

*On the  
125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
Henry Parkes'  
Tenterfield Oration*



Official launch of  
**FOUNDATION**1901

*dedicated to celebrating  
the past, present and future of  
Australia's Federation*

**24 October 2014**

# Sir Henry Parkes GCMG

27 May 1815 – 27 April 1896

**Born:** Canley, Warwickshire, United Kingdom

**Died:** 'Kenilworth', Annandale, New South Wales

Aged 80 years and 11 months

The youngest of seven children

Thrice married - Clarinda (1836), Eleanor (1889) & Julia (1895)

Seventeen children, 6 of whom pre-deceased him

"From the time my father left Stoneleigh,  
I might date the commence of suffering and hardship which soon  
resulted in bleak and lasting destitution. ... **and I,  
not quite ten years of age, went to work at a rope manufactory  
for fourpence pr day**".

Henry Parkes (1844) *Letter to Lord Leigh*

"... though not rich or versatile, his personality was massive,  
durable and imposing, resting upon elementary qualities of  
human nature elevated by a strong mind.

**He was cast in the mould of a great man and**  
though he suffered from numerous pettinesses, spites and failings,  
**he was in himself a large-brained self-educated Titan**  
**whose natural field was found in Parliament**  
and whose resources of character and intellect enabled him  
in his later years to overshadow all his contemporaries"

Alfred Deakin (1944) *The Federal Story*

"Uneducated, bankrupt and depressive,  
Henry Parkes nonetheless steered a fractious country  
to nationhood, championed women's rights, established  
secular state education and set a standard for honest governance  
that his successors, particularly in New South Wales,  
have proved incapable of emulating"

Geoffrey Robertson in Stephen Dando-Collins (2013)

*Sir Henry Parkes: The Australian Colossus*

# Sir Henry Parkes GCMG

*ON FEDERATION*

Tenterfield Oration – 24 October 1889

Crimson Thread speech – 6 February 1890

One people, One destiny – 13 June 1891

**"Father of Federation"**

"... but in spite of these efforts, nothing was done.  
Statesmen saw the need for union; but the people of each colony,  
intent on their local affairs,  
were indifferent to the larger questions.  
**It was Sir Henry Parkes who first caught the imagination  
of the Australian people"**

Robert Garran 'Australian Union' in (1901)  
*Souvenir of the Inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth*

"Not to beat around the bush, let us name the undoubted Fathers, ....

**We must first include Parkes.**

There can be various explanation of his actions in 1889,  
but the more closely one examines the events of that year, the more certain it is  
**that there would have been no 1891 Constitution but for his initiative,  
and his refusal to accept rebuffs.**

He was no technical Constitution-maker, but his

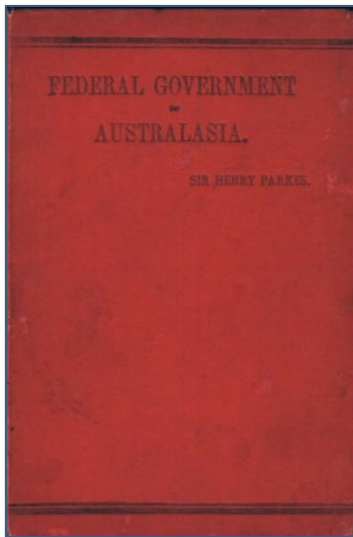
Resolutions of 1890 and 1891

set the process of gestation going.

The name 'Commonwealth' was his ..."

J.A. La Nauze (1968) 'Who are the Fathers?' in *Historical Studies*

Reprinted in Irving and MacIntyre (2001) *No Ordinary Act*



Various speeches delivered in 1889 & 1890  
& published by Henry Parkes in 1890  
from the transcripts of newspaper reports.

Original transcript of Parkes' Tenterfield Oration  
*Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 October 1889, p8  
'SIR HENRY PARKES AT TENTERFIELD  
BANQUET TO THE PREMIER.  
A BRILLIANT RECEPTION'

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/13746899>

Now also

<http://www.foundation1901.org.au>

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALASIA.

### BANQUET AT TENTERFIELD.

24TH OCTOBER, 1889.

IN response to the toast of "The Ministry" proposed by the Mayor,

Sir HENRY PARKES, who was received with applause, said, in reply, that he could assure them he could not find words with which to acknowledge the toast, without recurring to the time when he had stood for a short period in intimate relations to them. This was one of the passages in his life which was not likely to fade away, for he remembered how generously they had elected him within a few hours after his defeat for East Sydney. He remembered also the generous confidence which they had displayed in refusing to accept his resignation on the occasion of his visit to England. He had afterwards felt compelled to suddenly resign his seat, yielding to a similar train of thought to that which recently led to the conception and passing of the Public Works Act. He had seen what had appeared to him such an utter profligacy in voting away large sums of money for public works, that he felt it was time he should refuse to sit in a Parliament where such things were possible, although he saw occasion afterwards to return. The Premier



then referred to the passing of the Public Works Act and to the functions of the Parliamentary Committee, pointing out the valuable services which it was likely to render, and he also dealt at some length with the constitution of the present Government, showing in detail the ability of its different members. The late session would, if it had come to a conclusion ten days earlier, have been one of the most creditable ever held in this colony. He then traced briefly the work of the session, and went on to refer to what the Government intended to do.

They would do their best to carry out as perfectly as possible the organisation of the defence force of the colony. He thought that they should by every means in their power encourage young men to enter the service, and to learn the use of arms. The Government would do all they could to improve the organisation of the military forces of the colony in accordance with latest recommendations. They would doubtless be aware that a short time ago an Imperial officer inspected the forces of this and the other colonies, and this officer's opinion of our men was that they were calculated to make as fine soldiers as any in the world. Although he pointed out some defects, on the whole his report was favourable. General Edwards had also advised that the forces of the several colonies should be federated for operation in concert in the event of war, so as to act as one great army. If an attack were made upon any of the colonies, it might be necessary for us to bring all our power to bear on one spot of the coast. More, however, was necessary than they at present possessed if they were to have the federal system, so strongly recommended, and which must appeal to the sense of every intelligent man.

The Imperial General who inspected the troops of the colony had recommended that the whole of the forces of Australia should be united into one army. It would be pleasing if they could rely on being safe without taking military precautions at all; but as this was impossible, they must take measures to defend themselves, and the knowledge of the fact that they were in this condition of security would be spread all over the world, and make them additionally secure. There were two very important questions towards which their attention ought to be directed. They must have heard something of the Federal Council, in which New South Wales had not yet taken a place; but if they were to carry out the recommendations of General Edwards, it would be absolutely necessary for them to have something more than the Federal Council—one central executive authority, which could bring all the forces of the different colonies into one national army. Some colonial statesmen had said that this might be done by means of the Federal Council; but this Federal Council had no power to do anything of the sort, as it had no executive function; and, moreover, was not an elective body, but merely a body appointed by the Governments of the various colonies; and did not, therefore, carry with it the support of the people. It was constitutionally weak, and, under the Imperial Act which created it, no such tremendous power was given as that which the exigencies of Australia might demand. It had been suggested that the Imperial Parliament should be asked to pass a measure authorising the troops of the colonies to unite in one federal army; but still, even if this were done, there would be an absence of the necessary central executive government. The



colonies would object to the army being under the control of the Imperial Government, and no one of the colonies could direct it. The great question which they had to consider was, whether the time had not now come for the creation on this Australian continent of an Australian Government, as distinct from the local Governments now in existence. (Applause.) In other words, to make himself as plain as possible, Australia had now 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 without breaking the ties that held them to the mother country. (Cheers.) Believing as he did that it was essential to preserve the security and integrity of these colonies that the whole of their forces should be amalgamated into one great federal army, whenever necessary,—feeling this, and seeing no other means of attaining the end, it seemed to him that the time was close at hand when they ought to set about creating this great national government for all Australia. This subject brought them face to face with another subject. They had now, from South Australia to Queensland, a stretch of about 2,000 miles of railway, and if the four colonies could only combine to adopt a uniform gauge, it would be an immense advantage in the movement of troops, as well as in the operations of commerce and the various pursuits of society. These were the two great national questions which he wished to lay before them. He had just returned from Brisbane, and the object of his visit had been not to force his advice on the authorities there.

but to discuss with them these matters. Unfortunately, owing to the illness of the head of the Ministry, his communications were rather more of a private character than otherwise; but, without disclosing any confidences, he thought he might state that he understood both sides in politics sympathised warmly and closely with the views which had been expressed by him. As to the steps which should be taken to bring this about, a conference of the Governments had been pointed to, but they must take broader views in the initiation of the movement than had been taken hitherto; they must appoint a convention of leading men from all the colonies, delegates appointed by the authority of Parliament, who would fully represent the opinion of the different Parliaments of the colonies. This convention would have to devise the constitution which would be necessary for bringing into existence a federal government with a Federal Parliament for the conduct of national business. (Applause.) The only argument which could be advanced in opposition to the views he had put forward was that the time had not come, and they must remain isolated colonies just in the same way as they were now. He believed, however, that the time had come; and, in the words of Brunton Stephens, he would ask—

“Not yet her day. How long ‘not yet?’

There comes the flush of violet!

And heavenward faces, all aflame

With sanguine imminence of morn,

Wait but the sun-kiss to proclaim

The day of the Dominion born.”

(Applause.) He believed that the time had come, and if two Governments set an example, the others must soon of necessity follow, and they would have an uprising in



this fair land of a goodly fabric of free Government, and all great national questions of magnitude affecting the welfare of the colonies would be disposed of by a fully authorised constitutional authority, which would be the only one which could give satisfaction to the people represented. This meant a distinct executive and a distinct parliamentary power, a government for the whole of Australia, and it meant a Parliament of two Houses, a house of commons and a senate, which would legislate on all great subjects. The Government and Parliament of New South Wales would be just as effective as now in all local matters, and so would be the Government and Parliament of Queensland. All great questions would be dealt with in a broad light and with a view to the interests of the whole country.

He, therefore, took advantage of the opportunity which had arisen for the consideration of this great subject, for he believed that the time was at hand when the thing would be done. One great thing to be accomplished was the massing together of their military forces, whenever necessary, and this could not be effected by any other power than one representing all the colonies. In conclusion, he thanked them for the kindness which they had shown him; he had no fear but the Federal Parliament would rise to a just conception of the necessities of the wider sphere of political existence. This great thing would have to be done, and to put it off would only tend to make the difficulties which stood in the way greater. In the meantime, there was this substantial work of defence to be carried out, which they could not do by any other means, —which could not be done by any existing machinery.

# FOUNDATION1901

**Sir Henry Parkes GCMG  
Bicentenary  
1815 – 2015**

**‘In Henry’s footsteps’ tour**  
Warwickshire & Coventry, United Kingdom  
*January 2015*

**Republication of Henry Parkes’ major works**  
*May 2015*

**‘Who’s Henry?’ competition**  
*May 2015*  
*(subject to funding)*

**Register Of Federation Statesmen**  
Capturing the knowledge of Australia’s  
High Court Judges, Governors and Governors-General,  
Premiers & Prime Ministers  
*October 2015 ongoing*

*Inaugural*  
**Federation Week**  
**19 – 25 October 2015**

*Thank you for your ongoing support.*



[www.foundation1901.org.au](http://www.foundation1901.org.au)

