

Policy Launch Speech: Prime Minister Andrew Fisher (ALP)

The Bungalow, March 31 1913

“Four years ago I delivered a policy speech at Gympie which outlined the proposals of the first Fisher Government for the safety and future progress of Australia. It awakened interest in Australian national questions, and then quickly followed the fusion of other political parties in the Federal Parliament, the defeat of the Labour Ministry immediately Parliament met, and the return of the Labour party to power at the last election. (Hear, hear)

I am with you tonight to give account of my stewardship during the fourth Parliament, now nearing its close. The continued confidence of the electors of Wide Bay enabled me to occupy the chief position in the gift of my own party, and on two occasions the highest office the Commonwealth can bestow on one of its citizens. For these honors I thank you.

At the last election, a speech delivered in this city, I gave a list of the measures which indicated the policy of the Labor Party. That Programme is now practically on the statute book. (Cheers). It is a legislative and administrative record. (Hear Hear). Both in the amount of work done and its quality and importance it completely overshadows the record of previous Governments. During the Parliament 83 bills (other than those of appropriation and supply) were assented to, and the Navigation Bill was reserved for the Royal assent. For the whole of the period during which the previous regime lasted- from 1900 to 1909 (excluding the months of Watson Government and the first Fisher Government)- only 135 bills were passed (other than appropriation and supply bills). But more numbers are no indication of the disparity between the records of the two parties, we faced great problems determined to solve them (Cheers).

The present Commonwealth Government is a Government of action; Good illustrations are the cases of the transcontinental railway to Western Australian and the Federal capital. Take the transcontinental railway. The bill passed in 1907 provided for the expenditure of £20,000 for a preliminary survey. Beyond surveys, however, no action was taken to put the work in hand. We determined to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion at the earliest possible date. (Hear Hear). The result is well known; how with in the last twelve months the first sods have been turned at both ends, and the work of construction put in hand, The Government is desirous of accelerating the completion of the work. (Hear Hear). I now turn to the federal capita site . In 1904 the Watson Government passed the Seat of Government Act fixing the site of Dalgety,

Between that date and 1908 nothing definite was done, The then Deakin Government introduced a Bill to determine more fully the site, with the result that Canberra was substituted. The first Fisher Government proceeded to carry out the terms of the constitution and the contract with New South Wales. It went out of office in 1909, but on its return to power in 1910 it set about making strenuous efforts to make the

Federal capital an accomplished fact. In 1910-11, £10,000 was spent on preliminary works. In 1911-12 £100,000 was provided (applause). It is the intention of the Government to possess all the land of the Federal capital territory belonging to Australia and to keep it as its own for ever. (Cheers). During last year the a definite plan of the city was adopted as a result of a competition open to the world; local works are being pushed on with; machinery obtained; an Acting Administrator has taken up residence; and last but not least, the city has been christened by the wife of the Governor-general, "Canberra". (Cheers).

Here is a summary of the Government's legislation in its first session:-

Australian Notes Act provided for the issue by the Commonwealth of Australia notes to take place of existing bank notes and Queensland treasury notes.

Land Tax Amendment Act provided for a tax upon unimproved land values with an exemption of 2500 for non-[word unclear]but no exemption for absentees. The owner is required to value his own estate, and to furnish yearly returns. Commissioner assesses value and furnishes notice thereof. As a protection against undervaluation by owners, the Commonwealth may acquire land in certain cases; may transfer to the state if it so requires; use it for public purposes or dispose of it. Exemptions are made in favour of public authorities and institutions, and Interests of Crown losses, except in case of perpetual leases without revaluation and leases with rights of purchase. A board is constituted to release a taxpayer from liability in certain cases of hardship.

Northern Territory Acceptance Act: transfer to Commonwealth control – Commonwealth to take over South Australian loans and pay the State amount of accrued deficit.

Acquisition of Oodnadatta railway; continuation of line southwards from Darwin to South Australian boundary. Provision of Port Augusta-Kalgoorlie railway.

Surplus Revenue Act – Provided for lesser of sec. 87 of Constitution (Braddon clause), from and after 31st December, 1910.

Authorised payment to States for 10 years from 1st July, 1910, of 25/ per capita per annum, and special payment to Western Australia.

Conciliation and Arbitration Act, giving president power to convene compulsory conferences. Strengthened court's power in granting preference to unionists etc.

Naval Loan Repeal Act: repealed Loan Act of 1909 for raising loan of £3,500,000 for Naval defence. Naval Defence Act: provided for administration and control of Australian naval forces.

We promised to pay for defence out of revenue. The Fusion Government passed an act raising a loan of £3,500,000 for the navy, but we promptly repealed it, and paid for defence out of revenue. (Cheers)

Defence Amendment Act: provided for military training scheme, now in vogue; active training seven years, instead of two, as formerly. Military college etc.

Seat of Government Administration Act; Australian Industries Preservations Act: amended previous legislation in direction of imposing more severe penalties for infringement, and wider penalties for unlawful restraint of trade and commerce in suppression of monopolies, combines etc.

Constitution Alterations (State Debts) Act: gave Commonwealth power to take over all State debts. Power to make this alterations was given by referendum on 13th April, 1910.

Postal Rates Act: gave penny postage among the States and within the Empire and uniform rates on all postal articles throughout Commonwealth.

Customs Inter-State Account Act: repealed the keeping of accounts of duty on goods transferred between the States.

I pass now to the 1911 legislation:-

Kalgoorlie Port Augusta Railway Act made provision for construction of line on 4 feet 8½ inches gauge.

Lighthouse Act 1911, empowering Commonwealth to take over control of lighthouse, light ships, beacons and buoys.

Commonwealth Bank Act, established a Commonwealth Bank with power to carry on all general banking and Savings Bank business. The bank is empowered to have a capital of £1,000,000 raised by debentures. The Commonwealth Treasury advances money to enable the bank to open for business, such monies to be repaid with interest at 3½ per cent. Management vested in a governor, who has full power over the administration of the bank.

Arbitration (Public Service) Act, gives employees in Public Service of the Commonwealth right of appeal to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Court in respect of rates of pay and purchase from the private banks, a super-scription being placed on them to show that the Commonwealth was responsible for this issue. I arranged, when in London, for dyes to be prepared for our own notes. The designs have been much admired by the leading bankers, and I am sure will be appreciated by the public. The services of a note printer skilled in this special class of work were secured and the necessary machinery ordered. The printing of the new issue will soon be commenced and I hope that in a very short while we shall have only one set of notes circulating in the Commonwealth.

The record in 1912 was as follows:

Maternity Allowance Act, giving an allowance of £5 to mothers in respect of children born alive or viable.

(Loud cheers)

Navigation Bill, largest bill yet but before the Commonwealth Parliament. Introduced in 1904 and dealt with inconclusively by successive Governments until the present. The bill reserved for Royal consent. Will contain, when assented to, the law of the whole of Australia in relation to navigation and shipping.

Inter-State Commission Act has appeared in almost every Governor-General's speech since 1901. Provides for Chief Commissioner and two other commissioners. The functions are briefly:-

Standing commission of inquiry with power to investigate practically all matters, necessary to Parliament; and the public. A board of trade. An independent critic of social, industrial and commercial events, and the operation and administration of laws. Board of advice. Active guardian of the constitution. A commerce court, with

power to adjudicate on complaint made to it, or upon its own initiative, all violation of trade and commerce law of the Commonwealth.

Tasmanian Grant Act authorised the payment to Tasmania of £500,000, spread over a period of ten years.

Pine Creek, Katherine River Survey Act providing for survey of route from Pine Creek to Katherine River.

Commonwealth Workmen's Compensation Act, providing for compensation to officers of the Commonwealth in receipt of under £500 per annum; "out workers" and members of naval and military forces on active service are exempted. Liberal provision is made for compensation to total and partial dependents in case of death or incapacity.

Invalid and Old Age Pensions Act 1912 abolished deductions on account of value of the home, permitted permanently blind people to receive invalid pensions. Liberalised the system in certain directions.

Immigration Restriction Act 1912, compelling vigorous medical inspection of all classes of immigrants. Medical bureaus in London to be established. Appointment of Dr. Norris since made to supervise in London.

Sugar Excise Repeal Act 1912, Sugar Bounty Abolition Act 1912, passed by Federal Parliament in terms of agreement primarily with the Premier of Queensland.

Judiciary Act, increased number of judges of High Court, from five to seven and provided that where the court is divided in opinion on a constitutional case a decision shall not be given unless a majority of all the judges concur in the decision. Where there is equal division of opinion on an appeal from a High Court judge or a State Supreme Court the decision appealed from is to stand. In other case of equal division of opinion, the opinion of the Chief Justice or senior justice present is to prevail.

These are the principal measures which compose the record of the Government as far as legislation is concerned. (Cheers.) Our financial policy has been attacked more than any other thing we have done. I have prepared an official memorandum showing the exact position of the Commonwealth finances. I ask our opponents to criticise it in every way (Cheers.)

Voices: They cannot.

The Prime Minister: The Treasury is open to them, so that they can inspect everything.

The Australian Notes Act was passed on the 16th September, 1910, and proclaimed on 1st November of the same year. On the 17th March of this year the total circulation was £9,431,980, against which the Treasury held gold amounting to £3,885,044, which represents 41.19 per cent, of the circulation. Under the original act, one fourth of the amount of notes issued up to £7,000,000 was directed to be kept in gold. Gold was to be held for all notes issued over seven million. Under the Amending Act of last year only one fourth of the whole issue need be held in gold, but I gave an undertaking to Parliament when the bill was before it that until the new Parliament met, we would hold at least 40 per cent in gold which promise has been carried out. (Hear, hear.) At the present time £5,795,000 has been invested and the interest already received amount to £308,404. The money raised by the issue of the notes and all interest earned is carried to the credit of a trust fund called the Australia

Notes account which can be issued only by the redemption of the notes and for expenses of administering the issue.

On the 28th February last 80,977 old age pensions and 12,404 invalid pensions were in force. In all 93,441 pensions are now being paid at an annual cost of about £2,400,000. Under the Amending Bill issued during the last session of the present Parliament the act was liberalised in the direction especially of allowing pensioners the use of their homes and furniture, without any corresponding deduction from their pension. The Maternity Allowance Act was proclaimed on the 10th October, 1912. On 8th March 41,335 bonuses, amounting to £206,675, had been granted, and 1253 claims were under consideration. It is evident that all classes are availing themselves of the advantage of this legislation.

By natural increase and by immigration Australia has strengthened its position in the world during the last three years. The least satisfactory phase of our prosperous times is the slow progress in land settlement, and cultivation generally. Many people who leave Europe with the intention of earning their living on their land do not get out of the cities and towns until they have no desire to leave them.

The operation of the land tax has been beneficial to this country. It was the subject of endless attacks. The oft-repeated one of injustice to absentees is bold and daring. The people of Australia improve the value of the lands, and their sons are now fitting themselves to defend it. (Cheers). During 1910-1911 the net tax collected was £1,394,981; during 1911-1912 the amount collected was £1,400,193; and for 1912-1913 the estimate is £1,300,000.

It is to be noted, however, that the additional tax to be credited as the result of check valuations will exceed £100,000 in the aggregate for the three years mentioned. The average percentage cost of collection for the three years is 3.69 per cent, a meritorious figure, in view of expenditure necessary for the first year of the tax land owned by persons liable to make returns was sold to the unimproved value of £20,901,068. For the last nine months of the same year persons liable to make returns purchased land to the unimproved value of £9,266,506. In the second year of the tax no less than 5,393,452 acres of country land were sold by persons liable to the tax.

Although the alienation of land has increased apace in the Commonwealth, whether we consider actual alienation and land in process of alienations, or leasehold, a Crown lands, the position of land settlement in some of the States is not satisfactory. Notwithstanding the influx of immigrants, in Victoria the area under crop was last year over 300,000 acres less than the year before. In Queensland nearly 150,000 acres less was cropped than the previous year.

Taking the whole Commonwealth, the proportionate increase of area under cultivation which might have ordinarily been expected has not been maintained. Between 1909-1910 and 1910-1911 there was an increase of 1,000,000 acres approximately. Between 1910-1911 and 1911-1912 there was an increase of only 200,000 acres – a decrease of 20 per cent. (Hear, hear). Taking the Commonwealth as a whole the metropolitan populations increased during the ten years 1901-1911 by 24 2/3rd per cent. The rural population in the same period increased by only 14 1/3rd per cent. Queensland was the only State in which the rate of increase per cent was higher outside or then within the metropolitan area. (Hear. Hear.)

The Defence Act was extended in 1910 to provide for universal training up to the age of 25 years. The new law came into force on 1st January, 1911, and training commenced on the following 1st July. On 1st April, 1910, there were 22,382, militia volunteers; on 1st January, 1913, there were 34,272. On 1st April, 1910, there were 10,597 senior cadets; on 1st January, 1913, there were 89,100. Six years hence, it is estimated there will be 100,000 senior cadets in training, and 128,000 militia between the ages of 18 and 26 years. The senior cadets undergo 64 hours training per annum divided into whole day, half day and night drills. They do not go into camp.

In the citizen forces provision is made for 16 days in the case of infantry and 25 days for artillery and engineers. Pay is granted for attendances at parades. Promotion is by competitive examination from the next lower grade.

In the permanent forces the numbers have increased from 1510 on 1st April, 1910, to 2354 on 1st January, 1913. The rates of pay for members of the permanent forces have generally increased, and in the instructional staff the maximum rate for non-commissioned officers has been increased from £183 to £204 per annum, and for warrant officers from £265 to £285.

Three permanent field batteries of artillery have been provided, and the arrangement of the fixed defences is being proceeded with. A war railway council consisting of naval and military officers and officers of the Commonwealth and States Railway departments has been formed. During the last three years, some 1500 horses have been purchased for field artillery at an average cost of £25 each. The whole of the troops have been equipped with accoutrements; the new pattern web for equipment for the infantry and the bandolier equipment for the other arms. Arrangements have been made to issue saddlery to all ranks of mounted units.

A Royal Military College for the purpose of educating candidates for commissions in the permanent forces has been established. The principal boy in the college is the son of a carpenter and the majority come from the State schools. In the Australian navy boys can begin below the deck and rise to the top. In the military forces a boy can rise to become Commander in Chief. (Cheers.) That is the democratic spirit of our national defence forces. It is the national feeling associated with the Australian owned, manned and controlled navy. (Cheers.)

Five aeroplanes have been purchased, and two aviators have been engaged, and in aviation school is now being organised. For the three years ending 30th June, 1913 £93,000 worth of artillery material has been purchased in the Commonwealth, all of which was previously obtained outside the Commonwealth; £460,000 worth has been obtained from England, material which is at present not manufactured in the Commonwealth.

Since 1st July, 1911, four Government factories have commenced operations as manufacturing establishment viz: small arm factory, at Lithgow, N.S.W. cordite factory, at Maribyrnong, V: clothing factory at South Melbourne, V: harness factory, at Clifton Hill, V.

A commencement has also been made with the establishment of a factory for the manufacture of cloth for uniforms and woollen fabrics at Geelong, Victoria. Over £250,000 has been spent on these factories. They employ 925 hands and the monthly payment in salaries and wages is £8000. The wages paid in these factories is on a more liberal scale than those ruling for similar work in private establishments. In addition to public holidays for which pay is received, each employee is entitled to

twelve days recreation leave on full pay. Accident pay is provided and compensation in respect of injury. The results of these factories, both as regards the quality of the material and the cost of production have been so far satisfactory. (Hear, hear.) As far as practicable the materials used are of Commonwealth manufacture. (Hear, Hear.)

In 1900 the Fisher Government ordered two torpedo boat destroyers to be completed in England and one torpedo boat destroyer to be erected in Australia. (Hear, hear.) In 1909 a Defence Conference recommended an Australian fleet unit, which was adopted by the Fisher Government, who made preliminary arrangements for the construction of the armoured cruiser and the three protected cruisers in England. The Government in 1910 amended this by providing for the construction of one of the protected cruisers in Australia and also three destroyers and also ordered two submarines from England.

The Fisher Government in 1910 asked the admiralty to nominate an officer to come to Australia and advise the Government on a scheme of naval defence. Admiral Snr. Reginald Henderson was detailed for this work, and his report has been made public. It has been generally adopted by the Government, as a guide in its policy. (Hear, hear.). The *Warrego*, the first modern warship to be put together in Australia, was commissioned for service on the 1st June 1912. The protected cruiser *Encounter* has been lent by the Admiralty to the Commonwealth, and the third class cruiser *Pioneer* has been made a gift from the Admiralty to the Commonwealth, and will be utilised as a training ship.

The protected cruiser *Melbourne* carried out her trials satisfactorily, and has now reached Australia. (Hear, hear). The battle cruiser *Australia* and the protected cruiser *Sydney* are expected to arrive about June, and also the submarines. The submarines parent ship is being ordered through the Admiralty in Great Britain, and four oil storage vessels for harbor use will be built in Australia. (Hear, hear). The Naval Board consisting of four naval members, with the Minister of Defence as president, has been established, and a Navy Office and administration has also been established.

In 1910 the personnel of the permanent naval forces was approximately 240 and since that date 1790 Australians have been recruited in Australia and 400 Australians have been transferred from the Royal Navy. The balance of an establishment of 2350 has been lent from the Admiralty (Hear, hear.) A naval college has been established at Geelong, commencing with 28 cadet midshipmen. This college is also free admission being subject to selection and competitive examination. A naval training depot has been established at Williamstown, Victoria, and at Sydney the naval training ship *H.M.A.S. Tingira* has been established. Of the naval bases selected by Admiral Henderson work has been commenced in connection with Sydney, Westernport (V.). Cockburn Sound (W.A.) and Port Stephens (N.S.W.). Land for sub-bases is being acquired at Port Lincoln (S.A.), Albany (W.A.), Brisbane (Queensland) and Hobart (Tas). The Cockatoo Island dockland has been acquired from the New South Wales Government and work in connection with one protected cruiser and three destroyers is being proceeded with there. Arrangement is being made to take over from the Admiralty and the New South Wales Government the naval establishment at Sydney. Two branches of the Naval Reserve have been established, viz.; Naval Reserve (M.), 754 Naval Reserve (O), 087. There are also 3124 senior naval cadets in training.

The naval expenditure during the last three years is:- 1910-11, £1,453,071.; 1911-12 £1,595,605; 1912-123 £2,340,257; total, £5,400,933. In this connection it is

interesting to compare the naval and military expenditure per head of population for 1911-12 for Australia and other parts of the Empire:-

United Kingdom.....	£1	11	77
Australia.....	1	1	2
New Zealand.....	0	11	2
South Africa (Europeans)	0	6	2
Canada.....	0	6	1
Newfoundland.....	0	0	3

The Northern Territory, with an area of £23,020 square miles, was transferred on 1st January, 1911, so has been utilised by the Commonwealth's control for two years and a quarter. The first steps taken by the Government were to formulate a policy of administration, and then find the men to carry it out. At the time of transfer there were neither roads nor bridges. A railway ran from Darwin to Pine Creek, but was no use to pastoralists. Communication by sea was precarious. The coast was imperfectly lighted, or even surveyed. In the whole of the Territory there were but three small farms, most of the pastoral land being locked up in the form of long leases. The native population was practically uncared for.

Moreover, the Territory was burdened with a debt of £3,031,085, involving an annual interest charge of £151,000. We have since redeemed £2,057,835. In the Administrator, the Government believes it possesses an officer whose energy and ability will enable it to carry out its intended policy. (Hear, hear.) The policy of the Government is to settle whites permanently on the land. (Hear, hear.) At the same time it has taken up the burden of caring for the aborigine in a proper manner. Parliament has provided in the Northern Territory Transfer of Act that no Crown Lands in the Territory shall in future be sold or disposed of as freehold. The land ordinance passed provides for classification into two divisions – pastoral and agricultural – with further subdivision into three and two classes, respectively. Maximum areas in each class are prescribed. A board is constituted to deal with details of rent and lease. Leases of agricultural and town lands are perpetuity, and all pastoral lands for period of 21 or 42 years.

For the first 5000 blocks of agricultural land taken up no rent is to be charges during the lifetime of applicant or 21 years, whichever is the longer. In the case of subsequent agricultural leases no rent is payable for the first ten years. The first installment of 26 farms on the Daly River induced 339 applicants. (Hear, hear.) These are now under consideration. Experimental farms have been established to assist the settler. The work of extending railway communication has been seriously undertaken, the Government having appointed a commission to investigate the whole matter. Government steamers have been provided to ensure more satisfactory communication between ports, while new roads have been surveyed and construction put in hand. The mining industry has not been overlooked in the developmental policy. Freezing works for the territory have been approved of.

The Government has not continued the South Australian system of finance. In the first few months after transfer it paid off a portion of the debt, amounting to £273,250, which was in the form of South Australian Treasury bills and represented the balance

of the accumulated deficits which has not been converted into fixed loans. Of this amount £151,000 was obtained from the unexpended balance of the loan fund which has been transferred by South Australia to the Commonwealth; the remainder, £122,250, was paid out of Commonwealth revenue. In addition, the Government paid the annual interest each year as it accrued instead of adding it to the debt to become an additional source of compound interest burdens.

All expenditure for salaries, wages and material and whether employed in the construction of permanent or reproductive works, or from the current costs of administration has been met from revenue. The result is that at the present time the debt is substantially less than at the time of transfer, and no additional burdens have been piled up for future generations to liquidate. The following figures show the position:-

Debt at 1st January, 1911	£3,931,083
Unexpended loan funds transferred to Commonwealth...	<u>£ 101,000</u>
Net Debt.....	£3,780,083

Had the Territory remained under the control of South Australia the deficits for the last two years would have been added to that debt. Assuming that these deficits had not exceeded the amount for 1909-1910, namely £163,003 and making no allowance for the fact that the deficit for the second year would have been increased by the interest on the deficit for the first year, the burden of debt on South Australia at the present time would have been:

Net debt, 1 st January 1911	£3,780,065
Deficit for two years	<u>£ 327,250</u>
	£3,637,285

But under the Commonwealth control the debt at the present time is:-

Net debt, 1 st January 1911	£3,780,065
Reduction by payment from Commonwealth revenue	<u>£ 123,250</u>
Present debt	<u>£3,657,635</u>

It results from this that, notwithstanding all that has been done in putting into force a vigorous development policy, the debt on the Territory is at the present time £449,454 less than it would have been had South Australia remained in control and continued the previous policy inactivity. (Cheers.)

Sir George Reid continued to take advantage of every opportunity of keeping Australia well before the attention of the British public. Recently he has spent a good deal of time on the Continent with a view of establishing agencies for the purpose of making the products of Australia better known and so increasing the opportunities of our exporters. On his recommendation the Government has approved of the appointment of persons in Berlin, Vienna and Paris whose mission will be to give information regarding Australia to inquirers and take advantage of every chance that prevents itself for promoting the sale of our goods, particularly our frozen meat & fruit. The past year the plans for the New London offices which are to be constructed in the Strand have been settled and they are now in course of erection.

The development of Papua is proceeding satisfactorily. The control of that Government is gradually being extended over the wilder tribes. The plantations started a few years ago are now coming into bearing, and are promising good returns.

An important feature of the immigration movement has been receiving attention. Existing regulations do not adequately provide that none but healthy person shall come to this country. It has been determined to send a medical officer from Australia to England, who will establish a system under which all persons intending to come here and settled will have to be medically examined before they leave. If they are unfortunately affected with serious transmissible diseases or other physical troubles likely to preclude them from earning their living permission for them to embark will be refused. (Hear, hear.)

Customs and excise administration involving the collection of over £15,000,000 per annum has engaged earnest attention. While the service has been administered with strict economy, officers have received fair and reasonable treatment, and public interests have been carefully safeguarded. The Government's policy has largely increased the incidence of protection for Australian industry by the special attention paid to accuracy of invoiced and verifications of value of importations. (Hear, hear.) Failing this, protective duties are of little avail. (Hear, hear.) . Two expert officers are stationed in England for personal investigation of values in Europe, United States of America and Canada. Attention in this direction has proved abundantly profitable. The cost of the collection of the duties is £1 18/ per cent, a figure less than at any time since the inception of federation. (Hear, hear.)

The meat export industry means £1,500,000 annually to Queensland and £4,000,000 sterling to the Commonwealth. Its further development is unlimited. The Government has taken steps to see that the export of increases is accompanied by the inspection. Only by rigid insistence on best conditions may the quality be guaranteed and the reputation of the trade enhanced.

The Commerce Act framed to protect you from imposition has been rigorously administered. (Hear, hear.). Over 2500 patient medicines, infants' foods etc, have been inspected. Where they are found to contain injurious drugs or to be adulterated, the fact is clearly set out on the goods as far as Commonwealth power will allow. In 578 cases makers have been compelled to remove from advertisements grossly misleading claims. (Hear, hear.) The Customs Act has been amended to provide for the prohibitions of importation of harmful goods.

The Government will soon assume control of the lighthouse service. The service is of supreme importance, involving human lives, the interest of commerce etc. An expert, Commander Brewis, was appointed, and that gentleman's reports are now complete. Many of the existing lights were found to be worn out or obsolete. In some case no new construction had taken place for years, nor had any attempt to keep pace with progress in other countries been made. Remember, Australia has the longest coast line in the world. An ever increasing trade and the size and speed of vessels demand improvements and the erection of new lights. (Hear, hear.) It is estimated that £501,000 will be required for new construction and modernising existing lights. This is to be spread over ten years:

Annual maintenance of existing light services£90,000

When new constructions complete.....£23,000 p.a.

The work has already commenced on the Queensland coast, where it is a most urgent requirement. It is intended to provide a better service for keepers and families, (Hear, hear) educational facilities for the children and a special allowance and shorter service at lonely outlying stations where disabilities exist. (Cheers.)

The Commonwealth assumed control of quarantine in 1909. Properly qualified inspection of service had to organise in all entry ports. The State stations were also taken over, but owing to former neglect in certain instances, considerable expenditure was necessary. Each first port of entry is really a gateway to the whole Commonwealth, and the policy for the removal of any case of disease at the first port. Stations are now being established at Darwin, Thursday Island, Townsville and Brisbane. A site is being acquired at Broome and Sydney and Adelaide stations are being improved. The annual cost of maintenance, exclusive of cost buildings, is about £20,000 and not in any way higher than under State control. Considerable expenditure is incurred in the animal and plant divisions, and this is practically defrayed by inspection and fumigation fees.

Though there is sometimes public resentment at restriction, Australia has the enviable position of being the cleanest county in the world from the point of view of public health. Since the Commonwealth assumed control no quarantinable disease has obtained entrance. The Government is determined to leave no stone unturned to prevent, as far as humanly possible, entrance of quarantinable diseases. At the same time economy will be practised consistent with public safety. (Hear, hear.)

We have not been unmindful of the important interests of primary producers. We have devoted £4000 for the investigation and possible discovery of a remedy for bitter pit, which has ravaged our apple orchards and has involved our orchardists in most serious loss. This investigation will extend over a period of four years, and is in the hands of a skilled expert. We have appointed to London an experienced veterinary expert of Australian experience in the interest of our export meat industry. This officer reports on the condition in which the meat arrived at our principal market and when necessary advises as to any additional precautions which may be advisable in the interest of our producers. (Hear, hear.)

We have renewed the bounties on the local production of flax, cotton, hemp, jute, linseed, rice, tobacco leaf etc., and we have provided for the first time a bounty on the manufacture of wood pulp from Australian woods, and other vegetation. (Hear, hear.) This latter industry, if successful must prove of the greatest benefit. And provide employment for a large number of our citizens. The agricultural community are also vitally interested in our efforts to secure by reward and bounty the development of rock, phosphates, and thus provide the raw material indispensable for obtaining the best and most profitable results for their labor.

I now come to that important department the Post Office. From 1st January, 1911, to 31st January, 1913, there have been opened 356 post offices, 8475 miles of telephone line and 92,000 miles of telegraph line. Penny postage has been enacted between the States and within the empire, with reduced rates on other claims of correspondence, parcels, etc. (Hear, hear). There have been provided increased facilities for telegraph money orders, parcels post, private post boxes, bulk postage of newspapers, postage stamps and booklets. The post office also now caters to charitable institutions the mass of newspapers which from one reason or another cannot be delivered. Then there are the reduced cable rates and a service of week and cable letters.

In addition there has been a reduction by 50 per cent in the guarantee required for country telephone lines. The department is endeavouring, with due economy, to lighten the conditions of those living in country districts who have not the advantage of communication enjoyed by their fellow taxpayers in the towns. Improved allowances have been granted to “allowance” and “semi-official” post-masters and to their employees.

The amount received by officers in the Post Office is increased of salary during the year 1909 it was £118,000, and from 1st January, 1911 to 30th June 1912, £246,700. The revisions of salary lately made have cost an additional £112,000 per annum. Four fifths of this has been paid to officers receiving less than £3 per week. (Cheers). The general division has been further regarded from 1st march 1913, at an additional initial cost of £30,000 per annum. In addition to the increased salary, concessions have also been made in the matter of furlough, overtime, examination fees, and allowances to junior officers sent away from their homes. Officers generally are placed on a plane with their fellow citizens by being accorded ready access to the Federal Arbitration Court in regard to their rates of pay and conditions of employment.

In 1911 the Government decided to pay special attention to wireless telegraphy. An expert was appointed, and the Government resolved to build 17 stations around the coasts, in addition to the high-powered stations at Sydney and Fremantle. Seven of these have since been opened for public business. Eight others are in course construction, and Papua has been brought into a moment’s touch with the mainland. It has been decided further to link up with the Imperial chain by installing a station of great range at Darwin. There will then be stations at Port Moresby, Thursday Island, Cooktown, Townsville, Rockhampton, Brisbane, Sydney, Gabo Island, Melbourne, Hobart, Mount Gambier, Adelaide, Esperance, Fremantle, Geraldton, Roeburn, Broome, Wyndham and Darwin. By linking up the various parts, the Empire we will be warned in time for it will be difficult for an enemy to cut the wireless. (Laughter).

The Imperial Conference is a practical representative body, whose importance and usefulness is not yet fully realised. Through it public men who manage the political affairs of the self-governing Dominions, have a better knowledge of each other’s views and of the views of Ministers responsible for the policy of the United Kingdom.

As far as Australia is concerned, it has resulted in a working naval agreement which is a flexible, powerful and effective instrument, and which recognises the pride and sentiment of the people of the Commonwealth and of the motherland. (Hear, hear.). Whenever possible, in future there will be consultation on matters which may affect Australian interest prior to negotiations which would commit the Government of the United Kingdom. The resolution passed by the Conference I attended was of great important. (Hear, hear.) The mother country asks for no greater authority than the smallest Dominions, Newfoundland. She has admitted us in perfect confidence, believing we will be with her in good times and bad times. (Cheers). That confidence has begotten confidence, and our feeling is more alive today than in any previous period in our history. I wish the Imperial Conference long life and great success. (Loud cheers.)

We have earnestly and repeatedly advised the people of the Commonwealth, in their own interests and for their own protection, to give the Federal Parliament the increased powers asked for in the Referendum proposals now before the country. (Hear, hear) It is distinctly a national matter. Attempts are being made to make it a

party question, but it is, and must remain, a national one. (Hear, hear) We have to deal with industrial unrest, which is world-wide. Industrial peace is of inestimable value to the community. It can only be secured by increasing the powers of the Commonwealth in this direction. (Loud cheers.) The control of great trusts and combines which now exploit the public is one of the great and pressing questions that insistently call for immediate attention. Without an amendment of the constitution no effective legislation is possible.

The New Protection is our policy. It is economic justice. Mr Deakin blessed it with two memoranda in 1907 and 1908. Fusionists say they believe in it but cannot support it. They know it cannot be carried out with the present powers of the Federal Parliament. No other constitutional authority can do it. Those who are urging you to vote "No" are advocates of a policy that will continue indefinitely the exploitation of producers and consumers (Hear, hear.). They may deny that. They may say, like Mr Irvine, that they believe the powers – or some of them – are necessary if the purposes for which the Commonwealth Parliament was brought into existence are carried out.

They may add that they would trust the Parliament with additional powers if Fusionists had a majority in it, but not otherwise. That is Fusion modesty. (Laughter.) The elector may not be trusted. Parliament shall not be trusted, if Fusionists do not direct its affairs. Were ever such selfish reason given to excuse conduct that would inflict injustice on a free people and injure a nation? (Cheers.) The new powers for the Federal Parliament are set out in detail in an official booklet, a copy of which will be sent to every elector in the Commonwealth. The Government give their reasons for the proposed amendments. The Opposition gives reasons against.

Objection is taken to the proposals being brought on so soon after their rejection two years ago. It is answered by the fact that injustice will continue without them. (Cheers.) Federation would not have been accomplished had such reasons influenced leaders. Where the public interests are involved on a question which the electors alone can decide it is not for the Government to consider whether it is popular or not; it is its duty to submit it to them for decision at every convenient opportunity. (Loud cheers.)

With respect to nationalisation on general principles, the rule of guidance would be that where competition exists there is no need of interference.

The tariff as originally imposed in 1901, and since amended, though working fairly well on the whole seems to call for re-adjustment to more effectually encourage Australian manufacturers. (Cheers, cheers.) With respect to the further encouragement of Australian manufacturers the policy of the Labor party has been, and is along the lines of the new protection. Legislation instigated by the Labor party and passed by the Parliament in 1906, has been in the Excise (Agricultural Machinery) Act declared by the High Court invalid. Until the constitution is amended nothing can be done to give effect to that policy. Protection of the workers in protected industries cannot be assured, while protection of the consumer, i.e. of the community generally, is quite impossible. We therefore most strongly urge that the amendments of the constitution now before you should be approved, in which case we shall take immediate steps (Cheers) to put the policy of new protection into force and give such protection to the community and the workers as may be necessary. (Cheers.)

Should the people, however, decide not to take to themselves through their Federal Parliament these powers, the Government pledges itself to take an early opportunity to amend the tariff to give effective protection to Australia industries. (Loud cheers.)

At the present time the voice of the people of the Commonwealth is heard at elections every three years. During the intervals the people speak through their representatives in Parliament. The Government of the Commonwealth is broad-based on the people's will. In the din of fierce party contests good ideas may be unheard and sometimes when heard unheeded. That is not good for the Commonwealth (Hear, hear). It is proposed to bring the Government of the people nearer to themselves by means the initiative and referendum. (Loud and continued cheering).

The means by which these great instruments of democratic government are to be made available under our present constitution may be shortly stated:-

Initiative 1: The Government will at an early date in the session pass an act to provide the machinery whereby a prescribed number of electors may request the Parliament to legislate in a certain directions. Referendum 2: Such legislations or any other originating in the usual way in the Parliament, may upon the required number of electors so requesting in the prescribed way, be submitted to the people of the Commonwealth by way of referendums. (Cheers.) In this way the people will be able to initiate legislation and to veto it. The control by the electors will then be not only technically but practically complete, as well as continuous. (Cheers).

It is proposed to continue to carry out the policy of an Australian owned manned and controlled navy on the lines of the scheme laid down by Admiral Henderson. During the ensuing three years it is proposed to lay down in addition to the vessels now almost completed one battleship, three destroyers, two submarines and one supply ship. It is also proposed to make a start with a naval aviation vessel. The various bases for the use of the fleet will be proceeded with and a floating dock will be provided. The Fitzroy dockyard has been obtained from the government of New South Wales in a transferred property. It is proposed to complete the construction of the cruiser and the three destroyers now laid down there. The additional destroyers now proposed and the supply ship, will also be built in Australia, (Hear, hear.)

In view of the fact that there will be considerable amount of ship building and backyard work associated with the Customs Department for its quarantine lighthouses and navigation sub-departments and with the Department of External Affairs in connection with the Northern Territory and Papua, it is proposed to eventually concentrate that work at the Cockatoo Island dock, and to commence the work of establishing a naval ship building yard at Jervis Bay in Federal territory, to be utilised for the purpose of the fleet.

It will be the policy of the Government to fully co-operate with the other Dominions and with the United Kingdom in coming to a proper understanding on the question of the projection of British interest in the Pacific. (Cheers.) To that end the Government has suggested a conference of the self-governing Dominions of the Empire in Australia, New Zealand or Canada. (Loud cheers.) Further consideration of that proposal has been deferred until a later period of the present year.

The universal military training under the defence act is progressing satisfactorily. In connection with the training of senior cadets it is the wish of the Government that a proportion of the drills should be carried out in working hours (hear, hear) and that night drills should be correspondingly reduced. The Government will introduce

legislation to obviate loss of wages to cadets for time lost attending drills during working hours. Provision will be made for further drill halls, instructors and equipment, also for the manufacture in Australia of our field gun ammunition. (Hear, hear.) The provisions of adequate fixed defence for defended ports will be carefully attended to.

The question of the position of the sugar industry has of late excited considerable discussion. The system of bounty and excise erected as a superstructure of legislation to ensure the due protection of the grower who conformed to the national policy of the exclusion of colored labor was said to be unsatisfactory, inasmuch as the grower could not pay his employees what were considered to be reasonable wages for the industry. During the year 1912 the Treasurer of Queensland had an interview with me on the subject, and as a results the Premier of the northern State, in a letter to me, dated 5th September, 1912 stated, inter alia-

My colleague the Treasurer communicated to me your expressed opinion that it would make for the welfare of the sugar industry if both excise and bounty were abolished; that you would do your best to influence your colleagues to take the same view, and if successful would next session introduce bills for the repeal of so much of the excise and bounty sections as supplied to the sugar industry.

Whatever operation I can give you in the matter will be cheerfully rendered, for I am satisfied that along such lines as you suggested lays the only solution of the difficulties which have to be met. I hope therefore you will be able to prevail on your colleagues to take action in direction mentioned and to take it during the current session of Parliament for delaying until next year would curtail very serious consequences on the industry, and, among other evils, the intensifying of the present feeling of uncertainty and unrest in those connected with it.

If you can give me your assurance on this point, I shall undertake to introduce legislation exhibiting Asiatic aliens from engaging or working in the industry and compensating such aliens and may be bona fide owners or leaseholders of land now under sugar cane. The people of Australia desire the sugar industry to be a white labor one, and I gladly give my support to any arrangement which will ensure the realisation of that desire. It is also their wish that this industry should pay the white labor the highest wage consistent with its prosperity, and the better to achieve that end I shall so enlarge the Industrial Peace Bill as to bring sugar workers (both field and mill hands) under industrial boards. I think that will be the most effective means of protecting their interests.

On 3rd December I informed the Premier that the Commonwealth Government would introduce bills during the session to abolish the excise and bounty, such bills to be brought into operation upon the State passing an Act to – (A) Confer upon the Commonwealth Parliament the power to legislate in respect of the employment of colored labour and regulation of wages and conditions of labour; or (B) abolish colored labour in the industry, and establish tribunals for the regulation of rates of wages and condition of labor, such legislation, by whatever authority, to adopt the Royal Sugar Commission's recommendations as to minimum rates of wages and condition of labor. (Hear, hear.) Mr Denham wired me on 5th December, 1912 in terms of gratification at the assurances in my wire, and intimated that he preferred alternative B. He saw no insuperable difficulties in giving effect to Commonwealth requirements. Yet on the next day Mr Denham inquired as to my wire and intimated that the preferred alternative B. He saw no insuperable difficulties in giving effect to

Commonwealth requirements. Yet on the next day Mr Denham inquired as to whether we would by statute fix the minimum price for sugar at £21 10/ per ton. My reply to that was that we should on the 12th of the month introduce bills to abolish the excise and bounty in terms of the undertaking previously arrived at, and which he (Mr. Denham) had duly accepted. The bills were introduced, and passed by the Federal Parliament. When Mr. Denham carries out his agreement with me in the matter proclamation will issue. (Hear, hear.)

Should he decline to do so, or even fail to do so, the resources of the Commonwealth are not exhausted. Legislation will be passed to equalise the bounty and excise, and thereby protect the white growers against unfair competition by those employing colored labor. (Hear, hear.) This will be done on the assurance that not less than 2/2 per ton of cane will be paid to growers in excess of that which would be paid were that legislation not passed. That is the crux of the whole matter. The Commonwealth proposes to give up £1 per ton which we now have; but will see to it that the parties for whom it is intended shall get it. (Cheers.) If larger powers are given to the Federal Government, which I believe will be given – (cheers) then Parliament will be able to protect every producer in Australia. (Cheers.)

The States debts question remains unsatisfactory from a constitutional point of view, and bad business from the point of view of the taxpayers. The spectacle of six States' Treasurers jostling each other to get the first word with money lenders is not inspiring and does not tend to economy. We shall at once invite the States to a conference to consider the State debts-question with the view of substituting one Australian stock for seven; and one joint borrower for the same number. (Hear, hear.)

A general insurance law has been considered urgent. A bill has been drafted and will be dealt with in the next Parliament. Such a law will ensure uniform protection of funds and prevent abuses that have existed being repeated. An explanative measure dealing with bankruptcy was introduced last session, but time did not permit of it being dealt with. It is proposed next Parliament to pass legislation and thus provide for uniform law and administration throughout Australia on this most important subject. (Hear, hear.).

The Government has given the subject of reciprocal trade relations with New Zealand and other countries careful consideration and some preliminary correspondence has been exchanged. Mr Foster, of Canada and Mr Fisher, of New Zealand are due in Australia shortly and will during their stay, discuss the subject more closely with the Minister of Customs.

Five thousand miles of the Australian coast line remain unchartered and in parts even unexamined. It is of the highest importance that this work be proceeded with; if from no other consideration than the enormous monetary value of ships of war and those of the mercantile marine with their rich cargoes. It is estimated that this work will take many years to complete if two vessels be obtained and employed continuously for the purpose. We must not hesitate to spend the money even if it runs into over £1,000,000. It will be entered upon at once if we are returned to power.

The Government proposes to bring forward a measure for the establishment of a Bureau of Agriculture for scientific investigations and for collecting and disseminating agricultural, live stock and forestry information. (Hear, hear.)

As far as powers will permit, the Government will take action to safeguard the health of the people and for that purpose a sum of £30,000 will be set aside for the prevention and cure of consumption and cancer. (Cheers.)

Greater and more rapid extension of telephones to the country districts under more favourable conditions than exist at present is a step that will be taken during the next parliament. The system enable many settlers in the country to get the advantages that closer settled communities now only enjoy. The system of automatic telephones is working well at Geelong and it is proposed to extend it. (Hear, hear.)

We propose to establish Commonwealth steamers. (Lour cheers.) What is proposed is not a departure from, but only an extension of the policy pursued on land. On land restrictions have been placed on competitors as regards railways. The sea is open to all. That is not a disadvantage. The test will be on the open sea. The Government proposes first to establish a line of steamers between the mainland and the island State of Tasmania. – (Hear, hear.) and also as soon as practicable an oversea service for more expeditions and efficient carrying of mails and general produce. (Cheers.) For this latter service it is proposed that steamers of a greatly increased speed shall be employed.

The State-owned Pacific cable has not an Atlantic line of its own. Its dependence on private cables there is not satisfactory. Australia and New Zealand favour an Atlantic line being laid down to allow them through connection with London. We do not intend to let this matter rest as it is.

The Government regards as a matter of great importance the extension of a standard gauge from Fremantle to Townsville, Q. As long ago as 1901 Mr. Mathieson, then Chief Commissioner of Railways in Victoria, gave the following opinion:-

There can be no doubt that adoption of uniform gauge, enabling both passenger and goods traffic to flow freely without changing carriages or wagons, would be a great boom to the public, and one I think, the community has a right to demand from the Federal Government. The longer the uniform gauge is delayed, the more lines there are being built, and the greater will the ultimate expense be.

A conference of railway engineers of all the States, except Tasmania, met in Melbourne during 1912, under the presidency of the Commonwealth Engineer in Chief (Mr. Deane). The conference concluded that the adoption of uniform gauges was desirable at the earliest possible date, for the following reasons:

1. Economy in rolling stock and in expenses at every break of gauge.
2. Comfort and convenience of passengers.
3. Military necessities.
4. Encouragement to traffic through improved facilities offered.

The conference emphasised the fact that the longer unification is postponed, the more serious will the cost become. It further concluded that the future standard gauge of Australia should be not less than 4 feet 8½ inches, and resolved – the Victorian engineer dissenting – that the relative advantages of the 5 feet and 3 inches and 4 feet 8½ inches gauges from the point of view of efficiency and economy of working and disregarding the question of interest on cost of conversion, approximately balanced. The War Railway Council in February, 1911 unanimously decided to recommend the adoption of the 4 feet 8½ inches gauge. The Commonwealth Government considered

this matter urgent and will take immediate steps to convene a conference with all the States to consider the whole question with an open mind concerning the adjustment of costs. (Cheers.)

These matters, then will engage our attention in the next Parliament. During our period of office, we have seen increases in wealth in trade, in the areas of crops, in banking assets and banking deposits in savings, bank deposits in the number of depositors, in marriages, in births and in immigration. (Cheers.)

We have built, manned and equipped an Australian navy with our own money, and established an effective defence force (Applause).

We have provided the most advanced social legislation in the world to assist the needy and protect the helpless. (Applause.) In carrying it out 95 per cent of the people's money goes to the recipients. We build ships, make arms and ammunition, but we also open the door wide to young Australians on their merits, to command on sea and land. (Cheers.) The development of this great island continent is our first care and the Government will be true to its trust, and will open tracks from east to west and from north to south. (Cheers.).

We shall join lands with all those who desire peace in the world, while preparing for the emergencies of which history gives warning. (Cheers.). I will conclude with an extract from Admiral Henderson's letter, dated 9th January this year:- "I may say that I brought away with me from Australia the view that you and your Ministers were actuated by sincerity of purpose for the good of your country as a whole and in my quiet retirement, I watch with interest what is going on."

Source: Edited speech compiled from The Age April 1, 1913, Page 9 and The Sydney Morning Herald and the Marlborough Chronicle.