

(March 20)

A Canadian in Australia.

BY MR. H. B. AMES, M.P.*

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on the subject, "A Canadian in Australia, Mr. H. B. Ames, M.P., Montreal, said:

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Canadian Club,—I have very pleasant recollections of having met the Canadian Club of Toronto before, although I find time slips by so quickly that it is seven or eight years since I was here; but your President—an old friend of mine personally—sent me an invitation for to-day, so I accepted the privilege and pleasure of coming again.

It seems rather a presumptuous task to speak here on a continent in thirty-five minutes, to speak of a people in many ways one of the most interesting of the many countries in the world.

First of all, a word as to the circumstances in which I went to Australia a year and a half ago. There is, as you know, an organization called the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire, a body which meets every third year. The delegates come from all parts of the British Empire, delegated from various bodies, and meet to discuss trade relationships, to consider the various annoyances and barriers, and how their various dealings with each other can be made more extensive and profitable; also how the great British Empire can, along commercial lines, be drawn closer.

That organization, which met in 1906 in London, met in 1910 in Sydney, New South Wales. Among those present were Mr. Gage, of Toronto; Mr. Cockshutt, of Brantford, and a dozen Canadians of various bodies, who went as delegates. We were very hospitably entertained by our Aus-

*Another Canadian who brings home political knowledge gained abroad is Mr. Herbert B. Ames, M.P., of Montreal, one of Mr. R. L. Borden's Quebec lieutenants. He was a delegate from the Montreal Board of Trade to the Chambers of Commerce Congress of the Empire, which met in Australia, and while there he made special study of the new Australian constitution. Mr. Ames is an organizer of supreme capacity, and since entering the House of Commons has been before the public for his work in the Parliamentary Committees. A year or two ago he journeyed over much of Canada on a tour of minute inspection of public works, in order the better to understand the work before him in Parliament.

tralian friends, not only commercial, but political, bodies also vying with one another to make our stay pleasant, giving us an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the resources and the people of the country. I spent ten weeks as pleasantly as I ever spent that length of time in my life, with the delegates from all parts of the British Empire gathered in that congress to discuss these questions.

I will attempt to give you to-day a series of impressions made upon me in that journey through the Australian states. The first impression was that of the immense and unexpected size of the country. This strikes the Britisher particularly; we Canadians are accustomed to big things on this continent, and don't think so much of it. Yet, when you come to think of it, the area is greater than that of the United States; the seaboard is as long as the Pacific and Atlantic seaboard of the United States. We landed at Brisbane, went through New South Wales and Victoria, visited Tasmania, and then went through South and West Australia. Our trip would be equivalent to a journey in this country from St. John, N.B.—if we followed the coast—to Galveston, Tex. No feature struck me so favorably and forcefully as the magnificent cities. Of course, Australia has a number of seaboard communities, and these have developed independently of the rest of the country. So much of the capital of these cities depends on the large tributary area behind them. There are two classes of people—those who lived in the country and made money there and those who came to cities to swell the enormous aggregation of urban population. Sydney and Melbourne have a large, wealthy population. About 40 per cent. of the population live in some half-dozen cities, and nearly 35 per cent. in four or five cities on the seaboard. From these railways stretch into the interior, like radiating bars of a fan, in different directions. The shipping and financial interests are large, and there are great opportunities for culture also at Sydney. Their cities dominate the country very much more than our cities in Canada.

Their resources, though great and valuable, are not so diversified nor so promising as we have in Canada. We have a larger outlook and larger opportunities than they.

There are three main sources of wealth, and I shall speak of them historically, in the order of their development—sheep ranching, gold digging, and wheat raising. The early settlers, who went there a hundred years ago, found the uplands a little distance from the seaboard admirably adapted to sheep, and for years they could produce little else than wool, tallow,

and mutton. By the middle of last century there was a large number of sheep in the country, estimated at one hundred million, and it was not an unusual thing to see fifty, sixty, or seventy-five thousand in a single flock. We had several delightful opportunities of going into the interior and seeing the various operations of shearing and clipping by machinery and other processes. Life on those great sheep farms is very much like a home in an English gentleman's country residence, because some of these men are very wealthy. The sheep clip last year, as to value of the product, was \$150,000,000.

The next great source of wealth is gold. It was discovered first in 1857 in the alluvial soil at Ballarat and Bendigo. At first the miners were able to make fortunes in digging nuggets. Between 1851 and 1861 the population trebled, and there was a very large annual output, nearly all due to the miner with pick and shovel, amounting to \$50,000,000 a year. So, you see, a very large sum of money was made available for local investment and development. The output of gold has amounted to \$2,500,000,000 worth. We can hardly realize what it means to a country to have such an enormous sum of money for investment. The old method of digging gave place to the new method of placer mining, but no small placer miner is now to be found anywhere. It was interesting to see the traces of his old washings. To-day it is all gold digging, mining, getting from reefs and rocks, and is carried on by immense corporations. One man alone—a Mr. Morgan—got \$75,000,000 of gold ore.

The third means of wealth is raising of wheat. Australia is getting immigrants, and as many as possible are being put on farms, each being given two acres, one sheep, and twenty-five bushels of wheat. Thus they are getting them to raise wheat. With more than 25,000,000 acres of wheat land scattered over the different States, though they can produce only ten or twelve bushels to the acre, not more than half or two-thirds as much as we can, and have quarter as much land, yet their possibility of wheat production is very great.

From these three sources Australia has got wealth, and is still getting it. Some years she has had to import wheat, as in 1903, when there was a drought. Last year the yield was the largest on record—nearly 100,000,000 bushels. They have to count on one year in every six or seven as a bad year. Fortunately they have had a series of good years now, and are very prosperous.

As to the system of government, one is able to find much of interest in it. We have the impression here that we gave

them the model and they followed it, but that is not accurate. These Australian States federated as soon as 1901. What the Canadian is struck with first is the lack of cohesion. There is not much Australian sentiment as such—a man is a New South Wales man, or of whatever State he is, and then an Australian. There is not that sense as yet of unification which we have. Their constitution differs from ours in one very important principle—when the federation was made, it was arranged that the residuum of power should rest with the Provinces, not the federal authorities; with us it is the opposite. The tendency there is, therefore, to magnify State rights and minify the central power. They also have an elective Senate, each State being allowed so many Senators. The Senate sits for six years; it takes a vote of the whole State, the first eight receiving the nomination.

They also have woman suffrage now practically universally. And the ladies use their privilege almost as well as the men, at the last election 53 per cent of the male vote being polled and 47 per cent. of the female. Usually the ladies persuade their husbands to vote about the way they do, so there is not any very great difference in the returns since the ladies have been admitted to the franchise. I think the personal magnetism of the candidate has a good deal to do with the way they vote, and occasionally on a moral issue the woman vote will break away and make itself felt. They generally persuade their husbands and brothers to vote with them, so it is about a doubling of the vote. I think the labor element is gone, for practically every wife and daughter of the laboring man votes on the other side.

One very highly developed system they have is that of state ownership and operation of public utilities. Now, if the Government was to operate a road, the prices charged must be commensurate with the cost, so the average first-class fare there is $3\frac{3}{4}$ cents a mile and the second-class $2\frac{1}{2}$ cents. The average rate on a bushel of wheat carried three hundred miles is 14 cents; in Victoria it is lower—8 cents. If Australia had her wheat field in the centre of the continent, instead of on the edges, the question of marketing would be serious. But the centre is barren, and the only growth is within three or four hundred miles of the seaboard. In our country the average freight rate on grain is two or three times as heavy.

The telegraph system is lower in charge under government ownership, and so is the post-office. While not a financial success, for a deficit has to be made up annually, yet they give excellent service. Sixpence will carry a telegram in the

metropolitan area; ninepence will take it anywhere within the state, while one shilling will carry an ordinary message anywhere in Australia. A sixteen-word message goes anywhere for 25 cents, a smaller rate than we are accustomed to. The telephone rate in the smaller towns is \$15 and in larger towns \$20 a year. But it is a very poor service. I think I would need about two Australian telephones to give as much service as one in Toronto.

We had the opportunity of meeting the Premiers not only of the several States, but also the Prime Minister of the Federation. Premiers have very short lives in Australia. I found the people there had the utmost admiration for Sir Wilfrid Laurier. I said we all have in Canada. But one reason that seemed to be the chief one with many of them was that he could remain Premier for fifteen years they never had a man in Australia stay in more than three years. In the last ten years they have had no less than ten different ministries; so every politician has a chance in Australia.

There are three parties in Australia. After the States became federated the people naturally fell into two parties. Victoria was protectionist, while New South Wales was for free trade, thus giving the nucleus of two parties; but after they were amalgamated they effected a compromise on low tariff. Then there entered as a wedge the Labor party, which was stronger in the cities, but had considerable following in the country sections as well. Thus there were three parties, none of which was strong enough in itself, so there followed a series of coalitions—Liberal and Labor, Conservative and Labor, and Liberal and Conservative against Labor. This accounts for the turbulence of their politics. Free traders and protectionists were at one time held together by their common dislike of Laborites, but as soon as they went to the country the people elected a Labor man. So now Mr. Andrew Fisher is the Prime Minister of Australia; and, as he is a labor man and most of the Provincial legislators are Labor men, it is probable that for the next series of years labor legislation will be rather prominent. He is a big, fine Scotchman. You would not take him for a radical. I was told that he does not speak often, but when he takes the floor very few men can stand up against him in debate.

Mr. Fisher and some of his' colleagues were present at a little private luncheon, and we had an opportunity of asking them what they would do when they came into power. They did get in a few months after, and I have noticed that what he told us is what he is doing. One thing, they are all pro-

tectionists; they believe in protecting the product and the laborer, but they start from the bottom upwards, instead of from the top downwards. I will tell you what I mean. They say in Australia that every man is entitled to a wage that will enable him to adopt the standard of living that man ought to maintain in a civilized country; they say that their conditions of labor and the wages paid should be sufficient for this. So they appoint wage boards, and fix the wages by law. I suppose 80 per cent. of the wageworkers come under the wage boards. When the workers in any industry want a change in their conditions they make a petition to the Government, and the Government passes legislation enabling it to act, and appoints a commission, composed partly of workers, partly of manufacturers, with generally a judge for chairman, the board being composed of seven, nine, or eleven. These go carefully into the conditions of that line of business, from the bottom up, and they decide that the wages, the hours, and the conditions of labor should be such and such, and any manufacturer who works his employees for longer hours or gives them less than the board allows is penalized. The manufacturers tell the Government, "In order to have such conditions we must have such protection," so the Government gives them protection to that percentage. There is the basis of their protective policy.

A great many radical proposals are put into force—some seem to us almost anarchistic. I consider that heredity and environment produce this by a series of short steps, aiming to make the conditions of life better. The greatest good to the greatest number is a motto they seem always to keep in mind. They took one of the laws out by the roots and put into operation advanced trade union laws—eight hours a day and standard wages, for instance. You will say this was very radical, but the trades agencies in perhaps a dozen different lines opposed its repeal. Each one proceeded to a careful enquiry, so you will see they have arrived by only slow and short steps to a position which would seem radical, scarcely though legislation, but by natural evolution. Anyone who would say that these laws, as the Australians have them, were taken and transplanted from Canada makes a great mistake; they are the distinct outcome of hereditary environment and special conditions. We can follow, step by step, along the line of improvement, and see how each step is the result of careful investigation.

Mr. Fisher told me his party stood for centralization. The second plank in their platform is a progressive land tax. Very

large areas are held by the sheep ranchers, which the Government think should be turned into agricultural land occupied by small farmers. So they are introducing progressive land taxes, making a large holding an expensive luxury, and in that way taxing it out of existence.

In order to cause closer settlement of the land they will deliberately say, "We want a part of your land." They will pay a reasonable price for it, and the man will have to take that or submit the matter to a board of arbitrators. They claim that a man is entitled to hold only as much land as he can make the maximum use of. So a man that holds fifty thousand acres for a sheep run is thought to be dealing unfairly, since he has land that would support a large number of small farmers. In that way they are taking large areas and cutting them up into little farms, draining the land, building roads and bridges, and thus making a settlement of small farmers. The farmer pays principal and interest in thirty-six years.

The fourth plank is with reference to nationalization. The railroads, telegraphs, and telephones are all nationalized. They have state banks and state life insurance companies. The idea is to nationalize all natural monopolies, the forces of transportation and distribution, and even of production itself. Eventually they will have, of necessity, to land their community in state control of production.

Finally, most important of all their planks, they stand, first and last and all the time, for a "white" Australia. In the mining districts Chinese were entering in considerable numbers. For a number of years exclusion legislation has been enacted, and now no Chinese or Japanese can come in except under almost prohibitive conditions. The incoming yellow races are not allowed the rights of citizenship. A Chinese or a Japanese may hold property, but is not allowed to vote, and he cannot become naturalized. It may be difficult to maintain this condition. The whites occupy one-tenth of the area of the continent, and one-half of the continent is unexplored. If a country is under the tropics, it is not a white man's country, because, while the white man may hold it, he cannot occupy it. The north end of Australia is only a week's steaming from the south of Japan, and there would be difficulty in repelling any influx of the yellow races if they took the notion to bring their ships along the Australian coast.

A government, like an individual, may be considered entitled to hold only such land as it can make the maximum use of. So we find more militarism by far than in Canada. In the first

place, they have standardized their forces, as we are doing in Canada. They have a university cadet system, a free and compulsory system, for all go to school. Lads from 14 to 18 must all belong to cadet corps; many also belong to rifle corps. There is compulsory service for sixteen days in camp per annum for all men between 18 and 26 for practically every man who is in reach of any population centre.

The entire cost of the full unit of the naval force is great. The capital expenditure for the navy in annual contribution for maintenance is \$20,000,000. There are two great military wharves, for they have a great desire that the navy shall be able to transport troops rapidly.

In defence of a "white" Australia she is prepared to make great sacrifices. I think they realize very keenly what it means to be an outpost of empire, and they are prepared to do their part.

Three months ago there was some talking about reciprocal trade with Australia. Just now the pact or treaty with the United States has nearly knocked us out of that. We were to send them lumber, fish, and fruit; but now, since we cannot differentiate ours from the products of our neighbors to the south—but that is a long story; I will leave it for some other time.

I can assure you it was a particular pleasure to us Canadians to go to this meeting or congress, and there to meet with persons who came from all parts of the British Empire, and whom you find in a great city many thousands of miles from home, and the discussion of questions related to mutual experience is very inspiring and stimulating. For there were gathered people from South Africa, India, and the islands of the Pacific Ocean, from Egypt, and from the old land herself; and I confess that feature appealed very strongly to me, that they put methodical labor not only on the great question pertaining to mutual defence, but treated small questions with the same impartial care, and a great number of subjects could be taken up with due consideration.

After we had been entertained with innumerable banquets and dinners we passed through Ceylon, then went to Northern India, westward into Egypt, and so on home. I confess that the greatest impression of all that came to me was the impression of what British institutions mean in the world at large. Here it was possible for a man to start from Montreal, cross Canada, cross the Pacific Ocean, touching the Fiji Islands and Australia, traverse the Australian continent in all parts, sail to India, pass Aden, come to Egypt, pass by Gibraltar, and so

come on home; and everywhere he went he would be either on a vessel flying the British flag or in a British land where British institutions are known and respected. And, if the opportunity comes to any of you to have a similar trip, I cannot imagine a better, more healthful, or easeful experience. The feeling comes over one that the contribution of the British Empire to the world, where she alone can be, is of the greatest magnitude, and it makes us mindful of the proud fact that we, too, are in the working army.