted without question the advice of his Ministers' and by so doing had made it impossible for the Governor-General in future to serve as 'shield of a Parliament not desiring a dissolution against a Ministry attempting to coerce it by threats of a dissolution'. The Times, 22 May 1915.

2. The King-Byng dispute in 1926. See below, chapter X, pp. 481-482.

in the Commonwealth in local political affairs. Others would have stressed that what remained for the Governor-General was what existed for any constitutional monarch; influence not power. In either case few would have considered that he retained gubernatorial functions which he had when the century opened.

The argument about the effect of Munro Ferguson's action may remain unresolved, but there seems little doubt that his decision was 'constitutionally correct and politically wise'. In the event, to the surprise of many, the double dissolution sought by the Government, opposed by the Opposition and granted by the Governor-General, resulted in a return to power of Fisher's Labor Party. However, by the time the election had led to this result, Australians' attentions were absorbed by external rather than internal conflicts.

News of the European crisis reached Australia during the last week of July 1914, when newspaper columns normally devoted to purely local affairs began to show concern at the possibility of the conflict in Europe. In these headlines Ministers could read of ominous preparations for a war which, because of her membership of the British Empire, threatened to involve Australia. Yet the Commonwealth Government seemed strangely slow to deliberate upon the shattering events in Europe. In part this reluctance reflected a characteristic unwillingness to interfere in Britain's conduct of foreign policy. But also pertinent was the peculiarly inconvenient time. The Commonwealth Parliament was formally

2. Hughes attempted to recall Parliament after it had been dissolved so as to deal with the emergency created by the outbreak of war. But Fisher was 'absolutely in disagreement with' his lieutenant's views. See Hughes to Fisher, 5 August 1915. Fisher papers, MS 3919. A.N.L.
dissolved on 30 July and campaigning for the election was in full swing. Both Government Ministers and Opposition leaders were widely dispersed throughout the continent.¹ For a few crucial days Australian affairs were conducted not in the seat of Government, Melbourne, but in Sydney and not by the Cabinet, but by the Minister for Defence, acting in consultation with the Governor-General the Attorney-General and defence advisers.

Munro Ferguson had arrived in Sydney on 10 July determined to re-establish good feelings between the Governor-General and the State which had declined to provide him with a permanent residence.² After appropriate welcoming ceremonies and with a regretful glance at the splendid home of his predecessors in the Domain he had proceeded to 'Yaralla', a palatial but inaccessible property near Concord.⁴ Temporary offices were established at 'Craignish' in Macquarie Street, where callers could enter their names in the Visitors' Book and where Steward, the Official Secretary, carried on the administrative work of the Governor-General's Office. Immediately after his arrival Munro Ferguson commenced a vigorous round of social activities; presenting prizes at a polo carnival, attending banquets and holding a levee. The programme was scheduled to continue for approximately one month, after which His Excellency

1. A check of newspapers reveals that Cook was touring country districts in Victoria; Irvine was en route from Queensland, speaking at New South Wales towns on the way to Sydney; Forrest and Pearce were in Western Australia; Glynn, the Minister for External Affairs and Fisher were in Adelaide; and Hughes was in Sydney.


3. Sydney Government House was still unoccupied, pending the result of the protracted legal actions. Munro Ferguson told Harcourt, 12 July 1914, 'We embarked under old Government House, and very attractive it is'. Novar papers, MS 696/582. A.N.L.

4. Owned by Miss, later Dame Eadith Walker, a supporter of the Liberal Party and a prominent Sydney philanthropist who, at Cook's urging, had vacated her home on the Parramatta River for the Governor-General.
intended to visit Brisbane, but these plans were to be halted by the outbreak of war.

Australia's first steps towards war were hesitating and confused, indicating its relative immaturity in international affairs. The first official warning from the British Government, indicating that war was likely, was a cable which reached Steward at 'Craignish' at 3 p.m. on 30 July. The telegram should have read, 'See preface defence scheme adopt precautionary stage...', a pre-arranged message which meant that preliminary steps laid down in 1907 by the Committee of Imperial Defence were to be effected immediately. But an error in decyphering the cable delayed Australia's implementation of the instruction. The absence of Cook led to further difficulties. Normally such a telegram would be decyphered and a copy sent to the Prime Minister as well as to the Governor-General. In this case, the Prime Minister being inaccessible, a copy was handed to the Minister for Defence. Millen's unpreparedness and his understandable unwillingness to take important executive decisions in the absence of the Prime Minister led to further delay. Pressed by Rear Admiral Patey and the Naval Board, Millen agreed to effect the necessary naval measures almost immediately. But he was reluctant to put

1. A decoded copy of the text of this cable is in CP 78, series 23, volume 1, first paper, numbered 14/89/1/11. C.A.O. The word 'adopt' was at first decyphered as 'adoption' destroying the sense of the message completely. It is not known at what stage the error was discovered. For a narrative of these events see Ernest Scott, Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, vol. XI, Australia During the War (Sydney, 1943 edition), pp. 6-15.

2. He had to cable to Melbourne instructing that both the naval war orders and the defence scheme be brought to Sydney. Ibid., p. 8.

3. Admiral Sir George Patey, Commander of Australasian Squadron 1913-1916, had received orders to implement the precautionary stage from his superior Naval Officer, the Admiral of the China Squadron. Ibid., p. 7.

4. They were in full train by 10.30 p.m. on 30 July 1914. Ibid.
in train the appropriate military arrangements without Cook's authority.

It was not until the Attorney-General, Irvine, arrived in Sydney that Millen could be persuaded. Eventually, on Sunday 2 August, at a conference between Millen, Irvine and Munro Ferguson it was decided that orders should be issued bringing into effect the first stages of mobilisation.¹

In these difficult circumstances the Governor-General's role was far more than that of holding a watching brief. For the harassed Minister of Defence he was a welcome counsellor, whose advice carried considerable weight. Writing to Harcourt on 2 August 1914 His Excellency described Millen as 'extremely business-like and helpful in these anxious days, when in the absence of the Prime Minister a good deal of responsibility rested upon us two'.² Nor did His Excellency's influence cease when Irvine joined them in Sydney on the Saturday. He later informed Harcourt, in words which indicated how much he considered himself to have been involved in these deliberations: 'we had rather a delicate matter to deal with, namely whether we should hold up for the day a cypher presumably from the German Government to a small German ship... We decided to do so'.³ Earlier, Munro Ferguson had taken the unusual step of suggesting to the Prime Minister, by both letter and telegram, that a Cabinet meeting should be summoned 'in order that Imperial Government may know what support to expect from Australia'.⁴

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2. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 2 August 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/589-90. A.N.L.
3. Ibid.
4. See draft of telegram dated 31 July 1914, in Munro Ferguson's hand writing in CP 78, series 23, vol. 1, second paper, numbered 14/89/1/2. C.A.O. For letter to Cook of the same date see Novar papers, MS 696/4003. A.N.L.
Even in 1914 it was no part of the function of Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth to take part in policy discussions. Nor was it strictly proper for Munro Ferguson to advise his Prime Minister to call a Cabinet meeting. But in the unusual circumstances of those confusing days prior to the declaration of war the energetic and dedicated Governor-General interpreted his role as far more active than it would have been under more normal conditions. As representative of the British Government and in the absence of decisive leadership by Cook,¹ he had taken action to assist in Australia's prompt commitment to the European War.

There was no doubt that the Commonwealth's support for the Empire in the event of Britain's involvement in hostilities would be whole-hearted. The distant Dominion's attitude towards the Empire was instinctively one of tribal solidarity. The office of Governor-General was itself an embodiment of this sentiment. On 11 July 1914, commenting on Munro Ferguson's visit to Sydney, the Sydney Morning Herald had asserted confidently, 'The representative of the King and of the race, and the racial ideals and traditions, the great institutions and the splendid history which the King symbolises, has, as a matter of course, the goodwill of every shade of Australian opinion'.² But, as the leading Sydney newspaper recognized, race solidarity begot certain responsibilities:

whenever the day comes when real trouble threatens, trouble from outside - why then, for better or for worse, in victory or in disaster, whether it means eventual success or absolute irremediable ruin, through cloud or sunshine, or rain, or snow, or whatever the future holds, until that trouble is through, we are in it with the rest of our race.

¹. Murdoch, Joseph Cook, p. 284, describes the Prime Minister's dilatoriness as 'irresponsible'.
². S.M.H., 11 July 1914.
³. Ibid.
Within one month the time had come for such pledges to be redeemed. On the night of 31 July 1914 both Millen in Sydney and Fisher at Colac reaffirmed Australia's support for Britain in general terms. It remained for these to be translated into action.

After still more delay, caused by further problems in deciphering a telegram, Cook cancelled a proposed journey to Adelaide and scheduled the Cabinet meeting suggested by the Governor-General for Monday 3 August at 3 p.m. That day Munro Ferguson returned to Melbourne in the company of the two Ministers with whom he had been acting during the previous few days. Also on the train were the chief Australian Naval and Military advisers, Creswell and White. This grim party was met at the platform by the Prime Minister. After a few words the Governor-General drove off to Government House while Ministers proceeded to hold the long delayed Cabinet meeting to discuss the war.

In one respect this Cabinet meeting was a formality. The precautionary steps committing Australian naval and military forces had

1. Millen's assurance 'Australia is no fair weather partner', echoing the S.M.H., 11 July, received wide publicity in Australia and was greeted with enthusiasm in London. See S.M.H., 1 August 1914 and other Australian newspapers of the same date for reports of Millen's speech, and Age, 3 August 1914, for prominence given in London. In contrast Fisher's subsequently famous pledge to help and defend the mother country 'to our last man and our last shilling' received relatively little notice in Australia, only the Argus reporting it.

2. Apparently without Steward's knowledge, Munro Ferguson's telegram to Cook was given to the Governor-General's Military Secretary to despatch. Cook received it but was unable to decipher the code until 2 December. See CP 78, series 23, volume 1, items 14/89/1/3 and 14/89/1/4. C.A.O.

3. Major, later Lieutenant General Sir C.G. Brudenell White, was the senior Australian Army officer available. Colonel, later Lieutenant General J.G. Legge, had been recalled from England to become Chief of the Australian General Staff but was at sea and did not reach Melbourne until 8 August 1914. Brigadier-General, later Major General Sir W.T. Bridges, the new Inspector-General of the Australian Military forces, was absent in the North of Australia.
already been taken by Millen in Sydney, acting in consultation with the Attorney General and the Governor-General. It remained only for Cabinet to give retrospective approval of actions already taken. The real purpose for the gathering of Ministers, as the Governor-General had prompted in his telegram, was to determine the extent of the support which Britain could expect from Australia. At 4.30 p.m. on 3 August Munro Ferguson presided at an extended session of the Federal Executive Council at which the decisions of the earlier Cabinet meeting were given executive authority.\(^1\) After this meeting the Prime Minister announced that the Australian Navy would be placed under the orders of the British Admiralty and that the Commonwealth offered an expeditionary force of 20,000 men to be placed at the complete disposal of the British Government.\(^2\) Thus was born the First A.I.F. On 3 August the Governor-General described for his British superior the general mood which surrounded its formation: 'There is indescribable enthusiasm and entire unanimity throughout Australia in support of all that tends to provide for the security of the Empire in war'.\(^3\) He informed the Secretary of State, in a Secret despatch a few days later, 'I am convinced that 20,000 men represent but a fraction of what the Commonwealth could contribute to the Imperial Forces'.\(^4\)

In its display of unanimity with the Empire, Australia was only echoing actions already taken by its partners.\(^5\) On 6 August The Times boasted, 'For the first time in their history the Dominions take their stand side by side with England in a world-wide conflict'.\(^6\)

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1. The meeting lasted over an hour, see S.M.H., 4 August 1914.
2. Quoted Ibid. See also Scott, Official History, XI, p. 11.
4. 8 August 1914, copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1588-90. A.N.L.
5. Canada, New Zealand and South Africa were quicker to offer troops than Australia.
6. The Times, 6 August 1914.
this had been an instinctive response. Speaking at Colac on 2 August
Cook emphasized that for him there had been no other option: 'If the old
country is at war so are we ... It is not even a matter of choice but of
International Law'. It was to be a long-standing Australian opinion.
Twenty five years later almost identical words were used by a Commonwealth
Prime Minister to describe Australia's involvement in a second world-wide
conflict. The only measure of the Commonwealth's independence was that
it had itself determined the extent of its participation.

At noon on Wednesday 5 August 1914 the cable announcing that war
had broken out with Germany arrived in Melbourne. Munro Ferguson could
feel satisfied with his role during the preceding week. He had been in
constant consultation with Australian Ministers and military advisers,
partaking, at crucial moments, in their decision-making processes.
Australia's solidarity with the Empire, of which the office of Governor-
General was both symbol and guarantee, had been under-written as promptly
as circumstances had allowed. In the crisis the Governor-General's
function as channel of communication between the British and Australian
Governments had safeguarded his role as ambassador with special access to
the Commonwealth Executive.

Munro Ferguson regarded his duties during the war as those of
liaison officer, not only between Britain and Australia but also between
the Commonwealth Cabinet and its armed services. He anticipated that, as
Commander-in-Chief of Australian Defence Forces nearly all his work would
be with soldiers and sailors. 'In times like these' he informed Harcourt

1. Quoted in S.M.H., 3 August 1914.
2. On 3 September 1939, without consulting Parliament, R.G. Menzies declared
in a public broadcast: 'Great Britain has declared war ... as a result,
Australia is also at war'. Paul Hasluck, Australia in the War of 1939-
1945, Series Four, Civil, Vol. 1. The Government and the People 1939-
1941 (Canberra, 1952), p. 152.
3. Private letter to Harcourt, 18 August 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS
696/594. A.N.L.
'it is an advantage for the G.G. to have either naval or military experience, for Ministers are usually strange to both services, and a G.G. who is regarded as a brother officer, will always find a useful sphere of influence'. Despite their somewhat self-congratulatory tone, these remarks were essentially accurate. As an ex-Grenadier Guards Officer, Munro Ferguson was regarded with esteem by Australian Army and Naval staff. His upright military bearing and ability to wear with ease the cumbersome accoutrements of the office were of positive assistance to him. He informed Keith 'owing to the unexpected outbreak of War, I live chiefly in uniform'.

He took very seriously his titular position as head of the fighting services. To some extent the Governor-General's involvement with military and naval activities consisted in presiding at ceremonial occasions. Though he did not relish the public display and ostentation of some of his predecessors he did have a soldier's respect for military demonstrations. During his visits to all the States of the Commonwealth he constantly made himself available for presentations of colours or medals, or for parades at which he would take the salute, resplendent in plumes and official uniform. But he liked to mingle with the Australian officers and men more informally. Early in the war he took upon himself the task of inspecting military camps. On these tours of inspection he was sympathetic to the needs of the soldiers and interested in standards of

1. 21 November 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/622. A.N.L.
2. See Lt. Col. A.T. Paterson, The Thirty Ninth: The History of the 39th Battalion Australian Imperial Force (Melbourne, 1934), p. 32: 'the influence and example of the Governor-General who was himself a graduate of ... Sandhurst were greatly felt and appreciated in the military training establishments in Australia during the war'.
3. Private letter to Keith, 18 August 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/5095. A.N.L.
health and training, conveying complaints direct to Pearce, the Minister for Defence. On these visits he came to know the officers, and less often, the men, of Australia's fighting services, and in this way was able to feel himself to be more involved in the practical affairs of the war than his otherwise formal position would have allowed.

Letters to Pearce reporting shortages of blankets or inadequate drying facilities indicated Munro Ferguson's dedication to what was really a subordinate military task. On a higher level he took a close interest in the senior Australian Staff appointments. In this regard he was assisted on the one hand by his personal friendship with the senior British Commanders in the Mediterranean and on the other by the friendly relations he had established with Australian officers. On 10 August he reported to Harcourt that he had seen a good deal of Admiral Creswell and General Bridges. Though his estimation of the old naval officer was low he formed a high opinion of the energetic but unlovable architect of the A.I.F.

1. See Munro Ferguson to Pearce, 10 July 1915, complaining about facilities at military camps. Pearce papers, 10027, file 419/80/2 bundle 1, item 80. Australian War Memorial. He was also concerned at the unhealthiness of some military establishments. See Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 5 May 1915. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/684. A.N.L.: 'Our Military Camps are full of Measles and Pneumonia'. In November 1915 he inspected 'the venereal camp'. See Pearce to Munro Ferguson, 19 November 1915. Copy in Pearce papers, 10027, Bundle 1, item 105. Australian War Memorial.

2. He described General Maxwell, Commander of British Forces in Egypt, as 'an old Sandhurst friend'. See letter to Legge, 22 August 1915. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/3616. A.N.L. He also knew General Sir Ian Hamilton, Commander of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Forces, and had entertained him at his home in Raith. See Hamilton to Munro Ferguson, 7 February 1915. Novar papers, MS 696/3650-3. A.N.L.

3. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 10 August 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/592-3. A.N.L.

4. He did not express this at the time but see letter to Long, 23 September 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/960. A.N.L.

5. He told Harcourt, 21 November 1914: 'there is no more reliable authority than General Bridges, of whom as you know I think very highly'. Novar papers, MS 696/622. A.N.L.
The Australian General's death at Gallipoli in late May 1915 was the occasion of an unfortunate though unpublicized rift within the Imperial forces, in which Munro Ferguson's role was more than just that of an observer. On 20 May a cable nominating Colonel Legge as successor to Bridges was submitted for the Governor-General's signature. Seizing upon the opportunity to emphasize that he did not regard such action as a formality, he enquired whether the appointment had been fully considered by the Government. Fisher replied that the matter had been discussed at a Cabinet meeting and the appointment agreed to. Munro Ferguson signed the cable but was unwilling to let the matter rest there. He subsequently saw the Minister for Defence and obtained an assurance that a copy of the cable had gone to Sir Ian Hamilton. Pearce assured him also that Colonel Legge 'was the only Australian officer capable of succeeding General Bridges but that there was no desire to dictate to or to embarrass, the War Office or the G.O.C.' Munro Ferguson was aware that, though a 'competent and experienced officer', Legge was unpopular in the Service, and he therefore took it upon himself to inform the Secretary of State of this fact by personal and secret cable on 21 May.

The Army Council replied to the Commonwealth Government's cable by confirming the appointment and Legge was promoted to Brigadier General. But on 22 May Munro Ferguson received an intimation that Hamilton, who had not been consulted concerning the appointment, objected to the Commonwealth Government's selection of his Divisional Commander. Legge was the senior permanent officer in the Australian Defence

1. Munro Ferguson set out the sequence of events described on this page in a Secret despatch to the Secretary of State, 28 May 1915. See copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1652-4. A.N.L.

2. I have been unable to trace the original cable. Munro Ferguson refers to it in Ibid.
Forces. A man with wide peace-time experience, his grasp of administrative
details had recommended him to Pearce when the latter was previously
Minister for Defence. Legge had been responsible for the details of Lord
Kitchener's scheme upon which the Australian army had been organized and
had been Chief of the General Staff since August 1914. But, as the
Governor-General had suspected, the new Commander was generally unpopular.
His appointment caused murmurs of disapproval from officers who were
senior to him in rank but who belonged to the citizen establishment rather
than the regular component of the Army. Moreover there were such men at
Gallipoli who could point to recent experience of action which the new
Commander lacked. Two Brigade Commanders, Monash and McKay, were so
upset by Legge's appointment over their heads as to talk of resignation. They preferred to serve under the British officer, General Walker, who
had temporarily assumed command of the 1st Australian Division. It had
been the prospect of dissention among his Australian staff which had
prompted Hamilton to ask the Australian Government to reconsider the
appointment.

It was an embarrassing situation, made more so by the fact that
Legge had already sailed for Gallipoli, and by the highly emotional
atmosphere in Australia as her men faced what was for them 'the beginning
of the war'. The cable from Hamilton raised the whole question of
command of Australian troops in action, which had earlier been avoided

2. Ibid., II, p. 423.
4. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 5 May 1915: 'We are much agitated over
the operations in the Dardanelles. Australia, after 9 months of
"aiding the Mother Country" is now at war with Germany. To many here
it is the beginning of the war'. Novar papers, MS 696/682. A.N.L.
only by Bridges' unchallengeable position as creator of the Australian Imperial Force. The problem was to be a continual source of irritation. Australian politicians were inexperienced as war leaders and far from the fields of battle. As members of a Labor Government, Ministers needed to pay heed to those nationalist forces which demanded that Australian soldiers be commanded by Australian officers. But the infancy of the Australian army meant that her Staff Officers lacked experience and seniority. There was also an element of snobbery about the British Commanders' lack of confidence in Dominion Staff Officers. Hamilton later expressed such an attitude to his fellow Sandhurst graduate, Munro Ferguson: 'a commander of men ... [is] not created so much by education as by birth ... it takes a long time to manufacture a true military character and frame of mind'.

Fisher's immediate reaction to Hamilton's cable was a refusal to revoke an appointment which had already been made and announced. But he agreed that Pearce should also be consulted on the matter and later both Ministers came to see the Governor-General. His Excellency then pointed out to them the serious nature of a decision which forced a Divisional Commander upon a G.O.C. against his wishes. Notwithstanding the Governor-General's anxiety about the possible ill affects of the appointment, the two Ministers refused to reverse the decision, arguing that it had been open to the Army Council to raise objections had it wished.

1. In announcing Legge's appointment Pearce had said: 'we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that the Division is still in the command of an Australian officer'. C.P.D., 1914-1917, LXXVI, p. 3262. Also quoted in Age, 21 May 1915, together with a photograph of Legge and details of his career.

2. Hamilton to Munro Ferguson, 6 October 1915. Hamilton thought that even Bridges, 'fine character, brave soldier as he was, yet would not have been big enough to command a Corps'. Novar papers, MS 696/3658-63. A.N.L.
They felt that to recall Legge after gazettal of his appointment could only lead to his resignation. Both Pearce and Fisher considered him a 'perfectly competent officer, the best in the Australian service, and accounted for some of his unpopularity by the fact that he had, through ability, passed over the heads of other Officers'. They were strongly of the opinion 'that it was expedient that an Australian Officer should command the First Australian Division'. Reporting the conversation to the Secretary of State, Munro Ferguson remarked that 'inured to Trade Unions and the Political Caucus, [Ministers] do not seem to appreciate generally the value of bon camaraderie in the Field'. Fisher, particularly, had been 'disposed to make light of "popularity" as a wholly superfluous quality'.

In the face of the Australian Government's determination there was little else for Munro Ferguson to do but to recommend that the appointment be accepted. Legge reached Gallipoli in June and took over from Walker, for a few months, but later he was transferred to the command of the Second Australian Division. It was at this stage that command of the whole Australian Imperial Force was assumed by General W.R. Birdwood. Though the problem of the command of Australian forces was to recur Birdwood retained these functions until the end of the war.

1. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 28 May 1915, Secret. Novar papers, MS 696/1652-4. A.N.L.
2. Ibid.
3. See Copy of Minute for Executive Council, 26 July 1915, in Novar papers, MS 696/3454. A.N.L.
The consultations involved in this incident reveal that Munro Ferguson was by no means prepared to remain wholly a cypher in the role of Commander-in-Chief. Though his intervention had been discreet, he had required of his Australian Ministers that they justify their actions and decisions to him. Although he had not insisted upon his own opinion, he had impressed it upon the Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence.  

It was to be characteristic of Munro Ferguson's exercise of his role as Governor-General that he asserted both his own point of view and his responsibility as representative of the British Government as vigorously as discretion allowed. He continued to make it clear to the Australian Parliamentary leaders that he was in close contact with the senior British officers in the Mediterranean. Birdwood wrote regularly to him from the front and selected passages from these letters were forwarded to Pearce, Fisher and, later, Hughes.

Prior to federation the Bulletin and others had warned that a British official in the position of Governor-General might exercise his influence against the best interests of Australia in the event of a conflict between those and British interests. Defenders of the office of Governor-General had waved aside such objections, emphasizing instead the argument that such an official would be specially well-placed to understand the Australian point of view and represent that attitude to the British Government. It was later claimed by A.B. Keith that experience showed that a Governor-General 'felt it to be at least as important a part of his duties to impress Dominion views on British Ministers as British

1. Apparently only these two Ministers and the Governor-General knew of Hamilton's cable. See Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 14 June 1915. C.O. 418/133/33751, folio 39A.
2. See above, chapter I, pp. 43-45.
views on Dominion Ministers'. Early in the war there occurred one occasion where this was the case. The incident concerned the protection of naval convoys in the Pacific.

Like other Governors-General before him, Munro Ferguson had from the first shown a close interest in the fledgling Australian fleet. Despite British disapproval, he quickly appreciated that 'nothing could be more disturbing in naval circles in the Pacific than to cast doubt on the value of separate Fleet Units. Australia could not now conceive any alternative'. The approach of war found him even more attentive to the matter. On Sunday, 2 August, he visited Garden Island Naval depot informally, arriving at an early hour and remaining all morning to observe the great activity there as preparations were made for the fleet to sail. Later in the day he had an interview with Admiral Patey when the latter arrived in Sydney. But despite this interest, Munro Ferguson's knowledge of naval affairs was limited and his awareness of the strategic situation in the Pacific was superficial.

One month after the outbreak of war New Zealand's Expeditionary Force was ready to be transported across the Tasman Sea. On 14 September reported sightings of two big German cruisers near Samoa and news of the exploits of the Emden in the Bay of Bengal led to apprehension in Australia and New Zealand about the security of troop convoys. But, since Patey and the Admiralty discounted such fears as groundless, the New Zealand

1. See 'Recent Changes in Canada's Constitutional Status' in Canadian Historical Review, IX, no. 2 (June 1928), p. 111.
2. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 1 June 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/544. A.N.L.
3. See report in Age, 3 August 1914, which describes the Governor-General as being 'attired in a lounge suit with a soft shirt and no tie'.
4. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 4 August 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/591. A.N.L.
Government decided to transport its troops across the Tasman Sea with virtually no protection. Several of the vessels had already sailed when a telegram was received from Munro Ferguson conveying his private opinion that the transports ran a grave risk and should not sail until the Admiralty had been further consulted. The convoy was recalled immediately.

Although the British Government later approved the Australian Governor-General's action his concern was unfounded. The assessments of Patey and the Admiralty of the unlikelihood of a raid by the German warships proved accurate. But Munro Ferguson's direct interference had caused the delay of both New Zealand and Australian Expeditionary Forces.

In the opinion of A.W. Jose, official War Historian:

Sir Ronald had in this matter acted not as a Governor-General advised by his Ministers, but as an influential citizen of the Empire, informing its officials in England and New Zealand of his personal view... In this crisis he acted on his own responsibility; and, though the event proved his action needless, it would not therefore be safe to content that its motive was unsound.

Jose's assessment needs reconsideration in a study of the role of Governor-General.

Though Munro Ferguson sent the cable on his personal responsibility, the origin of his action lay in the attitude of Fisher. The Australian Government, only a few weeks in office, was concerned almost to the point of obsession at the possibility that troops might be lost by naval attack.

1. Munro Ferguson's account of this incident is in a Secret despatch to Secretary of State, 29 September 1914, C.O. 418/123/43671, folios 293-319.
2. For approval of his action see Secretary of State to Governor-General, cable, 28 September 1914. Novar papers, MS 696/1305. A.N.L.
3. Despite General Bridges' strong objections, the joint convoy did not leave Australian waters until 1 November 1914. Bean, Official History, I, pp. 91-2.
so close to Australian shores. In response to this anxiety, which he personally shared, the Governor-General was prepared to support his Ministers. He later expressed Australia's resentment at 'the assumption made by the Admiralty that we "funked" the embarkation of Troops'.\(^1\) In his secret report of the incident to the Secretary of State, Munro Ferguson also justified his action on the grounds of Imperial interest:

> I felt that a loss of unescorted transports would entail not only the loss of life, a matter for naval & military authorities, but a loss of confidence in the Admiralty which would raise the question of the advisability of handing over the Australian Fleet to Admiralty control. It would also accentuate the feeling that the 'New Zealand' should be in N.Z. waters so that Australian expeditions should not be dependent on the movements of N.Z. troops. I feel convinced that were unprotected transports sunk by the enemy a good understanding between the Admiralty and my Government could not be maintained.

Jose's interpretation of Munro Ferguson's action in delaying the convoy reflected a narrow conception of the Governor-General's role. The intervention was ambassadorial rather than personal, revealing His Excellency to have been sensitive to opinion in the Commonwealth and prepared to support his Australian Ministers when by so doing he was promoting Imperial unity.

If the cable to New Zealand showed Munro Ferguson's willingness to intervene in support of his Cabinet, there were occasions when he was equally as firm in asserting a point of view contrary to Ministerial advice. In August 1914 the Treasurer, Forrest, attempted to have the Governor-General sign an authority for the expenditure of £500,000 upon war preparations. As this had not been considered by Parliament, Munro

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1. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 29 September 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/604. A.N.L.
2. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 29 September 1914. C.O. 418/123/43671, folios 293-6.
Ferguson questioned the lack of authority, asking whether it would not be wise to consult the Leader of the Opposition in the circumstances. Forrest was forced to heed the warning and the authority was not signed.¹

The strength of such interventions lay in Munro Ferguson's undoubted knowledge of parliamentary procedures, the result of his lengthy membership of the British House of Commons and his insistence upon the monarch's active role in the executive and administrative areas of government.

Nor did the accession to power of the Labor Government deter the Representative of the Crown from asserting his supervisory role in the affairs of the Commonwealth. In early 1915 he noted signs that the Labor Government, 'with the exception of Mr Fisher himself who is always most punctilious, is inclined to treat H.M.'s representative somewhat cavalierly'.² The occasion for this comment was an announcement by Hughes, acting as Prime Minister during Fisher's visit to New Zealand, that he intended to administer the Government from Sydney rather than Melbourne, without consulting the Governor-General, or giving him the reasons for the move. Munro Ferguson protested to both Fisher and Harcourt about the matter, and Hughes apologised, but the problem was to recur in ensuing years.

In March 1915, an instrument setting up a Royal Commission on the New Hebrides, Norfolk Island and Lord Howe Island was brought before a meeting of the Executive Council. After the Council Munro Ferguson spoke to the acting Prime Minister about the matter, indicating that he had delayed signing the Commission. He objected that such an investigation

¹. See secret despatch, Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 25 August 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1594-6. A.N.L.
². Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 20 January 1915. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/650-653. A.N.L.
infringed upon the jurisdiction of the British Foreign Office and he warned
that France was likely to misconstrue an Australian investigation in a
colony jointly administered by her. Having raised these considerations,
His Excellency indicated that he was willing to sign the Commission if
Hughes advised him to do so. The points raised by the Representative of
the Crown impressed Hughes, who had no knowledge of the matter himself, but undertook to contact his colleagues. He thereupon cabled Fisher his opinion that the proposed Commission 'might easily do much harm'. The Acting Prime Minister considered that the Foreign Office should be notified and its approval obtained before the Commission acted.2

Though he did not consider the proposition to be a 'dangerous innovation' Fisher agreed that the 'Home Govt should be fully advised of its friendly peaceful character' and invited to assist in making its mission successful. The Government's policy on all war matters, the Prime Minister explained, was to 'avoid conflict with H.M. Govt when it decides there is danger [of] foreign complications'. In the face of Munro Ferguson's concern at the French reaction, he informed Hughes that the Commission should be delayed and 'certainly should not go to the New Hebrides until it was assured of a friendly reception'. 3 Though the Commission in itself was not really significant and its report was never published,4 Munro Ferguson was correct in guarding against clumsy and

1. Hughes had been absent from the Cabinet meeting which had decided to send the Commission. For the instrument setting up the Commission see Federal Executive Council, Minute Papers Approved, 1915, Prime Ministers Department Correspondence, A 1573, minute no. 16. C.A.O.
3. Ibid., initialled by Fisher and endorsed 'wire coded & sent 26/3/15'. See CRS A1, item 15/16430 for letter from Fisher to Minister for External Affairs, 16 September 1915, requesting strict observance of the proper channel in future.
4. The Commissioners secretly recommended the abolition of the Condominium and the annexation of the New Hebrides. See Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 5 September 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1729-1730. A.N.L.
unauthorized Australian action in an area which was potentially controversial between Great Britain and France.

By firm but tactful intervention in Australian political affairs Munro Ferguson was exercising the special advantages of the Governor-General's position in a way not evidenced since Northcote's term. In diplomatic, military, naval and even domestic affairs the Governor-General conveyed his own opinion and that of the British Government to the Australian Government. His tact and common-sense prevented him from insisting upon his own view when to do so would simply be counter-productive. In this delicate relationship between Governor-General and Ministry, as was evident during the terms of office of his predecessors, the attitude of the Prime Minister to the Representative of the Crown was of vital importance.

There was no doubt that Munro Ferguson regarded highly the Government he found in office when he arrived in Australia. He later wrote,

Sir Joseph Cook ... was my first Prime Minister and, from a Governor-General's point of view, quite the best, for he was always anxious to be thoroughly constitutional in his relations with the King's representative and took pains to be 'correct' in every particular."

In September 1914, he related to Harcourt how he had 'an almost touching exchange of adieux with the late Administration ... when it assembled in force to say goodbye. We had come to be very good friends', he wrote, 'and it was certainly a Government of high ability and Executive capacity'.

He considered Cook's successor to be 'a man of admirable character, of sound if restricted views ... [who] has exercised good influence upon his Party'. At first the cautious Fisher had 'laid stress on the

2. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 18 September 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/602. A.N.L.
expediency of all communications between the Governor-General and his Government passing through the Prime Minister'. However he soon relaxed this ruling and Munro Ferguson was 'quickly in the close relations with the Minister for Defence' to which he was accustomed. Fisher also suggested that it was not the practice to discuss business at an Executive Council. Munro Ferguson agreed, but he insisted on receiving the Minutes of Executive Councils in sufficient time to give them due consideration.

It was clear that he was determined to exercise conscientiously the role of constitutional monarch in Australia and to insist on his right to be consulted, to warn and to encourage. In August 1915 His Excellency complained that Ministers were failing to observe the Governor-General's rights. The Prime Minister apologised and instructed Cabinet members to observe the correct forms of procedure in future.

In January 1915 he was asked by Harcourt to use his influence upon Australian politicians in a particular direction. Five months earlier Japan had entered the war in support of Britain and her allies. At first Britain had hoped that Japan's war effort would be restricted to China and the China Sea. However, by October further assistance from the Asian

1. Secret despatch to Secretary of State, 28 December 1915. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1674-5. Fisher was unknowingly echoing Henry Parkes, who had written to Carrington in 1887 requesting the Governor to communicate with Ministers only through the Premier. Parkes to Carrington, 7 April 1887. Parkes Correspondence, vol. 6, A 876, pp. 127-130. Mitchell Library. I am indebted to Mr Graham Morey for this reference.

2. His Excellency reported this in his despatch of 28 December 1915. Novar papers, MS 696/1674-5. A.N.L.

3. Ibid.


partner was required and the Japanese occupied German colonies in the Pacific, including Yap, an island north of the Equator, which had been administered from Rabaul, and on which wireless stations had already been destroyed by Australian or British ships. It was at first assumed that the Japanese would hand Yap and other islands north of the Equator over to an Australian occupation force. However when, in late November, such an expedition was preparing to depart from Australia a cable from the Colonial Office directed that the occupation be abandoned. Riots had broken out in Japan at the proposition that she should relinquish prizes won from Germany in the Pacific.

These events in late 1914 prompted a secret letter from Harcourt to Munro Ferguson, 'for your eye only, and under no circumstances ... to be seen by anyone else' in which the Governor-General was informed that there was 'little doubt that it is the intention of the Japanese at the end of the war to claim for themselves all the German Islands North of the Equator'. The Secretary of State continued,

You ought in the most gradual & diplomatic way to begin to prepare the mind of your Ministers for the possibility that at the end of the war Japan may be left in possession of the Northern Islands and we with everything south of the Equator.

Harcourt knew that the Australians would find this fact disturbing. He urged upon Munro Ferguson the reasons for the likely eventuality, arguing that the object of most importance was to obtain 'those territories most contiguous to Australia' and emphasizing the great gain it would be to add German New Guinea to Papua and to have the whole of the Solomon Island group under the British flag. He concluded: 'I fear I have set you a hard task but I am sure you will execute it with your usual skill and

and discretion'.

The Governor-General did not need a second invitation to enter the field of international diplomacy, however peripherally. Indeed, he had already begun to take soundings among those with whom he came in contact. He felt that there would be little opposition to Japan keeping the Marianne and Caroline groups, though the Marshalls might cause more difficulty because of Australian trading interests there. He undertook, however, to consult Fisher and other leading Australians on the question. For the purposes of a study of the role of Governor-General these discussions are a vital indication that there remained a field of influence for the Governor-General as ambassadorial representative of the British Government. It was clear that he did not exactly share the Australian's terror of the Yellow Peril. In April 1915 he wrote, 'This fool's paradise needs a rude awakening, and if a Japanese naval base near the Line should act as a solvent then it would be a blessing in disguise'.

In the following months Munro Ferguson attempted to comply with Harcourt's instruction. He saw numerous politicians, and even Sir James Burns, of Burns Philp & Co, whose company had extensive trading interests in the Pacific. Colonel Legge, when Chief of General Staff, was also consulted, and his opinion that, from a military point of view, Australia should stay south of the equator, was seized upon by the Governor-General to support his diplomatic initiatives. When, in May 1915, Fisher seemed to be wavering from a previously expressed view that Australia would have her hands full south of the Pacific, Munro Ferguson referred him to Colonel Legge who had lately repeated his disbelief in the military value

1. Harcourt to Munro Ferguson, 6 December 1914. Novar papers, MS 696/1306-9. A.N.L.

2. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 6 April 1915. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/676-7. A.N.L. Also quoted Hicks, Impossible Alliance, p. 56.
of the northern islands. But despite all the Governor-General's efforts, an underlying Australian opposition to Japanese occupation of islands in the Pacific which might constitute a threat to Australia remained. Later under Fisher's successor as Prime Minister the question was to pass from the sphere of the Governor-General's personal diplomacy to the sphere of direct diplomacy between Australia and Britain.

For the rest of his term of office Munro Ferguson retained a close interest in the Pacific area and particularly the British island territories. For a time he employed as his private secretary E.C. Eliot, an official of the West Pacific High Commission. On several occasions he urged the Secretary of State to draw together all the Pacific colonies under one administrative authority and he suggested that this task might be entrusted to the Governor-General of Australia. In this way he considered that British power in the area would be consolidated, its commercial interests protected and the welfare of the local inhabitants secured. His scheme, never regarded favourably in London, would have encountered opposition from New Zealand, where Australian influence in the islands was regarded suspiciously.

His Excellency's enthusiasm for centralization was also reflected in his attitude towards Australian federation. His forceful support of the Commonwealth Government's authority ensured that relations with the

1. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 13 May 1915. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/687-8. A.N.L.
3. Eliot was Resident Commissioner Gilbert and Ellice colony and deputy Commissioner for the Western Pacific. For his attachment to Munro Ferguson's staff see Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, cable, 10 June 1916. C.O. 418/145/27549, folios 63-69.
State Governors, always a difficult problem for Governors-General became even more strained during the war. Though he was generally on good terms with the Victorian Governor, Sir Arthur Stanley, a difference of opinion arose over the perennial channel of communication dispute. Later in his career Munro Ferguson engaged in argument with the Western Australian and New South Wales Governors, Sir Francis Newdegate and Sir Walter Davidson. But the most prolonged and sharpest difference of opinion involved Davidson's predecessor in Sydney, Sir Gerald Strickland.

Prior to his appointment to New South Wales, Strickland had been Governor of the Leeward Islands, Tasmania and Western Australia. His legal training and pugnacious personality ensured that the ordinary differences between Representatives of the Crown in the Commonwealth and the States should be exacerbated. Northcote and Dudley had both expressed annoyance at Strickland's zealous support of States rights against the Commonwealth. Strickland's disaffection was increased by the

2. Sir Arthur Lyulph Stanley, later Lord Stanley of Alderley, was Governor of Victoria from 1914-1920.
3. For their correspondence on this issue see Novar papers, MS 696/5137-5158. A.N.L.
4. Davidson was Governor of New South Wales from 1918-1922. On 6 March 1919 Munro Ferguson complained to the Secretary of State of a despatch concerning the Pacific colonies being sent to the Colonial Office by Davidson. C.O. 418/176/26467, folios 147-150. Newdegate, Governor of Western Australia 1920-1924, was accused by the Governor-General of 'ceaselessly working against Governor-General and Federal authority'. See Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, cable, 23 August 1920. C.O. 418/203/41936, folio 56.
5. Governor of New South Wales 1914-1917. For biographical details see Dictionary of National Biography, 1931-1940, pp. 838-839; and The Times, obituary, 23 August 1940.
refusal of the Colonial Office or the Commonwealth to allow him to exercise the power of administering the Commonwealth under the Dormant Commission which he held and which was never allowed to operate while he held it. 1 The accession of the similarly strong-willed Munro Ferguson to the senior vice-regal post in Australia guaranteed difficulties. Nor was the situation eased when, in October 1915, Strickland triumphantly entered into occupation of the Sydney Government House from which Denman had been evicted. 2 A series of petty incidents over the respective spheres of each man's authority culminated in the Governor-General's refusal to conduct official business with the New South Wales Governor unless it were in writing. 4 Munro Ferguson even expressed doubts to the Secretary of State about Sir Gerald's sanity. 5 Their extended dispute only ended when Strickland, having fallen out with his Premier, Holman, was recalled to Britain in May 1917. 6

The Governor-General even encountered difficulties with the Governor of New South Wales over so harmless a subject as afforestation. Munro Ferguson was an enthusiastic practical forester and constantly urged upon Australia the need to conserve and administer its timber

3. As early as July 1914 Strickland complained that he had not been invited to the Governor-General's levee in Sydney. Strickland to Secretary of State, 21 July 1914 and Munro Ferguson's refutation, 27 July 1914, copies in Novar papers, MS 696/1580-7.
4. See reference in Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 12 November 1916. C.O. 418/146/62214, folios 150-151.
5. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 8 August 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/15889. A.N.L.
6. For circumstances of Strickland's recall see C.O. Confidential Print Australian No. 231, 'Further Correspondence (1915-1918) relating to Australian Constitution Questions', pp. 1-14. Also Evatt, The King and His Dominion Governors, pp. 146-152.
resources. In May 1916 he chaired a Conference on the subject in Adelaide, thereby earning the accusation, from Strickland, of taking an 'active part in matters of administration'. But the latter was an isolated objection. Upon the Governor-General's departure the Australian Forestry Journal expressed its appreciation of the value of His Excellency's contribution to forestry management.

It was not only Sir Ronald who caused dissatisfaction in the States about the exercise of vice-regal authority in the Commonwealth. In March 1916 Governor Stanley informed the Colonial Office of an unhappy dispute which had arisen between Lady Madden, the wife of the Lieutenant Governor of Victoria and Lady Helen Munro Ferguson. Her Excellency, the daughter of Dufferin, was certainly a lady with an imperious disposition. Early in August 1914, she undertook the active organisation of the Australian Red Cross and remained its President throughout the War. Government House Melbourne became the headquarters for the Commonwealth network and the Ball room was converted to a storage centre for Red Cross parcels. The problem which arose related to Lady Madden's criticism of Lady Helen for assuming 'functions that should properly belong to representatives of the States'. Stanley reported that Lady Madden was 'violently hostile to Lady Helen' and resented 'the autocratic management of the Red Cross'. Nevertheless, despite the State jealousies aroused by Her Excellency's methods, her work was a useful and practical contribution.

3. See S.M.H., 11 September 1915 for a published letter from Lady Helen to Holman, setting out the early steps in the organization of the Red Cross in Australia during August 1914.
to both Australia and the Empire, for which she justly earned the honour awarded her in 1920.¹

One potential source of friction between the Governor-General and State Governors was absent in the early years of Munro Ferguson's term. Fisher was resolutely opposed to the practice of awarding honours and declined to submit any recommendations. Denman had informed his successor, in May 1914: 'I had to make recommendations off my own bat'.² Munro Ferguson believed that, when wisely distributed, honours were 'a source of local and imperial public advantage'³ but his attempts to persuade the Prime Minister of this were fruitless.⁴ Faced with this opposition his Excellency attempted to submit names upon his own initiative. But his recommendation of the former Minister for Defence, Millen, was strongly opposed by Fisher⁵ and the Secretary of State declined to submit the nomination to the King. It was evident that while Fisher remained as Prime Minister only the State Governments had access to such patronage.⁶

But, as the war reached and passed its first anniversary, the pressures upon Fisher had proven too much for him. On 29 October he resigned as Prime Minister, to proceed to London in place of Reid as High

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1. She was made Dame Grand Cross of the British Empire.
2. Denman to Munro Ferguson, 11 May 1914. Novar papers, MS 696/7393-7400. A.N.L.
3. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 7 October 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/606-607. A.N.L.
4. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 29 September 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/604. A.N.L.
5. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 15 December 1914. C.O. 418/123/4141, folios 499-506.
6. Munro Ferguson informed Sir Ian Hamilton, 1 May 1915, that he did not make any recommendations, though Harcourt's despatch precluded only recommendations 'in respect of political services'. See Novar papers, MS 696/3646-7. A.N.L. For Harcourt's despatch of 18 February 1915 see C.O. 418/123/4141, folios 507-8.
Commissioner. The political leadership of his Party and the Commonwealth passed to William Morris Hughes.

Hughes' Prime Ministership was to see far reaching developments in Australian/British relations and serious effects upon the domestic political scene. In the following dramatic but divisive years Munro Ferguson, though at the centre of events and an intimate confidante of Hughes, was to lose some of the position he had succeeded in re-establishing for the office of Governor-General. In May 1915 his friend, Harcourt, had been replaced at the Colonial Office by the Conservative leader, Bonar Law. His Excellency's correspondence with the Secretary of State never regained its former intimacy. The departure of Fisher for England in late 1915 can be seen to mark the conclusion of Munro Ferguson's apprenticeship. He had been remarkably successful. In barely eighteen months, working amicably with three Prime Ministers, he had revived the influence of the Governor-General, which had declined under his two predecessors, and established himself as a man of some significance not only in Imperial concerns but also in Australian domestic affairs. The British Government recognized him to be an able and zealous diplomatic representative. Australian Ministers accepted his active interpretation of the functions of local constitutional monarch without significant demur. The outbreak of the war had further strengthened his dual role for, as channel of communication between the Commonwealth and the British Government, he was privy to all official correspondence. By the end of 1915 Munro Ferguson had already shown himself to be the most successful and active Governor-General since federation.
IX

High Point of the Office
The accession of Hughes to the Premiership in late 1915 ushered in a new period of vigorous nationalism for Australia. The next few years witnessed far reaching changes in the relationship of the Commonwealth with the mother country; developments which had a profound effect upon the role of the King's Representatives. With the other Dominions, Australia sought an improvement in status corresponding to the sacrifice involved in their participation in the war. Moreover, the war and its aftermath brought not only a new standing within the British Empire but an international identity as well. Consequently, though Munro Ferguson was the ablest Governor-General since federation and was vigorous in defence of the influences and prerogatives of his position, the role of Governor-General reached its peak and subsequently declined during the remainder of his term of office. Underlying these adjustments, as Australia moved towards maturity, was the force of Dominion nationalism. But personal factors, too, were involved and in the Commonwealth the most significant was the character of the new Prime Minister.

In many ways the Welshman's quicksilver personality was in marked contrast to that of the Scottish laird who represented the Crown. Whereas Hughes was politically adroit, erratic and impulsive, the Governor-General was inflexible, systematic and cautious. Yet, as he had done with Cook, Munro Ferguson quickly established a close personal relationship with his newly appointed chief Minister, an association which later broadened from friendship into an intimacy which the more guarded Fisher had never countenanced.

Munro Ferguson was not uncritical of the sometimes unpredictable ways of the Prime Minister, and he soon realized that it was more necessary to be on his guard with him than with Fisher.¹ Nevertheless he acknowledged

¹ Munro Ferguson to Bonar Law, 8 November 1915. Novar papers, MS 696/768-9. A.N.L.
that Hughes stood out 'above his whole party in intellect, courage and skill'\(^1\) and considered it in the interests of both Australia and the Empire that at the Head of the Government was a man who inspired 'his colleagues with some of his own go and grit'.\(^2\) He conveyed his high opinion of Hughes to the British Prime Minister, Asquith:

> Though stone deaf he is a remarkable personality. He has had greater educational advantages than most of his colleagues; is a natural leader of men; a delightful companion; bold in adversity; clear in his views; ... sound on the question of economy; also he has elasticity of mind and the faculty for grappling with difficulties.

Perhaps the most attractive facet of the man, from the Governor-General's point of view, was the fact that Hughes was 'a most sincere Imperialist'.\(^3\)

The new Prime Minister was no sooner in office than he resolved to travel to the United Kingdom in acceptance of an invitation which the British Government had extended to all Dominion Premiers. From January to July 1916 he was absent from Australia. The planned Conference did not eventuate as the other colonial leaders had been unable to leave their own territories at that time. In their absence Hughes was lionized in London, feted by the British press and flatteringly accepted into the councils of the Empire and the World.\(^4\) He was invited to attend meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet, an unprecedented honour for a Dominion leader. Attendance at the Paris Economic Conference further enhanced his prestige. Hughes also visited Australian troops in the trenches and met Birdwood and the Australian commanders in the field. It was a formative period in

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1. Ibid.
2. Munro Ferguson to Bonar Law, 11 January 1916. Novar papers, MS 696/793-5. A.N.L.
Hughes' development, encouraging the Commonwealth leader's ambitions for both his own and Australia's advancement within the Empire.

During Hughes' absence Munro Ferguson found it necessary to correct once again the tendency of Labor leaders to disregard the Governor-General in the constitutional process. In March he protested at the failure of Cabinet to inform him of its decision to fix the price of flour and bread, a far reaching assumption of central power by the Commonwealth which the Governor-General had first discovered not from his Ministers but from the press. Though Pearce, the acting Prime Minister, apologised for the oversight, Munro Ferguson decided to use the occasion to re-establish his position in the constitutional structure. Regarding it as essential that the King's Representative in the Commonwealth should be kept as informed of public policy as was His Majesty himself, he asked that while he was resident in Sydney periodical letters should keep him posted on current affairs. He asserted that Heads of State, whether under a monarchical or republican constitution, ought to be 'informed of Public Policy in time to consider it before that Policy is announced' and concluded by stressing 'the advantage, not merely formal but substantial of the G.G. being in full sympathy with his Ministers on all matters of public importance'.

Pearce's non-committal reply that he would do his best to give effect to Munro Ferguson's wishes goaded the Governor-General to retort that the matter was not one of personal whim but of respect for the Forms

1. Munro Ferguson to Pearce, 8 March 1916. Pearce papers, MS 213/5/15. A.N.L.
2. Pearce to Munro Ferguson, 8 March 1916. Novar papers, MS 696/3134. A.N.L.
3. Munro Ferguson to Pearce, 13 March 1916. Pearce papers, MS 213/5/18. A.N.L.
4. Pearce to Munro Ferguson, 13 March 1916. Novar papers, MS 696/3143. A.N.L.
of the Constitution. He denied that these were 'merely empty survivals', claiming that 'the underlying meaning of the obligation to consult the Crown before giving effect to any Policy is that by so doing that Policy becomes a national instead of a Sectional Policy'.\(^1\) This exchange of correspondence resulted in a personal meeting at which the two men had what Munro Ferguson described as a 'frank exchange on Constitutional practice'.\(^2\) Faced with Pearce's evident reluctance to concede to the Governor-General an active supervisory role in Australian public affairs, he determined to raise the question again when Hughes had returned.

Munro Ferguson's concept of the monarchical aspects of his office was somewhat old fashioned.\(^3\) But his interpretation of the role of Governor-General as constitutional watch-dog in the Australian system of responsible government was, in theory, accurate enough at the time. It was also true that in the United Kingdom the monarch was still kept closely informed of Cabinet's policy. Throughout his whole term of office Munro Ferguson insisted that his voice be accorded as much weight as was the King's. He demanded that he had the right to advise, encourage or warn his Ministers on policy matters, even when such matters were but tenuously linked to the category of 'Imperial interests'. It was a role which no Governor-General since Northcote had attempted to assert and few of his successors imitated. It was also an interpretation which independent minded democrats in the Labor movement were unlikely to accept, particularly when the office was filled by Britons appointed by the King on the

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1. Munro Ferguson to Pearce, 14 March 1916. Pearce papers, MS 213/5/20. A.N.L.
3. As the proper model for the relationship between monarch and Cabinet he instanced Gladstone's treatment of Queen Victoria. See his letter to Pearce, 13 March 1916. Pearce papers, MS 213/5/18. A.N.L.
recommendation of the British Government. Munro Ferguson was to find his views challenged during the following years and Pearce's cautious deferral of the issue until after his chief's return presaged the eventual frustration of the Governor-General's persistent attempts to influence policy on an official level. However, such a comparatively minor matter of constitutional nicety was necessarily thrust aside by the far more important political controversy over conscription which faced Australia on Hughes' return.

Munro Ferguson's observation, in August 1914, that the initial contingent of 20,000 men represented 'but a fraction of what the Commonwealth could contribute to the Imperial Forces' foreshadowed his later consistent effort to ensure that Australia increased its commitment. From the first days of the war, as a Briton watching his country struggling in the most destructive conflict in history, he was understandably anxious to be of positive service to the Empire. In December 1914 he informed Harcourt that the question of how to get more men to the Front was under discussion and 'might easily lead to a party squabble, in which case my influence may be of use'. Subsequently he seized the opportunities which came his way to urge a greater war effort. One such example was his suggestion to Fisher, in October 1915, that Federal M.P's might play a more active role in State Government recruiting drives.

Like the other Representatives of the Crown in Australia, the Governor-General had been prominent in efforts to induce young men to

1. See above, chapter VIII, p. 371.
2. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 6 December 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/632. A.N.L.
enlist voluntarily. He officiated at parades, marches and military
demonstrations in every State. Though he was not an impressive orator\(^1\)
he spoke vigorously at call-up rallies and on other public occasions of the
need to fight for the Empire.\(^2\) During wartime public speeches were much
less dangerous occasions for Governors. Patriotic exhortations and sabre
rattlings replaced the uncontroversial and usually dull subjects of vice­
regal orations before 1914. No doubt it was because he was so whole­
heartedly involved in the recruiting campaigns himself that Munro Ferguson
expressed his disappointment at the lack of enthusiasm evidenced by some
Commonwealth Ministers. But, in a typically cautious reply to His
Excellency's gentle reproof, Fisher contended that too much could be made
of Ministers as recruiting agents.\(^3\) Munro Ferguson was forced to leave
the matter rest for the time being.

During 1915 the Commonwealth Government came under increasing
pressure to stiffen Australian military involvement by compulsory
enlistment, particularly after Gallipoli had brought home to many war's
grim reality. The Universal Service League, a powerful pressure group
cutting across traditional party lines, was prominent in New South Wales,
largely due to the influence of the Premier, Holman. Another group which
took up the cause was the Australian Natives Association, whose chief

\(^1\) Punch (Melbourne), 28 May 1914, described his voice as 'high-pitched
clear excellent in quality. There is just a suspicion of a pebble
in the mouth', while Ada Holman, Memoirs, p. 31, remarked that he
had a 'slightly lisping voice, which belied his strength of character'.

\(^2\) See his speech to Lord Mayor's Banquet, Melbourne. Report in Argus,
10 November 1914.

\(^3\) Fisher to Munro Ferguson, 16 October 1915. Novar papers, MS 696/3973.
A.N.L.
strength came from Victoria. The Governor-General sympathised with these moves to strengthen Australia's war effort. He cautiously raised the subject with Hughes in November 1915, but the new Prime Minister replied that conscription was not a practicable proposal in Australia unless or until it were adopted in England. In December, reporting to the Secretary of State that recruiting was 'not going as well as it might do', Munro Ferguson stated his belief that 'compulsion ... may be regarded as inevitable if voluntary enlistment fails'. A few months later, although he defended his Government's reluctance to introduce conscription, he had decided that voluntarism had indeed failed. Writing to the Leader of the Opposition, Cook, he expressed the view that while the obstacles to compulsion were very real, they were less than they had been and would continue to diminish. He considered that 'in a war like this the doctrine of "equality of sacrifice" is ... bound, sooner or later, to prevail'.

Conscription was introduced into Britain, after considerable agitation, in early 1916. This increased the strength of pressure for similar legislation in Australia, but the Prime Minister's absence delayed resolution of the matter. In the Australian press, almost universally in support of obligatory overseas service, speculation flourished as to

3. Munro Ferguson to Bonar Law, 22 December 1915. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/789. A.N.L.
4. Munro Ferguson to Cook, 5 April 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/4024-5. A.N.L.
5. It became law on 27 January and men were called to the colours on 2 March 1916. Jauncey, Conscription, p. 126.
Hughes' probable course of action. Simultaneously, forces opposed to the concept began to organize in preparation for the coming battle. Hughes returned in late July and a month of manoeuvering began.

The Governor-General was more than merely a disinterested spectator during these crucial weeks. Shortly before Hughes' return he had written to Birdwood, 'We would certainly raise another quarter of a million men at a pinch & I am personally now in favour of conscription'.

His letters to Hughes in England had conveyed increasing anxiety about the shortage in recruiting and expressed the belief that some form of compulsion appeared to be necessary. Hughes' return enabled Munro Ferguson to plead the case for compulsion in person.

By late August Hughes had finally reached a decision. His problem was how to deal with doctrinal opposition to conscription within his own Party. On the twenty second both he and Munro Ferguson were in Sydney, at the opening of new head offices for the Commonwealth Bank.

After the ceremonies Hughes asked if he would be allowed a dissolution on the question of compulsory service. He intended to use this promise, if the Governor-General concurred, as a weapon in the caucus room, anticipating that his opponents would give way rather than risk a general election on the issue. The Governor-General agreed to the request, saying that he 'saw no difficulty as to granting a Dissolution'. This was an important indication of His Excellency's commitment to Hughes and conscription.

1. Munro Ferguson to Birdwood, 12 July 1916. Birdwood papers, Australian War Memorial.
2. Munro Ferguson to Hughes, 28 April 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/2480. A.N.L.
3. S.M.H., 23 August 1916.
4. Details of this private meeting were conveyed to Bonar Law in a private letter dated 26 August 1916, with postscript 30 August. See copy in Novar papers, MS 696/820-4. A.N.L.
There were good reasons why a two year old Parliament should not be dissolved in war time, especially over such a divisive issue. Yet the Governor-General indicated his willingness to hand Hughes this important constitutional weapon. In the event, though Hughes appears to have indicated to his colleagues that he had been fore-armed with such a promise, he decided to leave 'the sword in the scabbard' and caucus narrowly approved a compromise, whereby a plebiscite would be held on the question. The Governor-General's promise of a dissolution was, therefore, not utilised but it had been a valuable indication for Hughes of the sympathy and support he had from the Representative of the Crown. Cabinet resolved that the question of conscription should be put to the people.

On 30 August, in Munro Ferguson's words 'a memorable day in Australia's political history' the Prime Minister announced in Parliament his Party's decision on a question which 'easily transcends any matter which has been dealt with by the Government since the inception of Federation'.

Hughes' conviction that compulsion was necessary was chiefly the result of the increasingly sombre news he was receiving concerning the progress of the war in Europe. Convinced that Germany's defeat needed extraordinary measures of sacrifice he undertook to provide the men which Australian commanders in the field, and the War Council, estimated to be necessary. The responsibility for this action, whatever the influences, must be sheeted home to the Prime Minister himself. But the

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1. Ibid.
2. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 31 August 1916. Copy in CP 78, series 23, file 1914-16/89/385. C.A.O. Though this appeal to the people was known as a referendum at the time, it was really a plebiscite and will be so described here.
3. On 24 August the Secretary of State had cabled an estimate of necessary reinforcements prepared by Birdwood, together with a request for a special draft of 20,000 infantry. It subsequently became clear that the estimate was unduly inflated. See Scott, Official History, XI, pp. 358-361.
Governor-General's discreet, persistent advocacy of compulsion had reinforced Hughes' natural tendencies. Moreover their similar Imperial patriotism made them natural allies. Consequently, just as a word of caution might have deflected Hughes from his course, Munro Ferguson's support must not be ignored as a factor in persuading Hughes to press ahead.

The nature of their relationship at this time is revealed in an incident which has been described by several historians.\(^1\) Towards the end of what had become a bitter plebiscite campaign,\(^2\) Hughes attempted to introduce a provision whereby men eligible for service within Australia could be questioned by returning officers at the polling booths.\(^3\) But the proposed regulation was rejected at a meeting of the Federal Executive Council in Melbourne on 25 October, at which the Vice-President presided. Two days later the same regulation was presented to a different meeting, held in Sydney and chaired by the Governor-General. On this occasion, because of the absence of the three who had opposed the measure in Melbourne, the regulation was passed. When the absent Ministers discovered what had been done they promptly resigned.\(^4\)

At about midnight on the evening before the poll the Prime Minister roused the Governor-General from his bed in Admiralty House, and asked if he could see him. Munro Ferguson crossed the Harbour to find

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2. Munro Ferguson was sufficiently concerned for his own personal safety to arrange for a special military guard to be mounted at Government House, Melbourne, from 6 October to 15 December 1916. One Red Cross worker, arriving to attend a meeting there, complained that he was 'nearly shot down like a dog'. See P. Whitton to Steward, 11 October 1916. CP 78, series 25, vol. 1, file 297/23. C.A.O.
4. The three men who resigned were Senator Gardiner, Senator Russell and W.G. Higgs. F.G. Tudor had resigned his portfolio as Minister for Trade and Customs on 14 September.
Hughes waiting for him in a taxi on the Quay. After informing him of the latest Cabinet defections, 'The poor little man asked for advice and sympathy saying he "had not a brain wave left"'. Touched by this appeal from the dejected Prime Minister the Governor-General suggested that the announcement of the resignations be censored until after the vote. Hughes hurried off to put this advice into effect, only to find that the three Ministers had already communicated their decisions to the press.

The melodramatic meeting at midnight was more than a plea for sympathy. It can also be seen as a shrewd move on the part of the Prime Minister to learn the Governor-General's attitude and enlist his co-operation in what promised to be critical weeks. Hughes was aware that the episode of the regulation and the Ministers' resignations signified the final fatal blows to his control of the Labor Party. His was a theatrical personality and no doubt the emotional depression and appeal for help was genuine enough. But he was always a master of persuasion and if his real intent had been to ensure the support of the constitutional head of state before he engaged in the in-fighting and political intrigue which loomed ahead, he succeeded completely. The Governor-General could thenceforth be trusted almost as a fellow conspirator, though a little aggrieved that even while apparently pouring out his soul, Hughes had not placed the full facts before him.

The 1916 conscription plebiscite led to important changes both in the Governor-General's attitude towards Australia and the Labor Party's

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1. Munro Ferguson to Bonar Law, 29 October 1916. Novar papers, MS 696/834-836. A.N.L. He later recounted this incident to Long, 2 March 1917. Novar papers, MS 696/886. A.N.L.

2. Munro Ferguson did not discover until the following day that the offending regulation had been rejected at a meeting held in Melbourne without his knowledge. He suggested to Hughes, 1 November 1916, that the Prime Minister place all his cards on the table next time. Novar papers, MS 696/2513. A.N.L.
attitude towards the Governor-General. Previously Munro Ferguson had regarded as 'almost unique in its touching simplicity' Australia's loyalty to the Crown.\(^1\) Along with many others, he had believed that there would be 'general acquiescence in universal service'.\(^2\) Therefore, the resulting narrow but undeniable victory for the Noes,\(^3\) was a 'most serious blow' to his 'confidence in the future of this country'. He considered that, 'For the moment the anarchist and most ignorant section of society has shown itself more powerful than all the rest, & that in a community which is in the main the most irresponsible, self confident & inexperienced in the Empire, or even perhaps outside of it'.\(^4\) With his Whiggish background it was not surprising that he criticized the selfish class motives of Hughes' opponents\(^5\) and regarded the successful campaign as 'somewhat discreditable ... to the Labour organization'.\(^6\) Moreover, as a Liberal Imperialist he was naturally shocked by the anti-British outbursts of Archbishop Mannix throughout the struggle.\(^7\) The result was that he allowed these considerations to affect his previously balanced judgment. Writing to the new Secretary of State, Walter Long, on Christmas Eve 1916 he criticized Australia's contribution to the war as 'much below' its

1. Munro Ferguson to Bonar Law, 13 December 1915. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/785-6. A.N.L.
4. Munro Ferguson to Bonar Law, 29 October 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/835-6. A.N.L. This portion of the letter is partially obliterated but decipherable.
6. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 3 November 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1741-4. A.N.L.
7. E.g. Munro Ferguson to Long, 2 February 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/877-8. A.N.L.
fair proportion. This was more than unjust, considering distance from fields of battle and meagre population. His Excellency also commented on the fact that Australian troops did not go into battle until May 1915, an implication of tardiness which ignores the fact that the A.I.F., recruited largely from civilians and with much further to go, was in action in Gallipoli before Kitchener's new armies took the field. Such judgments were not merely the reaction of a jingoistic British aristocrat. Many Australians felt likewise. Conscription had divided Australia into two inimical political camps.

On the one side were those who regarded themselves as loyal to the British Empire, and with their instincts the Governor-General naturally sympathised. Elements of this group had always distrusted the attitude of the Labor Party towards the British connection. They now considered that their worst fears had been realized. The support which Labor branches and anti-conscriptionist Party members gave to the 'No' campaign led many to the conclusion that the Official Labor Party was controlled by disloyal elements. This distrust was exacerbated by the undeniable fact that in one stroke practically all the Labor Party's leading figures were lost. Leadership of the movement was left to unfamiliar men, vulnerable to the accusations of Imperialists that they were pawns in the hands of outside bodies which were, at best, luke-warm towards the war.

1. Munro Ferguson to Long, 24 December 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/850. One page of this letter, probably containing even stronger denunciation of Australia, has been destroyed. Long, who became Secretary of State in December 1916, never became as close to Munro Ferguson as Harcourt had been, but their correspondence was friendlier than had been the case when Bonar Law was at the Colonial Office.

2. Preston, Canada and 'Imperial Defense', p. 463.

3. For example Cook thought the result 'disgraceful ... a disaster for Australia ... a betrayal of national honour'. See Murdoch, Joseph Cook, p. 314.
and the Empire.¹

The effects of this division upon the Governor-General's office were important. Munro Ferguson, previously as impartial as any of his predecessors, found himself irretrievably identified with one Party, the 'Win the War' or 'Empire' Party. He considered Hughes' defiance of caucus as a victory for responsible government² and a defeat for the 'secret Trade Union Junta'.³ Therefore, while he had previously regarded Labor Party rule as unthreatening, if sometimes unpalatable, after the conscription plebiscite he regarded it as revolutionary and dangerous.⁴ On the other hand, this distrust was mutual. Despite occasional doubts about his impartiality, Labor leaders had thitherto been willing to give the Governor-General the benefit of those doubts. They soon came to believe, with some justification, that the chief executive officer was firmly ensconced in the ranks of the pro-conscriptionists. Before the war there had been consistent Labor agitation for the abolition of imported State Governors. To this cry was added, in mid war, the demand that Governors-General should also be chosen from the ranks of Australian citizens. There was to be little in the subsequent actions of Munro Ferguson to soften the impression gained by some Labor members that he was as partisan as their most implacable political opponents.

1. For an example of the propaganda of the anti-Labor forces a few months later see All for Australia, 'a newspaper to explain the aims and objects of the National Win the War Parties (Ministerial)' no. 3, 18 April 1917. Copy in Hughes papers MS 1538, box 51, folder 6. A.N.L.: 'The party who oppose the National (Ministerial) Government is made up for the most part of men either hostile to or lukewarm to the War, indifferent to the Empire or strongly opposed to it ... to them this life and death struggle for Empire and Liberty is a mere side issue'.

2. Munro Ferguson to Long, 4 January 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/869. A.N.L.

3. Munro Ferguson to Long, 4 April 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/895-8. A.N.L.

4. Ibid. He considered the Leader of the Party, Tudor, as reasonable and moderate but merely a tool of the extremists. See, also, Munro Ferguson to Bonar Law, 29 October 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/834-6. A.N.L.
In his report of the result of the plebiscite, Munro Ferguson forecast a reconstruction of the Government, followed by a General Election. Though this eventually proved to be the case, several confusing months intervened. On 4 November Hughes again asked Munro Ferguson to promise a dissolution. Assuring the Governor-General that he had no intention of using the promise, he explained that he needed a weapon in the forthcoming negotiations. Munro Ferguson replied by expressing his deep sense of confidence in Mr Hughes as P.M.; his conviction that this confidence was accorded to Mr Hughes by the people of the Commonwealth as a whole; and his determination to afford the P.M. the utmost support compatible with the limits of his action prescribed by the custom of the Constitution.

But he refused to commit himself in advance, reserving judgment until Hughes had allocated vacant portfolios and until he himself was convinced that the existing Parliament could not provide a Government to carry on for the remainder of its term. It was clear from this exchange that though Hughes could count on the Governor-General's active sympathy, Munro Ferguson would not relinquish his independence of action in advance. It was a small point, but it did prove that the Governor-General still retained his theoretical discretionary powers.

Eventually, on 14 November 1916, after two more of his colleagues had resigned, Hughes faced his opponents in Caucus. Finding himself opposed by a hostile majority and preferring to take the initiative himself rather than be deposed, he withdrew from the meeting followed by

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1. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 3 November 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1743. A.N.L.
2. See secret Memo, dated 5 November 1916, in Munro Ferguson's hand-writing. Novar papers, MS 696/2342-3. A.N.L.
3. Hugh Mahon and King O'Malley. Out of a Cabinet of ten, Hughes had only four still with him.
twenty three of his followers. The Prime Minister was left with only thirteen direct supporters out of the seventy five members of the House of Representatives, and eleven out of thirty six in the Senate. Yet, when later on the same day Hughes submitted his resignation and asked to be recommissioned, his request was granted. Though His Excellency required that Hughes give a written assurance that the Liberal Party would co-operate, this was a token exercise of his discretion. Munro Ferguson was, by this time, committed to Hughes as an individual. He informed the Secretary of State that the former Labor leader was 'the one man who can fill the rôle of Prime Minister' but that it was not apparent at that 'stage from whence his Government is to come'.

Hughes' caretaker Ministry, supported in Parliament by the Liberals, retained office until February. During this period the Prime Minister once more attempted to obtain the active assistance of the Governor-General in his Cabinet-making. In early January he discussed the question of an early dissolution with Munro Ferguson who while not

2. Again, Hughes appears to have been less than straightforward with the Governor-General. After asking and receiving a new commission the Prime Minister revealed that the new Ministers were already assembled at Government House, bibles at the ready, waiting to be sworn in. Scott, Official History, XI, p. 181.
3. This letter, written on 14 November 1916 but erroneously dated 'Nov 11/16' informs the Governor-General that Hughes had spoken to Irvine and Watt, and although they could not officially pledge the whole Opposition until they had seen Cook, they 'declared that they felt sure that this support would be accorded' and that they themselves would most certainly 'support him and use all their influence to secure the support of all others'. Novar papers, MS 696/2337. A.N.L.
4. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 14 November 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1754. A.N.L. His Excellency's confidence in his Prime Minister contrasts strikingly with the actions of Governor Strickland of New South Wales, who, a few days earlier, had attempted to dismiss Premier Holman. See Evatt, The King and His Dominion Governors, pp. 146-152.
specifically committing himself in advance, was obviously willing to consider the suggestion favourably.\footnote{Munro Ferguson to Hughes, 6 January 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/2583. A.N.L.} Eventually such a course was unnecessary as Hughes and Cook soon reached agreement and a Nationalist Ministry was sworn in by the Governor-General on 17 February 1917.

But the political turmoil continued. Hughes was reluctant to risk an election so soon after the plebiscite. He therefore introduced a resolution to procure an Imperial Act extending the life of Parliament for the duration of the war.\footnote{Hughes had secured the concurrence of the British Government to this proposal before the conscription crisis, while he was in England. See C.O. 418/155/32081, folios 447-463.} Unfortunately for Hughes' plan the Labor Party still controlled the Senate and were understandably hostile to such a proposal. In an atmosphere of suspicion and confusion considerable pressure was brought to bear upon waverers.\footnote{Charges that support had been solicited by bribery were made in the Senate. C.P.D., 1914-1917, LXXXI, pp. 10847-8.} Two Tasmanian Labor Senators absented themselves from Parliament\footnote{Senators Long and Guy.} and another, R.K. Ready, on 1 March 1917 resigned suddenly on the plea of ill health.\footnote{Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law, 1901-1929, pp.130-1; and Scott, Official History, XI, pp. 379-382 refer to this affair.} This enabled a hastily summoned meeting of the Executive Council in Tasmania to nominate as Ready's replacement a former Labor Premier but pro-conscriptionist, John Earle, who was visiting Melbourne at that time. A series of cables passed between Melbourne and Hobart which resulted in Earle taking his seat in the Senate less than 24 hours after his predecessor had resigned. Despite his uneasiness that the business savoured too much of a trick, Munro Ferguson was involved in this discreditable episode not only as the channel of

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1. Munro Ferguson to Hughes, 6 January 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/2583. A.N.L.
2. Charges that support had been solicited by bribery were made in the Senate. C.P.D., 1914-1917, LXXXI, pp. 10847-8.
4. Munro Ferguson to Long, 2 March 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/888. A.N.L.
communication between the Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments but also as a witness to Earle's written resignation from the Tasmania House of Assembly, a necessary pre-condition for membership of the Senate. However these manoeuvres were rendered ineffective by the refusal of two other Tasmanian Senators to support the obviously tarnished proposal to extend Parliament's term, and Hughes was compelled to dissolve in May and seek re-election.

Though the 'Win-the-War' Party triumphed in the Commonwealth elections and was supreme in all States except Queensland, eligible young men seemed to lack their political leaders' enthusiasm for the fighting. Enlistments in the Australian Imperial Force continued to decline.\(^1\) Notwithstanding the result of the earlier plebiscite the Governor-General continued to regard compulsion as the only way to secure the necessary recruits.\(^2\) Others, such as Irvine and the former Liberals in the Nationalist Coalition, were of the same opinion, and as the war news again worsened\(^3\) the Government came under pressure to do something about the problem. At first Hughes considered conscription to be impracticable\(^4\) but eventually the grim news of Passchendaele persuaded him to make a further appeal to the electorate. Though Munro Ferguson agreed that compulsory service was the only solution, he attempted to dissuade Cabinet from embarking upon a plebiscite, suggesting instead that a Bill brought

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2. See letter to Long, 13 December 1916, 'I fear that nothing short of conscription will meet the case'. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/848. Six months later he was still considering the possibility of resurrecting the idea of compulsion. See Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 12 June 1917. C.O. 418/158/41990, folios 134-5.
3. Notably Russia's withdrawal from the conflict.
4. See conversation reported in Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 14 October 1917. C.O. 418/159/57809, folios 144-153.
into Parliament, followed by a Dissolution was the best line of action.\(^1\) Disregarding both this proposal and Irvine's advocacy of conscription by executive action, Hughes decided to initiate another plebiscite.

The second conscription plebiscite was more violent and bitter than the first, with Mannix again vigorous in opposition. Hughes threw himself into the campaign with energy and dedication but his vilification of the opponents of compulsory service inflamed feelings and was, perhaps, in the end counter-productive. On occasions it was more than words which were flung about. The Governor-General reported that 'in one Queensland constituency a catapult was set up - the range having been carefully ascertained previous to the meeting - eggs and road metal were hurled with remarkable accuracy at the Honourable James Page'.\(^2\) The Prime Minister himself was, on a well publicised occasion, the target for an egg 'of indubitable antiquity',\(^3\) and more than once the centre of passionate opposition. It was an ill-omened and divisive campaign. Several times Hughes asserted that his Government needed an affirmative vote in the plebiscite and would not attempt to carry on without it.\(^4\) Yet, despite this threat, and a vigorous campaign by the Government elected only six months previously, the Australian electorate again rejected the proposal to introduce conscription.\(^5\)

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1. Munro Ferguson to Long, 30 November 1917, reports an interview at which this suggestion was put to the Prime Minister. See copy in Novar papers, MS 696/976-982. A.N.L.

2. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 8 January 1918. C.O. 418/169/9251, folios 8-10.

3. The 'Warwick Egg Incident'; see Scott, Official History, XI, pp. 415-6. This was to lead to the establishment of a Commonwealth Police Force, in the setting up of which the Governor-General was closely involved. See below, p. 429.


The Prime Minister was placed in a difficult position. He and other Cabinet members had publicly pledged on several occasions that the Ministry would not attempt to govern if the people rejected conscription. Jubilant anti-conscriptionists called upon the Cabinet to honour its word. Once again Hughes relied upon his close association with Munro Ferguson to assist him out of his difficulty. The Governor-General was in residence at Admiralty House, Sydney, for Christmas 1917 but his Official Secretary had remained in Melbourne. On Boxing Day Steward was summoned to the Prime Minister's presence. Obviously agitated, and explaining that he dared not absent himself from the delicate Cabinet negotiations then taking place, Hughes asked that His Excellency make a secret, unscheduled visit to Melbourne. Munro Ferguson cabled his willingness to travel south but rejected the undignified suggestion that he drive from the railway station to Government House secretly and circuitously in an unmarked car.

Though aware of the general dilemma which faced the Government, Munro Ferguson was not sure of the precise purpose of the proposed interview. He therefore sent Steward to enquire. But Hughes refused to be specific, merely subjecting the Official Secretary to a half supplicatory, half bellicose harangue, in which he warned that a Government led by Tudor might lead to Australia's taking no further part in the war. It was clear to Steward that the Government was looking to the Governor-General, 'either for such advice as will help them out of their difficulty,

2. See 'Most Secret Memorandum', Steward to Munro Ferguson, 26 December 1917. Novar papers, MS 696/2367-8. A.N.L.
3. See Official Secretary to Munro Ferguson, cable, 26 December 1917. Novar papers, MS 696/2369, and Munro Ferguson to Steward, 28 December 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/2370. A.N.L.
or for such assistance as will achieve the same end'.

The Prime Minister and the King's Representative met for about two hours in Government House, Melbourne, on 29 December 1917. With characteristic assiduity the Governor-General had prepared for the interview by summarizing what he considered to be relevant considerations in a written 'aide memoire'. This document reveals his conviction that the best course was for Hughes to resign and recommend that another leading member of the Nationalist Party be sent for. Such a course of action would fulfil pledges made during the campaign and yet not risk the accession to power of the Labor Party. Probably, Hughes repeated to Munro Ferguson the fears he had expressed to Steward about Labor's loyalty to the Empire and commitment to the war. The interview concluded without any definite result and His Excellency returned to Sydney.

On the surface Munro Ferguson's solution to the Government's moral and practical impasse was a feasible proposition. But, as the Governor-General had discerned previously, the Prime Minister was extremely reluctant to relinquish power. Possibly Hughes believed his own forecasts of the dire consequences if Tudor came to power. It may also have been true that another Nationalist leader would have been unable to hold the coalition together, though if Hughes really had the interests of the nation and the Empire at heart he could surely have prevailed upon his followers.

1. 'Most Secret & Personal' Memorandum, Steward to Munro Ferguson, 27 December 1917. Novar papers, MS 696/2364-6. A.N.L.
2. On Monday 31 December 1917 newspapers in both Sydney and Melbourne reported that His Excellency had paid a short visit to the southern capital on the previous Saturday. See Age, 31 December 1917.
3. This is now in Novar papers, MS 696/2381-8. A.N.L.
4. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 9 December 1916, 'It is doing Mr Hughes no injustice to suggest that he was averse to the relinquishment of power'. C.O. 418/146/4701, folio 370. Though the despatch was drafted by Steward it was signed by Munro Ferguson.
The Prime Minister's complex personality renders interpretation of his limpet-like tenure of office difficult. But, for whatever the reason, having with considerable effort obtained the Governor-General's advice, Hughes gave no indication of any disposition to follow it.

Cancelling a scheduled visit to Bathurst, Munro Ferguson returned openly to Melbourne on 3 January. By this time there was no disguising the government crisis. Hughes fought resourcefully for his political life. A meeting of the National Party on 3 January overwhelmingly endorsed him as its leader and the following day resolved to oppose any course of action which would 'hand the government of the Commonwealth over to the Official Labour Party'. Finally on 8 January Hughes called again at Government House and resigned, stating that 'the resignation was unconditional and that he had no advice to offer'. The Governor-General was left with the constitutional responsibility of finding a Ministry capable of carrying on the Government.

Though in theory the Governor-General's discretion was absolute, in reality his choices were limited. Hughes had not advised that he be recommissioned but there was practically no other alternative available short of entrusting the Government to the Labor Party. The actions of the National Party in the first days of January had closed the avenue that Munro Ferguson had thought to take. Munro Ferguson's guiding principle was that another political battle should be avoided and that an election would further inflame already embittered feelings. Quite apart from any personal bias His Excellency might have felt against the Labor Party, there

1. S.M.H., 5 January 1918. A document headed 'Resolutions Carried at meetings of the National Party' signed by Hughes and dated 7 January 1918 is in Novar papers, MS 696/2361. A.N.L.
were good reasons why Tudor should not be commissioned. Even a dissolution promised to be difficult to obtain. Supply had to be voted by Friday, 11 January. Therefore Parliament could not be dissolved without re-assembling and a minority Government faced the prospect of being unable to control the business of the House. Nevertheless Munro Ferguson went to elaborate lengths in appearing to exercise his responsibility impartially. He ostentatiously summoned to Government House no less than seven Commonwealth Parliamentarians; not to offer any of them a commission, but simply to enlist their views. At one time he envisaged entrusting the government to the aged but still ambitious Forrest. But after discovering that Nationalist Ministers refused to serve under the veteran Western Australian he discarded that possibility. All other Nationalists he spoke to agreed that the only man who could keep the two elements of the Party together was Hughes. During his interview with Tudor, Munro Ferguson had enquired as to his ability to form an Administration'. The Labor leader had replied that his Party was in an undoubted minority but that he had at least as good a chance of forming a Government as had Hughes in November 1916. As the Governor-General remarked, this claim was 'more ingenious than relevant'. It was obvious that if Tudor secured office he would need to dissolve Parliament almost

1. When a similar situation had occurred in Queensland during 1907-1908 the minority Ministry of Mr Philp had been unable to obtain supply. See Evatt, The King and His Dominion Governors, pp. 137-139.


immediately. But the problem of passing a Supply Bill would still
remain. In this situation the course which promised to involve the least
disruption was to re-commission Hughes, as His Excellency was quick to
perceive. After dinner he sent for Hughes. At this interview he stated
that though previously he had believed that the Prime Minister's 'temporary
withdrawal from office would enhance his credit in the country and satisfy
public opinion', he had found it necessary to ask Hughes again to form
an administration. In doing so he 'earnestly recommended that three
places in the Government be offered to the Labour Party'.

Early the next morning Munro Ferguson attempted to inform Tudor
and the press of his decision to recommission Hughes. But the Official
Secretary, Steward, advised the Governor-General that it was the invariable
procedure in the Commonwealth for such announcements to be made by the
Prime Minister. Steward was aware that an announcement made before Hughes
had completed the formation of his Cabinet, and while Parliament was still
in session, might embarrass the Prime Minister. Reluctantly, after
correspondence with Hughes, Munro Ferguson withdrew both messages. He
considered that to allow the Houses to meet and then adjourn without
informing them that the die had already been cast would be to reduce the
prestige of Parliament, which it had been his ambition to lift above

1. Ibid. It appears that Hughes made overtures to Tudor, ostensibly in an
effort to comply with the Governor-General's recommendation, but the
terms of the offer were disputed. Sawer, Australian Federal Politics
and Law, 1901-1929, p. 160.

2. It later appeared that Hughes' control of the National Party was not
so secure as he would have liked. A 'plot' involving Irvine and a
back-bencher, Chapman, did emerge a few days later. But by then Munro
Ferguson had re-commissioned Hughes. See S.M.H., 19 January 1918.

3. Hughes to Munro Ferguson, 9 January 1918. Novar papers, MS 696/2693.
A.N.L. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 15 January 1918. C.O.
418/169/12351, folios 47-62. For Steward's part in the affair see his
memorandum, dated 25 January 1918, in Novar papers, MS 696/2363. A.N.L.
Though he urged Hughes to make known the situation in the House, the Prime Minister was insistent that he be allowed to decide himself when and where he did so. The Governor-General was forced to give way. Hughes did not announce that he had been recommissioned by the King's Representative until after Parliament had adjourned for the day, and he did so in the Party caucus room.¹

At his interview with Munro Ferguson on 8 January the Prime Minister had pleaded that he had 'a very difficult row to hoe' and asked if the Governor-General would provide an explanatory memorandum for presentation to Parliament. Munro Ferguson agreed and after unofficially consulting Professor Harrison Moore² a memorandum was prepared which was tabled in both Houses on 10 January.³ In this document Munro Ferguson stressed that he had been guided by a determination not to put the country to the expense of an election so soon after the previous one, nor to risk reviving controversy after two bitter plebiscites. His decision had been limited, therefore, by the parliamentary situation as it then existed and he had found that Hughes was the only man who could command a majority. His public emphasis upon the supremacy of Parliament hinted at his private distrust of non-parliamentary organizations such as party caucuses.

On the other hand, Munro Ferguson's actions during 1917 and early 1918 had led to some hostility towards him in Labor circles. In September 1917 the Toorak Branch of the Party wrote to the 'Secretary, Labor Party, House of Commons, London' urging the recall of the Governor-

¹ For announcement to Party meeting see S.M.H., 10 January 1918. Scott, Official History, XI, p. 182, wrongly states that Munro Ferguson persuaded Hughes to adopt his recommendation.
² For a draft form of a suggested memo in Professor Moore's handwriting dated 9 January 1918, see Novar papers, MS 696/2373-77. A.N.L. Moore had lunched with Munro Ferguson on 9 January. Age, 10 January 1918.
General 'on the grounds of his partiality and interference in party politics to the prejudice of the Labour Party'. The writer gave as an instance of this His Excellency's part in the Senator Ready affair, and asked if the British Labour Party could 'endeavour to get an impartial Governor-General appointed'. Predictably, this somewhat naive representation was completely ineffective. But it did indicate a growing opinion among Labor Party members that they could no longer rely upon the impartiality of the Head of State. In January 1918, the recommissioning of Hughes led to criticism in Parliament of the King's Representative. During a debate on Supply muted dissatisfaction was expressed in the lower House while, in the Senate, one Labor Party member protested vigorously against the partisanship which he alleged the Governor-General had shown in the domestic affairs of the Federal Parliament. The Victorian weekly, Labor Call, labelled the affair 'a farce' and 'a bit of comic opera', exclaiming, 'How these imported titled gentry do hate Labor'. The recommissioning of Hughes strengthened the already distinguishable demand in Labor circles for a change in the system of appointing Governors-General. On 23 January Frank Anstey addressed a mass meeting which demanded a

1. The letter reached W. Adamson, a British M.P., who forwarded it to the Secretary of State. Long replied by denying the allegations and asserting that Munro Ferguson had the entire confidence of His Majesty's Government. See C.O. 418/168/57188, folios 18-23. For disallowed question by Mr Snowden in the Commons see C.O. 418/165/58156, folio 89.

2. On 15 January 1918 the member for Brisbane, Finlayson, was warned by the Speaker not to criticise the action of the Governor-General. C.P.D., 1917-19, LXXXIII, p. 2992. The next day another Opposition speaker, M. Charlton, described the Government's resignation as 'the greatest farce ever perpetrated in a deliberative assembly'. Asked if that was a reflection on the Governor-General he replied: 'I do not know on whom else it is a reflection'. Ibid., p. 3031.


4. Labor Call, 17 and 24 January 1918.

5. Labor M.P. for Bourke, Victoria.
dissolution and the recall of the Governor-General. A few months later Dr W. Maloney put on record in the Commonwealth Parliament, resolutions of various meetings he had attended urging that Munro Ferguson be recalled. At a Labor Party Conference in Sydney during 1919, a motion calling for the selection of an Australian citizen to represent the Crown in the Commonwealth pointed to future developments.

Maloney's comment, that the Prime Minister could do with the Governor-General whatever he wished, was not entirely accurate. It can now be seen that Munro Ferguson had favoured the more honest course of a genuine resignation by Hughes' Ministry followed by a reconstructed, though still Nationalist, Government. This solution proved impossible because of the Prime Minister's tenacity and his virtual indispensability to the coalition. Had Hughes tendered his resignation on 29 December the Governor-General might have had real freedom of action. But by not resigning until 8 January, after he had demonstrated his strength as leader of the Party, he rendered useless the apparent discretion of the Governor-General, despite his ostentatious refusal to offer the King's Representative any advice.

In the passion of their opposition to the renegade Hughes, Labor Party members exaggerated the partisanship of the Governor-General; but their point was nonetheless worth making. It can certainly be argued that over an extended period the Governor-General had been a useful bolster for the Nationalist coalition. Hughes acknowledged his debt in a letter written shortly before he departed again for England. He wrote:

1. See poster in Hughes papers, MS 1538, box 118, folder 2. A.N.L.
You have been in many a serious & trying crisis a great help to me. Many times I should have thrown up the sponge but for your advice, your sympathy & the feeling that you believed in me.

The Governor-General replied that it had occasionally been a solace, when so far removed from the scene of the war, 'to find it possible to help make smooth the path of the Government Car'.

The support which Munro Ferguson invariably gave non-Labor Governments should be seen in the wider light of the Governor-General's concept of his duty to the Empire. There is no doubt that he regarded it as part of his contribution to the war effort to encourage the despatch of as many Australian soldiers to the European war as could be spared. Moreover, from at least the formation of Hughes' coalition government in November 1916, - an event which the Colonial Office recognized as being 'of great advantage of the Empire' - he had been sympathetic to the Party which was committed to whole-hearted support for Britain in the war. It is significant that the characteristic which Munro Ferguson most frequently praised in Hughes was his Imperial patriotism.

1. Hughes to Munro Ferguson, 25 April 1918. Novar papers, MS 696/2718. A.N.L.
2. Munro Ferguson to Hughes, 9 May 1918. Hughes papers, MS 1538, box 118, folder 5. A.N.L.
4. See Onlooker [n.d. probably October-December 1918] for a long commendatory poem about Sir Ronald and Lady Helen. Two verses are particularly interesting:

True to trust that you held sacred,
"We must win the war", you said,
And when party leaders failed you,
You discarded them, and led!

Mouthing Billie served your purpose,
And wisely you commissioned him
To select, by your direction,
A Government the war to win.

Mr Humphrey McQueen has supplied this reference which he found in the Mitchell Library.
A letter written to Long after the second Conscription plebiscite reveals Munro Ferguson's overriding allegiance to Britain. He observed that:

The better kind of people are very disappointed at the result of the Poll and suffer from a sense of humiliation and a feeling of hopelessness with regard to the future of Australia. It is difficult not to share these feelings and at such moments the desire to be at Home and share in the great war effort of Britain is strong. However there may be something done in spurring them on to build ships and to increase production.¹

The implication from this letter, that he had regarded it as his share in the great war effort of Britain to spur on Australia to provide men and material for the European war, hardly needs emphasis.

Munro Ferguson's last effort to stimulate enlistment was his summoning of the Governor-General's Recruiting Conference of 1918. Suggested to him by Captain A.G. Carmichael, and supported by Hughes, this was a gathering together of representatives of Australian employers and employees with parliamentary representatives from all States to discuss ways of resolving, by voluntary means, the still difficult recruiting problem. Not only was the initiative for the meeting taken by His Excellency but it was held at Government House in Melbourne and the Governor-General's Official Secretary, Steward, acted as Secretary for the occasion. Talks lasted for seven days, from 12 to 19 April 1918, but the results were disappointing. Recruiting figures for the month of May did show an increase but thereafter they continued low.² Though internal dissension prevented the Conference from any substantial achievement, the fact that it was called and that bitter opponents were prepared to meet and discuss the problem of recruiting signified a much needed relaxation.

¹ Munro Ferguson to Long, 27 December 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/985-8. A.N.L. The last two sentences in this copy of the original have been censored, probably by Munro Ferguson himself, but the original comments are decipherable.

in tension and suspicion.  

The Official Secretary's prominence behind the scenes during the Government crisis following Hughes resignation and his usefulness for such functions as the Recruiting Conference indicated how indispensable Steward had become to Munro Ferguson. It has been seen that during Dudley's and Denman's terms of office there had been uneasiness in London about the position and influence of the Official Secretary.  

Munro Ferguson was apprised of these fears prior to his departure from Britain, and he arrived in Australia determined to reduce Steward's authority. Though the outbreak of war revealed to His Excellency how useful his assistant was, in August 1914 he was still of the opinion that under normal conditions it would be best to hand over to the Governor-General 'the sums paid for maintenance of an Official Sec & his staff & of the official part of Gov' Ho.'  

Such an attitude reflected the Governor-General's ignorance of the Australian Parliament's determination that the official business involved in the representation of the Crown in Australia should be transacted by an officer responsible to the Commonwealth Parliament. Twelve months later he admitted that his earlier proposal had been impracticable. Steward continued to exercise the functions he had inherited from Wallington in 1902.

Far from being a hindrance to the Governor-General, the able and

1. The Conference was not merely called in the name of the Governor-General but actively organized by him. Ibid. p. 448. For Munro Ferguson's telegram to Hughes, 3 April 1918, urging that the meeting be convened see Hughes papers, MS 1538, box 118, folder 4. A.N.L.
2. See above, chapter VII, pp. 334-335.
3. Memo for Secretary of State, 5 August 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1633. A.N.L.
4. See above, chapter IV, pp. 198-199.
5. Note dated 6 August 1915, on Memorandum in Novar papers, MS 696/1633. A.N.L.
experienced Official Secretary was a positive assistance. His zealous control of the expenditure of the Governor-General's establishment had helped to lessen criticism of extravagance. He had also been a consistent defender of the Governor-General's role as sole channel of communication with the British Government. His official duties included the encoding and decoding of confidential correspondence between Great Britain and Australia on both routine and secret subjects. When, in August 1915, the Secretary of State despatched a Secret Memorandum concerning counter-espionage to the Commonwealth Government with the request that its proposals be implemented in Australia Steward's prior experience in the Australian Intelligence Corps and his access to classified correspondence between Britain and Australia made him the obvious choice to head the local Branch. In early 1916 the 'Commonwealth Counter Espionage Bureau' was set up with the Governor-General's Official Secretary as Officer-in-Charge. Its function was 'to undertake the widest possible interchange with the British Government of confidential intelligence bearing especially upon the

1. For an example of Steward's zeal in supervising vice-regal expenditure see CRS A571, file 08/6223. C.A.O. Munro Ferguson never provoked significant criticism of his expenditure, but, towards the end of his term of office the Commonwealth Government showed some signs of an attempt to curb extravagance in that quarter. See Acting Prime Minister to Secretary of State, 24 December 1918. Copy in CRS A1606, item SC A21/1. C.A.O.
2. For example see his memorandum, 9 July 1912, quoted above, chapter VII, pp. 317-318.
3. Bonar Law to Munro Ferguson, 5 August 1915. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1337. A.N.L. It was characteristic of Australian security arrangements at that time that this circular was lost. See Munro Ferguson to Bonar Law, 20 January 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/797. A.N.L.
4. See correspondence, 28 July 1908, in MP 84/1, item 1849/2/79. C.A.O. Melbourne. Steward, a militia officer, reached the rank of Lt. Colonel during the war.
5. See letter Hughes to Minister for the Navy, 14 January 1916, Department of the Navy Correspondence, MP 1049/1, file 16/014. C.A.O. Melbourne.
activities of hostile secret service agents throughout the Empire, both 
in time of peace and in war'.¹ Munro Ferguson reported in April 1917 
that Steward had been 'specially engaged in unravelling the schemes of 
the I.W.W. and following the doings of various malefactors of this type 
& of aliens' in which operations he appeared to have remarkable gifts.² 

Though pleased at the access to the 'subsoil activities' of the 
country which this arrangement afforded him,³ His Excellency was also a 
little anxious about it. Quite apart from his pardonable concern at the 
occasional unsavoury character who called at the back door of Government 
House, there was the problem that the duties of Official Secretary suffered 
while Steward busied himself with his duties as chief spy. As early as 
March 1916 Munro Ferguson protested that 'the duties of my Official 
Secretary in connection with the Counter Espionage Bureau are prejudicial 
to the work of his very important office'.⁴ But the situation was never 
resolved to the Governor-General's satisfaction. Indeed it worsened, 
for in June 1917 Munro Ferguson complained to the Prime Minister about 
other 'usages to which his Official Secretary had been put'. He informed 
Long that Hughes did not trust the Secretary at the head of the Prime 
Minister's Department and used his Official Secretary for confidential 
business of his own.⁵ Steward's usefulness both to the Governor-General 
and to the Prime Minister was evidenced in the subterranean moves

¹. 'Most Secret Circular No. 1 - 1916' in Ibid.  
². Munro Ferguson to Long, 20 April 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/ 
901-2. A.N.L.  
³. Munro Ferguson to Milner, 16 June 1919. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/ 
1126-7. A.N.L.  
⁴. Munro Ferguson to Pearce, 7 March 1916. Pearce papers, bundle 1, item 
173. Australian War Memorial.  
⁵. Munro Ferguson to Long, 25 June 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/ 
931-2. A.N.L.
connected with the Government crisis of late 1917 and early 1918. Twelve months later in March 1919 he resigned from the position he had occupied for seventeen years, to take up the post of Commissioner of Police for Victoria, in which capacity he was acting when he died in a road accident.¹

Steward's long career as Official Secretary to five Governors-General and one Acting Governor-General had been beneficial both to the occupants of the office and to the Commonwealth. Though he was sometimes difficult and pompous he established amicable working arrangements with most of his superiors.² The only dissatisfaction expressed about him came from Tennyson in 1903 and later from the Colonial Office, which suspected him of exercising too much influence in matters relating to its private correspondence with the Governor-General. In fact his efficient exercise of the dual roles of Secretary to both the Governor-General and the Executive Council had assisted the Representative of the Crown to retain access to Commonwealth affairs. As Munro Ferguson recognized, 'liaison officer between the Governor-General and his Advisers ... was a delicate position demanding the exercise of considerable tact and judgment'.³ The Official Secretary's familiarity with the workings of Australia's governmental machinery was unexcelled and his advice was therefore invaluable to successive Representatives of the Crown while his intimate knowledge of technical administration allowed the latter to concentrate on other aspects of his role. At the same time, as a Commonwealth civil


2. Shortly after arriving in Australia, Munro Ferguson commented that Steward was 'a strange mortal ... He says "No" to everything ... I am sure he means well and does his best. He amuses me and I get along quite well with him'. Munro Ferguson to Harcourt, 28 May 1914. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/538. A.N.L.

servant, his association with important executive functions deflected the sort of criticism which Wellington's position had aroused. Steward was rewarded for his services in 1918 by the conferral of a K.B.E.¹

Though less gifted than his contemporaries, Atlee Hunt and R.R. Garran, his name should be included among those permanent officials whose industry and zeal breathed life into the Commonwealth civil service in its early years.

Steward's activities in the Counter Espionage field had led him to believe, by January 1917, that a 'small Federal Police Force' was urgently required in Australia.² Munro Ferguson supported his Official Secretary in these views³ but without success. It was not until the closing stages of the second conscription plebiscite that, as a result of an incident at Warwick,⁴ Hughes resolved to create such a force. As his chief purpose was to deal with the difficulties into which he had got in Queensland, he proposed to establish the Commonwealth police in that State, with head-quarters at Brisbane. The Governor-General immediately wrote to Hughes urging that the sphere of the Federal Police should not be entirely confined to one State since such a force was needed in other States to protect ships, to guard Commonwealth property and to 'support the Secret Service'.⁵ It was a sensible suggestion and the Prime Minister agreed to widen the scope of the proposal as His Excellency had suggested.

While such private, unofficial advice was a proper and useful

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1. He, like Melba, was in the first list of British Empire Orders. Argus, 16 March 1918.
2. Steward to Pearce, secret, 23 January 1917. Hughes papers, MS 1538, box 117, folder 1. A.N.L.
3. Munro Ferguson to Long, 30 November 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/976-82. A.N.L.
5. Munro Ferguson to Hughes, 8 December 1917. Hughes papers, MS 1538, box 117, folder 1. A.N.L.
activity on the part of the Representative of the Crown, an attempt by Munro Ferguson, shortly afterwards, to exercise a more than nominal role in Executive Council meetings was less defensible. Since 1903, the practice had grown of delegating to the Vice-President authority to deal with business of a routine character during His Excellency's absence from Melbourne.  

But, from the beginning of Munro Ferguson's term of office, he exhibited a determination to exercise his functions as chairman of the Executive Council actively. In November 1916 he informed the Prime Minister that he proposed to revert to the practice of holding Executive Council meetings in the Federal Government House, instead of in the Cabinet Room of the Commonwealth Offices. Hughes admitted that 'a certain looseness had crept in' and agreed to make whatever arrangements the Governor-General thought proper. But His Excellency continued to express dissatisfaction at irregularities, and objected to the Prime Minister's tendency to rush the formalities through without respect for the Governor-General's right to consider policy matters before affixing his signature. He particularly deprecated the practice of dealing with important matters in his absence at Councils chaired by the Vice-President.

The culmination of these representations was a memorandum dated 22 January 1918 in which the Governor-General attempted to utilise the

1. For delegations signed by successive Governors-General after Tennyson see CP 78, series 19A. C.A.O. Also see above, chapter IV, pp. 211-212.
2. E.g. his conversation with Fisher in December 1915, quoted above, chapter VIII, pp. 385-386.
3. Munro Ferguson to Prime Minister, 20 November 1916. Copy in CP 290, series 12, bundle 1. C.A.O.
5. Munro Ferguson to Hughes, 3 March 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/2619.
6. See memorandum of informal meeting before Executive dated 3 November 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/4751-2. A.N.L.
temporary strength with which the recent political crisis had endowed
him, to enforce his ideas for reform of the procedure at Executive Council
meetings. In this document he recited past irregularities and suggested
that no Executive Council should be held elsewhere than in the Council
Chamber of Government House save with the express consent of the Governor-
General and that all Minutes be delivered to the Secretary to the Council
twenty-four hours before the meeting was due to take place. In addition
he suggested that the delegation of powers to the Vice-President in the
absence of the Governor-General should be amended to preclude the discussion
of anything other than business of a routine or formal character unless
the Governor-General had 'adequate time either to attend the meeting,
should he consider it advisable to be present, or to give a considered
opinion by telegraph or otherwise'.

Munro Ferguson was a vigorous, intelligent man who chafed at
the enforced inactivity of his position. In particular he resented the
continued tendency of Australian Cabinets to ignore the Governor-General.
His earlier remonstrances with Fisher and Pearce about such discourtesy
were echoed in frequent sometimes strongly worded complaints to Hughes.
Eventually, after Hughes had received what he described as 'a hell of a
talking to from the G.G.' he had agreed to see the Governor-General once
a week to discuss Government business. While willing to talk privately
over Government policy with the King's Representative and grateful for

1. Munro Ferguson to Hughes, 22 January 1918. Hughes papers, MS 1538, box
118, folder 5. Copies are in Novar papers, MS 696/1896-1900, A.N.L.
and C.O. 418/169/12305, folios 69-77.
2. See undated note in Novar papers signed 'B.E.H.C.' (probably the
Governor-General's Private Secretary, Captain B.E. Clifford). MS 696/
4765. A.N.L.
3. Memo of conversation with Prime Minister, 29 August 1917. Novar papers,
MS 696/4761-3. See, too, Munro Ferguson to Long, 29 August 1917. Copy
in Novar papers, MS 696/957. A.N.L.
useful suggestions, Hughes was opposed to the Governor-General's inclination to assert a supervisory role in any formal way through the Executive Council. He replied politely but firmly to the Governor-General's memorandum of 22 January, reminding His Excellency, as Barton had reminded Tennyson, of the supremacy of the elected representatives of the people over the nominated Representative of the Crown. Admitting that it was desirable for proper procedures to be observed, Hughes was adamant, nevertheless, that the Government had the right to submit matters to the Executive Council whenever it saw fit. He considered that,

to admit the right of the Governor-General to delay assenting to matters submitted to him personally at Executive would be to admit his right of review or even rejection of such matters: - but this would make the Gov-General the de facto Government of the Commonwealth which under our Constitution & that of Britain he is not. 2

Despite this timely reminder that His Excellency must not push his role as constitutional watch-dog too far, Munro Ferguson was reluctant to concede defeat. Subsequent delegations of authority to the Vice-President of the Executive Council were accompanied by a memorandum embodying his recommendations concerning procedure. 3 Moreover, he continued to assert his executive independence. In May 1919, when presented with a form of credentials establishing Australian representation in the United States of America, he 'altered its terms so as to restrict his sphere to that of trade commissioner'. 4 Six months later he declined to sign a

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1. Munro Ferguson informed Long, 24 August 1917, that Hughes had adopted many of his written suggestions. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/953. A.N.L.
2. Hughes to Munro Ferguson, 8 February 1918 (wrongly dated 1917). Novar papers, MS 696/2604. A.N.L.
3. CP 78, series 19a. C.A.O.
Proclamation submitted to him by the Minister for Customs until Hughes pressed him to do so.\(^1\)

These interventions were evidence of Munro Ferguson's concept of the monarch's active supervisory role in Australian affairs. Though his assessment of the responsibilities of the King's Representative in such matters might be open to the kind of criticism raised by Hughes, His Excellency did unquestionably retain an active influence over one sphere of policy, namely the conferral of honours. In January 1916 he had reported to the Secretary of State that Hughes, unlike Fisher, had an open mind on this subject.\(^2\) But, the Labor Cabinet continued to oppose such recommendations\(^3\) and it was not until Hughes had formed his Nationalist Ministry that the Governor-General found a Government which was prepared to sanction the awarding of titles and other distinctions.

Almost immediately there arose problems involving the channel of communication. In February 1917 two State Governors protested against the Governor-General's action in announcing honours recommended by State Governments.\(^4\) In this instance the Secretary of State supported the objections and instructed Munro Ferguson that in future he should 'enable State Governors to publish their own honours'.\(^5\) An exception to this general rule was the newly instituted British Empire Order. Both the Governor-General and the Australian Prime Minister insisted that these

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1. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 27 November 1919. C.O. 418/178/955, folios 432-451.
3. See Pearce, Acting Prime Minister, to Munro Ferguson, 15 March 1916. Copy in Pearce papers, bundle 1, item 103. Australian War Memorial.
4. Munro Ferguson reported this to the Secretary of State, 1 March 1917. See copy of correspondence in C.O. Confidential Print, Australian No. 231, p. 119.
5. Long to Munro Ferguson, 30 May 1917. Copy in Ibid., p. 122.
distinctions, since awarded for war services, should be a Commonwealth responsibility. ¹ Despite pressure from State Governments,² the Colonial Office supported the proposition that the Governor-General, advised by the Commonwealth Government, should act as co-ordinating authority in respect of recommendations for the British Empire Order.³

While Hughes' favourable attitude towards titles meant that the Governor-General regained his close connection with the awarding of honours, the Prime Minister soon indicated dissatisfaction with the existing system. Apart from discontent at the continued connection with Britain which it afforded State Governments, he disliked the subjugation of the Commonwealth to the Imperial authorities which the procedure involved. In May 1917 he protested against the conferral of titles on Australian citizens unless the Commonwealth Government had been consulted. He saw such a practice as an intervention by the British Government in Commonwealth affairs which was 'calculated to subvert the principles of self-government which the Dominions enjoy'.⁴ Later, in 1919, he objected to further Colonial Office interference with his recommendations.⁵ These incidents were an indication of Hughes' increasing inclination to assert the independent status of the Dominion Governments in relation to the central authority of the Empire. The latter years of the Great War were to see a growing tendency in this direction, a tendency which was to have significant effects upon the role

1. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, telegram, 17 April 1918. Copy in Ibid., p. 131.
3. Long to Governor of Western Australia, 4 June 1918. Copy in C.O. Confidential Print, Australian No. 231, p. 145.
4. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, telegram, 7 May 1917. Copy in Ibid.
of the Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth.

Munro Ferguson's exercise of office illustrated the opportunities available to a strong-minded Governor-General to exercise an active rather than a passive role in the inner machinery of the Commonwealth Government. But such opportunities were to be seriously undermined in 1918 when Hughes instituted a serious attack upon the ambassadorial role of the Representative of the Crown. It has been seen that since 1910 the latter's role as sole channel of communication between the Commonwealth Government and Britain had been threatened by the establishment of the office of High Commissioner and the commissioning of Australia's local fleet unit.1 Though Munro Ferguson was as quick as his predecessors to protest at any tendency to by-pass his office, the occasions on which he was overlooked increased. These reached a peak in mid 1917 particularly in the case of correspondence between the Australian Naval Board and the Admiralty. Strongly worded complaints were sent to Hughes, Pearce and Cook2 but the problem remained unsolved.

It was not only in this sphere that the Governor-General's role as channel of communication was being disregarded. Early in 1917 both Long and Munro Ferguson objected to a new tendency for Hughes to cable direct to the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George.3 During the Australian

1. See above, chapter VII, pp. 315-319.


3. See Long to Munro Ferguson, 15 February and 7 March 1917. Copies in Novar papers, MS 696/1397-1407 and 1408-1415. A.N.L. Hughes had borrowed the Governor-General's cypher and Long's was lent to Lloyd George's private secretary by mistake. The occasion was a cable from Hughes in December 1916, reporting on the Australian political situation and asking the British Government to solve the Irish problem. A copy of this telegram is in Novar papers, MS 696/1389-1392. A.N.L.
leader's visit to London he had enjoyed unique access to British policy making and to war reports. Upon his return to Australia he chafed at the lack of detailed information available to him and at the delay which occurred when he was forced to communicate via the Governor-General and the Colonial Office. On occasion he by-passed the official channel to correspond directly with the British Prime Minister, often using Keith Murdoch as intermediary. The Governor-General was distressed at the irregularity of such correspondence and hoped that it would not recur. But the situation soon worsened.

In early 1918 the British Government had invited Dominion Ministers to London for an Imperial War Conference. Hughes had been unable to attend the Imperial War Conference of 1917 which had been an important turning point in the evolution of the Dominions as sovereign states. A resolution of this 1917 Conference had recommended that a special conference be called after the war to consider the readjustment of constitutional relations and it was resolved that:

any such readjustment, while thoroughly preserving all existing powers of self-government and complete control of domestic affairs, should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, ... [with] an adequate voice in foreign policy ... and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern...

Twelve months later Hughes' local political position was secure enough for him to attend the next Conference. En route to London he

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1. E.g. cable, Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 14 August 1917, conveying a message from Hughes complaining that the fortnightly cable letter on the progress of the war was interesting but too general. C.O. 418/158/40485, folios 519-520.
2. Munro Ferguson to Long, 2 March 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/886. A.N.L.
cabled through the Governor of Fiji a desire to add to the agenda for the approaching conference an additional subject, namely: 'channels of communication between Britain and the self governing Dominions'.

The Secretary of State was puzzled at this message and asked for further details. But the Governor-General was no better informed. Hughes had not mentioned any such desire before his departure. Nor did he subsequently explain what he proposed to include under the general heading, despite two cables from Munro Ferguson to Honolulu and Vancouver. Not until the Commonwealth leader had put his proposal before the Imperial Conference did the Governor-General discover Hughes' intention to press strongly that Dominion Prime Ministers should be able to communicate directly with the Prime Minister of Great Britain.

The Governor-General was dismayed at the prospect of losing access to important correspondence, recognizing this proposal as a serious attack on the position of the King's Representative as quasi-diplomatic agent of the British Government. Without knowledge of such communications he would be unable to pass on his own comments and recommendations to the Secretary of State. Nor would his influence on Australian politicians be as significant as had previously been possible. He conveyed these fears

1. Cable, 6 May 1918. CP 78, series 23, file 1918/1004. C.A.O.
2. Ibid.
3. Great Britain Parliamentary Papers, 1918, 16, 'Imperial War Conference, 1918. Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid Before the Conference', [Cd. 9177]. The Conference met from 17 June to 26 July 1918 on alternate days to the Imperial War Cabinet. Long wrote on 3 July, warning the Governor-General of a mood for change, but before Munro Ferguson received the letter a cable of 23 July reported that the matter had been raised in the Conference. See Novar papers, MS 696/1490 and 5291-5. Hughes was encouraged in his attitude, perhaps prompted, by L.S. Amery, then attached to Lloyd George's staff, later Secretary of State for Colonies. See Amery to Hughes, 12 June 1918. Copy in CP 447/2, SC 18. C.A.O.
to the equally apprehensive Secretary of State and at the same time lobbied Governors-General in all the other Dominions in an effort to defeat or modify Hughes' proposals.

But though his fears were to prove justified both his and Long's efforts were without effect. Faced with Hughes' conviction that Australia and the other Dominions had passed the stage when the Colonial Office and the Governor-General should act as delaying buffers between them and the British Government, the Secretary of State had to give way. Hughes' tactics in securing the concurrence of Canada's R.L. Borden in advance and in not giving the Colonial Office time to organize opposition to his proposal was successful. The Imperial Conference resolved that:

the development which has taken place in the relations between the United Kingdom and the Dominions necessitates such a change in administrative arrangements and in the Channels of Communication between their Governments as will bring them more directly in touch with each other.

It was a mildly worded resolution, but it heralded a new period in the relationship between Australia and Great Britain, a period in which the Commonwealth and the other Dominions sought to exercise an influence upon British policy through consultation; a period in which the term 'British Commonwealth' gradually replaced 'Empire'. In the new organization the Governor-General's role as intermediary was no longer relevant. The

1. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, cable, 21 July 1918. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/4971. A.N.L. A full despatch on the question was sent on 25 July 1918. See copy in Novar papers, MS 696/5197-5201. A.N.L. As this despatch, together with another dated 28 October 1918, is not filed in C.O. 418 (Australia - General Correspondence) a reference to the original cannot be given. However, an edited copy of each appears in C.O. Confidential Print, Dominions No. 61, C.O. 886/7/61, pp. 229-234.

2. For copies of these letters see Novar papers, MS 696/5160-70, 5186-94 and 5197-5215. A.N.L.

3. Prime Minister of Canada, 1911 to 1920.

4. [Cd. 9177], pp. 155-65.

Conference resolution was quickly given teeth by the Imperial War Cabinet. Lloyd George proposed, at a meeting of the latter body, that Prime Ministers of the Dominions should communicate directly on Cabinet business with the United Kingdom Prime Minister and vice versa, each being the judge of what was of sufficient importance to warrant such action. He also suggested that during the war each Dominion should keep a resident Minister in Britain to attend meetings of the War Cabinet as required.¹

Though the Colonial Office formally disclaimed the imputation that the new arrangements reflected any dissatisfaction with its function² Hughes was voicing a consistent Australian point of view.³ In the Melbourne Herald Keith Murdoch asserted that the motive behind the changes was discontent with the 'crusted, procrastinating, bureaucratic inefficiency and ineptitude of the Colonial Office'.⁴ Munro Ferguson observed that 'the opinion that the Colonial Office had entirely ceased to be connected with Australian affairs' was rapidly gaining ground.⁵ There was a widespread feeling that the Dominions were being 'swept into the circle of world politics'; that they had 'arrived at a stage at which they can no longer be considered merely as colonies'.⁶

¹ Quoted in Long to Munro Ferguson, cable, 25 July 1918. Novar papers, MS 696/5294. A.N.L.
² A public statement was issued refuting this claim. See The Times, 14 September 1918.
³ See his speech, 18 July 1918, to the Conference: 'The present method of administration through the Colonial Office ... has ... become an anachronism'. He later referred to it as a 'tortuous channel'. [Cd. 9177], p. 156.
⁴ Herald (Melbourne), 7 September 1918.
⁵ Personal and secret memorandum enclosed in Munro Ferguson to Long, 13 September 1918. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1080-2. A.N.L. A similar reaction was evident in Canada. See article in Montreal Gazette, 30 September 1918, enclosure in Governor-General of Canada to Secretary of State, 3 October 1918. C.O. Confidential Print, Dominions No. 61, C.O. 886/7/61, p. 230.
⁶ Munro Ferguson to Long, 13 September 1918. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1080-2. A.N.L.
The Governor-General was naturally disillusioned at the considerable lessening in his prestige which the change had effected. Earlier in the war he had hoped that Australia's growing maturity would mean that his functions would become increasingly more important. In particular he had hoped and constantly urged that the additional role of High Commissioner for the Pacific would be added to his duties. He was, therefore, disappointed at the effects of a change which he correctly interpreted as 'lowering his status and restricting his sphere'.

In addition to personal chagrin at his diminished standing he was concerned at the repercussions of the change on the relationship between Australia and Britain. In a despatch of October 1918 Munro Ferguson outlined his concept of the office and discussed the effect of the new developments upon the role of the King's Representative in the Commonwealth. He summarized his responsibilities under three headings, Imperial affairs, Federal affairs and Commonwealth Government administration.

There was some truth in the assertion that the Governor-General had a federal role to perform in the Commonwealth. His office was a reminder to the public of the essential unity of Australia, encouraging a wider patriotism than purely State loyalty. At first sight his claim that it was 'important to strengthen the position of the one factor, viz.,

1. Munro Ferguson to Bonar Law, 3 October 1916. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/829. A.N.L.
2. Munro Ferguson to Long, 16 November 1918. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1095. A.N.L. This letter lists the despatches in which he had urged his suggestion upon the British Government, beginning on 23 June 1916. It had never been enthusiastically regarded at the Colonial Office. See C.O. 418/145/49683, folios 369-405.
4. Ibid., pp. 232-234.
the Crown, which can enforce to a certain extent the observance of constitutional forms and provide a check on irregular or hasty action, was less persuasive. But the action of Governor Sir Phillip Game of New South Wales thirteen years later was to reveal that this view of the role of a monarch in a democratic system of government was not as anachronistic as might appear on the surface. Nevertheless the tendency was to lessen rather than strengthen this emergency power of the Crown.

Concerning the Governor-General's role as guardian of British interests, His Excellency stressed that he was the only independent source from which the British Government received unbiased reports of Commonwealth policies and attitudes. The suggestion that his role ought to be limited to representing the King and not the British Government he countered by pointing out that the latter would then be 'totally unrepresented in Australia' while a Commonwealth Minister and High Commissioner would resemble 'representatives accredited to Downing Street'. He was convinced of the need for Britain to watch closely Commonwealth affairs. In support of this need he listed five occasions when he had intervened on behalf of the United Kingdom Government 'to secure the observance of regular procedure in the conduct of international and inter-Imperial affairs'.

Munro Ferguson's assessment of the Governor-General's Imperial

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1. Ibid., pp. 234.
3. The first was the intervention in connection with the Commission to the New Hebrides. See above, chapter VIII, pp. 383-385. The other four occasions were: channel of communications between the Commonwealth and the Commissioner for the Solomon Islands; the exclusion of Maltese immigrants; enforcement of finger-print process on Japanese entering Australia; and the channel of communications between the Minister of External Affairs and the Governor of Ceylon. He did not mention the important conversations he had with Australian leaders concerning Japanese occupation of Pacific islands North of the Equator. See above, chapter VIII, pp. 386-389.
role, though slightly exaggerated, was a reasonable summary of the situation as it had existed since federation. It was natural that he should deprecate a change which threatened that role. He failed to recognize that the diminished importance of the Governor-General was a reflection of the significant alterations of Imperial structure effected during the war. But he was correct in concluding that:

a change which transforms the Representative of the Crown into a social figurehead, having less than ambassadorial responsibility, is one which must necessarily diminish his power of usefulness, both as the official head of the Government in Australia and as a factor in maintaining the unity of the Empire.

His successors were to find their ambassadorial responsibility reduced and then eliminated while the Empire lost the unity which had been maintained prior to the Great War.

For some time Munro Ferguson had shown anxiety at the Commonwealth's increasing drift away from the formerly intimate Imperial ties. This was especially true in the sphere of commerce. He viewed with distrust the Commonwealth's developing trade with Japan. But what caused him most alarm was Australia's relationship with the United States. As early as June 1916 His Excellency expressed concern that zeal for Australia's safety might induce Hughes to turn towards America. Indeed, the Governor-General anticipated a 'growing orientation of this country towards the U.S. which may in time have a determining effect on Australia's future'. He had no doubt that this would be a retrograde step 'involving weakening of the sense of dependence on the Mother Country and a fostering of Republican sentiment'. This fear increased as the years 1917 and 1918

1. C.O. Confidential Print, Dominions No. 61, C.O. 886/7/61, p. 234.
4. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 17 January 1917. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1774-6. A.N.L.
saw a steady growth of financial and commercial ties between the two Anglo Saxon countries flanking the Pacific.

By far the most important evidence of the Commonwealth's evolving international independence was, as Munro Ferguson recognized, her involvement in the aftermath of the war. In March 1920, writing to Lord Milner, who had replaced Long as Secretary of State, he commented: 'The formation of the League of Nations has put new aspirations into the heads of the Dominion Ministers, they see themselves transformed into world powers'.

Hughes was still in Europe when peace came, having remained after the 1918 Imperial War Conference had adjourned. At the Peace Conference in Paris he was vigorous in defence of what he conceived to be Australia's national interests. This performance, in retrospect, may be seen as uncouth and short-sighted, but it was an impressive debut for the Commonwealth in world affairs. Australia's international status was later confirmed by her membership of the League of Nations.

The further loosening of Imperial ties was inescapable. In this situation Munro Ferguson pressed for increased British representation in Australia. He pointed to the activity of commercial agents from America and suggested that Britain ought to follow suit. The retirement of Steward from the position of Official Secretary prompted the suggestion that the moment had come for 'the Home Gov't to have agents of the quasi Dip^c or Secret Service type' in Australia. He observed that since the


2. Australia was an independent signatory to the Treaty of Versailles and as such became an original member of the League.

Dominions had achieved a position of comparative independence it was desirable that the British Government should have as much information about their 'external condition and colonial activities as it possesses as to those of foreign countries'. These recommendations reflected a recognition of the narrowing role of Governor-General and an appreciation of the need for the structure of the Empire to be re-shaped to meet the changing situation. It was to be another six years before the changes in the status of the Governor-General were given formal recognition.

In the meantime the institution of the new channel of communication made it increasingly difficult for the Governor-General to keep in touch with important developments in foreign policy. As early as November 1919 Munro Ferguson had cause to complain that he had no knowledge of communications concerning Australia's claim to Mandates and her policy towards the League of Nations. The Secretary of State expressed regret and forwarded certain telegrams for inclusion in the Governor-General's files, but the likelihood was that the Representative of the Crown would be overlooked more frequently in the future.

It was natural, given Munro Ferguson's background of Imperial Federationism, that he viewed the drift of the Dominions away from the Mother Country with alarm. The announcement in July 1919 that an American fleet planned to visit Australia provoked him to protest against such a visit and suggest that a squadron of the British Navy would be preferable. While this specific suggestion was not followed, the post war years saw a significant revival in the propaganda of Empire. Munro Ferguson

1. Munro Ferguson to Milner, 16 June 1919. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1126-7. A.N.L.
2. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 27 November 1919. C.O. 418/178/955, folios 447-450.
commented approvingly upon the visits to Australia first of Admiral Jellicoe and later of General Birdwood. These flag-waving tours were far eclipsed in mid 1920 by the triumphal tour of Edward, Prince of Wales; a visit which the British Government was anxious to make 'an Imperial event of wide significance'.

Australia's reception of 'The Prince of all the Britains' was wildly enthusiastic. From May to August thousands massed to witness the royal progress, which provided an opportunity for the people to participate in a ceremonial re-dedication. Though mainly concentrated around various State Government Houses, the Prince's itinerary also provided for lengthy excursions into the back-blocks. At the end the unfortunate youth emerged battered and exhausted but with prestige enormously enhanced. His tour stimulated both loyalty to the Crown and pride in British citizenship.

In the 'twenties, no less than in earlier times, the Crown was to be a personification of the aspirations of the people.

There were, of course, protesting voices. The Trades Hall Labour Council in Sydney resolved to hold aloof from functions connected with the

1. Munro Ferguson to Milner, 29 May 1919. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1160. A.N.L. 'I have no doubt that the visit of distinguished men ... do an immense amount of good and lead the people of the outlying parts of the Empire to feel a joint proprietary pride in the heroes of the War'.

2. See S.M.H., 26 April 1920 for Birdwood's presence at Anzac ceremonies. The Australian Worker (Sydney), 15 April 1920, called the visitors 'shrewd emissaries of Imperial Federation'.

3. The Private Secretary to the Prince of Wales conveyed this to the Governor-General. Novar papers, MS 696/4891. A.N.L. The Advocate (Melbourne), 7 February 1920, saw the visit as 'part of the propaganda of Imperialism'.


5. Argus, 17 June 1920, estimated half a million on the streets.

6. 'The King is not so much a man as a vital national sentiment'. Ibid. But the S.M.H. deprecated the view that 'the sole tie which now binds the Empire together is that of personal allegiance to a common sovereign. If that be so we have unthinkingly set our feet upon a path which leads to a goal undesired by most of us'. See issue for 17 June 1921.
visit.¹ A few radical newspapers poured scorn on the 'nauseating drivel'² and 'sordid extravagance'.³ But these were isolated criticisms, only serving to illustrate the gulf between radical opinion and the great majority. Australians may have rejected conscription but the majority had retained their fervour for monarchy and their pride in the British Empire. The Prince of Wales personified both. In the following thirty years the Crown was raised to new heights; as the other traditional unifying agencies were replaced it became the mystical symbol of the union between Britain and her former colonies.

The Prince of Wales left Australia in August 1920. He was followed, in October, by the Governor-General. Two years earlier Munro Ferguson had been so depressed by his 'elimination as a constitutional factor' that he had been glad his five year term of office was nearly over.⁴ His expressed intention to return to England in May 1919 aroused some consternation in Britain.⁵ It was clear that he would be hard to replace. Hughes, too, was anxious that His Excellency should remain as long as possible.⁶ Eventually he was persuaded to withdraw his tentative resignation and remain for an additional year. Subsequently this was twice

1. S.M.H., 19 March 1920.
2. Australian Worker (Sydney), 3 June 1920. H.E. Boote, the editor, saw 'the sinister form of capitalism in the shadows'.
3. Ibid., 1 July 1920.
5. Long to Munro Ferguson, 26 August 1918. Novar papers, MS 696/1511-2. A.N.L.
6. Ibid. 'Hughes told me with evident emotion that you had "saved Australia for the war"; and he begged me to do all in my power to secure your continuance in office till the end'.
extended; first to enable him to plan and supervise the tour of the Prince of Wales; and later to avoid an interim period between the end of his tour of duty and the beginning of his successor's. Consequently it was not until 6 October 1920, nearly six and a half years after he had arrived in Australia, that he left.

Munro Ferguson returned to resume his interrupted political career, amid general acclamation. One contributor to the Argus lauded the Governor-General's achievements in verse:

You came among us for the years
When war hung heavy in our sky,
Our hopes together with our fears
You shared in ready sympathy.
No idle sham or vain display
Proclaimed a wish for fete or fuss -
You did your job. And so to-day
We're proud to think you One of Us.

Most newspapers in all States lavished fulsome praise on Sir Ronald's exercise of office. Typical of press comment was that of the Age:

The office of Governor-General is the expression of the relationship between Australia and the mother country: it is also the Constitutional channel through which official messages pass from the one nation to the other. It would be difficult to point to any direction in which the office has, during the term of Sir Ronald Ferguson, failed to meet every possible demand upon it.

In the radical press His Excellency received a less complimentary farewell. The most embittered outburst was in Labor Call which exclaimed 'Good riddance to bad rubbish ... Ferguson was never of the people, with

1. Munro Ferguson to Milner, 9 July 1920. Copy in Novar papers, MS 696/1289. A.N.L.
2. He was created Viscount Novar in 1920 and two years later became Secretary of State for Scotland in Bonar Law's Conservative Government, retaining that office in Baldwin's first administration. Novar died on 30 March 1934.
3. 'Ave Atque Vale' by Oriel, Argus, 14 August 1920. The poem was reproduced in the Presbyterian Messenger (Melbourne), 20 August 1920. I am grateful to Mrs Mary Mohan and Mr R. Lucy for directing my attention to this poem.
the people or for the people'. His popularity they credited to 'smug vulgar society cliques ... lickspittles ... profiteers [and] ... perjured politicians'. The harshness of such comments, reflecting attitudes to the part he had played in the political crisis over conscription, pointed to the future substitution of Australian citizens for British noblemen in the office of Governor-General when a Labor Government was next in power.

Munro Ferguson had presided at a time of hardship and sacrifice engendered by the war. The special opportunities which this provided for one of his energy and Imperial dedication, he had seized with enthusiasm. As a result the King's Representative had reached the apex of his influence as envisaged by Australia's founding fathers, exercising a central though subtle role in the machinery of government. In his close and cordial relationship with successive Prime Ministers, particularly Hughes, he provided a model of the way the personal influence of a vice-roy should operate. The Secretary of State was voicing more than an empty compliment when he expressed his confidence that the Empire had never been better served by a Governor than it had by the laird of Novar.

Nevertheless Munro Ferguson's term of office had witnessed a marked reduction in the role of King's Representative in the internal affairs of the Commonwealth. To some extent he had over-extended his influence upon the formal organ of the Executive Council. In his concern to retain the Governor-General's status he had unwittingly contributed to the loss of what had been the most important prerogative remaining to him prior to his appointment, namely the discretion to refuse his Minister's

1. Labor Call, 26 August 1920.
2. Long to Munro Ferguson, 14 January 1919. Novar papers, MS 696/1541. A.N.L.
advice to dissolve Parliament. He did refuse, more than once, to give a promise of a future dissolution but when his Ministers had presented him with advice to dissolve Parliament immediately, he had complied. Although he had insisted that in so doing he had been acting as an independent arbiter the practical effect of his actions was to give weight to the argument that in cases of dissolution as in the case of other prerogative powers of the Crown the Governor-General should act upon the advice of his Ministers. After his retirement, with Dominion leaders assuming a greater role in international and Imperial councils and Representatives of the Crown tending to be less distinguished, it was unlikely that the precedent which Munro Ferguson had set would be disregarded.

But developments in Australia's status had effected a more significant change in the function of the Governor-General. Hughes' successful efforts to obtain the right of direct communication with the British Prime Minister had begun a process which, within a decade, was to see the elimination of the Governor-General as representative of the British Government. Although he still retained the function of constitutional monarch, the quasi-ambassadorial duties he had undertaken on behalf of the Colonial Office were shorn from him. The result was a lowering in the status of Governors-General and a change in the manner of their appointment, developments which were foreshadowed during Munro Ferguson's term of office.

Though Munro Ferguson himself did not clearly perceive the direction in which developments in the office of Governor-General were moving, his despatches and suggestions during the latter years of office

1. The occasions were in June 1914 and November 1916. See above, chapter VIII, p. 359 and this chapter, p. 410.
pointed to separate representation for the British Government in Australia. One man who did recognize the implications of evolving Dominion independence was L.S. Amery, who acted as Secretary of State for six months during 1920. In an excellent appraisal of the situation which he conveyed to Munro Ferguson in May 1920 he pointed out that the dual function of Governor-General was a 'survival of the process by which Dominion Self-Government gradually became established'. The principle of equality of status he foresaw would lead inevitably to a point where the function of agent and mouthpiece for the Imperial Government would cease and the Governor-General would be left in exactly the same position as the King, 'entitled to be consulted in every subject of importance, and to see copies of every important paper going in and out, but no longer himself an official channel of communication'. He predicted that this would be what Smuts would press for at the next Constitutional Conference and suggested that the Imperial Government ought not to resist it.\(^1\) In the following years, and particularly in the period when Amery himself came to office as Secretary of State for Colonies, a new structure of the Empire was to be hammered out at a series of Imperial Conferences. But signs of the emerging framework were discernible in the term of office of Australia's sixth Governor-General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson.

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1. Amery to Munro Ferguson, 3 May 1920. Novar papers, MS 696/5258-60. A.N.L.
A Narrowing Role
Lord Forster of Lepe, Governor-General of Australia
6 October 1920 to 8 October 1925, with Lady Forster.

Lord Stonehaven, Governor-General of Australia
8 October 1925 to 22 January 1931, with Prime Minister, S.M. Bruce.
Despite the diminishing status of the post, Munro Ferguson's successful exercise of office pointed to the fact that unostentatious former members of Parliament provided the qualities which Australians expected their Governors-General to possess. 'Untried juvenile noblemen', like Hopetoun and Dudley had proven markedly less successful than mature, experienced politicians such as Northcote or Munro Ferguson. The latter set the pattern for the Representatives of the Crown in the Commonwealth during the 'twenties.

The appointment of a successor to Munro Ferguson was the occasion for a change in the method of selection. Previously the Secretary of State had chosen a suitable man and after ensuring his willingness to accept the appointment had submitted the one name for the Commonwealth Government's approval. In 1902 Barton had suggested that several names should be supplied, from which the Australian Cabinet could choose the most suitable, but the Colonial Office was averse to such a proposal and the Commonwealth Government continued merely to acquiesce in decisions previously made by United Kingdom Minister. It was not until after the First World War that the increased status of the Dominions within the Empire led to a significant departure from this procedure.

Shortly before returning to Australia in 1919 Hughes submitted a memorandum to the Colonial Secretary concerning the appointment of Governors-General. Asserting that the time had passed when the Commonwealth would be satisfied with a mere notification of an appointment which had

2. See Tennyson to Secretary of State, cable, 26 October 1902. C.O. 418/19/44392, folios 361-2. H.E. Dale, a clerk at the Colonial Office, had minuted 'there is no ground ... for going further than the usual practice of first selecting someone and then asking the C'wealth Gov't whether he will be acceptable'.
already been made, the Australian Prime Minister claimed the right, not only to be consulted, 'but to have a real and effective voice in the selection of the King's representative'. To this extent Hughes was unknowingly echoing Barton's request nearly twenty years earlier. But he went on to suggest that Dominion Governments should be able to submit their own nominations and that 'the field of selection should not exclude citizens of the Dominion itself'.

There was some consternation at the Colonial Office at the implications of this proposal. Officials there realized that it was the Governor-General's diplomatic role which had justified the retention by the central authority of the right of selection. Sir H.C. Lambert argued that, insofar as the Governor-General was an agent of the British Government, it would be absurd for the Commonwealth to have a greater, or even any, claim to nominate. He predicted that, if the office were filled by an Australian, His Majesty's Government would be forced to choose an alternative channel of communication, such as a High Commissioner, for diplomatic representations between Britain and the Commonwealth. While he reminded Milner that 'an able and conciliatory Governor-General in constant personal touch with Ministers had often had a very real influence', he pointed out that a weak man in that position 'rapidly degenerates into a figurehead and once the influence is lost it is difficult to regain'. In Lambert's opinion the newly instituted channel of communication between


2. Lambert was in charge of the Dominions Department.
Imperial Prime Ministers had greatly weakened the Governor-General's position.¹

This minute was an indication of the Colonial Office's attitude to the changing structure of the Empire and its recognition of the need for flexibility in the face of demands such as were evident in Hughes' memorandum. Hughes' attitude was supported by Smuts.² But, while prepared to concede change if pressed, the British Government was always inclined to wait until that pressure became explicit. Consequently, Hughes' memorandum was left unanswered. The Secretary of State thought that the Australian leader was merely 'blowing off steam'.³ Twelve months later Hughes proved that he had been in earnest. In May 1920 he despatched a peremptory telegram urging that the selection of Munro Ferguson's successor should be in accordance with his earlier memorandum.⁴ The Secretary of State was quick to deny any intention of making an appointment without first communicating with the Commonwealth Government. He enquired whether Hughes had any name to suggest. If not, Milner was prepared to nominate a man who, 'would fill the position admirably'. In any case he undertook not to submit any name for His Majesty's approval until they were in agreement about the choice.⁵ Mollified by the assurance that his

4. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 18 May 1920. C.O. 418/202/31221, folio 386. The draft of this cable and other correspondence is also in CRS A 1606, bundle marked 'Appointment of Governor-General', file no. A 21/1. C.A.O. Hughes had seen a report in the Herald (Melbourne), 13 May 1920, which had stated that the Secretary of State expected to be able to announce the name of a successor to Munro Ferguson within a fortnight.
5. Decypher of secret cablegram, Secretary of State to Governor-General, 18 May 1920. In Novar papers, MS 696/5040. A.N.L.
views would be taken into consideration, but still reserving the right to submit a name himself, Hughes asked Milner whom he had in mind, adding that any appointment should be for two years only, to allow the next Imperial Conference 'to make such readjustments of Imperial relations as war and other circumstances have made necessary'.¹

It appears that the man being considered as a suitable replacement for Munro Ferguson was Stanley Baldwin, then a member of the British Coalition Government with long parliamentary experience, mostly on the back-benches.² Though it is interesting to speculate on the possible course of British history if Baldwin had accepted, the suggested appointment was not entirely appropriate. Hughes was unlikely to have welcomed such a man as Representative of the Crown, while Baldwin would surely have chafed at the frustrations of the narrowing role which had irked Munro Ferguson. In the event, the future British Prime Minister declined the offer and Milner was forced to submit three other names for the Commonwealth Government's consideration.³ By allowing the Dominion Ministers the final choice Milner was making an important concession to Hughes' demand, in effect conceding what Barton had requested in 1902. Subsequently a similar procedure was followed in the appointment of a Governor-General to New Zealand.⁴ For Hughes, it was to be the last change in status which he

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¹ Telegram, Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, received 24 May 1920. C.O. 418/202/31221, folio 385.


³ Secretary of State to Governor-General, cable, 1 June 1920. Novar papers, MS 696/5045. A.N.L.

⁴ Massey, Prime Minister of New Zealand, revealed at the Imperial Conference that he had selected the Governor-General, Lord Jellicoe, from a list submitted to him by 'the powers that be'. See Secret print, minutes of 24th Meeting, 12 July 1921 at 5 p.m., p. 3. Copy in Hughes papers, MS 1538, box 109. A.N.L.
urged. By 1921 it was clear that opinion in his National Party was opposed to any further loosening of the Imperial links. At the Imperial Conference of 1921, despite his earlier enthusiasm for changes in the structure of Empire, he argued forcefully that such delicate machinery ought not to be further tampered with. But the Australian leader's initiative was soon to be followed up by Ministers in other Dominions. The status of Governors-General was still unsatisfactory to South African and Irish leaders.

The three names Milner submitted to Hughes in June 1920 were those of General J.E. Seely, the Earl of Donoughmore and Lord Forster. Of the three the two first-mentioned were more distinguished than the last. Seely had been Secretary of State for War in the Liberal Government of 1913-1914 until forced to resign over the 'Curragh incident'. After serving gallantly and prominently in the Great War he was for some months Under Secretary to the Air Ministry. In contrast to Seely, Donoughmore was scion of an ancient Anglo-Irish family with long experience in the House of Lords. He had been Under Secretary of State for War in the Conservative Government from 1903 to 1905 and Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords since 1911. Though neither he nor Seely were outstanding

1. Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1921, XIV, [Cmd. 1474]. See pp. 17-23 for opening speech by Hughes: 'Let us leave well alone'. In private he still insisted that Dominion Governments were entitled to submit their own nominations for the position of Governor-General. See Imperial Conference Secret print, minutes of 23rd meeting, 12 July 1921, p. 9. Copy in Hughes papers, MS 1538, box 109. A.N.L.

2. D.W. Harkness, The Restless Dominion: The Irish Free State and the British Commonwealth of Nations, 1921-31 (London, 1969), p. 24, reveals that though Irish negotiators had won the right to nominate their own Governor-General they were anxious to further 'reduce the status of this nominated official'. For South African opinion see Hall, Commonwealth, pp. 310-311.


4. He was R.W.J. Hely Hutchinson, sixth Earl of Donoughmore. See Ibid., p. 375.
public figures they were men of some political importance.

The third name proposed by the Secretary of State was that of Sir Henry William, first Baron Forster of Lepe. Possessing neither the political significance of Seely nor the aristocratic antecedents of Donoughmore, Forster's chief distinction was that he had played cricket for Oxford, Kent and Hampshire, had twice represented the Gentlemen against the Players and was President of the Marylebone Cricket Club. A tall, dignified man of fifty four years he had been a Conservative member of Parliament from 1892 to 1919 before his elevation to the peerage. During those long years in the House of Commons he had risen to only minor political office.

It was significant that the man chosen by the Australian Cabinet to represent the Crown in the Commonwealth in 1920 was Forster. Though it is only possible to guess at the reasons for this decision the most likely arguments in Forster's favour were his Parliamentary experience and his association with cricket. He was not wealthy and exhibited some concern at the well-known disinclination of the Australian Parliament to supply an

1. It is worth noting that there is no entry for Forster in the Dictionary of National Biography. For a biographical reference see Serle, Dictionary of Australian Biography, I, p. 316.
2. He was a Lord of the Treasury from 1902 to 1905, and Financial Secretary to the War Office from 1915 to 1919.
3. A note of the Cabinet meeting on 7 June at which the appointment was discussed reveals none of the reasoning. See Hughes papers, MS 1538, box 155, folder 2. A.N.L.
4. The Colonial Office felt it was necessary to explain to the press who Forster was, adding that 'a reference to his cricket would probably go down well in Australia'. H.C. T[hornton] to W. Scott, 14 June 1920. Copy in C.O. 418/202/31221, folio 394. Comments in the Australian press did tend to emphasize Forster's sporting activities. He had been a batsman, but in the Argus, 18 June 1920, Hugh Trumble remembered him as 'a useful left hand bowler'. W. Farmer Whyte, William Morris Hughes: His Life and Times, (Sydney, 1957), p. 422, commented, 'the appointment of an old County cricketer and all-round sportsman seemed fitting'.
adequate allowance. However he accepted the appointment on the assurance that it would be for two years only and that a special allowance would be provided by the British Government. He arrived in Australia in October 1920. After briefly meeting Munro Ferguson in Kalgoorlie he was sworn in as Australia's seventh Governor-General at a ceremony in Melbourne on 6 October.

The end of the Great War and the changing status of the Dominions meant that social leadership of the community, always a significant role for the Governor-General, tended to become pre-eminent. Forster devoted himself zealously to these duties and succeeded in achieving a wide-ranging popularity. He was assisted in this by a natural interest in outdoor sport, which was guaranteed to win him favour in Australia during the nineteen twenties. Though he no longer played cricket he took special care to retain his association with the game and was prominent in the Members' Enclosure at Melbourne Cricket Ground for matches against interstate and overseas touring teams. One pastime in which he did participate actively was yachting. He owned several boats and sailed them successfully in numerous regattas.

Nor did he neglect other popular Australian sporting pre-occupations. He attended international lawn tennis tournaments and

2. Forster to Secretary of State, 20 October 1920. C.O. 418/190/57716, folio 676.
3. Brisbane Courier, 16 June 1920, commented that Forster's interest in cricket and tennis 'should give him a hall mark of popularity in Australia where sport enters so largely into the national life'.
4. See Argus, 20 February 1922. Writing to his successor, 19 May 1925, Forster took considerable pride in owning boats which had won Championships of their classes in both Sydney and Melbourne. Stonehaven papers, MS 2127, series 3. A.N.L.
5. Argus, 14 January 1921.
polo matches. He was also a regular observer of the G.P.S. Rowing Championship in Sydney. But the outdoor activity which occupied the greatest part of His Excellency's time was horse-racing. The Governor-General was expected to be seen at Jockey or Turf Club meetings in cities throughout the Commonwealth. The most important such occasion, not surprisingly, was the running of the Melbourne Cup each November.

Vice-regal patronage of this annual carnival event was one element which helped to perpetuate the anachronistically formal nature of the occasion. There, top hats and British éclat added style. Before federation it had been customary for a large party of visiting dignitaries to accompany the Victorian Governor to the meeting and Hopetoun had continued the practice as Governor-General. As the pre-eminent 'season' in Melbourne before the war, Cup-time was a time of vice-regal levees, garden parties, banquets and balls.

Forster revived the glamour of the Melbourne season as it had existed before 1914. Federal Government House was the ideal venue for grand occasions, with spacious grounds and a grandiose ballroom. The Argus commented in November 1921:

> with the exception of the balls given in honour of the Prince of Wales, there has not been since the war a more brilliant function at Federal Government House than the ball given by ... the Governor-General and Lady Forster.

The Bulletin, though only a shadow of its former self, went through the

1. Argus, 11 March 1922.
2. Daily Telegraph, 3 May 1923.
3. A few years later, Forster's successor considered that a Governor-General needed to be fond of racing, otherwise he would be 'hideously bored by the amount of attendance at race meetings which is compulsory'. Stonehaven to Harding, at the Colonial Office, 4 November 1929. Copy in Stonehaven papers, MS 2127, series 1, folder 6. A.N.L.
4. Argus, 3 November 1921.
motions of criticizing the expense of the Governor-General's establishment, but there was little evidence of any significant opposition on grounds of economy. The amount spent annually upon the Governor-General had risen after the war, and remained at a high level. To a certain extent this reflected rising inflation. His Excellency continued to complain that his allowance was still quite inadequate and that he was required to supplement it out of his own pocket.

In addition to his successful leadership of Melbourne society, Forster was also alive to the necessity for a Governor-General to keep in touch with country areas and with the less lofty elements of the Australian community. For example he was always willing to open agricultural shows away from the capital cities. He took seriously his duties as Chief Scout for the Commonwealth and was proud that he had helped to establish the popularity of this movement after the war.

1. The Bulletin, 4 November 1920, has a cartoon on this subject.
2. The following table details in £s the cost of the Governor-General's establishment, 1912-1926, including the statutory salary, £10,000 and expenses of the Executive Council Office. Figures are from Commonwealth Year Books.

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4. Sir Earle Page, Truant Surgeon: The Inside Story of Fifty Years of Australian Political Life (Sydney, 1963), pp. 74-5, describes Forster's prompt acceptance of a request to open the Clarence River Agricultural Show in 1922.
5. See Forster to Stonehaven, 19 May 1925. Stonehaven papers, MS 2127, series 3. A.N.L. The importance of the Scouting movement in shaping Australians' ideals and attitudes ought not to be overlooked in any study of the British Empire. Through this movement thousands of boys were inculcated with Christian virtues and monarchical sentiment.
The Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth was expected to embody in himself all the Christian virtues. Attendance at divine service on Sunday became an important item on the vice-regal itinerary. Lord and Lady Forster carried out these duties admirably, regularly worshipping at St. Paul's Cathedral Melbourne and St. Andrew's Sydney.¹ They were also generous with their time in supporting charitable causes. Forster was prominent in the establishment of a branch of Dr Barnado's Homes for Boys in New South Wales during 1921.² Her Excellency, too, followed the pattern of public activity set by her predecessors. She was President of the Red Cross Society, Patron of the National Council of Women and closely identified with the work of the Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria. Besides these formal and administrative functions, she was kept busy attending charity bazaars and school fetes.³

Writing to his successor in May 1925 about the social duties of the role of Governor-General, Forster commented that:

> The incessant speech making is the only fly in the ointment. Where-ever you go, & whatever you do, you are expected to make a speech. The trouble is that one can't touch on anything which is the subject of political controversy and as most things are, one's choice of subjects is limited!

Forster was a cautious speaker, his orations often ponderous or jejune. But he was allowed one safe topic, namely, praise of the courage of Australian soldiers on the field of battle and the staunch Imperial spirit

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1. This was a post-war development. A search through the vice-regal columns of the Argus indicated that earlier Governors-General were irregular church-goers.
2. S.M.H., 12 April 1921.
3. Lady Forster was awarded the Dame Grand Cross of the British Empire (Civil Division) in January 1926 for her public services in Australia. See Argus, 1 January 1926.
4. Forster to Stonehaven, 19 May 1925. Stonehaven papers, MS 2127, series 3. A.N.L.
exhibited by the people of the Commonwealth during the Great War.\textsuperscript{1}

It was a subject which His Excellency had a great deal of opportunity upon which to expand, for a large amount of his time was occupied in dedicating monuments to fallen A.I.F. soldiers. As the Australian pride in Anzac burgeoned Lord Forster laid innumerable foundation stones for memorial halls, and unveiled plaques, statues and columns. In countless towns throughout the Commonwealth these tributes to those Australians who had paid the supreme sacrifice in the Imperial cause became a prominent civic feature. A fair share of them, such as the War Memorial Column in Queanbeyan,\textsuperscript{2} were dedicated by Lord Forster.

The Governor-General's earnest attention to his public duties, whether social, athletic or ceremonial, was not limited to Sydney and Melbourne. Both he and his wife were tireless travellers throughout the continent. He was conscious of the Governor-General's unifying role within the federation, recognizing that his office not only linked Australia with Britain, but also the six States of the Commonwealth together. From the beginning he publicly emphasized a desire to 'draw closer the interstate ties'.\textsuperscript{3} During his first twelve months of office the Governor-General covered no less than twenty thousand miles within Australia,\textsuperscript{4} without the benefit of the internal aviation services which his successors were to enjoy. Not all of this travelling was repetitious. In 1924 he spent four weeks in Papua and the newly acquired Mandate territory of New Guinea.\textsuperscript{5} But much of the Governor-General's journeying was merely tiresome. In

\textsuperscript{1} See Brisbane Courier, 6 August 1921.
\textsuperscript{2} Erected 14 April 1923.
\textsuperscript{3} Argus, 25 September 1920.
\textsuperscript{4} Argus, 7 October 1921.
\textsuperscript{5} From 28 August to 20 September. Argus, 28 August 1924.
particular he was constantly required to motor or travel by train between Melbourne and Sydney.

In the New South Wales capital the Governor-General's residence, Admiralty House, was too small for vice-regal entertainments. But Forster benefited from the efforts of Munro Ferguson who, shortly before leaving Australia, had persuaded Hughes to purchase the adjacent property, Kirribilli House, as staff quarters and so make available more space in the other house.¹ After the manner of his predecessors, Forster spent an appropriate amount of time each year in Sydney, usually at Eastertime, when he was expected to open the Royal Agricultural Show. The winter months were ordinarily spent in sampling the warmer climates of Queensland and Northern New South Wales.

Forster's zeal in carrying out the arduous public duties of his office echoed the style in which George V was exercising the functions of monarch in Britain at the same time. The King, too, was a man of moral earnestness, assiduous in carrying out his ceremonial and charitable duties.² The prestige of the royal family, consolidated by the war and given added dash by the Prince of Wales, was never higher than in the 'twenties. The devotion of countless loyal Australian citizens to the British royal family reflected the role of the Crown as a unifying symbol in the Empire. As the international personality of the Dominions grew and the Empire's foreign policy began to show signs of internal disunity the idea of a common monarchy linking otherwise separate parts of the British community became the essential element in the Imperial structure. Allegiance to the Crown was to be the formal link which signified membership of an organization which was

¹. Acquired by the Commonwealth on 17 January 1920. See Commonwealth Gazette, 17 January 1920, p. 49. For correspondence see CRS A461, item Y7/1/1. C.A.O.
becoming distinguished as the British Commonwealth. Thus, while the practical duties of Governors and Governors-General diminished, their symbolic function as Representatives of the Crown increased. But the increased accessibility of the King tended to lower the prestige of British quasi-monarchs in Australia. With a growing identification of the British royal family as belonging to Australia it became less necessary for Governors or for the Governor-General to be British.¹

There had always existed a persistent egalitarian strand for whom the retention of British Governors was an unnecessary and demeaning reflection upon Australian self esteem. The firm control of the Commonwealth Government by conservative elements precluded this trend being obvious in respect of the Governor-General's office. But the 'twenties saw a revival of attempts by various State Governments to abolish Imperial State Governors.

Agitation against Imperial Governors had not been a prominent feature of public debate in Australia during the War. But there was an attempt made by the Western Australian Government in 1915, to secure the appointment of Sir John Forrest as State Governor.² Though Hughes was eager to avail himself of this solution as a means of dislodging a troublesome colleague³ when the post became vacant, the Secretary of State decided not to vary the existing practice. In January 1917 Long

¹ For earlier opposition to 'imported' State Governors see above, chapter VI, pp.281-284.
² Governor to Secretary of State, 31 August 1915, enclosing Minute from Premier, J. Scaddan, dated 17 August 1915. C.O. 418/139/45033, folios 535-540.
³ In January 1917 Hughes wrote to Lloyd George recommending that Forrest be appointed as Governor of Western Australia. The letter is not filed in the Colonial Office records, but see Long to Munro Ferguson, 23 January 1917. Draft in C.O. 418/166/4412, folios 207-209 for details.
informed the Governor-General that if the States were to manifest a strong desire for change then the British Government would offer no objection.  

But this statement was never conveyed to State Governments.

After the war, feeling in favour of local appointments again surfaced. In July 1919 the Victorian Treasurer, William McPherson, while visiting London, informed Milner that there existed in Victoria a strong and growing opinion, which his Government shared, that in the future Australian Lieutenant-Governors should be appointed to the States. In October of the same year, when a vacancy arose in the Governorship at Melbourne, the State Government urged the postponement of any appointment until after the matter had been discussed at a Convention to consider the future relationship of Commonwealth and States. While an appointment was delayed for a few months the Victorian Government later agreed to the Colonial Office's selection of Lord Stradbroke in 1920.

The Premier of Queensland, E.G. Theodore, was the next to raise the question. In July 1920 he urged that, 'the time has arrived when self-governing states should be given the power ... to nominate Governor of their own choosing'. He suggested that William Lennon, then administering the Government, should be confirmed in the post. But once again the Secretary of State decided that no change should be made without concerted action on behalf of all the Australian States. When a Governor of the traditional type was nominated by the Secretary of State, Theodore

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1. Ibid.
3. On Victoria's initiative the matter had been discussed at the 1918 Premiers' Conference. See Argus, 11 July 1919, for report of McPherson's statement.
4. Lieutenant Governor of Victoria to Secretary of State, 9 October 1919. C.O. 418/179/57976, folios 569-570.
acquiesced.  

The continued reluctance of Secretaries of State to grant individual States' requests for alteration in the procedure was, to some extent, contrary to the advice of some servants of the Colonial Office itself. In 1919 Munro Ferguson had been asked for his opinion on the matter and had indicated his support for a change whereby State Chief Justices would become Lieutenant-Governors. Some State Governors themselves felt that their office was an anachronism. Forster, too, felt that State Governors could be dispensed with. In a long minute of 3 November 1922, one Colonial Office official argued that the appointment of Australian Governors would localise the 'States Rights' conflicts and keep the Secretary of State out of them. He pointed out that 'a local man would be less open to accusations of acting under instructions when taking unpopular decisions'.

Moreover the exercise of office as State Governor was becoming an expensive privilege. Salaries remained at the level they had been early in the century and allowances were inadequate. In September 1921 the South Australian Governor resigned prematurely, giving financial

1. Ibid., folio 416. The new Governor was Sir Matthew Nathan.
2. Munro Ferguson to Secretary of State, 22 October 1919. C.O. 418/177/71435, folios 445-452.
3. Notably the Governor of South Australia. See Weigall to Secretary of State, 2 April 1921. C.O. 418/210/22867, folios 37-43. A similar attitude had been expressed by Governor Stanley, of Victoria, in 1917. See Stanley to Secretary of State, 21 August 1917. C.O. 418/160/56818, folios 383-392. On 25 January 1919 Governor Davidson, of New South Wales, noted with regret, that 'the political value of State Governors under the nomination of the Crown' was tending to decrease. C.O. 418/179/22856, folio 33.
5. Minutes by J.F.N. G[reen] on despatch from Lieutenant-Governor of Tasmania to Secretary of State, 30 October 1922. C.O. 418/223/53909, folios 230-233. Green was Assistant Secretary in the Dominions Section of the Colonial Office.
difficulties as his reason. A few months later, Sir William Allardyce, Governor of Tasmania, was also forced to resign because his salary and allowance was insufficient to pay for the expense of maintaining a large and expensive Government House. In other States there were similar complaints.

The coincidence of Labor Governments in all States except Victoria during 1925 prompted speculation that some united action was at last likely to be taken to effect a change in the system of appointing State Governors. These forecasts proved correct. In September 1925 a Memorial signed by the Premiers of all Australian States except Victoria asked that Australian citizens be selected for future appointments. In their Memorial the Premiers emphasized that the proposed change was not a new idea and the reasoning they advanced in support of their contention certainly possessed a familiar ring. The argument that by appointing a local citizen they would considerably lessen 'the expenditure from public funds in the maintenance of Vice-Regal establishments' dated from before federation. Again the Premiers stressed that the appointment of a Governor-

1. See Weigall to Secretary of State, telegram, 1 December 1921. C.O. 418/210/59880, folios 190-3. In 1922 South Australia raised the salary of its Governor from £4,000 to £5,000 per annum.

2. Argus, 25 January 1922. As the Tasmanian Parliament declined to increase its Governor's salary no replacement was appointed until December 1924, when a 'democratic' Governor, Sir J.J. O'Grady, formerly a British Labour parliamentarian, accepted the post. A smaller Government House was also provided. See Mercury (Hobart), 22 July and 23 December 1924.

3. The Governor of Western Australia, Newdegate, estimated that a Governor needed to spend £2,500 per annum out of his own pocket. See Newdegate to Secretary of State, 16 June 1921. C.O. 418/210/36260, folios 634-641. Governor Davidson of New South Wales also complained that his position would cost him £1,000 annually in excess of his salary and allowances. See Davidson to Fiddes, 21 January 1919. C.O. 418/179/23970, folios 17-27.

4. Memorial from Premiers to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 20 August 1925. Copy in 'Correspondence relating to the Appointment of Governors of the Australian States', Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1926, XXII, [Cmd. 2683], pp. 4-7.
General was sufficient representation of Imperial interests in Australia insofar as such an appointment 'automatically modified the status of State Governors'. It was pointed out that during the frequent absences of Governors, local men of proven ability and administrative skill had discharged vice-regal duties with conspicuous success. Anticipating the charge that local appointments would lead to the identification of the Governor with local Party politics, the petitioners pointed out that the gentlemen then being appointed were themselves the nominees of the party in power for the time being in the Imperial Parliament. Forestalling the accusation of disloyalty to the King or the British Empire, they emphasized that their attitude was, 'entirely consistent with the feeling of the greatest loyalty to His Majesty's Throne and Person and a desire to strengthen ... the bonds of Empire unity'.

The most significant opposition to this Memorial came from Victoria, the one State which had declined to sign. There, the Attorney General, F.W. Eggleston, prepared a Memorandum refuting the Premiers' Memorial and setting out the reasons for the Victorian Government's attitude. In a skilful orchestration of judicial reasoning, Eggleston defended the continuation of existing practice in connection with appointing British Governors. He pointed to the advantages to both States and their Commonwealth which lay in their continuing to exist in Britain, returned Governors, well informed on Australian questions, able to explain the local point of view. The most important advantage of the system, he claimed, was that it enabled 'responsible government as developed in the British parliamentary system to be operated with the same ease and

1. Ibid.
2. Later Sir Frederick Eggleston.
3. A copy of Eggleston's Memorandum, forwarded to the Secretary of State on 10 November 1925, is in [Cmd. 2683], pp. 11-19.
efficiency as in Great Britain'. Eggleston argued that a Constitutional Head of State should come to office by 'some legal means outside those political forces and attachments' of the community over which he presided. In the case of the British Crown this was effected by hereditary descent. In the case of other Governments under the Crown it could be effected by the 'appointment of the Head of State on the advice of an outside Government'. In the opinion of the Victorian Attorney General a Governor appointed from Great Britain had no association with local politics and would be completely neutral, with a mind unaffected by local bias. Behind the advocacy of a change in the system, Eggleston discerned the erroneous belief that the administrator of the Government was a mere automaton. This he denied strongly. Under the system of responsible government, which he regarded with reverence, great powers resided in the Head of State. A Governor who was appointed by a political party and almost inevitably chosen from among the ranks of politicians or ex-politicians would, he suggested, threaten some of the greatest safeguards of that system. The Victorian Attorney General concluded his argument by emphasising the symbolic value of the Crown as 'an element of permanence and unity' which was 'an essential foundation upon which the unity of the Empire must rest'.

The gulf between the point of view expressed by the Premiers and that held by the Victorian Government was extensive. One presumed that the British Empire and the British system of responsible government was a delicate bloom which ought to be handled with care if it were to be handled at all. Links with the Empire ought to be retained. Any changes which might be considered to threaten those links were to be deprecated. This fear stimulated the often hysterical accusations which greeted

1. Ibid.
apparently minor changes such as the selection of Australian citizens as State Governors. On the other hand the Premiers who had signed the Memorial regarded the Imperial connection as an exercise in practical co-operation whose success depended upon spirit rather than form. They tended to emphasize this community of interest rather than structure. But at the same time they felt that the appointment of an officer of the State by an outside Government was a slur on the competence of that State to manage its own affairs and a restriction upon national self expression. It was an argument which could easily be extended to the Commonwealth.

The dissenting voice of the Victorian Government persuaded the Imperial authorities to allow the situation to remain undisturbed. The Premiers' Memorial, for all its near unanimity, was but a request. If the King's British advisors chose to reject that request there was little that could be done. It is also likely that the Premiers were less enthusiastic about their own proposal than was evident on the surface. In the State Labor Parties there were some who clung to an Imperial Governor because they felt such an avenue to the British Government preserved their status as against that of the Commonwealth. Nor was Eggleston's the only communication received in London which denied the Premiers' conclusions. Petitions and letters protesting at the proposed change were forwarded to the Colonial Office from Legislative Councils and Opposition parties in all the States, and from a miscellany of conservative minded bodies.¹ In this situation it was not difficult for L.S. Amery, who had become Secretary of State for Dominions in 1925, ² to point to 'very strong opposition to the

¹ The latter included the Graziers Federal Council, the Council of Manufacturers of New South Wales and the Central Council of Employers of Australia. See [Cmd. 2683], pp. 20-39.

² Amery had removed control of Dominion affairs from the Colonial Office, but he retained both portfolios. See Cross, Whitehall and the Commonwealth, pp. 46-49.
proposal'. 1 His reply to the Memorial was brief. Declining to enter into discussion of the issues, and claiming that opinion in Australia was so acutely divided that there could be no assurance that the proposed settlement would be accepted as definitive, he concluded that there was insufficient justification for the abandonment of existing procedures.

Although there was no comparable agitation for the selection of Australian citizens as Governors-General, beneath the surface there was a considerable body of opinion to that effect. In June 1918 the Australian Natives Association, at its annual Conference in Brisbane, resolved that 'all appointees to the positions of Governor General and State Governors should be Australian born'. 2 The following year at a Conference of the Australian Labor Party in Sydney a motion was carried which demanded 'That the Governor-General be an Australian-born, and be elected by the people'. 3 Though these were isolated opinions they did reflect a significant trend, which the Governor-General himself recognized. In January 1922, Forster drew Churchill's attention to the fact that the premature resignations of the Governors of South Australia and Tasmania had provoked a certain amount of criticism. He considered that this criticism would be strengthened if he were to relinquish office after only two years, as had earlier been intended. He indicated his preparedness to carry on for the normal term of five years, if the British Government provided additional financial assistance. 4 Hughes, too, was anxious that Forster remain for a longer term. He pointed out that if Forster went

2. See General Secretary, Australian Natives Association, to Secretary of State, 1 June 1918. C.O. 418/175/39384, folio 119.
'sharp on the heels of Weigall and Allardyce it will have a most unfortunate effect upon public opinion'. 1 As a result of these representations His Excellency's term was quietly extended to 1925.

In urging that Forster be enabled to remain for a full term of five years, Hughes praised Their Excellencies for having 'won their way into the hearts of the people'. 2 But Forster seems never to have become particularly close to Hughes himself. The few letters from him in Hughes' papers are brief and impersonal compared with the frequent, friendly, often chiding messages from Munro Ferguson. He appears never to have approached the intimacy which his predecessor had succeeded in establishing with leading Australian public figures. Part of the reason for this was Forster's personality. One Australian newspaper proprietor described him in terms which suggest a certain chilly aloofness. 3 Moreover his own limited financial means and the Commonwealth Government's insistence that he restrict his expenditure 4 meant that the Governor-General hosted less banquets and dinner parties than his predecessors before the War. In addition his devotion to the public aspects of his role left him less time for the business of cultivating friendships with Australian politicians.

Indeed there was less reason for such close association from the point of view of diplomatic representation of the British Government. It has been seen that during the latter years of Munro Ferguson's term of office, despite the determined efforts of that forceful man, the Governor-

1. Hughes to Churchill, 12 January 1922. Ibid., folios 103-104. Churchill minuted 'I think it essential Lord Forster shd stay on'.
2. Ibid.
4. See Forster to Acting Prime Minister, 12 September 1921 in which he asserts that, while he had endeavoured to avoid extravagance, with the single exception of 'Cup Week', the drain upon his private income was exceeding £2,000 per year. CRS A 1606, item SC A21/1. C.A.O.
General tended to be pushed to the side in negotiations between the Imperial Government and Australian leaders. This trend continued during Forster's tour of duty. Apart from the Imperial Conferences, which were more frequent during the 'twenties than at any time before the War, 1 Australia was becoming increasingly involved in international affairs. Though the Commonwealth never had particular faith in the League of Nations her delegates did participate in the deliberations at Geneva. At first, communications between the Commonwealth and the League Secretariat passed through the British Cabinet and Colonial Offices. Even then Munro Ferguson complained of not being aware of such correspondence. 2 But after January 1921 the Commonwealth requested that in future all correspondence should be forwarded to the Commonwealth Government direct. 3 Pearce represented Australia at the International Conference on the limitation of armaments held in Washington during 1921 and 1922. 4 During Forster's term of office a Trade Commissioner Service, whose beginnings can be traced to contacts established during the War, was firmly established. 5 This direct Dominion involvement in external affairs during the 'twenties tended to devalue the Governor-General's role as representative of the British Government. After 1920 the confidential cabled reports from the Foreign Office, previously addressed to the Governor-General, and handed by him to the Prime Minister, were discontinued. 6 The practice of forwarding occasional

1. There were Conferences in 1921, 1923, 1926 and a Conference on Dominion Legislation in 1929.
2. See above, chapter IX, p. 444.
5. In addition to the Commissioner appointed to the United States in 1918, a Trade Representative in the East was appointed in 1922. See C.P.D., 1923, 105, p. 3048.
6. See correspondence in CP 78, series 30. C.A.O.
Foreign Office papers through the Representative of the Crown ceased after the 1921 Conference, when Hughes began to receive, directly, confidential Foreign Office prints and summaries normally seen only by British Cabinet Ministers and Heads of Missions abroad. It is unlikely that the Australian Prime Minister kept His Excellency adequately informed. Munro Ferguson had constantly complained of being overlooked. In September 1921 Forster complained to Churchill that he was 'wretchedly ... served in the matter of cabled news ... we never know what is really doing at home'. A month later he renewed his predecessor's complaint that Hughes was communicating directly with the British Prime Minister.

In the early 'twenties the traditional channel of communication between the Commonwealth and Great Britain showed increasing signs of strain. The Chanak crisis in late 1922 highlighted the deficiencies of the Governor-General's office for the purpose of consultation. Among the consequences of this sudden crisis, during which Britain seemed on the verge of war with Turkey, was the shattering of the hopes expressed at the 1921 Imperial Conference that a unified British Imperial Foreign Policy could be sustained when Dominion leaders were scattered over the globe. The crisis had arisen quickly and as a result of a policy initiated without the knowledge of Hughes and the other Dominion Prime Ministers. Yet the British Government asked the latter for support and published the

appeal before official notification reached the recipients. This action angered the Dominion Governments while emphasizing the unsatisfactory nature of the existing consultative channels. Moreover, the delay occasioned by transmitting cables through the Colonial Office and the Governor-General continued to frustrate Hughes. He complained that telegraphed situation reports forwarded through the Governor-General reached him many hours and sometimes days after press cables had been published in local journals. Hindsight prompts the conclusion that the intimate consultation to which Hughes was aiming was in fact impossible, just as an Imperial Foreign Policy was to prove unattainable. But at the time Australian leaders were committed to the pursuit of improved consultative devices.

But 'consultation' proved to be an elusive quarry. Britain's failure to include the Dominions in the Lausanne Conference called to settle the Chanak dispute provoked further complaints from Australian and other Dominion leaders. This dissatisfaction was shared by S.M. Bruce, who, in February 1923, succeeded Hughes as Prime Minister of the Commonwealth. In an attempt to remedy the unsatisfactory situation Bruce introduced an important innovation in the machinery of Imperial


2. See Governor-General to Secretary of State, 30 September 1922. CP 78, series 32. C.A.O.


4. The manoeuvrings by which the Country Party engineered the replacement of Hughes are outside the scope of this thesis. Hughes saved the Governor-General any difficulty as to choosing a chief Minister by resigning and recommending that His Excellency commission Bruce. See Argus, 3 February 1923. For Bruce's dissatisfaction with the situation see C.P.D., 1923, 104, pp. 1481-3.
communication. In 1924 he appointed R.G. Casey as Liaison Officer between Australia and Great Britain. Casey was stationed at the Foreign Office in Whitehall and communicated direct to the Commonwealth Prime Minister.¹

The creation of an additional channel of communication between Australia and Britain was a further blow to the diplomatic role of the Governor-General. Prime Minister to Prime Minister correspondence had increased. The flow of defence information between Britain and Australia after the Great War had become a 'torrent of documents'.² The Office of High Commissioner continued to afford the Commonwealth quasi-diplomatic representation in London.³ With channels of communication between Australia and Britain proliferating in this manner the official channel naturally declined in importance. This development was accentuated by Forster's inexperience. His official despatches lacked the insight and knowledge of men and affairs which had distinguished those of Munro Ferguson. Lacking the diligent research previously done by Steward, the Governor-General's reports were common-place and uninformative, often consisting simply of newspaper clippings without accompanying comment.

Forster's attitude to his duties was perhaps best revealed in a comment he made when writing to his successor in May 1925: 'the work of a G.G. and his wife is just like the work of looking after a big constituency'.⁴ Within the narrowing limits of the office he had been

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² James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada: From the Great War to the Great Depression (Toronto, 1964), pp. 91-93.
³ In 1921 Fisher had been succeeded as High Commissioner by Joseph Cook.
⁴ Forster to Stonehaven, 19 May 1925. Stonehaven papers, MS 2127, series 3. A.N.L. Note that his contemporary as Governor-General, Jellicoe, in New Zealand, was by no means a merely social figurehead. See Ian MacGibbon, 'The Constitutional Implications of Lord Jellicoe's Influence on New Zealand Naval Policy 1919-1930', in New Zealand Journal of History, 6, no. 1 (April 1972), pp. 57-80.
successful. While he lacked the zeal and active influence of his predecessor he had provided the type of social leadership that was becoming the most important practical role of the Representative of the Crown. His term of office had witnessed the accelerated growth of Dominion status within the Empire. The climax of these developments, involving a fundamental change in the role of the Governor-General, came during the term of office of Forster's successor.

The appointment of John Lawrence Baird, Lord Stonehaven, as ninth Governor-General of the Commonwealth was made according to the practice upon which Hughes had insisted in 1920. By 1925 the Dominions' increasing status had emphasized the right of Dominion Governments to a significant role in the selection of the individual who was to be local Head of State. But as the Representative of the Crown was still a servant of the British Government that role fell short of Hughes' request for the right of nomination. In announcing Stonehaven's appointment it was publicly stated that the new Governor-General's name had been submitted, with others, to the Commonwealth Ministry, who had selected him. He arrived in Australia in October 1925.

It was ironic that, in many ways, Stonehaven's qualifications would have fitted him more for the active role of Governor-General as it had existed earlier in the century, than for the function of social figurehead towards which it was developing. After a solid Eton and Oxford education he had entered the Foreign Service and filled diplomatic postings in Cairo, Paris and elsewhere before forsaking diplomacy for politics.

1. For newspaper comment on his vacation of office see Advertiser and Register, 7 October 1925 and S.M.H., 10 October 1925.
2. Baird was raised to the peerage a few days after the announcement of his appointment to Australia.
From 1911 to 1925 he was a Conservative member of the House of Commons. During this long parliamentary experience he had been Parliamentary Private Secretary to Bonar Law, Under Secretary of State for Home Affairs and Minister for Transport and First Commissioner for Public Works. He was, therefore, by no means an insignificant public figure.

Aged fifty one upon his arrival in Australia, Stonehaven was small in stature, smoked a pipe and wore a monacle. Like his old friend, Forster, he was an active man, fond of yachting and golf. In general he set out to emulate the style of office established by his predecessor. He kept up the links with sporting bodies, was generous with his public time and travelled extensively about the continent.

The Governor-General's duty to perambulate around the Commonwealth underwent a revolutionary change during Stonehaven's term of office. Internal air services were introduced to Australia during the 'twenties and His Excellency did a good deal to encourage interest in their development. Though his experience in pioneering the use of aeroplanes was not without incident he did help to establish public confidence in the industry by extensive use of that form of transport for his visits to remote areas of Australia.

1. He was M.P. for Rugby, 1911-1922 and for Ayr Burghs, 1922-1925. For biographical details see Argus, 19 May 1925 and The Times, obituary, 21 August 1941. Also see Serle, Dictionary of Australian Biography, I, pp. 36-7.

2. But, note that no reference to Stonehaven appears in the Dictionary of National Biography. After his return from Australia, he became Chairman of the British Conservative Party.

3. In February 1926 he survived, uninjured, an air crash. Argus, 17 February 1926.

4. Shortly after Stonehaven's death, the Australian Government was asked to recognize his services to aviation by naming a town after him. The Commonwealth Department of Air acknowledged that he had fostered interest in air transport and supported the proposal but the Curtin Government was unable to comply. Department of Air to Prime Minister's Department, 18 August 1943. CRS A461, C7/1/2. C.A.O.
His Excellency quickly established good relations with the Prime Minister, S.M. Bruce.\(^1\) The normal social contacts between the two men were supplemented by a shared predilection for gentlemanly pastimes. Writing to his predecessor in December 1925 Stonehaven expressed his high opinion of Bruce and commented 'I keep in touch with him by riding in the morning, and am going out to Frankston next week for a game of golf'.\(^2\) It was understandable that, lacking such identity of interests with leading Labor Party members, Stonehaven's opinion of the Opposition was less than sympathetic.\(^3\)

Notwithstanding Stonehaven's close relationship with the Nationalist Government, his diplomatic experience and administrative ability, his term of office signified the end of the Governor-General's quasi-ambassadorial role as channel of communication with the British Government. Twelve months after his arrival in Australia a formal definition of Dominion sovereignty was enunciated at the Imperial Conference which met in London during October 1926.

This Conference confirmed the tendencies which had been evident in the British Empire since the Great War, enabling the establishment of a framework which was to preserve that Empire, nominally transformed into the British Commonwealth, for another twenty-five years. The leading advocate of change at the Conference was the South African Prime Minister, General J.B.M. Hertzog.\(^4\) A Nationalist with wide Afrikaner support,

1. He considered the Prime Minister 'a very remarkable man ... an outstanding example of what can be done by a combination of an Australian Public School and a British University'. Stonehaven to Lord Irwin, 10 May 1926. Stonehaven papers, MS 2127, series 1, folder 2. A.N.L.
2. 11 December 1925. Stonehaven papers, MS 2127, series 1, folder 1. A.N.L.
3. See letter to unidentified correspondent, 27 May 1929. Stonehaven papers, MS 2127, series 1, folder 5. A.N.L.
4. Prime Minister of Union of South Africa, 1924 to 1939.
Hertzog had defeated the more moderate Smuts in 1924 and was determined to assert his radicalism by forcing a definition of equality out of the Conference. To his surprise he found the groundwork already laid and the British leaders gracefully acquiescent. His aims were satisfied by the Balfour Report which declared that Britain and the Dominions were autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one of another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.¹

One of the corollaries of this declaration was a change in the role of Governor-General.

It has been seen that the first steps towards an alteration in the role of the Representative of the Crown had been taken by Hughes as early as 1918.² Thereafter Smuts had argued constantly that the vice-regal functions of the office ought to be separated from the duty of ambassadorial representation.³ Ireland, too, was anxious to reduce the role of the Representative of the Crown to that of a figurehead.⁴ But it was not until these ranks were joined by the Canadian Prime Minister, W.L. Mackenzie King, that any substantial readjustment was effected.

In mid 1926 King had become involved in an important political dispute with the Dominion's Governor-General, Lord Byng.⁵ Briefly, the

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2. See above, chapter IX, pp. 437-439.
4. See Harkness, The Restless Dominion, pp. 107-8. This work considerably over-emphasizes the effect of Ireland's inclusion in the Empire-Commonwealth.
question involved the right of the King's Representative to refuse his Prime Minister's advice to dissolve Parliament. Byng had declined to accept King's request that he should dissolve the Canadian House of Commons and when King reluctantly resigned, Arthur Meighen was commissioned to form a Government. But the new Prime Minister was unable to control the business of the House and was forced to ask His Excellency to grant a dissolution. On this occasion Byng agreed. Though Byng was legally and constitutionally justified in so doing practically it was a major blunder. The election which followed was won by King with a comfortable majority. One of the results of this controversy was that the Canadian leader became convinced that it was time to separate completely the dual functions of the Governor-General. He arrived at the Imperial Conference of 1926 prepared to press this point. 

King found little opposition in London. South Africa and Ireland supported his position. The Secretary of State, Amery, had been convinced since 1918 of the necessity for a change such as King was urging. As a result of the consultations of the Inter-Imperial Relations Committee the Conference resolved that the Governor-General of a Dominion was 'no longer the representative of His Majesty's Government in Great Britain'. It was, therefore, 'no longer wholly in accordance with the constitutional position of the Governor-General' for him to remain as the

1. Forsey, Dissolution of Parliament, pp. 204-249, presents formidable arguments to prove this. For an earlier, conflicting view see Keith, Responsible Government in the Dominions (1928 Edition), I, pp. 146-152. Evatt, The King and His Dominion Governors, pp. 55-64 concludes that Byng's action was against 'constitutional practice'.


3. Ibid., pp. 180-1.

4. See letter to Hughes, 17 June 1918. Quoted above, chapter IX, p. 448n.

5. [Cmd. 2768], p. 16.
formal official channel of communication. The Conference resolved that
the recognized channel in future should be directly between Government and
Government.¹

Simultaneously with removing the quasi-diplomatic role of the
Governor-General, the 1926 Imperial Conference emphasized his monarchical
function. The Report asserted that it was

an essential consequence of the equality of status existing
among the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations that
the Governor-General ... is the representative of the Crown,
holding in all essential respects the same position in relation
to the administration of public affairs in the Dominion as is
held by ... the King in Great Britain...

Finally, it was recognized that a Governor-General should be supplied with
copies of all documents of importance and should be kept as fully informed
of Cabinet business and public affairs as the King was.²

There were several direct consequences in the Commonwealth of
Australia of the changes in the role of the Governor-General as enunciated
by the Imperial Conference of 1926. Consistent with the attitudes of
Australian Governments since the Great War, Bruce's Cabinet decided to take
advantage of the provisions regarding direct communication between
Government and Government.³ Implementation of this decision was postponed
until after the Commonwealth Parliament had transferred from Melbourne to
Canberra. From 31 December 1927 the Governor-General ceased to be the
official channel of communication between the Australian and British
Governments. The functions of coding, decoding and despatching official
correspondence, previously undertaken by the Official Secretary to the

¹. Ibid.
². Ibid.
³. See 'Memorandum for the Official Secretary to the Governor-General',
21 May 1927 and draft telegram for Secretary of State, 17 December
1927, both initialled by Bruce, in CRS A 461, item G 334/1/2. C.A.O.
Governor-General, were taken over by the Cables Section of the Prime Minister's Department.

Other consequences flowed on from the elimination of the Governor-General's role as diplomatic agent for the British Government. In particular it was no longer inappropriate for the appointment of the Representative of the Crown to be made with the advice of the Australian Government. If the Colonial Office was no longer the employer of the Governor-General, upon whose advice should he be appointed? The 1926 Conference left this point unexplained, but all indications pointed to the appointment becoming a matter for consultation between the Dominion Government and the King directly. In such a case, the former would be in a position to press for the appointment of a local citizen. The subsequent selection of Sir Isaac Isaacs as the first Australian to be appointed as Governor-General was foreshadowed by the decision of the 1926 Conference.

In 1918 Munro Ferguson had observed that if the Governor-General were to surrender his role as agent of the British Government then the latter would be unrepresented in Australia. Amery considered this aspect would be solved by the appointment of an United Kingdom High Commissioner in each of the Dominions. Even before the 1926 Conference had met, the British Cabinet had come to the decision that it would be expedient to

1. The Commonwealth Government secured formal acknowledgment of this point at the Imperial Conference of 1930. See 'Summary of Proceedings' in Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1930-31, XIV, [Cmd. 3717], p. 27.


3. See letter to Secretary of State, 28 October 1918, quoted above, Chapter IX, p. 441.

appoint such quasi-diplomatic officials in Dominion capitals.\(^1\) The Secretary of State pressed this view on the Prime Ministers in London during November and secured agreement to a system of quasi-diplomatic representation throughout the British Commonwealth.\(^2\) The first United Kingdom High Commissioner was appointed to Canada in May 1928. Australia and Britain came to an agreement about a similar appointment to Canberra in 1931, but it was not until 1936 that the first such official was appointed.\(^3\)

The Imperial Conference of 1926 substituted a new framework for the Empire/Commonwealth in which the Governor-General's role as channel of communication was eventually phased out. But his function as Representative of the Crown remained. In 1927 the Commonwealth was treated to another royal visit, emphasising the symbolic link which the King and the royal family had become. The Duke and Duchess of York arrived in Sydney on 28 March 1927 and spent two months touring the Commonwealth. The high-light of their visit was the opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament to meet at the seat of Government, Canberra, on 9 May 1927.

The moving of the Parliament to the Australian Capital Territory necessitated the finding of an official residence for His Excellency. The establishment of 'Yarralumla' for that purpose signified the final solution of a problem which had concerned Governors-General since federation. For the time being Stonehaven persuaded the Bruce-Page Government to retain official residences in Sydney and Melbourne as well as in Canberra. But henceforth the Representative of the Crown became

2. [Cmd. 2768], p. 27.
3. An acting Representative of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, E.T. Crutchley, was appointed in 1931. Sir Geoffrey Whiskhard was the High Commissioner appointed in 1936.
identified with Canberra and 'Yarralumla'.

Although Stonehaven did not complete his term of office until 1932, the year 1927 saw the end of the role of Governor-General as it had existed since federation. The implementation of the decisions of the Imperial Conference of 1926, and the establishment of the Governor-General in a permanent official residence, marked the conclusion of a distinct period in the history of the office of Governor-General. Though the Representative of the Crown continued to exercise the functions of local constitutional monarch his role had narrowed substantially since the Great War. After Stonehaven the office of Governor-General in Australia entered upon a second stage of development.
Conclusion
For the first quarter century of its existence the Commonwealth's relations with the external world had been conducted through the office of the Governor-General. In the limited independence which Australia possessed in 1901 few regarded it as inappropriate that this should be so. On the contrary the most commonly held opinion was that Australia would benefit by such a 'Connecting link'.\(^1\) Part of the reason for this attitude was fear of external threat, and the belief that Australia's best prospects for safety lay within the British Empire. The military demonstrations at the Inauguration of the Commonwealth\(^2\) and press comment upon the appointment and arrival of Lord Hopetoun\(^3\) reflected a conviction that the Governor-General's presence safeguarded Australia's connection with the might of the Empire. In July 1906, the Mayor of Cootamundra referred to His Excellency, Lord Northcote, as

the visible link between this young Commonwealth and the Motherland, securing to us the right to work out our own destiny, without fear of invasion from foreign powers. These are the days of the survival of the fittest, of the growth of the larger nations at the expense of the smaller, for the strong to increase and the weak to decrease, and our right to exist and make our own laws depends on the existence of the British fleet.\(^4\)

It is evident that the most significant role of the Principal Representative of the Crown in the Commonwealth was symbolic. His presence as the Head of State was a guarantee of Imperial solidarity.

The Governor-General's primary responsibility was to the British Government. During the first decades of the twentieth century

\(^1\) Table Talk (Melbourne), 3 January 1901, quoted above, introduction p. 1.

\(^2\) See above, chapter II, pp. 97-103.

\(^3\) See above, chapter II, pp. 90-91.

the Representative of the Crown fulfilled the role of guardian of Imperial interests successfully. Though his power to reserve legislation for the Royal Assent withered within the first ten years of the Commonwealth, he was left with the important duty of carefully scrutinizing Commonwealth legislation, and informing the Secretary of State of any matters which might be likely to conflict with the policy of the British Government. In such cases he was required to convey instructions or representations from the latter to his Australian Ministers, and was expected to use his personal and private influence in the direction of British interests. To this purpose his role as channel of communication was crucial. As the sole agent by which the Australian Government communicated with Britain and thence with the other nations of the world, he was in a unique position to supervise those relations.

But in the exercise of his Imperial responsibilities the Governor-General was required to avoid public exposition of his connection with Commonwealth Government policy. The reaction to Hopetoun's speech to the Australian Natives Association in January 1902 indicated that His Excellency should exercise his influence upon Ministers privately and discreetly. The most important avenue for this was in the close relationship of Governor-General with his chief Minister. The personal element was important. Tennyson's frequent private advice to his Cabinet probably carried little weight. Dudley's personal qualities lessened the likelihood of his achieving a close and constructive role in Australian affairs, particularly in view of his disputes with the Labor Ministers. The Colonial Office had expressed dissatisfaction with Denman on the ground that he had tended to be too

1. See above, chapter III, pp. 141-151.
ready to take the Australian side on certain issues, notably the establishment of an Australian Navy. However, Northcote and Munro Ferguson, whose terms of office together comprised half the period 1901 to 1920, were particularly successful in the exercise of their role as diplomatic representative of the British Government. Lambert's comment that Governors-General 'had often had a very real influence', reflected general satisfaction in the Colonial Office with the way the system had worked.

In addition to his Imperial responsibilities the Governor-General had an important role as local constitutional monarch. Writing in 1897, one constitutional authority considered that His Excellency would be 'not merely the guardian of Imperial interests, but also the guardian of the Constitution and the Law' and that in the exercise of these functions he would have 'a large amount of personal discretion'.

In the early years of the Commonwealth Parliament, before a stable two-party system had developed, his most significant constitutional duty concerned the dissolution of Parliament. It was felt that the selection of experienced British officials provided an impartial authority who could be trusted to avoid local bias. By 1920, the political stability of the Commonwealth Parliament had greatly reduced the discretionary role of the Representative of the Crown in this sphere of action, while the close identification of Munro Ferguson with Hughes rendered less persuasive, at least to Labor Party members, the argument that British Governors-General would be more impartial than Australian citizens.

1. See above, chapter X, p. 454.
Despite general acceptance of the necessity for the office, Australian politicians were unwilling to sanction excessive vice-regal ostentation. In particular, His Excellency was obliged to limit the expenditure of public funds in carrying out his duties. Extravagant display was only appropriate for special celebrations, such as the Inauguration of the Commonwealth or during royal visits. On the occasions when Governors-General asked for more than this they were rebuffed.

Though ostentatious and expensive entertainment was out of place the social role of the Governor-General was important from the beginning and remained significant. Writing to her mother in October 1902, Lady Tennyson remarked on the qualities which Australians wanted in their Governor-General:

All that is wanted is kindly sympathetic & not patronising manners when mixing with people of all classes & keen interest in their interests, and what helps also very much - good sensible and wise speeches ... I do not think they would like a man who was not a peer, they much prefer that to riches, & they want a Statesman & the best man England can send - otherwise their pride is hurt of which there is a large amount in Australians I can tell you.

This summary was close to the truth. The most popular of the men who represented the Crown in the Commonwealth were those who had a gift for 'mixing with people of all classes'.

Speech-making without venturing onto forbidden topics presented difficulties. But it was a vital aspect of the vice-regal role, and it needed to be exercised not only in the seat of Government but throughout the continent. Most Governors-General were aware of the need to travel extensively around Australia. They recognized that their office represented the federal union of the separate States as perhaps no other

1. Lady Tennyson to her mother, 29 October 1902, Tennyson papers, MS 479/41/193. A.N.L.
institution could do while the Commonwealth Parliament met in Melbourne and lacked prestige as a national institution. Until the Australian capital, Canberra, was established, the occasional glimpses of the Governor-General represented all that many citizens recognized as the Commonwealth Government.

It was hoped that the practice of selecting British officials for the post would be of practical advantage to Australia. Many considered that this would establish in the mother country a lobby of influential and sympathetic patrons. In practice this expectation was rarely fulfilled. In the first place the appointees were seldom as distinguished as had been anticipated. The British Government generally found it difficult to persuade ambitious men to interrupt their political career for a tour of duty in the colonies, and the Governor-Generalship of the Commonwealth was less attractive than other vice-regal posts in the Empire. South Africa offered more scope for an active pro-consul, while Canada, less geographically isolated, was also more generous in the provision of salary and allowances. Consequently, Representatives of the Crown in Australia were seldom as influential as was hoped and on their return to Britain were rarely consulted by the Imperial Government on matters concerning the Commonwealth.

1. See Brisbane Courier, 30 June 1904, commenting on a visit of Northcote to Queensland: 'he is also to us the representative of the Australian Commonwealth, of which in their hearts, Queenslanders are all undoubtedly proud'. Note also similar comment by the same newspaper concerning Dudley's northern tour. Brisbane Courier, 20 July 1909.


3. See Forster to Stonehaven, 26 October 1929 'of course no one ever consults an ex-Governor-General about anything connected with Australia, and they always seem rather to resent any offer of help or suggestion'. Stonehaven papers, MS 2127, series 1, folder 5. A.N.L.
One problem which had from the beginning involved a restriction of the prestige of the Governor-General had been the survival of the institution of separate State Governors. These officials, appointed from Britain, and with their own vice-regal establishments, hindered the identification of the Governor-General as the Imperial figurehead in Australia. Jealousy of their local spheres of influence often led to friction between them and the principal Representative of the Crown in Australia, for, more often than not, State Governors encouraged their State Governments to protest against the encroaching authority of the central Government. Prior to federation it had been frequently thought that Imperial State Governors would be abolished after the establishment of the Commonwealth. But, chiefly because they provided a useful guarantee of State's sovereignty against Commonwealth interference, British officials continued to occupy Government Houses in all State capital cities.

State antagonism towards the Commonwealth was also a contributing factor in the persistent problem of the Governor-General's residence. Rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne and the Commonwealth Parliament's reluctance to approve vice-regal expenditure added to a difficulty which was not resolved until the national Parliament moved to Canberra in 1927. But, despite these difficulties, the office of Governor-General operated to the general satisfaction of both Australia and Britain up to and during the Great War.

The War of 1914-1918 wrought far-reaching changes upon the British Empire. While there had been tendencies towards fragmentation prior to this, war accelerated the process. The Dominions' increased autonomy and their growing participation in international affairs meant
that an Imperial relationship which had been appropriate in 1901 was less so twenty years later. Further development of the Imperial Conference system as an organ of intra-Imperial co-operation meant that Australian politicians were able to exercise direct influence upon British Ministers, while the growth of alternative avenues for correspondence between the Commonwealth and British Governments diminished the usefulness of the official channel of communication. Signs of a change emerged during the term of the most successful and resourceful Governor-General. Despite Munro Ferguson's active interpretation of his functions, the office of King's Representative was, by 1920, suffering a lessening of status and a diminution in responsibilities. A new structure for the British Empire, thereafter to be known as the British Commonwealth of Nations, emerged at the 1926 Imperial Conference. Changes formally enunciated at this Conference and effected in succeeding years eliminated His Excellency's role as diplomatic representative of the British Government. The altered nature of the office was signified by the selection of an Australian, Sir Isaac Isaacs, to succeed Stonehaven in 1931, and the subsequent appointment of a British High Commissioner to Australia.

The establishment of explicit diplomatic representation which was possible in the nineteen thirties would have been unacceptable in the first two decades of the twentieth century. While a resident British Minister might have been able to carry out the ambassadorial duties which the Governor-General had exercised, the appointment of such an official would have implied a breach in the diplomatic unity of the Empire which both Australia and Britain wished to preserve. In
this situation, the Representative of the Crown provided a useful and flexible bond between Britain and the Commonwealth of Australia. The office was both guarantee and symbol of the Imperial connection.
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