

At this point New South Wales intervened with her new amendments. You are sure to have been informed long ago of their purport, but it may be convenient if I briefly refer to them here. In clause 5 it was proposed that an enlargement of the Council should only be made on a resolution of the Federal Council. In clause 15, subsection (i), it was proposed to strike out the provision allowing any two or more colonies to refer matters to the Federal Council, and to provide instead that such reference should only be made on a request from all the Legislatures. As such a restriction not only involved the previous consent of every Legislature to the reference itself, but also an agreement upon the exact legislation to take place, I was unable to support Sir Saul Samuel in pressing this amendment. Supposing, for instance, Victoria and South Australia to desire a uniformity of weights and measures within their two colonies, they were not to be allowed to have that uniformity unless all the other colonies consented. Again, it was singular that a previous agreement of all the colonies should be wanted for the laws contemplated in subsection (i), while no such previous agreement was wanted for more important laws contemplated in subsections (a), (b), and (c); thus, while a previous agreement was required for a municipal law about uniformity of weights and measures, none was necessary for a political law involving the interests of all Australasia in the Pacific. The amendments proposed in clauses 16 and 29 were consequential, following the alteration in clause 15.

Her Majesty's Government thus suddenly found themselves in face of new structural amendments of a fundamental kind; and it was not unnatural for all of these to be rather unwelcome under the pressure of the political circumstances of the moment.

The Secretary of State thereupon determined to confer with the Agents-General, postponing in the meanwhile the Committee stage of the Bill. At this point Victoria intervened with an offer to withdraw her objections to the 31st clause, provided the Bill was not otherwise changed in principle. When, therefore, the Agents-General met Colonel Stanley yesterday, the question had become really narrowed to the one whether the Bill should go on as it was, or the risk be run of losing it altogether for this session.

Colonel Stanley announced that Her Majesty's Government had decided to go on with the Bill, expressing at the same time a hope that the differences between the colonies might be reconciled, and the Bill be allowed to go through without contentious discussion in the House of Commons.

I do not trouble you with any detailed account of the long conference with the Secretary of State; nor, indeed, was any final decision then given by him. But I feel very confident, all the same, that the amendments of New Zealand and New South Wales will all be rejected, and that, if the Bill goes through at all, it will go through as it came down from the Lords. The only difference may be in the omission of the proviso at the end of the 31st clause, allowing a retiring colony to repeal Federal legislation. The proviso was certainly too wide; for a person who was married one day by the operation of the Federal law might find himself unmarried the next by its repeal. Sir Saul Samuel insisted strongly on the proviso being maintained; but Mr. Murray Smith urged that, as Victoria had only given way on the 31st clause in the hope of obtaining unanimity, she would not go any farther. I then made a last suggestion that any evil to be feared from the repealing proviso might be prevented by "repealing Acts" having to be reserved for the Queen's pleasure; but, although the suggestion was favourably received, it will not be adopted.

Sir George Campbell has given notice of two amendments on going into Committee, which I send you. One is to prevent going into Committee at all, the other is to leave out subsection (a) of clause 15. Neither amendment, however, will be carried.

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &c.,  
F. D. BELL.

### Enclosure 1.

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.—(Monday, 27th July.)

SIR GEORGE CAMPBELL,—On motion for going into Committee on Federal Council of Australasia Bill, to move, That this House will, upon this day three months, resolve itself into the said Committee. [Thursday, 23rd July.]

*In Committee on Federal Council of Australasia Bill:—*

Sir George Campbell,—Clause 15, page 3, line 21, leave out subsection (a).

### Enclosure 2.

The AGENT-GENERAL, New South Wales, to the COLONIAL OFFICE.

SIR,—

5, Westminster Chambers, Westminster, S.W., 15th July, 1885.

Referring to my interview with the Secretary of State for the Colonies and yourself this morning, relative to the Federal Council Bill of Australasia, I now beg to forward, for the information of Colonel Stanley, copies of the telegraphic despatches, to which I then adverted, received by me this morning from the Colonial Secretary at Sydney, suggesting certain amendments in the Bill now before Parliament.

I would specially direct your attention to that portion of Sir Alexander Stuart's message which states that, if the proposed amendments be adopted, there is more chance of the colony coming under the Act, but he cannot guarantee even then that New South Wales would do so, and that the Colonial Parliament alone can give its assent, his present object being to make a possible opening for that assent.

I send herewith a copy of the Bill with the suggested amendments, as I understand them from the telegraphic messages I have received.

The Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies.

I have, &c.,  
SAUL SAMUEL.