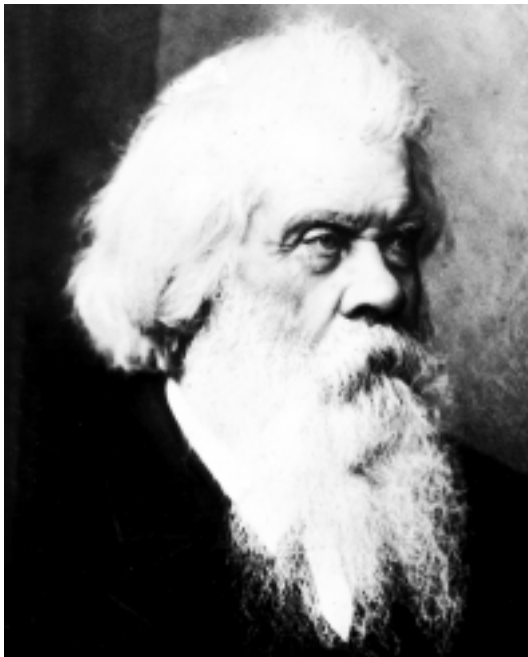


Sir Henry Parkes "The Father of Federation"



The great question which they had to consider was, whether the time had not now arisen for the creation on this Australian continent of an Australian Government. In other words, to make himself as plain as possible, Australia now had a population of three and a half millions, and the American people numbered only between three and four millions when they formed the great commonwealth of the United States. The numbers were about the same, and surely what the Americans had done by war, the Australians could bring about in peace...

Sir Henry Parkes at Tenterfield reported by the Sydney Morning Herald 25 October 1889

1. That the powers and privileges and territorial rights of the several existing colonies shall remain intact.
2. That the trade and intercourse between the federated colonies, whether by means of land carriage or coastal navigation, shall be absolutely free.
3. That the power to impose customs duties shall be exclusively lodged in the Federal Government.
4. That the naval and military forces of Australia shall be entrusted to federal forces, under one command.

The federal constitution shall establish:

1. A parliament, to consist of a senate and a house of representatives, the former consisting of an equal number of members from each province, the latter to be elected by districts formed on a population basis.
2. A judiciary, consisting of a federal supreme court whose decisions shall be final.
3. An executive, consisting of a governor-general and his advisors (Prime Minister and Ministers).

Sir Henry Parkes outlining his vision of the structure and powers of the new federal government prior to the 1891 National Australasian Convention that was to draw up a constitution for the Commonwealth of Australia.

Does Sir Henry Parkes forget that we already belong to the greatest and most beneficent Federation the world has ever seen - the Federation of the British Empire? Talk about the 'birth of a nation' was high-flown nonsense! ... What has all this talk about the United States to do with New South Wales... Queen Victoria is our Queen and Sovereign, and Ministers and people of England have been our most loving friends. Why, then, are we called upon to ignore them?

Sir John Robertson, 1890

Questions

1. In his Tenterfield speech, what did Parkes hope Australia could do?
2. In the new federation, what did Parkes believe should happen to the territory held by each colony?
3. How did Parkes see trade, customs and defence operating in a federated Australia?
4. What form of parliament did Parkes want for the new federal government?
5. What was Sir John Robertson's main fear with the process of federation?

The Corowa Conference, 1893



Modest Town that became a Federation Star

Today, the townspeople of the wheat and wool centre of Corowa, reposing contentedly on the NSW

bank of the mighty Murray, make bacon, from a piggery claimed to be the biggest in the southern hemisphere, and muesli bars, at an Uncle Toby's factory.

But a little over 100 years ago they helped make a nation.

It was to tiny Corowa, on July 31 1893, that delegates from NSW and Victoria converged to promote the cause of Federation among the six separate colonies then constituting Australia.

What happened over the next 48 hours, in a series of meetings at the local court house, the Oddfellows' Hall and the Globe Hotel, was to change the course of history and earn for Corowa its enduring reputation as "the birthplace of federation".

Why Corowa? It was convenient - the delegates came by special Federation Trains, the New South Welshmen to the local station, the Victorians by their wider-gauge railway to

Wahgunyah, on the opposite bank.

Though some of the delegates to the Corowa conference were moved by a vision of new nationhood, the motives of most local people were primarily hip-pocket.

Immigration across the border, especially for Chinese goldfield workers prevented from crossing into NSW, was a problem. But the big issue was Customs. Edmund Barton, a leading proponent of Federation, complained bitterly that when he crossed the bridge into Corowa, he had to pay sixpence duty on a bottle of wine bought in Rutherglen. Even someone from Corowa taking a home-made cake across to a friend in Wahgunyah had to pay duty.

It was dreadfully expensive and it was also degrading.

On a walking tour of Corowa you can revisit the sites that featured in the Corowa conference. Here the station where the NSW delegates disembarked. There the court house where the 72 delegates met. Here the Globe, where the men (women were admitted only as observers) retired for dinner. There the tin-roofed Oddfellows' Hall, where the delegates addressed a large and enthusiastic public meeting...

John Huxley

The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 February 1998

Fill in the missing words to summarise this newspaper article

On 31 July _____ delegates from _____ and _____ met at the town of _____ to decide how to promote the cause of _____. Over the next _____ hours, this conference was to change the course of _____ and earn for Corowa the title _____. The site of Corowa was chosen for the _____ as it was convenient and while some delegates were moved by visions of _____, most local people were motivated by the _____. Chinese _____ was one concern but the big issue was _____ which the locals found to be expensive and _____. In Corowa today you can still see many of the _____ associated with the conference such as the _____ where the delegates met and the _____ Hotel where they had their meals.