

First Day.
15 April 1907.
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(Mr. DEAKIN.)

But utterances of yourself and of leaders like yourself relating to those larger politics which we share with you are, first of all, rare, and next fail to be conveyed to those whom we represent, as these undoubtedly will be. We are happy to think that millions in Australia—I use the word, although it is large, in reference to our population, advisedly—practically the whole population of Australia to-morrow will have the opportunity of reading *in extenso* the remarks which you have been good enough to make to-day. What does that mean? The subjects with which you have dealt have probably been but lightly touched upon there since six weeks ago the Parliament of the Commonwealth was closed in order to permit of the attendance of its representatives at this table. During those six weeks I venture to say, without any very intimate knowledge of detail, that local public events in Australia have not stood still, and that the interest of our people in those events has not diminished. Consequently the tendency has been to overlay whatever impression was made by the action of our Parliament in adjourning to permit of the attendance of my colleague and myself at this Conference by the more insistent demands of the everyday politics of our country. After these proceedings close, five weeks will elapse before either of us will have the opportunity of addressing the people of Australia in order to explain what we think has been done here, and also what has been attempted to be done. Now all this interval requires to be bridged over by some such strong influence as you, Sir, by your address, are, fortunately, bringing to bear. It will revive that interest of theirs in the Proceedings of this Conference, an interest as deep as is the interest of the people of this country; you refresh that interest and thus enable the Proceedings of this Conference to become to them actual, concrete, and indeed living.

On our side of the sea, with the ample self-government that happily we enjoy, and, perhaps, largely because we are still a smaller community, our electors, men and women both, share and share intimately with us so far as they choose in every stage and every step of our political action. If that intimacy be withdrawn from them, or rather, if the knowledge which enables them to follow us step by step be withdrawn from them, these political questions disappear over their horizon and are replaced by others closer and more pressing, although probably of far less importance. Consequently, to us publicity is of great importance. If this Conference is to exercise that educational influence to which, in your concluding remarks, you referred as one of its chief functions—if it is to exercise it at all efficiently, it can only be by convincing Australia that the Government of Great Britain, the Government of the Empire, realises the significance of this gathering, however limited its practical powers may be. That you do recognise its importance we have proof in that you not only think fit to attend it, but honour it by addressing to us such words of experience and counsel as you have been good enough to speak to-day. You will, therefore, realise that much natural anxiety felt by us has been dispelled by your appearance and by your address, and will also perhaps realise how, at a later stage, we shall be inclined to ask your colleagues to remember that our people on the other side of the world, unless kept in close touch with the proceedings of this Conference, will not derive from it anything like the benefit we are desirous they should obtain. The preceding Conferences, at which Sir Wilfrid Laurier has been present, and in which he has played so honourable and conspicuous a part, may have produced great results in this country and in Canada, which, as compared with us, is your next-door neighbour; but to our communities at the Antipodes, separated by half the globe, I regret to say that those Conferences failed of anything like their full effect. Their results were carefully studied by some politicians and by those directly concerned, but they made little or no impression upon our people; and the