AMERICAN PRESIDENCY.

THE REPUBLICAN PLATFORM.

PROTECTION AND THE WORKER.

LONDON, June 19.

In the presence of 14,000 people the National Convention of the Republican party of the United States adopted with acclamation the "Rooseveltite" plank of the platform submitted, including a modified form of the anti-injunction plank, which upholds the authority of the Courts.

Another plank adopted demands the strengthening of the Sherman anti-trust law, and a third recommends a special revision of the tariff by a special session of Congress immediately after the inauguration of the next President.

The workers are described as the most direct beneficiaries under the protective system, and the platform declares that the United States owns one-fourth of the world's wealth, and makes one-third of its modern manufactured products.

Considerable opposition was aroused by the suggested plank to ensure labour organisations against snap judgments by courts of law in the issue of injunctions. Many of Mr. Taft's supporters objected to the plank, and Senator Burrows was cheered on Wednesday when he pronounced against divesting the Courts of their constitutional powers. According to President Roosevelt, "there is a distinct practice to use injunctions to prevent the entirely proper and legitimate actions of labour organisations in their struggle for industrial betterment. If some way of remedying the indiscriminate use of injunctions is not found, the feeling of indignation among the citizens will grow so extreme that it will produce a revolt against the use of the whole process of injunctions."

MR. TAFT NOMINATED.

A FLATTERING DEMONSTRATION.

When Mr. W. H. Taft, Secretary of State for War, was proposed, there was a demonstration, second only to that which was accorded President Roosevelt the previous day.

In the ballot 702 delegates voted for Mr. Taft, 68 for Mr. P. C. Knox, 63 for Mr. C. Hughes, 61 for Mr. J. Gannon, 40 for Senator C. Fairbanks, 25 for Mr. R. M. La Follette, and 10 for Senator J. B. Foraker.

The Pennsylvanian delegates, amid immense cheering, cast three votes for President Roosevelt.

Subsequently Mr. Taft's nomination was made unanimous.

QUICKENING LOYALTY.

THE DUCHESS AND THE HOME.

LONDON, June 19.

In honour of the Duchess of Albany laying the foundation stone, the Wesleyan authorities decided to call their new institution at Portsmouth, which is to cost £18,000, "The Duchess of Albany's Sailors' and Soldiers' Home."

Mr. A. L. Smith, a member of the Legislative Council of New Zealand, in course of a speech delivered on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone, said that by participating in such functions the Royal family endeared themselves to the Empire. He recalled the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales to Australasia, which, he said, had had the effect of quickening the loyalty of the people there.

BOMB OUTRAGE IN INDIA.

KEIR HARDIE AND THE MURDERER.

LONDON, June 19.

In the House of Commons, Mr. Keir Hardie, Labour member for Merthyr, asked if it was not a fact that Kudiran Bhose, who had been sentenced to death at Calcutta in connection with the Muzaffarpur bomb outrage, had been several times insane.

Mr. T. R. Buchanan, Under-Secretary for India, promised to submit Mr. Hardie's statement regarding the matter to Mr. John Morley, Secretary of State for India.

THE PORT OF LONDON.

ANOTHER DOCK PROPOSED.

LONDON, June 19.

The Board of Trade proposes to construct a new dock on the north side of the Thames, costing two millions sterling. With the extension of the existing docks, dredging, and other improvements, this will make a total of £4,100,000 to be expended on the port.

"THE DIAMOND MAKER."

SUED FOR DIVORCE.

LONDON, June 19.

The wife of M. Lemoine, the engineer, who pretended that he had discovered a method of manufacturing diamonds, is suing for divorce, on the ground of his cruelty and threats, by which he extorted a large sum of money from her prior to his flight.

JOURNALISM IN KOREA.

A BRITISH EDITOR'S TRIALS.

LONDON, June 19.

Mr. E. T. Bethell, editor of the "Korea Daily News," who was tried by a Court appointed by the British Privy Council on a charge of creating seditious disturbances in Korea, has been ordered to submit to three weeks' imprisonment if called upon. In the meanwhile, he has been warned that a repetition of his offence will entail his deportation from Korea.

BLACK HAND BLACKMAIL.

NEW ORLEANS TRAGEDY.

LONDON, June 18.

Mr. Gracona, a rich wine merchant in New Orleans, shot and killed three Italian desperadoes belonging to the Black Hand (secret society), who attempted to blackmail him and threatened him with a revolver.

QUEENSLAND'S PREMIER.

INTERVIEWED IN LONDON.

LONDON, June 19.

Mr. W. Kidston, Premier of Queensland, on being interviewed by several press representatives, dilated upon "White Australia's" aspirations, and the phenomenal increase in Queensland's dairying, mineral, and timber industries.

Money advanced upon all securities, 17 S.W. Mont de Piete D. and I. Coy., Ltd., 74 Castlereagh-st, 74. Free Accident Insurance Policies gres. to cus. Eustace Bennett, G. Mgr.—Advt.

PAN-ANGLICAN CONGRESS.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

THE CHURCH'S WATERLOO.

LONDON, June 19.

The Pan-Anglican Congress at the Royal Albert Hall yesterday discussed the question of Temperance. The speakers included the Rev. Harold Anson, late of St. John's College, Auckland.

Bishop Goldsmith, of Bunbury, Western Australia, speaking before the section which discussed Gambling, denounced that vice in all its forms.

Bishop Neligan, of Auckland, presiding over the section which discussed the preparation of the young for personal service in the Church, asked: "Remembering the anniversary (June 18), what will win the Church's Waterloo?" And he answered himself: "The service of a whole-hearted and devoted clergy and laity."

METHODIST GREETINGS.

The National Council of the United Methodist Free Churches telegraphed to the Pan-Anglican Congress the heartiest welcome, adding, "We are one in faith and service."

THE EDUCATION QUESTION.

CHURCHMEN'S CONFERENCE.

LONDON, June 18.

A conference of Churchmen, representing Roman Catholics, Wesleyans, Methodists, Unitarians, and Jews, convened by the Right Rev. Dr. Knox, Bishop of Manchester, arrived, with a few Nonconformist dissentients, as a basis of agreement upon the education question.

The Rev. Dr. Clifford condemns the settlement as unjust, and on the ground that it is not likely to secure peace.

The Rev. Hirst Hallowell considers that the proposed settlement will leave things in a worse and more confused state than at present.

RESULT OF A SHAM BATTLE.

DAMAGE BY CONCUSSION.

LONDON, June 18.

A sham battle was proceeding when the Cunard liner Lusitania entered the Narrows, New York, and the vessel was compelled to stop for 20 minutes.

The concussion caused by the firing broke £4000 worth of glass and crockery aboard the liner.

CABINET MINISTER TO THE RESCUE

MR. JOHN BURNS'S EXPLOIT.

LONDON, June 19.

Mr. John Burns, President of the Local Government Board, while trying to release a man who was pinned between two motor cars which had collided, strained himself in lifting one of the vehicles, and has been confined to his bed for several days suffering from internal pains.

IMPORTUNATE SUFFRAGISTS.

A DISTURBED AFTERNOON TEA.

LONDON, June 19.

Mrs. Drummond, the leader of a group of women suffragists, aboard a launch on the Thames harangued a number of ladies and members who were seated at tea on the terrace of the Houses of Parliament, overlooking the river.

PROTECTION OF BLACKS.

LONDON, June 19.

Reuter's agency reports that M. Millies-Lacroix, the French Minister for the Colonies, supports M. Lucien Hubert's movement in favour of a European Congress to discuss the question of protecting the black races.

ENGLISH SCULLING CHAMPIONSHIP.

TOWNS v BARRY.

LONDON, June 18.

Articles have been signed for the sculling race for the championship of England and £200 a side between George Towns, of Sydney, and E. Barry.

ROYAL ASCOT JUNE MEETING.

THE WHITE KNIGHT WINS THE GOLD CUP.

LONDON, June 18.

At the Royal Ascot June Meeting to-day the race for the leading item on the card resulted as under:—

ASCOT GOLD CUP, value 500 sovs, with 3500 sovs in specie in addition, out of which the second shall receive 700 sovs and the third 300 sovs, added to a sweepstakes of 30 sovs each, h ft, for entire colts and fillies; three-year-olds, 7st 7lb; four, 8st 12lb; five, six, and aged, 9st 4lb; mares allowed 3lb; to the best at the Cup post, and go once round, two miles and a half.

Mr. W. R. Wyndham's b h The White Knight, by Desmond—Pella, 5yrs, 9st 4lb 1

Mr. L. de Rothschild's b h Radium, by Bend Or—Taia, 5yrs, 9st 4lb 2

Mr. W. M. G. Singer's b or br h Torpoint, by Trenton—Doncaster Beauty, aged, 9st 4lb 3

The Gold Cup, which was instituted in 1807, is one of the most important w.f.a. races in the United Kingdom, and its winning scroll shows a grand array of equine talent, which includes the names of the most celebrated horses that figured on the turf and at the stud during the past century. Among the celebrities that have caught the judge's eye are Loiterer, Aladdin, Anticipation, Glaucus, Glencoe, Touchstone, Lanercost, Beeswing, Van Tromp, The Flying Dutchman, Teddington, West Australian, Winkfield, Fisherman, Thormanby, Gladiateur, Lecturer, Blue Gown, Cremorne, Boiard, Doncaster, Apology, Petrarch, Isonomy, St. Simon, La Fleche, Isinglass, Love Wisely, Persimmon, Cyllene, and the New South Wales-bred horse Merman. The nominations for the race just decided numbered 36, and among the candidates were Saucy (since dead), Bridge of Canny (whose nomination was void, owing to the recent death of his owner, Lord Derby), the Russian horse Hammurabi, Woolwinder, Galvani, Baltinglass, the Oaks winner, Rhodora, and 11 horses from France. The winner was bred in Ireland by Colonel Kirkwood, under whose colours he raced as a two-year-old, and opened his winning career in the Curragh Grand Prize. The following season he crossed the Channel, and commenced auspiciously by winning the Three-year-old Handicap, 1¼m, at the Newmarket First Spring Meeting, the Gold Vase at Ascot, and the Newbury Autumn Cup. Last season he secured the Coronation Cup at Epsom, and the Gold Cup at Ascot, after which he became the property of his present owner, whom he credited with the Goodwood Cup, his earnings during the three seasons aggregating £9269. Desmond, the sire of The White Knight, is a son of St. Simon, and his dam, Pella, is by Buckshot from Pamela, by King John. Radium, who ran second, was bred by his owner, and is by Bend Or from Taia, by Donovan from Eira, by Kisber. He won a race as a two-year-old, but was not successful the following season. Last year, however, he secured four races, worth £2144, the principal of which was the Jockey Club Handicap. Torpoint, who filled third place, is by the Australian horse Trenton from Doncaster Beauty, by Sheen from Doncaster Belle, by Doncaster. Torpoint numbers among his victories the Ascot Stakes and Alexandra Plate, at Ascot, last year.

GERMAN EXCITEMENT.

OVER BRITISH CRUISE.

A FANTASTIC IDEA.

LONDON, June 18.

The approaching visit of 53 British warships to Christiania and Copenhagen is exciting the press in Germany.

A section of the German newspapers accuse the British of desiring to practise landing manœuvres in the Baltic preparatory to attacking Germany in conjunction with Russia and France.

THE DOEBERITZ SPEECH.

ACTION OF BAVARIAN SOCIALISTS.

LONDON, June 19.

As Bavaria presides over the Federal Council's Foreign Affairs Committee, which has not been summoned since the Morocco crisis arose, socialists in the Bavarian Diet intend to call attention to the speech which the Emperor is reported to have made at Doeberitz recently.

Prussia is not represented on the Committee, as the direction of its foreign affairs is in the hands of the Emperor-King.

GENERAL CABLE NEWS.

THE HIMALAYA'S MISHAP.

LONDON, June 19.

It will be some days before the R.M.S. Himalaya leaves Port Said on her voyage to Sydney, as the repairing of the cracked flange in her main steam pipe will take longer than was at first thought.

SEDITION IN INDIA

It is reported that the new Explosives Act and Press laws are having an excellent effect in India.

AFFORESTATION.

Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, intends to deal with afforestation by legislation in 1909.

MOROCCO'S NEW SULTAN.

Mulai-Hafid, who had already been proclaimed Sultan of Morocco at Fez, in place of his brother, Abdel-Aziz, has now been proclaimed Sultan at Tetuan, on the Northern coast.

OLYMPIA HORSE SHOW.

The forthcoming horse show at the Olympia will call for last year's exhibition. Sixty Continental officers will come to London to compete in the jumping contests.

DEEPENING SUEZ CANAL.

Prince D'Arenberg, President of the Suez Canal Company, speaking at a banquet in London, stated that it was proposed to increase the depth of the canal to 36ft.

THE GOLD-BUYERS ACT.

TWO MEN FINED.

MELBOURNE, Friday.

The hearing of the case arising out of the sensational gold yield reported at Eaglehawk recently, when Joseph Arblaster and John Tuesdale sold 78oz 5dwt of gold which they stated had been obtained from a crushing of 10 loads, was concluded at the Eaglehawk Police Court to-day. Arblaster was charged under section 38 of the Goldbuyers Act in the following terms:—Joseph Arblaster, being a person who sold 78oz 9dwt. of gold, to the Bank of Victoria, Bendigo, on April 23, 1908, did not satisfy Constable Thomas E. Thomson that he came lawfully by the 78oz 9dwt. of gold, and that the same was obtained from works situated at Ironstone Hill, near Epsom, as mentioned in the entries signed by Joseph Arblaster."

Tuesdale said that he and Arblaster had come by the gold honestly.

Defendant was fined £25, with costs.

A similar charge was preferred against John Tuesdale, who was in partnership with Arblaster, and he was fined £25, with £4 4s costs. Notice of appeal was given.

BISHOP MERCER ON SOCIALISM.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY NEEDED.

THE BEST SHOULD BE ON TOP.

LITHGOW, Friday.

Last night, when the confirmation service was concluded, Dr. Mercer, Bishop of Tasmania, delivered a lecture on social equality in the Church of England parish hall, the Rev. Dixon Hudson presiding.

Clearly, said the Bishop, it was impossible that people could be equal in a mathematical sense. Men had differed, would differ, and must differ if the race was to make progress, but there was some very real sense in which they must aim at greater social equality than existed at the present time; in fact, a social equality which should be of a spiritual character. It was said that everyone was equal before the law; but the law was not exactly as fair as it should be, even in British lands. A man with a big income engaged the best lawyers and barristers, and a poor man had to put up with anybody he could get. He thought the Crown ought to employ the best lawyers and barristers in the community in order to defend those who could not pay for their law. (Applause.) In education we were aiming at equality, but had not yet got it. Artificial barriers in regard to hereditary privileges were bad. He could not see why certain children should be born into the world with every possible advantage, and other children born without any of these advantages, simply because one was born the child of a viscount or a lord, and the other was the child of a poor man. He could not see why the law should not be modified to bring about the genuine equality of opportunity, and so have the best at the top, instead of mumskulls who were simply the born children of privileged or titled people. (Applause.) There was something wrong with the system when one man had more money than he could reckon, while another had none. With reference to snobs and snobbery, the Bishop dealt with the servant question. "A girl serving in a shop," he said, "is called Miss, and a servant is called Sarah or Susan. For years in my own case I have insisted that everybody who comes to my house calls those who are good enough to do my housework Miss, just the same as anyone else would be called." The lecturer said he always took off his hat to every woman, high or low.

BRICKFIELD-HILL BOLT.

HORSE IN THE ARCADE.

There was a rather exciting runaway yesterday afternoon in George-street, Brickfield Hill, as a result of which £60 worth of damage was done to a furniture establishment in the Central Arcade.

Almost opposite the arcade excavations are being made for the erection of new buildings. Two tipdrays, used for carrying clay, were backed against the clay embankment, 20 or 30 yards from the footpath. One of these belonged to Mr. Burns, of Cook-street, Rozelle. While the clay was being shovelled into the tipdray its horse suddenly took fright. It dashed out across the footpath, over the road to the opposite footpath, right on into the Central Arcade.

At the end of the arcade is Mr. J. Heath's furniture establishment. Just opposite this the horse slipped, and slid through the doorway into the shop, where it fell on the floor sprawling. The upright of the doorway and its glass were broken, the plate glass of a 10ft x 7ft window close beside it smashed to pieces, and a cart shaft ran right through the window. A moment before the horse and cart burst in, Mr. Atkinson, the manager for Mr. Heath, had entered, and at the inrush he just stepped back in time against the wall, while horse and cart went by. There was another narrow shave, for the owner of the horse made after it, and as it entered the arcade he caught it by the head. He could not stop it, and narrowly escaped being crushed against the wall by the tipdray as it passed him. The show window of the shop stretches the full width of the arcade. In front of it stood chests, bookcases, washstands, and other furniture. The cart struck these and smashed them, breaking also more furniture inside the shop.

ISLAND MURDERS.

TWO EUROPEANS BUTCHERED.

DEPORTED KANAKAS IN REVOLT.

SERIOUS UPRISING FEARED.

IDEAL OF A "BLACK POLYNESIA."

The alarming news was brought to Sydney last evening by the island steamer Upolu that many of the Solomon Islanders who were recently deported from the sugar plantations in Northern Queensland by order of the Commonwealth Government are in revolt, and that the settlers dread a general uprising of a serious character.

Two British settlers have already been murdered in a brutal way, and the fear is entertained among the white population that the returned natives will seek to further avenge themselves. Most of the kanakas who spent a few years in Queensland speak broken English, and they resent very forcibly the action of the authorities in sending them back to their barbaric homes after they had obtained an insight into the joys and vices of civilised communities. The officers of the Upolu state that the cry of the returned islanders is "The white man would not have us in his country, and we will rid our country of the white man." One, putting the ideal in another form, said, "You got a White Australia; well, we'll give you a Black Polynesia."

The first murder reported to the officers of the Upolu on arrival in the western portion of the Solomons was that of Mr. P. Brown, one of the employees of Captain W. H. Pope, a prominent plantation owner, whose home is in Sydney. There appears to have been no reason for the outrage other than bitterness against the whites in general, for the deceased had always lived on the very best terms not only with his white colleagues, but also with the native tribes. The murder was committed at Cape Marsh by tomahawks on Mr. Brown, and it would appear from the meagre particulars which the officers of the Upolu could gather that the deceased was taken by surprise by a band of infuriated kanakas, who stealthily approached him from behind. He had always trusted the blacks, and most of them had trusted him; but it would seem that in carrying on their warfare against the Europeans the natives are no respecters of persons.

Oliver Byrnes, a well-known trader in the Solomons, was the second European to fall a victim to the black man's revenge. His station was at Maravo or Maravou Lagoon—a village that extends nearly the whole length of the island of New Georgia. The chief assassin in this case was the deceased's native cook, who, strange to say, was urged on and assisted in the terrible deed by a native woman. Indeed, according to the statements made to the officers of the Upolu when the vessel called at that place at the beginning of the month, the woman was in reality the instigator of the crime.

The unfortunate victim was attacked with tomahawks, sharpened for the occasion. He was repeatedly struck in the head, first by the man and then by the woman, and as he was absolutely unarmed he was unable to defend himself. The outrage it would seem had been premeditated, for only a few minutes previously the deceased and his victim had been conversing together. Not the slightest indication had been given of the intention of the native to turn on his old employer, and it was some time before news of the murder reached other white settlers in the island.

The skull of Mr. Byrnes was completely severed from the body, and on examination it was found that the head had been cut into two pieces. As soon as the murderer and murderess were satisfied that their victim was dead they rushed to the waterside where his vessel—an ordinary island cutter—was at anchor. Having looted the little craft they ran it ashore, and then destroyed the wreck by fire.

The British authorities at once despatched messengers and native troopers in search of the guilty persons. Both were soon under arrest and were placed on their trial. According to statements made to the officers of the Upolu in the islands, the native murderer paid the penalty for his deeds on the gallows near the scene of the tragedy, while the native woman who assisted has, it is stated, been sent to Fiji to undergo imprisonment for life.

Mr. C. M. Woodford, the British Resident Commissioner for the Solomon Islands, who has an intimate knowledge of the character and customs of the natives, some time ago gave an interesting account of the native people at Maravou Lagoon—the scene of the recent murder of Oliver Byrnes.

"At the village," he said "there lived an old scoundrel of a chief named Paravo. He had only one hand, being blown off the wrist with dynamite while shooting fish. He had never killed a white man. He had intended to do so once or twice, but his courage had always failed him at the last moment. So for the time he remained on outward terms of friendship with the trader who lived in the lagoon, bringing him from time to time a little copra or a little turtle-shell, leaving his tomahawk in his canoe when he went up to the trader's house, but always on the lookout for the opportunity that he thought would come if he waited long enough when he might step unsuspected behind the white man, and with a turn of the wrist cleave his skull with the tomahawk. I always saw this old man on the three or four occasions that I passed through the lagoon, and as he could talk English I never failed to try to get some information out of him."

Eventually, so the story goes, Paravo with a canoe load of natives started on an expedition to get heads. They were unsuccessful, and their craft was wrecked on an uninhabited island half way between New Georgia and Guadalcanar. Paravo, who had never killed a white man, fell sick and died, apparently from failure to attain his ambition, and his faithful companions being hard up for food cooked and divided their leader between them.

According to the news brought by the Upolu the natives have not benefited by their short experience of civilisation in Queensland—indeed, it is asserted that in some instances the old barbaric customs have been renewed with great activity. Maravo Lagoon is one of the principal show-places visited by tourists when cruising among the Solomon Islands, and it is said to be one of the most beautiful sights of the South Seas.

The Upolu has been absent from Sydney for three months, and during that time has visited most of the islands of the Solomon, Union, Phoenix, and Ellice Groups, as well as Christmas, Fanning, and Washington Islands.

POSTAL COMMISSION.

SEATS ALLOTTED.

SCOPE OF INQUIRY.

MELBOURNE, Friday.

It was officially announced to-day that the Royal Commission to inquire into the Postal Department affairs will be composed of the following members of Parliament:—Mr. Hume Cook (Vic.), chairman; Senator De Largie (W.A.), Senator Malcahy (Tas.), Dr. T. Salmon (Vic.), Mr. D. Storrer (Tas.), Mr. W. Webster (N.S.W.), and Mr. Wilks (N.S.W.).

Mr. Hume Cook is secretary to the Cabinet and Government whip; Messrs. Salmon and Storrer are direct Ministerial supporters; Senator De Largie and Mr. Webster are members of the Labour party, and Senator Mulcahy and Mr. Wilks members of the Opposition. They will inquire into and report upon the postal, telegraphic, and telephone services of the Commonwealth, more particularly in relation to the following matters:—(a) Management; (b) finance; (c) organisation, including discipline; (d) extensions in country districts, and particularly in remote or sparsely populated parts of the Commonwealth; (e) complaints in relation to the service.

The commission provides that four will constitute a quorum; that in the absence of the chairman a deputy may be appointed; and that the chairman or his deputy shall have a casting vote in the event of the sides on any question being equal. The Commissioners, if necessary, will be enabled to divide themselves into parties, each consisting of not less than two members, one of whom will act as chairman. This provision has been put in so that the work may be expedited by portions of the Commission proceeding to different parts of the Commonwealth.

It is understood that the secretary will be Mr. H. B. Templeton, formerly chief clerk in the central administration, who is at present acting as Deputy Postmaster-General in Queensland.

A preliminary meeting will be held on Thursday next, when such matters as procedure, admission of the press, etc., will be discussed. An executive meeting on Monday will confirm the appointment.

It is anticipated that the inquiry will extend over 12 months. The Commissioners will be entitled to an allowance for expenses when not in Melbourne attending to their Parliamentary duties.

MUNICIPAL ASSESSMENTS.

APPEALS MAY BE ANNUAL.

GUNDAGAI, Friday.

The department has advised the local municipality that appeals against assessments can be heard annually. Some aldermen contended that as the valuation was made triennially, appeals could only be lodged every three years.

THE FEDERAL "GRAB."

IS IT CONSTITUTIONAL OR JUST?

CONFUSION OF STATE FINANCE.

I.

The Surplus Revenue Act, which was recently passed by the Federal Parliament, is an ingenious device for stretching the Constitution in a manner favourable to the Federal Treasurer. And under the existing relations of State and Federal finance, what is favourable to the Federal Treasurer must of necessity be unfavourable to Treasurers of the States. Under the guise of an ordinary piece of legislation discussed just as any other bill is discussed, it in reality is an amendment of the Constitution. It may not be generally understood, for though every Australian should know his Constitution off by heart, few in reality do so, that amendments of that instrument may be made in one of several ways, all of which are provided for in the Constitution itself. Most sections are subject to those methods provided in the last chapter, involving votes of both Houses, followed by a referendum. But this is not the only means. Certain sections may be amended by the Federal Parliament itself. These are such which, like the Braddon clause, lay down rules to be followed for a fixed period "and thereafter until the Parliament otherwise provides." It is this variation from the ordinary method of amending the Constitution that has made the Surplus Revenue Act possible. The bookkeeping clauses of the Constitution set forth that for the first five years after the imposition of the uniform tariff the distribution of the surplus Customs receipts shall be made among the States on certain principles, which it is not necessary here to detail, and that, after that period has elapsed, "The Parliament," i.e., the Federal Parliament, "may provide on such basis as it deems fair for the monthly payment to the several States of all surplus revenue of the Commonwealth." It is under the power conferred by this section that the Surplus Revenue Bill was drafted. Eighteen months have elapsed since the five-years' limit was up. There can, therefore, be no doubt that up to this point the Federal Government has been perfectly within its constitutional rights in proposing some variation of the bookkeeping clauses. So far there is no room for difference of opinion. It is on quite another point that the doubtful constitutionality of the Surplus Revenue Act has been assailed. This we shall now proceed to discuss.

WORD SPLITTING.

Section 87 of the Constitution, known as the Braddon clause, provides that during the first 10 years after the establishment of the Commonwealth, i.e., till December 31, 1910, and thereafter until the Parliament otherwise provides, not more than one-fourth of the net revenue from Customs and excise "shall be applied annually by the Commonwealth to-wards its expenditure." What does this mean? Does it mean, as all of us have believed for the last eight years, that the Commonwealth can spend not more than one-fourth of the net Customs and excise revenue and must return the balance to the States? Or does it mean something else which till lately no one has believed or even suspected? This is where the Surplus Revenue Act comes in. It interprets "applied for expenditure" not as "expended," but as "appropriated." Whether this view is right or wrong no one but the High Court can authoritatively say, and from its finding there is no appeal. At present the constitutional lawyers are ranged in opposing battalions. On the one side there are Messrs. Irvine, Groom, and Glynn; on the other, Mr. Reid, Sir John Quick, and Mr. Wade.

MORE DUBIOUS CONSTITUTIONALITY.

There is another point that has a constitutional aspect. If the Surplus Revenue Act be in accordance with the Constitution, that is, if the Government is right in interpreting "applied for expenditure" as "appropriated," then the Federal Treasurer can undoubtedly retain a whole quarter of the net receipts from Customs and Excise, whether he actually expended it or not, so long as he has induced the Federal Parliament to "appropriate" it, to be possibly actually spent at some distant date. But can the Federal Treasurer do more than this? He proposes not only to retain the full Federal quarter for this month, but the State three-quarters as well, on the ground that he has already during the first 11 months of the current financial year returned them £992,000 more than they were entitled to. What he desires to do is to make the Act operate retrospectively. As to whether this is possible or not raises the second constitutional point. Section 94 lays it down that "The Parliament may provide, on such basis as it deems fair, for the monthly payment to the several States, of all surplus revenue of the Commonwealth." But if there is no "monthly" payment at all is this section not contravened? Here again is a question that the High Court alone can authoritatively settle.

THE LAY VIEW.

Whether the Surplus Revenue Act be constitutional or not is, however, only one of the questions that should be considered. Another is—"Is it just?" This view may not appeal to a lawyer or a constitutionalist, legal or lay, but it will be a strong appeal to the average citizen. Here are several constitutional points raised by the Federal Government which need never have been raised at all, and which had previously in effect decided in quite another way, that decision being unchallenged for about eight years. Of course, their having been raised will place the Federal finances in a somewhat stronger position, provided the Act is held to be intra vires; and by so much as the Federal Treasurer is benefited by so much will the State Treasurers be weakened. Such is the result of the unhappy association of Federal and State finance. Two points should strike the average citizen—the first is that there is no doubt that the Federal Government could have spent the money. If it can spend it why should it not be able to save it—even if only temporarily? The second part is that after this month there will be very little surplus for anybody, if, indeed, there will be any at all. Federal expenditure is rapidly growing, and for a time at least Customs receipts are likely to diminish. These two tendencies running concurrently are mutually destructive. The Federal Government cannot go on much longer spending more and receiving less. A halt must soon be called, and two or three months will see it. Then Surplus Revenue Act or no, only one-fourth can be retained by the Commonwealth till December 31, 1910, when there will be no constitutional restrictions to prevent its holding its own fourth and the States' three-fourths as well.

A TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT.

As far as can be seen, then, the Surplus Revenue Act will enable the Federal Treasurer, subject possibly to the revision of the High Court at a later date, to take £731,000 which would otherwise have gone to the States, and after that will become largely a dead letter.

Even though its constitutionality be unimpeachable, the Surplus Revenue Act operates in a way decidedly unfair to the States. Whatever the Prime Minister and Treasurer may say about the warning notes they sounded, it is abundantly clear that the State Treasurers never anticipated that the Act would have been made to operate retrospectively. Mr. Deakin was pointedly asked at the Premier's Conference whether this was intended, and his reply left only one construction in the minds of his hearers at the time, though now a careful perusal of his words show that they might be made to have quite another meaning. No one would, of course, presume that Mr. Deakin intended to deceive the Premiers, but that he did deceive them is very clear.

GOLD AT MEEKATHARRA.

DISCOVERY OF A BIG REEF.

PERTH, Friday.

A telegram from Meekatharra states that a big reef has been found eight miles west of that centre. The floaters and reef show good gold. A mile and a quarter along the reef has been pegged out.

THE BRAYBROOK DISASTER.

DRIVING THE GOVERNOR'S SPECIAL

DRIVER MILBURN CROSS-EXAMINED.

MELBOURNE, Friday.

Driver Milburn continued his evidence to-day at the inquiry being held into the Braybrook railway disaster. He was examined at some length as to his record, and gave explanations of occurrences for which he had been fined. In 1896 he was fined £2 for driving the Governor's special at an excessive speed through Oakleigh. In referring to this incident Milburn said, "The train was late when leaving Korrumburra on the return journey. The Governor's aide-de-camp came to me with the guard and some of the other officials, and said, 'The Governor has a meeting in town, and wants to arrive in Melbourne at 8 o'clock if possible.' I looked at my watch, and said, 'It is very late, but I will endeavour to be there at 8 o'clock.' Coming through Oakleigh the first or second carriage gave a bit of a lurch, so I 'shut off.' I was not going over the regulation speed of 40 miles an hour. Somebody got a bump and complained. Later I arrived at Flinders-street at one minute to 8 o'clock. Fifteen or sixteen gentlemen complimented me on the manner in which I had arrived. I did not know that there was any complaint until two or three days afterwards, when I was brought before the chief mechanical engineer."

Mr. Guthwaite, representing the Westinghouse Brake Company: At Macedon you say you were trying to act back, but could not move the train. Did you try to release the brakes?—I put the handle over in the release position, but could not move the train.

When the train moved did you release the brakes, or did Driver Dolman on the second engine,—I could not say. Someone sang out, "It is all right," and I said "Give me a bit of air," and then the brakes moved.

If the other driver released the brakes he must have had the isolating cock of his engine open?—Yes.

Mr. Starke, counsel for the Railway Commissioners: Do you think you passed the distant signal at 50 miles per hour?—Oh, no.

The Coroner: Have you ever had occasion to reverse your engines before this?—No

Was it possible enough to do so, except in the case of attempting to prevent an accident.

Were you very much annoyed by the delays which occurred at the different stations after leaving Kyneton?—I was.

As the result of that annoyance, you were anxious to make up your time?—Yes. We are asked to do the best we can.

Some of the witnesses who were passengers say that you came along that night at a terrible rate?—Nothing more than I came along on any other night.

The foreman of the jury: Do you agree with Burgess when he describes you as being a "two-application" man?—I don't know what he means by his two applications.

If you did not make up the time lost between Macedon and Woodend, would you have been blamed for it?—If it were proved that I had lost time I would. I don't think I would have been called on to report for the delay on this night, owing to the traffic.

In view of the tests and the trials that have been made, do you desire any further?—No; I am perfectly satisfied with them.

Driver Dolman was recalled.

Mr. M'Arthur, representing the public: Milburn says that at Sunbury he asked you to give him air?—Well, I never heard him. I was very busy with the pipes at the time.

Do you swear you never gave him any air?—Yes. I cannot understand what he should want air for.

The Coroner: Have you any recollection what you did when you reversed?—Not very much; but I opened the regulator, and after some little distance let the sand run from the box on to the rails. I admit I did not do that as quickly as I might have.

Fireman Devenoy (recalled) said he did not hear Milburn ask for more air at Sunbury. He did not know what would actuate Milburn in doing so. Milburn was off the engine during almost the whole of the stoppage. It was a week after the accident before Milburn said anything about asking for air at Sunbury.

Mr. M'Arthur: What did he say about Sunbury?—He said, "At Sunbury I called out to you to give me some more air." I said, "That is a funny thing. You were on the ground with us for nearly the whole time, and could not tell from there whether the brakes were released or not." Milburn made no reply.

Mr. Core: In justice to Milburn it is only fair to say that he has always maintained that he asked for air at Sunbury. He was ill in bed for a week after the accident.

William O. Bagley, expert for the Coroner, was recalled.

Mr. M'Arthur: Did you hear Driver Harcombe suggest that one possible cause for the failure of the brakes might be that some of the triple valves were sticky?—Yes; but I found every one of the valves throughout the train free from any sunny substance.

Mr. Harcombe also suggested that the water in the pipes would do it. Do you think that water would account for the accident?—No.

From all you have seen and heard, can you assign any cause from the condition of those brakes for the accident?—No. There is a possibility that some foreign substance got into the train pipe and choked the rotary valve.

At the adjournment Mr. Chomley expressed his intention of asking the Coroner to direct the jury on Monday that there is nothing to justify a charge of manslaughter against Stationmaster Kendall. Legal authorities will be quoted in support of the proposition that Kendall cannot be held to have caused the accident. This view will be opposed by Mr. Corr on behalf of the suspended engineman.

GOVERNMENT AS BANKER.

SAVINGS BANK LOANS TO DATE.

NEARLY HALF REPAID.

We understand that the business done by the new loans branch of the Government Savings Bank amounts at this date to about £1,000,000. This includes the outstanding loans taken over from the Advances to Farmers and Settlers Board, and all loans made by the bank since that time, not excluding those which have been paid off by the borrowers.

Since January of this year no fewer than 500 applications for new loans have been sanctioned by the bank, and this is, of course, very far short of the number of applications received. These applications are all for loans between £50 and £1000, and they come particularly from the northern rivers and the wheat-farming districts. An astonishing fact is that very nearly half of the loans made or taken over have been repaid, even during the short time the bank has been engaged in this loaning business—a symptom which might not be welcomed by every bank, but which in the case of the State Bank, whose object is to give settlers a footing, may reasonably be taken as a sign that the object of the loans has been attained.

A SEVERE SQUALL.

BOAT'S PARTY IN PERIL.

A violent squall, evidently of a purely local character, was experienced at the Heads yesterday afternoon. The wind suddenly freshened from the north-west, and gained in velocity until it attained terrific force. For half an hour the wind blew at the rate of a gale, but subsequently died completely away.

A 24ft sailing boat, which had been outside on a fishing excursion, had a narrow escape between the Heads. She received the full force of the squall, and became disabled, her three occupants making signals as best they could for assistance. The pilot steamer Captain Cook, which had placed a pilot on board the San Francisco steamer Boverie, fortunately happened to be returning to port at that moment, and at once proceeded to render aid. Much to the relief of the three fishermen the Captain Cook took the little craft in tow, and brought her safely into Watson's Bay.

STRIKE AT A NEWSPAPER OFFICE.

COMPOSITORS CEASE WORK.

BRISBANE, Friday.

The compositors of the Brisbane Newspaper Company, Ltd., went out on strike to-night. The company has been negotiating with the men for a change of system at prices higher than at the society rates. But whilst the company was negotiating the men suddenly broke off the conference proceedings and went out on strike. The strike only applies to machine operators. The machines have been temporarily filled, although linotype operators will be engaged permanently should they present themselves. The publication of the company's journals will not be interfered with.

THE WESTRALIA'S ESCAPE.

TO BE DOCKED TO-DAY.

Arrangements have been completed for docking the steamer Westralia this morning, in order to ascertain whether she has sustained any damage as a result of taking the ground during a fog in the vicinity of Port Hacking. The work of discharging the timber cargo of the vessel was finished at the Federal wharf last evening.

Captain Newton, Superintendent of Navigation, held a preliminary inquiry yesterday into the circumstances surrounding the narrow escape of the steamer, and has recommended that the matter be referred to a Court of Marine Inquiry.

A REMARKABLE TRAGEDY.

LAY READER SHOT DEAD.

AN ATTACK ON A CONSTABLE.

THE MURDERER WOUNDED.

MELBOURNE, Friday.

A tragedy surrounded by remarkable circumstances occurred this afternoon at Mount Blackwood, nine miles from Trentham.

R. G. Robinson, a lay reader in the Church of England, was shot dead while he was talking to his wife at his residence shortly after midday. The man who fired the shot was not in sight, but suspicion fell upon William Pincombe, a local miner, who resides in the house opposite.

Constable Saunders proceeded to Pincombe's residence to arrest the man. Pincombe fired at him with a rifle, but fortunately the bullet did not take effect. Saunders then drew a revolver and shot Pincombe through the head. He is not expected to recover.

There appears to have been no reason why any sane person should have made an attempt upon Mr. Robinson. He had been stationed in the district for about 12 months, and both he and Mrs. Robinson were highly popular amongst the residents.

Mr. Robinson was standing on his own verandah, without any thought of danger, talking to his wife, when suddenly a rifle shot rang out, and he fell into Mrs. Robinson's arms, shot through the heart. Mrs. Robinson's screams brought several neighbours