

Reg. 25<sup>th</sup> April 1903.

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and prosperity of the Commonwealth. (Cheers.) This being so it is a matter for alarm that both the Federal Government and the Opposition have been found accusing one another of bargaining for the labour vote; and that as a matter of fact legislation with a tinge of injurious socialism has already been accomplished, and is largely contemplated. Hence arises the necessity for increased activity by Chambers of Commerce, and hence also arises the still greater necessity for the establishment of a strong commercial party in the Federal Parliament consisting of experienced business men capable of initiating legislation beneficial to and perceiving and preventing legislation inimical to commerce. (Cheers.)

—Murray Waters.—

I have not thought it necessary to touch upon the Murray River question, because the result of the Premier's Conference in Sydney has not yet been published, but I am indebted to the press for some further particulars than are yet to hand. The Attorney-General had an interview with the press, in which he said:—"The agreement as it stands is, in my opinion, an admirable compromise, and one which will be regarded, I believe, favourably by the people of South Australia. It is made subject to ratification by the Parliament of each state, and for five years only. It saves all existing and accrued rights and remedies to each state. It also provides for the appointment of an independent commission, whose duty it will be to see that the agreement is carried out, and the Chief Justice of Queensland has been appointed arbitrator." However much we may have approved of the action of the Government before the conference, I think before further discussing the matter we should see really what has been done, and then we can say whether or not we approve of the action of the Government. (Cheers.)

—Conclusion.—

To occupy this chair for the last two years has been to me a pleasure and an honour, and it is a final satisfaction that the gentleman I shall presently have to declare my successor—Mr. W. Herbert Phillipps—is so able and distinguished as a business man, and so eminently fitted to carry out the objects of this chamber. There is no finer mission in life than by promoting its commerce to increase the progress and happiness of a people, and I can imagine no better such missionary than my friend Mr. Phillipps. (Cheers.) Mr. C. Allen seconded. They were indebted to the committee, and especially to the President, for the way they had carried out their duties. He suggested that they should have an up-to-date circulating library on commercial matters in connection with the chamber for the use of members and their employes.

Mr. W. Herbert Phillipps (President-elect) said those who had studied the report must have been impressed with the great influence the chamber had exercised on the legislation of the state and other matters. The report was undoubtedly the best they had ever had. The work had been well done during the past year, and that had been very largely due to the personal devotion and interest of the President. (Cheers.) No one could have been more thorough, more devoted, more earnest, more self-sacrificing than Mr. Jacobs had been, and when in the beginning of last year the chamber was good enough to nominate him (the speaker) as President he felt that he should do a great wrong in taking the position. The President had made himself master of the customs administration, and had the special advantage of legal training, so he argued with Mr. Jacobs, and when that gentleman saw it was the wish of the chamber he most readily consented to act for another term, and, personally, he had not regretted having taken the action he did. The chamber was reaping the reward, and they felt that the status of the commerce in South Australia had been greatly raised by the splendid efforts of Mr. Jacobs. (Cheers.) He confessed to a feeling of temerity in following him in office, but he would endeavour to do his best. Reference had been made to commercial education. There had been a great deal of discussion, in arranging the curriculum at the University, on the point as to whether it might not incur a little hardship upon young men if the University compelled them to take certain degrees in all the ordinary studies before they could get the highest commercial diploma. It was argued that if a man was thoroughly up in accountancy and commercial law he might have his diploma in those subjects, and be a good business man. In the University, however, it was felt that a man should be educated by a thorough training of the mind all round to put him in a position to compete with the world. It was also felt that the diploma should carry with it the hallmark of culture which was associated with the University. In reading through the report of the forty-third annual meeting of the Association of Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom he found that the Duke of Devonshire took the same view. That statesman said:—"Whilst it was important that educational institutions should exist in which attention was given to commercial subjects, yet it was still more important that the training which was given in any one or in any number of those special subjects should be training which rested upon the foundation of a complete and efficient general education. It was more important that the intelligence and intellectual qualities of the student should be developed than that he should become proficient in one or two or many of those special branches to which he would have to apply that intelligence in future years." It was very gratifying that such an able and distinguished statesman should confirm the decision of the University on that question. (Hear, hear.) Looking to the future, there was one matter which would have to be very carefully considered by Australian commercial traders. That was the resolution which was passed by the Premier at their meeting in London with regard to differential duties. At the meeting of associated chambers the matter was brought forward, and it seemed likely that it would become a prominent subject for discussion. A resolution was passed congratulating the Colonial Secretary upon the position taken up by him at the Colonial Conference, and expressing the hope that one of the results aimed at—namely, preferential treatment by the colonies of

the productions of the mother country—would be adopted by them. It commended itself to their feelings that if Continental nations did create a differential tariff as against British products from any part of the world, their first duty was to retaliate, as Canada had done. That course appealed to them. But in Australia conditions were somewhat different. He hoped legislators would pause before they rushed into anything of that sort. (Cheers.) When in England he was requested to furnish a report upon that subject. He got statistics from the leading merchants and others in London who were able to show exactly what the course of trade was, and, although he had the impression before, he was astounded to find how dependent they were upon Continental markets for the disposal of their products. If they only realized the very overwhelming proportion of their products that went to the Continent because the English nation could not take them or give adequate prices for them they would be simply astonished. If in their imperial loyalty they were led to the course which had been suggested it would tell a very disastrous tale to them. They must remember that their prosperity depended upon their having the best markets for their produce. He mentioned the matter in order that they might think carefully over it. (Cheers.)

The motion was carried.

The following officers were elected:—President, Mr. W. Herbert Phillipps; Vice-President, Mr. G. W. Cooper; general committee, Messrs. W. Bickford, A. S. Cheandle, J. Darling, jun., M.P., Arnold E. Davey, James Gartrell, C. H. Goode, S. J. Jacobs, L. P. Lawrence, A. Le Messurier, H. C. E. Muecke, A. S. Neill, R. J. Phillipps, G. H. Prosser, C. F. Rischbieth, J. Shiels, E. W. van Senden, R. Kyffin Thomas, and F. W. Vasey; corn trade sectional committee, Messrs. C. H. T. Connor, J. Darling, jun., M.P., T. H. Davey, Clement Giles, A. P. Hall, W. R. Johnston, and H. Thomas; mining sectional committee, Messrs. W. Bickford, T. Drew, E. Laughton, W. J. Magarey, and H. C. E. Muecke; auditors, Messrs. A. S. Neill and J. C. Genders.

On the motion of Mr. Muecke, seconded by Mr. Goode, a vote of thanks was carried with the heartiest acclamation to Mr. Jacobs, the retiring President, for the services he had rendered during his two years' occupancy of the position.

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#### A COMMERCIAL ANNIVERSARY.

An able, energetic, and enthusiastic retiring President; an able, energetic, and enthusiastic President-elect; an able, energetic, and enthusiastic secretary and organizer; and a committee which is useful and representative as well as ornamental. These advantages on the personal side stand out with gratifying prominence in connection with the record of the proceedings at the annual meeting of the Chamber of Commerce yesterday. The history of that admirable institution since its establishment 53 years ago has been one certainly of fluctuations, but also of vicissitudes marked on the whole by steady and continuous progress. The latest year of the chamber has been in many respects the best which it has ever experienced. Its membership has reached the highest point yet attained; its influence has been recognised by the state and federal authorities in a manner without precedent; and, under astute and patriotic direction, its outlook and its scope have broadened materially. Significant incidents in this view are the establishment of a Faculty of Commerce by the University in direct association with the chamber; the solicitation of its assistance by the Customs Department, even if sufficient weight has not been paid to its recommendations in that quarter; and the advance towards the establishment of a federalizing force composed of the interstate chambers themselves. One must admit, however, that this last movement is proceeding at a snail's pace, and the pace of a somewhat decrepid snail at that. A few weeks hence a meeting of the General Council of the chambers will be held in Adelaide, and one may reasonably trust that that gathering will render the new paper alliance at least a little less unsatisfactory than it is to-day. It apparently needs an able organizer—else it seems likely to die of inanition. The curse of apathy appears to be upon it—that apathy which during the past generation has caused the commercial interests in the various states to suffer so seriously through foolish legislation.

For many of the ills due to bad laws the representatives of commerce have to thank their own neglect of their political rights and privileges. Nobody grumbles more readily than the man who directly suffers most through irrational statutes, but probably none other takes less active interest in politics, or is so indisposed to bear the burden of Parliamentary tasks, or even to perform his duties as an elec-

tor. Mr. Darling, the special representative of commerce in the South Australian Assembly, has frequently complained with rueful visage that his fellow-mercantile men will not help him to fight the battle he is waging for the proper recognition of business interests in the halls of Legislature. The indictment which his complaints constitute is just; and the commercial laws of this community will never be what they ought to be unless colonists closely concerned in them shall realize in the fullest degree the practical meaning of the old aphorism—"The price of liberty is eternal vigilance." We may hope that the lessons of the past may be suggestions of reforms for the future; but we hope with some misgiving. "The burnt child dreads the fire;" yet after his fingers have ceased to smart the memory of the cause of his trouble gradually grows dim. The more deeply, however, one is impressed by the comparative individual neglect of public duty, the more thoroughly must one be in accord with the aims of a body which, like the Chamber of Commerce, seeks to concentrate in an organized mass the force that otherwise would be uselessly diffused. The retiring President of the chamber has, for many reasons, made his two years' tenure of office distinguished and memorable. Whilst he has been a loyal spokesman for his own class, he has not allowed mere sectional interests to circumscribe his views of his obligations as a citizen in a broader sense. The address in which he summarized the commercial and national position yesterday was admirable, and even statesmanlike, and not the less so because his remarks were pitched in a distinctly optimistic key. He is manifestly a prophet of hope; and this is well. Towards the close of a period of great perplexity, chequered sadly with adversity in many cases, one of the first things to be done in the advance to better conditions is to severely suppress the croakers. A great part of the battle of life is already fought and won by the man who has faith in himself; and an important factor in the future commercial progress of South Australia must be buoyant confidence in the resources of the state and in the character of its people. The community has had—not without some excuse—a bad attack of "nerves;" and the observations of the retiring President on Friday were pleasantly calculated to help to remove that distressing form of indisposition.

"Don't grumble," he advised in effect; "all the auguries are satisfactory and hope-inspiring." Disastrous as the last harvest was to many people who tried to wrest victories from Nature in localities where Nature said, con-quests of the kind should not be won, it was almost a fortune-making period for hundreds of farmers in more favourably situated areas. Much money would be distributed throughout the state on account of the price of wheat and other products of the field; and the copious rains which were falling in the north even while the chamber was meeting gave promise of a brilliant opening for the coming season. The metal markets also were improving, and altogether the vista was brightened by roseate tints. All this is true. The people, however, must not lose their heads; and, though a warning with this purpose was perhaps too lightly emphasized, the speaker did good service by uttering it. Much of the trouble which has been endured may be traced to the influence of that section—not even a class—in legislation which, though under various specious guises, is an exponent of harmful socialistic principles. If encouragement had not been offered to the real toilers through reasonable individualism and personal initiative—if men had not been compelled to work out their own industrial salvation—the attempt to establish South Australia as a province of Great Britain would have failed dismally, as it seemed likely to fail within the first few years of its inauguration. This fact should always be kept strongly in memory by the descendants of the pioneers and their immediate successors; nor in the coming good times ought men to forget the causes which contributed to much of the distress inflicted by the recent drought. If in years of plenty South Australians should neglect the conservation of water, the perfecting of the machinery of production, and the exploiting of profitable markets, they will suffer again in the future as surely as they have suffered in the past. If the Chamber of Commerce will persistently preach this doctrine, and if its members will all work actively to extend its influence, it will increase its already substantial claims upon the gratitude of the people.