

## No. 35.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the PREMIER.

SIR,—

7, Westminster Chambers, London, S.W., 14th December, 1886.

I have received your telegram of to-day informing me that the modifications in the scheme of the Imperial Institute, as telegraphed by the Agents-General in their joint message to the colonies, had received the approval of your Government. I immediately informed the Prince of Wales's committee of this. Yours is the first reply that has yet been received to the new proposals.

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The Hon. the Premier, Wellington.

I have, &amp;c.

F. D. BELL.

## Enclosures in No. 35.

[Extract from the *Times*, Monday, 6th December, 1886.]

THE IMPERIAL INSTITUTE.

Melbourne, 4th December.

A JOINT telegram has been despatched by the representatives of the Australian Colonies to the various colonial Governments communicating the scheme for the Imperial Institute. It states that the Prince of Wales's committee has recently been conferring with the Agents-General of the colonies on the subject, and have, with His Royal Highness's concurrence, remodelled the basis of the arrangements upon which the scheme for an Imperial Institute is to be carried out. The name of the building is to be "The Imperial Institute for the United Kingdom, the Colonies and India," and the foundation stone of the building is to be laid next year at South Kensington. One-half of the entire space is to be devoted to the United Kingdom, while the other half, which will be in no way inferior as regards position, will be reserved for the colonies and India. Each colony is to have control of its own section, and the colonies and India are to have a fair share in the general management. It is also in contemplation to hold in the building from time to time exhibitions of specific industries and products. The colonies which may contribute a lump sum towards the maintenance of the Institute will not be called upon for any further grant for administrative expenses. The despatch concludes by stating that on receipt of the approval of the colonies the amended scheme will be definitely adopted.

[Extract from the *Times*, Tuesday, 7th December, 1886.]

WE are requested to state that the communication of the Agents-General to their respective Governments in reference to the Imperial Institute relates to the proposal to modify the original scheme by including the United Kingdom in the organization of the Institute. The details of the scheme, and especially of that part of it relating to the United Kingdom, are now under the consideration of the committee. No final decision in regard to the site has been taken.

The Secretary of State has sent a circular letter to the Governors of the colonies under responsible government which will arouse widespread interest. The interest will not be confined to this country, nor to the colonies; it will extend to many another country where Great Britain is admired and envied. The proposal of Mr. Stanhope is that, early next year, there shall be held in London, under the presidency of the Secretary of State, a conference of representatives of the principal colonies, convened for the purpose of discussing two groups of questions of great Imperial interest. Of these political federation is not one. That question, Mr. Stanhope thinks, is not yet ripe for formal discussion at such a conference, for no colony has yet pronounced definitely upon it, and to raise it in conference would probably do more harm than good. But there is enough to discuss without approaching this "very difficult question." Mr. Stanhope prescribes two branches of the inquiry on which the conference will be engaged: the defence of the colonies and the means of improved communication between themselves and the Mother-country. These things are certainly in a fit state for discussion, and we may expect that a thoroughly practical conference, like that contemplated by Mr. Stanhope, will come to the consideration of them furnished with the means for really useful conclusions. The Secretary of State, as we have said, is to preside, and the representatives of the colonies will be the Agents-General, together with any other "leading public men who may be at liberty to come to England." As the conference will be purely consultative, Mr. Stanhope points out, there will be no need to insist on the proportional representation of the different colonies; the numbers will be elastic, and if Victoria or Canada choose to send two or three special delegates no doubt they will be welcomed. What is important is that the conference shall be made as representative as possible. The Agents-General have a recognized official position, and if they are supported by men of authority coming fresh from the colonies, and prepared to speak with the full weight of their respective colonies, the resolutions of the conference will have a force and validity that the world in general will recognize.

It is right and wise that political federation is not to be discussed. It will be enough if the delegates privately exchange views on the vast and complicated problems which this great idea suggests, and if these private discussions prepare the ground for a future full consideration of the question. With colonial defence the case is very different. It is pressing, it is not a new question, it has been under examination by Lord Carnarvon's committee, and already not a little has been done towards the solution of it both by the Mother-country and the colonies. The little navy of Victoria is no inconsiderable possession. The fortifications of Sydney Harbour are a work of time, but they are as creditable to the colony as they are undeniably necessary. In these days, when action follows upon the declaration of war as the thunder follows the lightning, a quarrel with a great naval Power would infallibly mean an instant attack upon some one or other of our colonies.