

## No. 49.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 3rd December, 1884.

I transmit to you herewith *Times* reports of questions put in the House of Commons to Mr. Gladstone and to Mr. Ashley, and to Lord Derby in the House of Lords, respecting the introduction of the Enabling Bill proposed by the Sydney Convention.

You will see from the replies to those questions that Her Majesty's Government think that the Bill requires amendment in several respects; and the amendments they propose will presently be sent out to the colonial Governments, in order that the same may be considered in concert with the colonies before any Bill is introduced in the Imperial Parliament next year.

I have, &amp;c.,

The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.

## Enclosure 1.

[*The Times*, Tuesday, 25th November, 1884.]

PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE.—HOUSE OF COMMONS, Monday, November 24.

*The Australian Colonies.*

Mr. T. O'CONNOR asked the First Lord of the Treasury whether, as five of the Australian Colonies were willing to confederate, he would now propose the Enabling Bill, which, in reply to the then member for Waterford County, he expressed his readiness to introduce in the closing days of the last session.

Mr. GLADSTONE.—I will not say that the expressions used in the questions are incorrect, but they might mislead. The draft Bill which was under consideration is not what is commonly understood by a Bill to enable the Australasian colonies to confederate. The word "confederate" is too wide. It is a Bill to enable them to establish simply a Federal Council for the purpose of dealing with certain questions of common interest, leaving colonial institutions intact. It is more limited, then, than what is commonly understood by confederation. There is, however, such a Bill; and the opinion of the Government about it is this: it is tolerably clear that if it were introduced it would require amendment in certain respects: that being so, the Government consider it would be the much more convenient course to have these amendments considered in concert with the colonies before they produce the Bill in the Imperial Parliament.

## Enclosure 2.

[*The Times*, Tuesday, 2nd December, 1884.]

PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE.—HOUSE OF LORDS, Monday, December 1.

*Federation of the Australasian Colonies.*

THE EARL OF CARNARVON asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether it was the intention of Her Majesty's Government to introduce during the present session a Bill to enable the Australasian Colonies to carry out the scheme of federation lately agreed to by the Intercolonial Conference in Australia.

THE EARL OF DERBY.—My Lords, I am glad that the question which has been put to me by my noble friend gives me an opportunity which I very much desire to have of explaining how this matter really stands. I have seen suggestions in various quarters that the Government have not made up their minds about this Australian Bill, that they are hesitating, and that that is the cause of the delay in bringing it in. For that statement there is no shadow of foundation. We are pledged to bring in the Bill, and we have not the least wish to withdraw from our pledge; and I am sanguine enough to believe that it will meet with very little opposition either here or elsewhere. It is, in fact, the carrying into effect of the policy which, on the part of the Colonial Office, I suggested last year, and I am therefore the last person likely to be indifferent to its success. The reasons which have prevented me from bringing it in during this autumn session have been various. There was the inevitable uncertainty until within the last few days as to the duration of our sittings and the business that would come before us; and on examining the draft of the Bill we have found various points of detail on which amendments seem desirable; but before introducing these amendments we have thought it well to consult the Governments of the various colonies. We shall have their answer early in the spring, and practically no time will be lost. It will be an additional advantage if the Legislatures of New South Wales and New Zealand should so far reconsider their present view as to be willing to join; but as the Bill does not create any compulsory union, but only empowers colonies to act together for certain purposes if they choose to unite, unanimity among the colonies is not necessary.

## Enclosure 3.

[*The Times*, Wednesday, 3rd December, 1884.]

PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE.—HOUSE OF COMMONS, Tuesday, December 2.

*The Australian Colonies.*

IN reply to Sir H. Holland, Mr. ASHLEY said,—The Government never contemplated the introduction of any other Bill than that adopted by the Sydney Convention, and if the Bill had been