

1883.

—  
VICTORIA.

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# AUSTRALASIAN CONVENTION

ON

ANNEXATION OF ADJACENT ISLANDS

AND

# FEDERATION OF AUSTRALASIA.

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PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

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CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING AUSTRALASIAN CONVENTION ON  
ANNEXATION OF ADJACENT ISLANDS AND FEDERATION OF  
AUSTRALASIA.

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P. 386.  
E.C.—83/181.

Queensland,  
Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Brisbane, 17th July, 1883.

SIR,

I have the honour to forward to you the enclosed copy of an Extract from the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Executive Council of this Colony, of this date, embodying a memorandum by myself on the refusal of the Imperial Government to confirm the recent annexation of the Island of New Guinea, and to request that you will be good enough to favour me with the views of your Government thereupon, and to take such steps as you may consider necessary to move the Imperial Government to an early reconsideration of their decision against the annexation of this valuable territory.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

THOMAS McILWRAITH.

THE HONORABLE  
THE PREMIER,  
VICTORIA.

NEW GUINEA.

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF  
QUEENSLAND.

At Government House, Brisbane, 17 July, 1883.

PRESENT :

His Excellency the Administrator of the Government in Council.

His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, at the instance of the Honorable the Colonial Secretary, lays before the Council the following Memorandum by the Premier on the refusal of the Imperial Government to confirm the annexation of New Guinea, and recommends that the same be approved :—

MEMORANDUM BY THE PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND ON THE REFUSAL OF THE IMPERIAL  
GOVERNMENT TO CONFIRM THE ANNEXATION OF NEW GUINEA.

The decision arrived at by Her Majesty's Government in reference to the annexation of New Guinea seems to me to justify some decided and concerted action on the part of the Australian colonies. It is scarcely necessary to refer at any length to the previous correspondence on the subject, or to the repeated representations in connexion with it which have been made to the Imperial Government.

It seems to me right that reference should be made to the various reasons assigned for this refusal. In 1875, Lord Carnarvon, while not discouraging the idea of extensive annexation, assigned as one reason why he could not act on the representations of the Australian Colonies, that the British taxpayer could not and would

not bear the expenditure. Lord Derby advances the same reason now. He adds to this other reasons—the enormous extent of the territory, the unknown character of the interior, and the hostility of the natives. These objections may be easily combated. The expense need not be great, and we now know that the Australian Colonies will undertake this expense, or share it with Her Majesty's Government, if required to do so. As for the natives, the Dutch have not interfered with the aborigines in that part of New Guinea claimed by them, and their claim costs them nothing. They wait, and simply hold the country as against any other Power. There would be no difficulty in our doing single-handed, in that part of New Guinea contiguous to our shores, a great deal more than the Dutch have done during the last fifty years in the North-Western portion of the island. Queensland has simply been desirous that New Guinea should not fall into the hands of a foreign Power, and that the requisite authority should be exercised over those adventurers who frequent the shores of that island. Experience in Torres Straits has already proved valuable in this respect. The "beachcombers" who frequented the islands of Murray and Darnley have taken themselves off since the annexation of these islands to Queensland territory. What was effected in Torres Straits could have been carried out with perfect ease on the mainland of New Guinea. All that was required was the acceptance of the proclamation. I still think that it ought to have been accepted, and I hope that the Australian Colonies will, by their several and united representations, urge upon Her Majesty's Government a reconsideration of their decision.

But there can be no doubt that the refusal to annex New Guinea, together with the possible acquisition by foreign Powers of some of the Pacific Islands contiguous to Australia, does raise very serious questions intimately connected with the future interests of the Australasian Colonies. If Her Majesty's Government does not feel that the annexation of New Guinea, or of the islands adjacent to Australia, is of so much importance to the Empire at large as it is to the Australian Colonies, let some means be devised by which those islands may be held and governed for the benefit of the Australian people. The step taken by the Queensland Government in causing a formal claim to be made over New Guinea, was done in the interests not only of Queensland, but of all the Australian Colonies, and in the interests of the natives of New Guinea, who ought to be protected by some lawful authority from contact with the lawless adventurers who are too often a law to themselves. That also which is for the advantage of this country, is surely for the advantage of Great Britain. The middle island of New Zealand was won for Great Britain by a timely act of annexation. In the last century, similar timely acts of annexation won large portions of America for the Anglo-Saxon race. Why, then, should not Queensland be permitted, with the sanction of Her Majesty's Government, to assist in carrying out this national and beneficial policy? If, then, the real reason for the refusal to annex New Guinea be, not the expense, but the difficulty of providing for the government and protection of the native races, might not this be met by the sanction and authority of the united Colonies? Some justification, it has been often said, is required for federation—may it not be found in this exigency?

I submit that a case has arisen which may be made use of to call into existence the higher forms of government required to give effect to this policy of annexation. The Australian Colonies are now united by sentiments of filial regard and devotion to the British Empire, though they are not represented in the British Legislature. The Imperial Parliament dominates the whole Empire, and the Colonies are not represented in that Parliament, though their interests may be vitally affected by its decisions. It is not possible to give authoritative effect to the wishes of the people of Australia in anything beyond their own domestic interests, except through the intervention of Her Majesty's Government.

The circumstances of the present case seem to point to a necessity for combination among the Australian Colonies—a combination for both legislative and executive purposes. Australian interests are involved in securing the peaceful and progressive supremacy of Australian influences in the adjoining seas. In order to effect this, it is necessary that there should not only be sentiments held in common, but that a form of Government should be provided capable of giving expression to these sentiments. The federation of the Australian Colonies may thus be forwarded. Here is work for the united Colonies to do, if they can be got to unite. I suggest that a convention of delegates should be held to discuss the basis upon which a Federal Government could be constituted.

This, I believe, was the form adopted in Canada previous to the constitution of the Dominion Parliament. May not this example be followed here? The Dominion Government has added largely to the influence and the national integrity of Canada. It seems probable that a similar form of government adapted to the special requirements of Australia would give life to national aspirations here, without repressing the autonomous Governments of the respective Colonies. To it would properly belong the discussion of such measures as are necessary for the consolidation and security of Australian interests, as well as for the government of these outlying islands in the Pacific, which, at present, are not claimed by any civilized power.

I think, therefore, that there ought, in the first place, to be representations from all the Australian Colonies, urging upon Her Majesty's Government a reconsideration of their decision as regards New Guinea; and, in the next place, Her Majesty's Government should be invited to move in the direction of providing for a form of Federal Government suitable for the Australian Colonies. I propose that this memorandum should be embodied in an Executive Minute, and forwarded both to Her Majesty's Government and to the Governments of the respective Australian Colonies for their consideration, and for such action as they may deem expedient.

T. McILWRAITH.

10th July, 1883.

The Council deliberate and advise as recommended. Immediate action.

A. V. DRURY,  
Clerk of the Executive Council.

No. 241.

Premier's Office,  
Melbourne, 25th July, 1883.

SIR,

I have the honour, by direction of the Premier, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th inst., No. 181, transmitting an Extract from the Proceedings of the Executive Council of Queensland, embodying a memorandum by yourself on the refusal of the Imperial Government to confirm the annexation of New Guinea.

I am to express to you the pleasure with which Mr. Service has received your letter, and to state that it will have early consideration.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

E. J. THOMAS,  
SECRETARY TO THE PREMIER.

THE HONORABLE  
THE PREMIER,  
BRISBANE.

TELEGRAM.

No. 258.

Premier's Office,  
Melbourne, 26th July, 1883.

TO THE HON. SIR THOS. McILWRAITH,  
BRISBANE.

Thanks for your memorandum. This Government concurs generally with it. Agree in proposal for Convention of Delegates. Also, that representations be made by Colonies urging reconsideration of decision respecting New Guinea. Suggest Convention be held in Melbourne.

JAMES SERVICE,  
PREMIER.

P. 448. TELEGRAM.

THE HON. JAS. SERVICE, PREMIER.

Dated Brisbane, 27th July, 1883.

I have not yet had a reply from other Colonies. I think the Convention should be held in Melbourne, and that you should call it. A general election is about to take place here. I think I will be able to leave this for Melbourne after the 21st August. Don't fix the time before that. We cannot extradite French escapees without the assistance of the French authorities. Hitherto that assistance has been given; now it is refused. We have consequently been compelled to allow French escapees to go at large. I have cabled home to this effect.

THOS. McILWRAITH.

No. 279.

TELEGRAM.

Premier's Office,  
Melbourne, 30th July, 1883.

THE HON. SIR THOS. McILWRAITH,  
BRISBANE.

Your telegram of 27th received. Notice some date after 21st August would suit you; also that you agree Melbourne should be meeting place, and, further, that I should convene. This honour belongs to you, and I see no reason why you should decline. At same time I shall be happy to forward the movement in this or any other way. I suppose other Colonies will advise you by wire. Let me know from time to time their answers. Letter by post.

JAMES SERVICE,  
PREMIER.

P. 484. TELEGRAM.

THE HON. JAMES SERVICE, PREMIER.

Dated Brisbane, 31st July, 1883.

I believe you will forward the movement by consenting to convene, and I will cheerfully respond to your call. Thanks for the honour you propose doing, but I have fully considered the matter, and ask you to act. I have heard from none of the other Colonies yet.

THOS. McILWRAITH.

No. 290.

Premier's Office,  
Melbourne, 31st July, 1883.

SIR,

You will have received before this my letter of the 25th instant, expressing the pleasure with which I had received yours of the 17th idem, No. 181, stating the steps which you considered should be taken consequent on the refusal of the Imperial Government to confirm the annexation of New Guinea.

With reference to the Extract from the Minutes of the Executive Council of Queensland, enclosed in your letter, my telegram of the 26th will already have apprised you of the general concurrence of this Government in the sentiments and views of your memorandum, which forms the gist of the Executive Council Minute referred to. I now beg to confirm the statement of the telegram, and to remark a little more in detail on your Memorandum.

The subject naturally divides into two branches—

- (1.) The refusal of the Imperial Government to annex New Guinea, and
- (2.) The necessity for Federation, which the position of the Colonies under that refusal renders so peculiarly apparent.

With regard to the first of these two heads, I beg to inform you that I have addressed to His Excellency the Governor of this Colony a despatch, in which I have requested him to be so good as to convey to the Right Honorable the Secretary of



State for the Colonies an expression of the profound regret of this Government at the decision respecting New Guinea and our earnest desire for a reconsideration of that decision. I enclose herewith, for your information, a copy of the despatch in question.\*

I notice, however, that your memorandum only slightly alludes to the annexation of other islands than New Guinea. I submit for the consideration of your Government that the annexation of the other islands—the movement for which has been strongly taken up by Victoria—is not of less importance to Australian interests than that of New Guinea; and I suggest that the annexation of the whole chain of islands from New Guinea to Fiji, including the New Hebrides, New Ireland, and New Britain, should form one object in the united efforts of the Colonies.

Coming now to the even larger question of Australian Federation, I beg to assure you of the cordial sympathy not only of myself personally, but of this Government as a whole, in the views that your Memorandum expresses. Australian Federation is an event which has indeed long been foreseen, but it is the feeling of this Government, concurrently with your own, that the time has now come for action in this direction, and that events have happened which render that action now opportune.

The Intercolonial Conferences which it has become almost a custom to hold, however beneficial their deliberations may have been, lack the legal *status* and authority necessary for dealing in a definitive way with any national question such as that of the Annexation of New Guinea and the Pacific Islands.

I have the pleasure of expressing to you the full concurrence of this Government, in the suggestion of your Memorandum that a Convention of delegates should be held to discuss the basis upon which a Federal Government might be constituted.

I observe that your Memorandum suggests that in this matter the Imperial Government should be moved in the direction of providing for a form of Federal Government for Australia. I admit that it would add weight to the resolutions of such a Convention to meet under the sanction of Imperial authority; and I am aware that this was the course taken in establishing the Dominion of Canada; but it seems to me that this is not essential. Any determination come to by the Convention must afterwards form matter for legislation, and therefore would necessarily be only tentative.

If, however, it be deemed desirable that the Convention should have Imperial sanction for its proceedings, that sanction could be telegraphed for.

I shall be glad to learn your views as to—

- (1.) The number of delegates which should be sent from the several Colonies.
- (2.) How those delegates should be appointed, and whether the same mode of appointment should be followed in each Colony.

Should Parliament in any Colony be in Session at the proposed date of the Convention, the occasion may possibly be considered of sufficient importance to warrant a special adjournment, so as to permit of the attendance of leading public men.

In my telegram to you, I have suggested that the Convention should meet in Melbourne. I made the suggestion in the interests of the Delegates from the other Colonies, whose convenience would in all probability be best met by the holding of the Convention in Melbourne.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

JAMES SERVICE,

PREMIER.

P.S.—While preparing this letter, I have received and replied to your telegram of the 27th instant. I thank you for your suggestion that I should convene the meeting of delegates, but, as I stated in my telegram of yesterday, I feel that you are entitled to that honour.

I shall be obliged if you will apprise me from time to time of any further steps taken in this matter.

J. S.

THE HONORABLE SIR THOS. McILWRAITH, K.C.M.G., M.P.,

PREMIER,

&c., &c., &c.,

BRISBANE.

\* The despatch here referred to has already been printed, and forms part of Parliamentary Paper No. 23, of this Session.

P. 526.

Premier's Office,  
Hobart, 3rd August, 1883.

SIR,

I have the honour to forward for your information a copy of the reply addressed by me on behalf of the Government of Tasmania, to the Premier of Queensland, in answer to his memorandum on the question of the Annexation of New Guinea, and the Assembly of a Federal Council or Convention to consider that and other questions.

I should feel obliged by receiving from you a copy of the answer sent by your Government to Sir T. McIlwraith's suggestions.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

THE HONORABLE  
THE PREMIER,  
MELBOURNE.

W. R. GIBLIN.

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(Enclosure to P. 526.)

Premier's Office,  
Hobart, 30th July, 1883.

SIR,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 17th instant, addressed to the Colonial Secretary, with reference to the proposed annexation of New Guinea, and enclosing a copy of a memorandum by you on the subject, dated the 10th July, approved by the Administrator in Council on the 17th July.

I have perused with much interest your memorandum, which deals with a subject which the Premier of Victoria has repeatedly brought under my notice during the past two months—although Mr. Service's action appears to have been directed with a view to secure the annexation, not of New Guinea only, but of the New Hebrides and other islands in the Pacific.

This Government is prepared to act in cordial unison with the other Australasian Colonies in making all urgent representations to Great Britain to induce the Imperial Authorities to prevent the occupation of either South-Western New Guinea or any of the at present unannexed Pacific Islands by any Foreign Power. The occupation of any of these places by a Foreign Government as a Penal Settlement would be in the highest degree objectionable; and their occupation, even for peaceful colonization, by any Continental Power would, in all probability, cause trouble to Queensland and New South Wales in the future. Now the interests of the Australasian Colonies are so far linked together that even a probability of future trouble or danger to one Colony is a sufficient reason for united action on the part of all. But the real difficulty of the case, to my mind, lies in this: That the question of what measures are expedient, or even possible to be taken, is one the determination of which must be left to Her Majesty's Ministers in England, and in coming to their decision they must necessarily be affected by larger considerations than those which present themselves to our minds, and their action may be limited by obligations of the nature of which we are uninformed, and of the extent of which we are ignorant. The question, therefore, whether the end we seek—viz., the prevention of annexation by any other Power—is only to be attained by an act of annexation on the part of England, or whether it may not be attained by diplomatic representations, is one that only English Ministers can settle, and it should be left in their hands. It is perfectly obvious that the Australasian Colonies, standing alone, are in no position to enter upon a policy of aggression; and that, apart from their position as a portion of the great English Empire, they could offer no effectual resistance to the occupation by France, Germany, or America of any one of the numerous islands which dot the Pacific, although the occupation of such island by a Foreign Government might justly be deemed fraught with menace to the future peacefulness of these Southern seas. But if we are dependent upon England for any effective check to what we regard as foreign encroachment, is it wise, or even becoming, to assume a semi-hostile position to the Imperial Authorities because, on our first approach to the Queen's Advisers, we do not at once get all we ask? I cannot but believe, in view of the strong language that has been used as to this question of annexation, and of the impatience of control which the proposed action indicates, that the Assembly of a Federal Council or Convention at the present time for the purpose of expressing more forcibly and more collectively our dissatisfaction with the decision of Her Majesty's Ministers, and our opinion of the unwisdom of their action, would be the beginning of difficulties the end of which I do not profess to be able to foresee.

The mere question of the expense of governing any new dependency is, I venture to think, of secondary consideration. Shared among the Colonies it would not be burdensome, and probably Tasmania's share would be comparatively trifling. My objection to the course suggested is rather that it appears to me that we are going too fast and too far; that we are subordinating Imperial to Colonial interests, and assuming an incapacity or an unwillingness on the part of Great Britain to defend us from the evils which we dread, for which there does not seem to be any sufficient warrant.

For these reasons this Government is not prepared to do more than to join in urging Her Majesty to take such effectual steps as the wisdom of her Advisers may suggest to prevent the occupation of New Guinea or the Pacific Islands by any Foreign Power.

I have the honour to be, Sir,  
Your obedient servant,

THE HONORABLE  
THE PREMIER,  
QUEENSLAND.

W. R. GIBLIN.

No. 455.

Premier's Office,  
Melbourne, 25th August, 1883.

SIR,

I beg to thank you for the courtesy of communicating to me by your letter of the 3rd instant, a copy of your reply to Sir Thomas McIlwraith's circular letter, respecting the refusal of the Imperial Government to ratify the annexation of New Guinea, and I have much pleasure in complying with your request to be furnished with a copy of my reply to the Queensland memorandum, and I accordingly beg to enclose one herewith.

With reference to your own letter, permit me to express the earnest hope that the objections you state are not of so fixed and serious a character as to prevent your ultimately joining in the Convention proposed by Queensland, and agreed to by the other Colonies. As your principal difficulty seems to be a supposed unfriendliness to the Imperial Government in the proposed course of action, I trust it will sufficiently remove this objection to point out that the proposal to federate, and that in connexion with the desired annexation of the islands, is accepted in quite a different light by the Imperial authorities themselves.

It is reported that Lord Derby, in the despatch in which he declines to confirm the annexation of New Guinea, definitely expresses the hope that steps will speedily be taken by the several Australian Governments to bring about the general federation of the Colonies. From this it is evident that the federation of the Colonies is regarded by the Imperial Government as a solution rather than a raising of difficulties.

With this explanation I trust that you will see your way to take part in the proposed Convention. I am accordingly sending you by this post a circular inviting the nomination of delegates to the Convention.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed) JAMES SERVICE,

PREMIER.

THE HONORABLE

THE PREMIER,

HOBART.

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(P. 610.)

E.C.—83/197.

Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Brisbane, 9th August, 1883.

SIR,

I have the honour, by direction of the Premier, who is absent at Bundaberg, to forward to you the enclosed copies of letters (with enclosures) which have been received from the Colonial Secretaries of New South Wales and Tasmania,\* in reply to Sir Thomas McIlwraith's memorandum on the refusal of the Imperial Government to confirm the annexation of New Guinea.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

(for the Colonial Secretary)

R. J. GRAY,

UNDER COLONIAL SECRETARY.

THE HONORABLE

THE PREMIER OF

VICTORIA.

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\* Note.—For the letter from Tasmania see page 10, *ante*.

(Enclosure to P. 610.)

(Copy.)

Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Sydney, 31st July, 1883.

SIR,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 17th instant, communicating to me the views of your Government, as expressed in a minute of your Executive Council, upon the refusal of the Imperial Government to confirm the annexation of New Guinea.

In reply, I desire at the outset to assure you that I deprecate as much as any one that New Guinea should ever be taken possession of by any foreign Power, as it not only would tend to cripple the trade in Torres Straits, which has proved a beneficial enterprise both to your colony and to ours, but would at all times, and especially in European conflict, be highly inconvenient and menacing to the whole Australian group.

Holding this view, I had no hesitation in sending, in April last, instructions to our Agent-General to state to Lord Derby that this colony viewed with the utmost favour the annexation of New Guinea by the British Crown in place of permitting any foreign Power to take possession of it or obtain further footing therein.

While strongly holding these views, I am not altogether surprised at the attitude taken by Lord Derby, because it seems to me that, while deeply impressed yourself with the danger to be apprehended of immediate foreign aggressive movement upon the island, you have not very definitely shown to Lord Derby the grounds for your fears, but have urged him to accept your strong feelings as evidencing the fact rather than submitted definite proofs of the facts themselves, or pointed out sufficient overt acts of any foreign Power upon which he could come to the same conviction as yourself.

I take a somewhat different view from you with regard to the expense of annexation. It is contrary to the English genius of colonization to be content with exhibiting the mere nominal symbol of her flag. When England annexes, she must govern—she must rule. She cannot be content with the *laissez faire* system which you point out as having been followed by the Dutch—not interfering with the aborigines, but waiting and simply holding the country as against any other Power. It seems to me, therefore, to be unwise to brush aside the matter of expense as a mere fancy. It should, on the contrary, be fairly looked at, and a division suggested as to the proportions to be borne by the countries interested; the Imperial interests are probably as great as the Australian, and the colonies would doubtless respond to any liberal basis for its apportionment.

I have always looked upon the question of federation as one which would not probably assume a definite shape until the outward pressure of some common danger compelled the various colonies to sink many minor differences and jealousies in the necessity for combined action for common safety. Whether such danger exists in the present refusal by the Imperial Government to recognise the action you have taken with regard to New Guinea, I feel hardly called upon at present to decide, but I gladly accede to your suggestion that the question of federation should be discussed by the colonies, and if it be considered that the present is a fitting time, then that such discussion should take the form of putting forward the basis on which a Federal Government could be constituted.

This Government is also prepared to accede to your request to urge upon the Imperial Government that it is desirable that the question of Annexation be reconsidered, and with that view I have addressed a letter inviting His Excellency Lord Augustus Loftus to lay our views before the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and of such letter I beg to hand you a copy.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

THE HONORABLE  
THE COLONIAL SECRETARY  
OF QUEENSLAND,

BRISBANE.

(Signed) ALEX. STUART.

*(Sub-enclosure to P. 610.)*Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Sydney, 1 August, 1883.

MY LORD,

I have the honour to address you on the subject of New Guinea Annexation, with the view of inviting Your Excellency to convey to the Secretary of State for the Colonies the views of this Government.

2. I beg to enclose a copy of a communication received from Sir Thomas McIlwraith, with a minute of the Executive Council of Queensland, and of my reply thereto.

3. I would respectfully urge a reconsideration of the question by the Imperial Government, because that, although I am not prepared to say that there was an imminent prospect of New Guinea being taken possession of by any foreign Power, yet I do fear now that the prominence which has been given to the subject will, of itself, cause some nation to take it up as a strong strategic point in the future domination in these seas.

4. From its close proximity to the northern part of Queensland, and from the control over that important highway of commerce, Torres Straits, which would be given to any possession of the southern shores of New Guinea, its occupation by a foreign nation might be, in the event of European war, most disastrous to Australia, and therefore to British interests.

5. I was at one time inclined to think that a protectorate of the southern coast would have been sufficient ; and even yet it may be so, if its effect would be to keep any other nation from obtaining a footing ; but if a protectorate be inefficient for that purpose, it would be better to accept the annexation, so that there might be no ground for the future disquiet arising from foreign settlements so close upon our shores.

I have, etc.,

HIS EXCELLENCY

THE RIGHT HONORABLE

LORD AUGUSTUS LOFTUS, G.C.B.,  
&c., &c.

(Signed) ALEX. STUART.

No. 450.	{	TO PREMIER,	{	BRISBANE, SYDNEY, ADELAIDE, HOBART, WELLINGTON.
CIRCULAR.		AND TO COLONIAL SECRETARY,		{

Premier's Office,  
Melbourne, 25th August, 1883.

SIR,

With reference to Sir Thomas McIlwraith's circular letter, enclosing a Minute of the Executive Council of Queensland, in which it is proposed that some concerted action should be taken, consequent on the refusal of the Imperial Government to annex New Guinea, and that a Convention of Delegates from the Colonies should be held "to discuss the basis on which a Federal Government could be constituted," I have the honour to inform you, that at the special request of Sir Thomas McIlwraith, Premier of Queensland, I have consented to act in the capacity of Convener of the proposed Assembly of Delegates.

Having learned that all the Colonies have replied to Sir Thomas McIlwraith's circular, I now write with a view to ascertain what date would best suit the convenience of the various Colonies ; and, as a means of eliciting this, I beg to communicate my own suggestion, that the Convention should meet in Melbourne at a period in the ensuing month, say on the 25th proximo. According to the information before me as to the sittings of the Parliaments in the different Colonies, this period would, for the convenience of the majority, be the most suitable, at least of any period within a reasonable time.

I beg also to suggest the desirability of giving this Convention a higher *status* than that of the Intercolonial Conferences hitherto held to discuss comparatively subordinate topics, and with this view I propose that the number of delegates should be four from each Colony, and that these delegates should be of as generally representative a character as possible, of course any one Colony having the option of sending a less number, if that should be more convenient.

I propose sending a telegram to anticipate the arrival of this letter, in order to facilitate the despatch of an early reply. I shall be obliged if you will similarly communicate by telegraph your answer.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

JAMES SERVICE,

PREMIER.

THE HONORABLE  
THE PREMIER.

P. 716. TELEGRAM.

THE HONORABLE THE PREMIER OF VICTORIA.

Sydney, 25th August, 1883.

Impossible for me to be in Melbourne on 25th September. Will reply more fully on Monday.

ALEXANDER STUART,

COL. SEC.

No. 479.

Premier's Office,

Melbourne, 27th August, 1883.

SIR,

With reference to the correspondence that has passed on the subject of the Annexation of islands in the Pacific Ocean, it will probably be within your knowledge that the confirmation of the annexation of New Guinea has been refused by the Imperial Government.

I now beg to transmit for your information a copy of a memorandum consequent upon that event, which has been issued by the Hon. Sir Thomas McIlwraith, Premier of Queensland, in which he suggests the holding of a Convention of Delegates from the Australasian Colonies, to consider the desirability of making further representations respecting the islands, and also to make it the occasion of discussing the basis on which a Federal Government for Australia could be constituted. This proposal has met with the concurrence of all the Colonies possessing responsible government, and at Sir Thomas McIlwraith's special request, I have consented to act as Convener of the proposed Assembly of Delegates.

My object in now writing is to thus state the position of the matter, and to say that it would be a most welcome event if Western Australia, notwithstanding the difference of her political position, could be represented at the proposed Convention. From the fact that the Secretary of State for the Colonies has himself suggested the federation of the Colonies in connexion with this question of the annexation of the islands, I am encouraged to think that the co-operation of Western Australia in the proposed Convention would be readily sanctioned by the Imperial Government.

I am accordingly addressing to you by the present mail the same circular which I have sent to the Premiers of the other Colonies.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

JAMES SERVICE,

PREMIER.

THE HONORABLE  
THE COLONIAL SECRETARY,  
PERTH, W.A.

P. 726. TELEGRAM.

THE HONORABLE THE PREMIER.

Dated Perth, 27th August, 1883.

The Government of Western Australia readily accept your invitation to take part in the proposed Convention.

COLONIAL SECRETARY.

P. 750.

Sydney, 27th August, 1883.

MY DEAR MR. SERVICE,

I received on Saturday your telegram asking me if 25th September would suit me to meet in Melbourne representatives from the other Colonies. I replied that it would not, but that I would write you to-day.

On Saturday night I received your second telegram, suggesting that to suit South Australia or Tasmania it should be end of October or beginning of November.

I regret to say that none of these times will suit us. Our Parliament meets early in October, and as our Land Bill is the first measure that will occupy our attention, and it is of overwhelming interest to this Colony, it will be quite impossible that any Minister can be absent at the time indicated by you.

Nor am I able at present to name a time, as our movements or arrangements must be guided by the mode in which our measure is received by Parliament.

Regretting that I am not able to give you a more satisfactory reply,

I remain,

Yours very truly,

ALEX. STUART.

THE HONORABLE JAMES SERVICE, M.P.

TELEGRAM.

No. 496.

Premier's Office,

THE HONORABLE

Melbourne, 31st August, 1883.

ALEX. STUART, PREMIER,

SYDNEY.

Would holding Convention in Sydney help out of present difficulty? I am prepared to ask our Parliament to adjourn for a fortnight if necessary, end of September or beginning of October.

JAMES SERVICE,

PREMIER.

P. 770.

TELEGRAM.

THE PREMIER OF VICTORIA.

Dated Sydney, 31st August, 1883.

Be assured we have no desire to put a damper on views or wishes of the other Colonies. Your telegram to-day removes our difficulty of interfering with meeting of our Parliament, but apparently November suits South Australia and Tasmania better; moreover, Constitutional difficulty appears to us to exist regarding Queensland joining at present time, as her Government is under appeal to country. She was first to move in this matter, and her interests are perhaps more involved in New Guinea Annexation Question than those of any other Colony.

ALEX. STUART,

COLONIAL SECRETARY.

P. 818.

Premier's Office,

Hobart, 31st August, 1883.

SIR,

In reply to your (circular) letter, No. 452, of the 25th instant, I telegraphed you yesterday to the effect that this Government was desirous of taking part in the Conference proposed to be held at Melbourne shortly, if the date of meeting was such that delegates from this Colony could find it practicable to attend.



Confirming this telegram, I would now explain that our Parliament is at present in session, and that, using all expedition, its labours can hardly be expected to be concluded in less than five or six weeks from the present time. The inconveniences attendant upon prolonged adjournment would be in this Colony so great that it would not be expedient to adjourn the sittings of the Legislature for the purpose of enabling delegates to attend the proposed Conference, so that if the suggested date of meeting (25th September) is adhered to, this Government would reluctantly be compelled to be unrepresented on the occasion.

Should it be found practicable to fix, say the second week in October or any later date, for the proposed meeting, we shall be happy to make arrangements for delegates from Tasmania to attend. I understand that New Zealand proposes to send two delegates only, and, therefore, as at present advised, should propose that only two delegates should attend on the part of Tasmania. If, however, all the other Colonies agree to send four, and you attach any importance to the number being made larger than usual, this point can be reconsidered.

I have the honour to be,  
SIR,  
Your obedient servant,

W. R. GIBLIN.

THE HONORABLE  
THE PREMIER,  
MELBOURNE.

No. 542.

Premier's Office,  
Melbourne, 6th September, 1883.

SIR,

It will probably be within your knowledge that considerable correspondence has taken place between the various Governments of Australasia and the Imperial Government, respecting the Annexation of the island of New Guinea, and indeed of all the islands lying between New Guinea and Fiji, including the New Hebrides, New Ireland, and New Britain.

The refusal of the Imperial Government to ratify Queensland's action in taking possession of New Guinea was accompanied by a suggestion on the part of the Secretary of State for the Colonies that the Australasian Colonies should combine together in respect of such questions and for other purposes of government.

The Honorable Sir Thos. McIlwraith, Premier of Queensland, has adopted this idea, and has thereupon circulated among the other Australasian Colonies a Minute of the Executive Council of Queensland, embodying a memorandum by himself, in which he suggests the holding of a Convention to consider the desirability of making further representations respecting the islands, and to discuss the basis on which a Federal Government for Australasia could be constituted. This proposal has met with the concurrence of all the Colonies of Australasia possessing representative Government, and also of the Crown Colony of Western Australia. At Sir Thomas McIlwraith's special request I have consented to act as Convener of the proposed Assembly of Delegates.

My object in now writing is to say that it will be a very welcome event if Fiji can also be represented at the proposed Convention. From the fact that the Secretary of State for the Colonies has himself suggested the federation of the Colonies in connexion with this question, I am encouraged to think that the co-operation of Fiji in the proposed Convention would be readily sanctioned by the Imperial Government. I am accordingly addressing to you by the present mail the same circular which I have sent to the other Colonies.

It has been arranged that the proposed Convention shall meet in Sydney. The date has not yet been decided upon, but will be communicated to you as early as possible.

I have the honour to be,  
SIR,  
Your most obedient servant,

(Signed) JAMES SERVICE,  
PREMIER.

THE HONORABLE  
THE COLONIAL SECRETARY,  
FIJI.



CIRCULAR.

Premier's Office,  
Melbourne, 11th Sept., 1883.

SIR,

My circular letter of the 25th of August was written with a view to ascertain what date would best suit the various Australasian Colonies for the meeting of the Convention, which Sir Thomas McIlwraith, the Premier of Queensland, proposed should be held to discuss the two questions of the annexation of adjacent islands and the federation of the Australasian Colonies.

No. 591. Bris-  
bane.  
No. 592. Sydney.  
No. 593. Ade-  
laide.  
No. 594. Perth.  
No. 595. Hobart.  
No. 596. Wel-  
lington.  
No. 597. Fiji.

I have been since that date in constant telegraphic correspondence on this subject with the different Australasian Governments, and the result is, as already announced to you by my telegram of the 7th instant, that on collating the advices from the different Colonies, I am enabled to name the last week in November as the time most convenient for the meeting of the proposed Convention.

My telegram of the 7th instant will also have informed you that to meet the convenience of the Sydney Government, who could not name any day on which it would be convenient for them to send delegates to Melbourne, I had suggested that Sydney should be the meeting-place. This has accordingly been arranged.

The precise date for the meeting of the Convention will be announced later on.

I beg now formally to invite your Government to appoint delegates to represent your Colony.

I find a slight difference of opinion amongst the Colonial Governments as to the number of delegates which should be appointed—some proposing four, some two. In my letter of the 25th August I suggested that each Colony should send four delegates. My reason for this was, that, on so important an occasion, it seemed desirable that the delegation from each Colony should be thoroughly and fairly representative, not only of that party which may be at present in power, but of all parties.

A precedent for this is found in the history of the formation of the Dominion of Canada, on which occasion parties and party leaders who had been long opposed coalesced for the purpose of forming that Federal Government which has so much enhanced the prosperity and importance of the Colonies united under it.

In view of the attention which this movement has received from the Imperial Government, as well as from the English press and people, it seems to me especially desirable that the importance of the present occasion should not be under-estimated, and I feel that it would add greatly to the weight of the Convention's determinations if it were made a thoroughly representative body.

It is of course a question for each Colony to decide how many delegates it will send.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

JAMES SERVICE,

PREMIER.

THE HONORABLE  
THE PREMIER,

{ BRISBANE,  
SYDNEY,  
ADELAIDE,  
HOBART,  
WELLINGTON.

THE HONORABLE  
THE COLONIAL SECRETARY,

{ PERTH,  
FIJI.

P. 974

Office of Colonial Secretary,  
Sydney, 18th September, 1883.

SIR,

*Re* ANNEXATION OF ADJACENT ISLANDS AND FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN  
COLONIES.

The time which you have ascertained by telegraphic communication with the other Colonies to be the most suitable one for the assembling of the proposed Convention will meet the convenience of this Government, and I await the announcement of the precise date, which you will, doubtless, make as early as you may be enabled to do so.

2. With reference to your invitation as to the appointment of Delegates, and the suggestion contained in your letter of the 25th August, that each Colony should send

four delegates, I desire to make a few observations, which I am the more anxious to make without delay, in order that you may clearly understand in what light I regard the proposition.

3. You explain your reason for suggesting so unusually large a number of representatives on the ground of the importance of the occasion, and the desirableness of securing a thoroughly representative character of the Convention, not only of the party which may be at present in power, but of all parties.

4. While reciprocating your desire that the importance of the present occasion should not be under-estimated, I am unable, on purely constitutional grounds, to give my immediate assent to a proposal which I should have supposed to have been unprecedented, had I not been informed by you that it had been sanctioned in the preliminary steps taken for the establishment of the Dominion of Canada.

5. It appears to me that a Minister would hardly be justified in exposing himself in such a Convention to the peril of being out-voted by the representatives of a party directly opposed to his Government ; and yet that might be the situation in which he would find himself if he nominated as representatives those who differed with him on leading questions of public policy. And, moreover, in the uncertainty of political affairs, it might very easily happen that in nominating men who in his judgment at the present time occupied representative positions, he might fail to select those who, in the order of events, would become his successors in the Government. And as I presume this is one of the main reasons by which a course so exceptional could alone be justified, if there is any doubt about the object being attained, the thing itself could not on any Constitutional ground be defended.

6. I feel sure that I should experience great difficulty in vindicating the adoption of a course of procedure which is certainly at variance with the principle of Ministerial responsibility ; and I am not quite satisfied that, were I convinced of the expediency of adopting it, I could make the necessary nominations, because of the great unwillingness of public men in this country to depart from well understood Constitutional principles.

7. I am so anxious that you should be saved from embarrassment in your very difficult negotiations that I deem it right to place you in possession of my views upon a proposal which is certainly novel, not without danger, and, as I think, somewhat impracticable.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

ALEX. STUART.

THE HONORABLE  
THE PREMIER OF VICTORIA,  
MELBOURNE.

No. 793.

Premier's Office,  
Melbourne, 9th October, 1883.

Re ANNEXATION OF ADJACENT ISLANDS AND FEDERATION OF AUSTRALASIAN  
COLONIES.

SIR,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 18th ultimo, in which you assent to the time named by me for the proposed Australasian Convention, and in which you deal with the proposal made in my letter of the 25th August, and further urged in my letter of the 11th September, that the number of Delegates from each Colony should be at least four—with a view to giving a fair representation of the whole Colony, not merely of the dominant political party.

2. I am glad to notice that, while stating your objections to this course, you only express your inability to give "immediate assent" thereto—from which I, with pleasure, infer that you are still open to approve of it, if, after a due consideration of the objections you urge, sufficient reasons can be shown in favour of my proposal. I therefore proceed to a consideration of the points of objection submitted by you.

3. You state that a Minister would hardly be justified in exposing himself to the peril of being out-voted in the Convention, by the representatives of a party

directly opposed to his Government. Now I do not see how this could possibly happen. In appointing representatives to the Convention, the Government of each Colony, representing, as it necessarily does, the majority in Parliament, would be justified, if it thought proper, in nominating a majority of representatives from its own party, or in selecting from the Opposition gentlemen whose views of the subject-matters of the Convention were known to accord with those of the Government. That being so, the vote of such Colony in the Convention (for, I presume, voting must be by Colonies, and not by individuals) would be determined according to the mind of the Government. This objection, therefore, disappears.

4. With regard to the course proposed by me being at variance with the principle of Ministerial responsibility and well understood Constitutional principles—it is requisite to bear in mind that the occasion is one not within the lines of ordinary Constitutional procedure, but is outside the sphere of domestic politics altogether. The Convention finds no place in our Parliamentary system, and so far from being a part of our Constitution, its very object is, to lay the basis of another Constitution—a Federal one. The occasion being thus exceptional, I think we must be prepared to admit modes of action which may indeed appear novel, but which may really be the best adapted to accomplish the object in view.

5. That the foregoing is the view which was taken by all the leading men in the British North American Provinces, without a single exception, is evidenced by the fact that each of the separate Colonies sent to the Convention at Charlottetown about an equal number of representatives from the Government and the Opposition. The Hon. Dr. Gray, in his *History of the Confederation*, says (Vol I., p. 29):—

“In order that the question of their union might as much as possible be removed beyond the pale of party conflict, the delegates to attend the Convention at Charlottetown were selected from the Liberal and Conservative ranks alike. Dr. Tupper, the leader of the Government of Nova Scotia, with his own colleague, Attorney-General Henry, and Mr. Dickey, a Conservative supporter, had included the Hons. Adams G. Archibald and Jonathan McCully, long and well-known leaders of the Liberal party; Mr. Tilley, the leader of the Government in New Brunswick, with his own colleagues, Messrs. Johnston and Steves, had included the Hons. Edward Barron Chandler and John Hamilton Gray, prominent and well-known leaders of the Conservative party there; whilst in Prince Edward Island, the Premier had, with equal consideration, selected the Island delegates from both sides of the House. The recommendations of the respective Governments were approved by the Lieutenant-Governors, and the Convention was opened in due form at Charlottetown, September 8th, in the Chamber of the House of Assembly.”

In the case of the Canadian Provinces, it was at first proposed that a Royal Commission should be formed to consist of an equal number of members of the Government and of the Opposition, and this was only set aside because the Opposition and the Government coalesced for the purpose of Confederation.

6. The case of the Canadian Dominion therefore furnishes a powerful precedent. There can be no doubt that the spectacle of a Convention representing the leading parties in each of the Colonies would have a much more imposing effect—because possessing a greater significance—than one based on party lines.

7. To regard a matter of this sort as in any sense a party one deprives it of all its special value. The fact of doing so would imply that there is a party in the Colony which is opposed to the objects of the Convention. If such exist, it may of course one day possess the ascendancy, and therefore the voice of a Convention based on party lines would, instead of being a National one, be merely the ephemeral utterance of the dominant party, and could not make the commanding claim to the attention of the mother-country which a really National Council could assert. Here in Victoria our Parliament is unanimous—without a single dissident. In New Zealand the case seems very much the same. In Queensland, I have reason to believe, and I most assuredly hope that that Colony will be represented by the leaders of both parties, and I hope that New South Wales and the other Colonies may see their way to follow suit.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

JAMES SERVICE,

PREMIER.

THE HONORABLE

THE PREMIER OF NEW SOUTH WALES,  
SYDNEY.

No. 760-765. TELEGRAM. (Over.)

No. 760-765.

## TELEGRAM.

THE HONORABLE THE PREMIER, BRISBANE.  
 " " SYDNEY.  
 " " ADELAIDE.  
 " " HOBART.  
 " " WELLINGTON.  
 " COLONIAL SECRETARY, PERTH.

Melbourne, 6th October, 1883.

Referring to my letter of 11th September, I now have the honour to announce Wednesday, the 28th November, as the day for the meeting, at Sydney, of the Convention respecting Annexation and Federation.

JAMES SERVICE.

PREMIER, MELBOURNE.

CIRCULAR TO PREMIERS OR COLONIAL SECRETARIES OF AUSTRALASIAN COLONIES.  
 (INCLUDING WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND FIJI).

Premier's Office,  
 Melbourne, 8th October, 1883.

RE *Annexation of Adjacent Islands and Federation of Australasian Colonies.*

SIR,

Referring to my letter of the 11th September, naming the last week in November as the time for the meeting of the Convention agreed to be held in Sydney on this subject, I now have the honour to announce Wednesday, the 28th November, as the day for the meeting of the Convention.

My telegram of the 6th instant to this effect you have doubtless already received.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES SERVICE,

PREMIER.

THE HONORABLE  
 THE PREMIER,

{ BRISBANE,  
 SYDNEY,  
 ADELAIDE,  
 HOBART,  
 WELLINGTON.

THE HONORABLE  
 THE COLONIAL SECRETARY,

{ PERTH,  
 FIJI.