

## Opening of the Federal Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

March 19, 2011



***9th May 1901***

## **THE PROCEEDINGS**

Precisely at 12 o'clock His Royal Highness the Duke of Cornwall and York, accompanied by the Duchess of Cornwall and York, and also by their Excellencies the Governor-General and the Countess of Hopetoun, entered the Exhibition Building. The members of the Royal and Vice-regal staffs were all in attendance. The orchestra played the National Anthem.

Shortly before noon the members of the Senate were in their places, occupying seats immediately in front of the Royal dais, while members of the House of Representatives were seated in the building designed for the chamber of that House in the western annexe of the Exhibition Building.

The clerk of the Parliaments read the Proclamation to the Senate. The clerk of the House of Representatives read the same Proclamation to the members of that Chamber. The Proclamation was as follows:-

## **PROCLAMATION.**

"Australia to Wit.

"Hopetoun.

"By His Excellency the Right Honourable the Earl of Hopetoun, a Member of His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council; Knight of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of the Commonwealth of Australia.

"Whereas, by the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, it is amongst other things enacted that the Governor-General may appoint such times for holding the sessions of the Parliament as he thinks fit; and whereas, by the said Act, it is further enacted that the Parliament shall sit at Melbourne until it meet at the seat of Government; and whereas, it is expedient now to appoint

the time for holding the first session of the Parliament of the Commonwealth: Now, therefore, I, John Adrian Lewis, Earl of Hopetoun, the Governor-General aforesaid, in exercise of the power conferred by the said Act, do by this my Proclamation appoint Thursday, the ninth day of May instant, as the day for the said Parliament to assemble and be holden for the despatch of divers urgent and important affairs. And all Senators and members of the House of Representatives, and all officers of the said Parliament, are hereby required to give their attendance accordingly at Melbourne, in the building known as the Exhibition Building, at the hour of 12 o'clock noon, on the said Thursday, the ninth day of May, one thousand nine hundred and one.

“Given at Melbourne, this twenty-ninth day of April, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and one, and in the first year of His Majesty’s reign.

“By His Excellency’s command,

“EDMUND BARTON.

“GOD SAVE THE KING.”

His Royal Highness the Duke of York motioned to the Usher of the Black Rod to inform the House of Representatives that His Royal Highness, authorised by virtue of His Majesty’s commission, desired the immediate attendance of that honourable House to hear the commission read.

Several minutes elapsed before the members of that Chamber, headed by the Prime Minister, entered the Royal presence.

## **PRAYER AND PRAISE.**

The Hundredth Psalm was then sung with accompaniment by the orchestra.

His Excellency the Governor-General read prayers as follows:-

O Lord, our heavenly Father, high and mighty, King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes, who dost from Thy throne behold all the dwellers upon earth, most heartily we beseech Thee with Thy favour to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lord King Edward, and so replenish him with the grace of Thy Holy Spirit that he may always incline to Thy will and walk in Thy way. Endue him plenteously with heavenly gifts, grant him in health and wealth long to live, strengthen him that he may vanquish and overcome all his enemies; and finally, after this life he may attain everlasting joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ our Lord. – Amen.

Almighty God, the fountain of all goodness, we humbly beseech Thee to bless our gracious Queen Alexandra, George Duke of Cornwall and York, the Duchess of Cornwall and York, and all the Royal Family; endue them with Thy Holy Spirit; enrich them with Thy heavenly grace; prosper them with all happiness; and bring them to Thine everlasting Kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. – Amen.

Almighty God, we humbly beseech Thee to regard with Thy merciful favour the people of this land, now united in one Commonwealth. We pray for Thy servants the Governor-General, the Governors of the States, and all who are or who shall be associated with them in the administration of their several offices.

We pray Thee at this time to vouchsafe Thy special blessing upon the Federal Parliament now assembling for their first session, and that Thou wouldst be pleased to direct and prosper all their consultations to the advancement of Thy glory and to the true welfare of the people of Australia, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who has taught us when we pray to say –

Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we

forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil; for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. – Amen.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all, evermore. – Amen.

## THE ROYAL COMMISSION.

The Clerk of Parliaments then read His Majesty the King's Commission to His Royal Highness the Duke of Cornwall and York to open the Parliament. The Commission was expressed in the following terms:-

“Commission empowering His Royal Highness the Duke of Cornwall and York, K.G., K.P., G.C.V.O., to open the first Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia.

“Dated 23rd February, 1901.

“Edward the Seventh, by the grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India; to our right trusty and right well-beloved cousin and councillor, John Adrian Lewis, Earl of Hopetoun, Knight of our Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle, Knight Grand Cross of our Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Knight Grand Cross of our Royal Victorian Order, Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in and over our Commonwealth of Australia; and to our trusty and well-beloved the Senators, Representatives, and people of our Commonwealth of Australia, greeting:-

“Whereas in pursuance of the act passed in the sixty-fourth year of the reign of Her late Majesty Queen Victoria, intituled An Act to Constitute the Commonwealth of Australia, the Parliament of the said Commonwealth has been summoned to meet for certain arduous and urgent affairs concerning us, the state, and defence of our said Commonwealth, at the City of Melbourne.

“And whereas we are desirous of marking the importance of the opening of the first Parliament of the said Commonwealth of Australia, and of showing our special interest in the welfare of our loyal subjects therein, and forasmuch as for certain causes we cannot conveniently be present in our Royal person in our said Parliament, at Melbourne, Now Know Ye that We, trusting in the discretion, fidelity and care of our most dear son and faithful councillor, George Frederick Ernest Albert, Duke of Cornwall and York, Knight of our most noble Order of the Garter, Knight of our most ancient and most noble Order of the Thistle, Knight of our most illustrious Order of Saint Patrick, Knight Grand Cross of our Royal Victorian Order, by the advice of our Council, do give and grant, by the tenor of these presents, unto the said George Frederick Ernest Albert, Duke of Cornwall and York, full power in our name to begin and hold the first Parliament of our said Commonwealth of Australia, and to open and declare and cause to be opened and declared the causes of holding the same, and to do everything which for Us and by Us shall be therein to be done. Willing that Our said Son shall hereby carry to Our said Parliament and people Our Royal Message of Goodwill and assurance of Our earnest prayer for the blessing of Almighty God on the Union of Our Dominions in Australia, in one Federal Commonwealth, under the crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; commanding, also, by the tenor of these presents, with the assent of Our said Council, as well, all and every, the said Governor-General, Senators, and Representatives of our Commonwealth of Australia, as all others whom it concerns, to meet in Our said Parliament, that to the same George Frederick Ernest Albert, Duke of Cornwall and York, they diligently intend, in the premises, in the form aforesaid;

“And we do further direct and enjoin that these, Our Letters Patent, shall be read and proclaimed at such place or places as Our said Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief shall think fit, within Our said Commonwealth of Australia.

“In witness whereof We have caused these, Our Letters, to be made patent.

“Witness Ourselves, at Westminster, the twenty-third day of February, in the First Year of Our Reign.

“By the King Himself.

“Signed with His Own Hand.

Muir Mackenzie “EDWARD R. and I.”

## **MESSAGES FROM THE KING.**

The message from His Majesty the King, delivered by His Royal Highness the Duke of Cornwall and York, was:-

**“GENTLEMEN OF THE SENATE, and “GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.**

“My beloved and deeply-lamented grandmother, Queen Victoria, had desired to mark the importance of the opening of this the first Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, and to manifest her special interest in all that concerns the welfare of her loyal subjects in Australia, by granting to me a special commission to open the first session.

“That commission had been duly signed before the sad event which has plunged the whole Empire into mourning, and the King, my dear father, fully sharing her late Majesty’s wishes, decided to give effect to them, although His Majesty stated, on the occasion of his opening his first Parliament, that a separation from his son as such a time could not be otherwise than deeply painful to him.

“His Majesty has been pleased to consent to this separation, moved by his sense of the loyalty and devotion which prompted the generous aid afforded by all the colonies in the South African War, both in its earlier and more recent stages, and of the splendid bravery of the colonial troops. It is also His Majesty’s wish to acknowledge the readiness with which the ships of the Special Australasian Squadron were placed at his disposal for service in China, and the valuable assistance rendered there by the Naval Contingents of the several colonies.

“His Majesty further desired in this way to testify to his heartfelt gratitude for the warm sympathy extended by every part of his dominions to himself and his family in the irreparable loss they have sustained by the death of his beloved mother.

“His Majesty has watched with the deepest interest the social and material progress made by His people in Australia, and has seen with thankfulness and heartfelt satisfaction the completion of that political union of which this Parliament is the embodiment.

“The King is satisfied that the wisdom and patriotism which have characterised the exercise of the wide powers of self-government hitherto enjoyed by the colonies will continue to be displayed in the exercise of the still wider powers with which the united Commonwealth has been endowed. His Majesty feels assured that the enjoyment of these powers will, if possible, enhance that loyalty and devotion to his throne and Empire of which the people of Australia have already given such signal proofs.

“It is His Majesty’s earnest prayer that this union so happily achieved may, under God’s blessing, prove an instrument for still further promoting the welfare and advancement of his subjects in Australia, and for the strengthening and consolidation of his Empire.

**“GENTLEMEN OF THE SENATE, and “GENTLEMEN OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

“It affords me much pleasure to convey to you this message from His Majesty. I now, in his name, and on his behalf, declare this Parliament open.”

## **TELEGRAM FROM THE KING.**

His Royal Highness read the following telegram from His Majesty the King:-

“My thoughts are with you on the day of the important ceremony. Most fervently do I wish Australia prosperity and great happiness.”

## **REPLY TO THE KING.**

The following telegram was despatched by His Royal Highness the Duke of Cornwall and York to His Majesty the King immediately after the opening ceremony:

“I have just delivered your message, and, in your name, declared open the first Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. I also read your kind telegram of good wishes, which is deeply appreciated by your loving Australian subjects, and was received with great enthusiasm. Splendid and impressive ceremony, over 12,000 people in Exhibition Building.”

### **MESSAGE FROM THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.**

When the newly-elected President of the Federal Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives were presented to His Excellency the Governor-General at the old Treasury Buildings, Lord Hopetoun intimated to them, and to the members of the Commonwealth Legislature who were present, that he had received the subjoined message from the Secretary of State for the Colonies:-

“His Majesty’s Government welcomes the new Parliament that to-day takes its place among the great legislative bodies of the British Empire, and they feel confident that it will be a faithful interpreter of the aspirations of a free and loyal people, and they trust that its deliberations will promote the happiness, prosperity, and unity of the whole continent of Australia.”

The message was subsequently read in both Houses of the Federal Parliament and received with cheers.