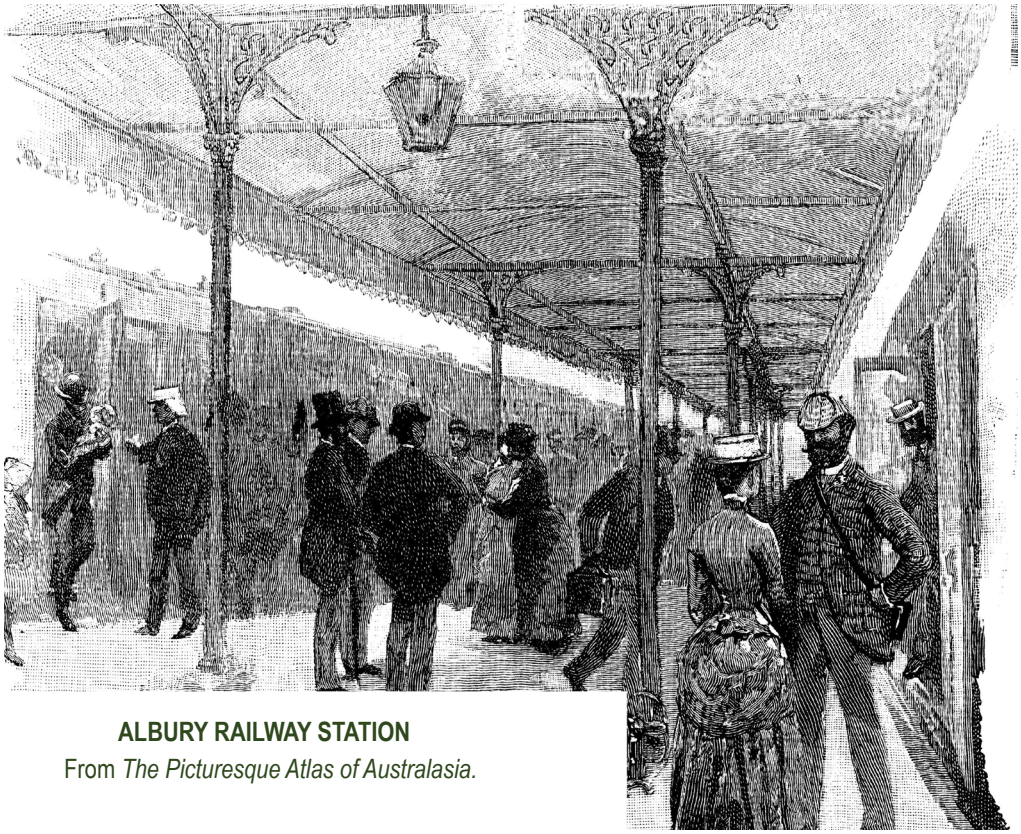
CHAPTER 12

‘NUTS AND BOLTS’ PEOPLE



ALBURY RAILWAY STATION
From *The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia.*

CHANGING CARS AT ALBURY

There are two sorts of people. There are those who fix things with nuts and bolts; and there are those who fix things on paper. In 1897 Australia had a chance at fixing the worst of its gauge muddle. It nearly happened. It would have required just one line added to the Constitution of Australia. One line with one word.

(xxxviii) Railways.

Section 51 reads:

> The Commonwealth shall have the power, subject to this Constitution, to make laws for the peace, and order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to:

It then goes on to list the many functions and departments of Government that pervade our daily existence, such as quarantine, marriage, post office, currency and defence, to name a few. But not the railways.

Whereas those activities became Federal responsibilties in their entirety, the same did not apply to the railways. They remained the responsibilty of the States. The Commonwealth did have some powers regarding the railways but they were weak.

The following are those sections of the Constitution that relate to railways.*

Clause 32:

> for the Commonwealth for its own use at time of war.

Clause 33:

> voluntarily acquire a State’s railways on mutually agreeable terms.

Clause 34:

> railway construction and extension in any State with the consent of that State.

There is also Section 111 which provides:

> The Parliament of a State may surrender, and the acceptance thereof by the Commonwealth, such part of the State shall become subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Commonwealth.

Section 111, accordng to Irving**, anticipated the need for the Northern Territory and its railway to be transferred to the Commonwealth

* If railways had been included the would have probably been clause 38 of Section 51. I have avoided Roman numerals.

**IRVING, Helen. *To Constitute a Nation. A Cultural History of Australia’s Constitution*. Cambridge University Press 1999.

Yet, without the railways, the colonies and their people would not have enjoyed the freedom and ease to cross borders and interact with the culture and population of the other colonies. It was the railways that made us one people. But the railways were then unceremoniously dumped leading to much anguish and wasted time and money.

In previous chapters we were left in no doubt that the four eastern mainland colonies were in a steady state of conflict. The polarisation of politics then was free trade vs protectionism. Victoria was the bastion of protectionism. New South Wales was the free-trade colony. The 1890s saw the rise of the Labor movement which made rapid gains in a political environment. The free-trade/protectionist schizm was doomed under Federation. With time, most of the remnants of the free traders and protectionists would find a home within the Liberal Party.

It is easy to view this in retrospect. We can only wonder if the fathers of Federation would have been more serious in their endeavors regarding railways if they could get a glimpse at how things would unfold for the railways after 1901. There were two issues but in reality they were intertwined. There was the matter of resolving the break-of-gauge and there was the merging of the railway enterprises of all the colonies into one national railway administration.

There have been many attempts to fix the gauge problem in a timely manner in the years since Federation, but all have failed, either because one State could not agree with the other(s), or it was State(s) vs Commonwealth. In the subsequent chapters we will examine these failures. But it is with a reasonable degree of confidence that we can conclude, if the railways had become one Commonwealth instrumentality, the gauge problem would have been an intolerable burden that would have been fixed as a priority.

Railways in Australia had evolved as instruments of government and represented a significant investment. Governments had the power to open and close railways and they could set rates to favour one district or a particular commodity. Many members of Parliament could thank the railways for their seat in the House. For the voter, railways were emotional. They were a life-line.

They were an instrument whereby a government could dispense social services. They could be used to create jobs for the unemployed. Many could remember the days before the railway and how much better life was since. They connected the country to the city. Each colony had its own type of locomotive fleet and rolling stock. There were some engines built in Australia, and some overseas. Generally, the locomotive fleets of the colonies were heterogeneous and of different ages, safe working, track standards, bridges, loading and structure gauge.

It was common to find a locomotive that was a solitary example of the class. There were some engines that were secondhand. The railway workshops of the colonies were, at the time of Federation, starting to build their own engines. Each colony had its own types of engine.

There were considerable up-front costs regarding tooling and pattern-making. There was also an element of trial and error. Some of the engines were failures.

The Minister of Railways was one of the more important members of the government, but not always honourable in the execution of the role .

By the time of Federation, the Victorian Railways was the largest enterprise in Australia, followed closely by the New South Wales Government Railways. And these railway networks had mostly been built with borrowed money.

The railway routes had been designed by the colonies to keep transport and commerce tightly contained within the colony. The Riverina had historically been fiercely contested by Victoria and New South Wales, with South Australia having part of the action with its river trade.

Regarding the construction of a Constitution for an Australian Federation, the question that had to be resolved was whether, or not, the railways should be federated. It was not a question of 'what are we going to do about the gauge problem?'

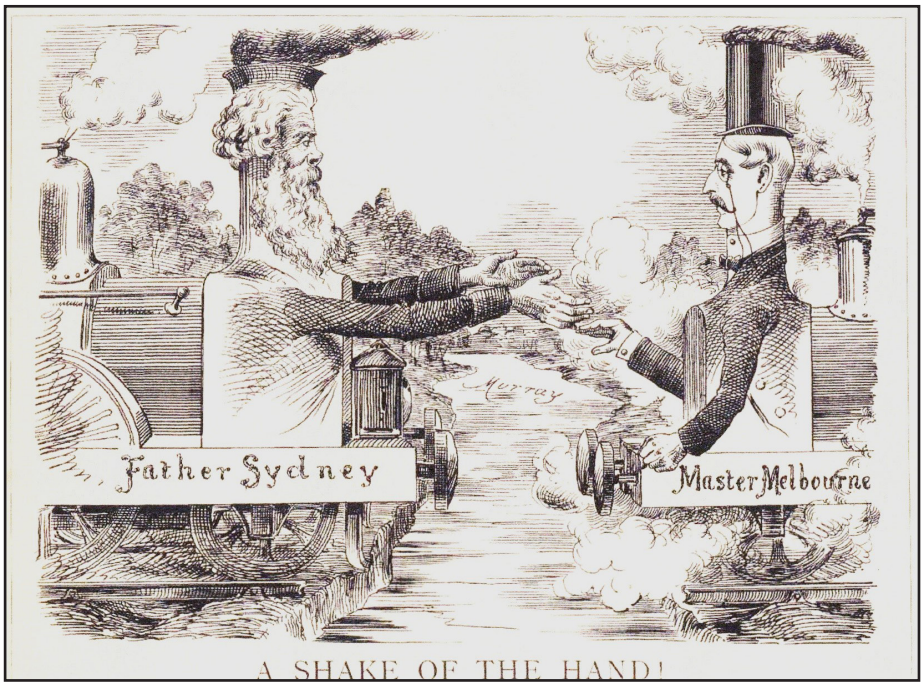
The 1881 celebration at Albury station was a New South Wales event. Invitations were issued to some from Victoria, of which the most notable was the Victorian Premier Berry.

So Albury, in February 1881, should have been the start of the slow train ride to Federation.

Sir Henry Parkes was the Premier of New South Wales and used the occasion to give Mr Berry a lecture about the evils of protectionism. The line from Melbourne to Wodonga had been completed 8 years earlier, its terminus about 3 miles distant on the other side of the

As an instance of the changes which railways bring about, it may be mentioned that some years ago one of the wool-growers of the Murray sent his clip to Sydney with directions to the teamsters to return as speedily as possible with stores. After the drays had set out, the wool-grower left for England, which he reached safely, and had actually returned to Albury in time to meet his drays with the Sydney supplies—it had taken half a year to do what is now commonly accomplished in less than a day.

This item was in the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia 1888*. The suspicion is that it contains an element of blarney but it fits into the story.



From Sydney *Punch* 25 February 1882..

One of forces that was a persistent undercurrent to achieve federation of the railways was that New South Wales regarded itself as the Senior or Premier colony. The prospect of the Commonwealth being bigger than New South Wales, caused some anxiety. But combining the railway systems, which were already the largest enterprises in each colony, would have produced a federated railway network of enormous size. It could have been of greater worth than New South Wales.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

The Melbourne *Age* was the anchor that fiercely defended Victorian values. **From the *Age* (Melbourne), 5 February 1881:**

> Sir Henry Parkes made the most of his opportunities at Albury. But then he always does improve the shining hour…. We have always paid a willing testimony to the energy and ability of Sir Henry… but we have never shut our eyes to the thoroughly selfish character of the Parkes policy…Sir Henry Parkes stated at Albury that 'he was so confident in the loyalty of the people that he believed that they would rather send 400 miles to trade with Sydney than go only 200 miles to Melbourne'…now that the lines are completed, why does he insist on differential rates on traffic going to Sydney, and that going to Melbourne?… we have pointed out over and over again that the real obstacle to intercolonial free trade is Sir Henry Parkes and not Mr Berry… Nothing can excuse the bad form of which Sir Henry Parkes was guilty at Albury when he lectured Mr Berry and Mr Patterson on the fiscal policy of Victoria. They were his guests and he was bound to treat them with at least civility…and a banquet at Albury to celebrate New South Wales, having contrived to complete what Victoria finished many years ago...

In 1883 the link was finally closed. A train load of guests from Melbourne arrived on the broad gauge and a similar number from Sydney arrived on the standard gauge. And they had a great banquet and toasted the good health of the others. This time Sir Henry was better behaved.

The banquet at Albury that night was for more than one thousand, within a very decorated locomotive shed, illuminated with electric light and joyfully reported by the newspapers of both colonies. The tenor of the speeches that evening was of mutual congratulations, but we have had to look hard within the reports to find a mention of the 'break-of-gauge'.

The Governor of Victoria, The Marquis of Normanby, ***The Ovens and Murray Advertiser*** **(Beechworth) 16 June 1883:**

> There are unfortunately breaks caused by differences of gauges on the different lines, but I think that if we consider the benefits which will be derived from the completion of the lines, we will regard the difference of the gauge as a very small matter indeed.

He was probably right.

But for a thorough and objective version of that event and subsequent developments, there is Quick and Garran's *Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth* of over 1000 pages, that was published in 1901, and has been reprinted and continues to be used as a reference by High Court judges. It sounds formidable but is quite approachable and is a lively commentary. Quick & Garran (page 102) viewed it differently:

> An interesting historical record of the after-dinner views of prominent men on the subject of Confederation. The union of railways irresistibly suggested the greater political union; but most of the speakers spoke of federation as a far-off divine event rather than as a practical policy. The Governors of course welcomed the joining of the hands across the Murray as a step towards federation. The speakers from the mother colony did not respond very heartily.

Until this time the colonies enjoyed a comfortable existence believing that the Royal Navy had full control of the oceans. There had been the occasional scare when a ship sailing under a Russian flag had quietly turned up in port. There had also been some anxiety at the time of the Crimean war. Colonial defences consisted of a few fortifications armed with cannons pointing seawards. South Australia had its HMCS *Protector*. (HMCS – Her Majesty's Colonial Ship).

But in 1883 it was apparent that Germany had ambitions in New Guinea and the French in Polynesia. The Queensland response was to send a magistrate to New Guinea armed with a Union Jack, which was duly raised in the name of the Queen. The response by the colonies to this threat was slow and in 1885 some of the colonies (including Fiji, but not including South Australia, New South Wales and New Zealand) formed the Federal Council. Sir Henry Parkes considered it to be ineffectual and declared that the time was not ripe to move forward with Federation.

In 1885 Victoria and South Australia were able to put aside their differences for a while, and agreed to complete the intercolonial railway. The driving force behind this was the desire to hasten the transit of the English mails.

It was the mails and their early delivery that governed the wheels of commerce, and if one colony could hasten receipt of the mails by just one day that was a great advantage. The intercolonial railway gave Adelaide the certainty that there would be a regular mail service. The railway would get the mails into Melbourne a day sooner. Sydney would have its mails a day or two sooner but it was Melbourne that was the winner.

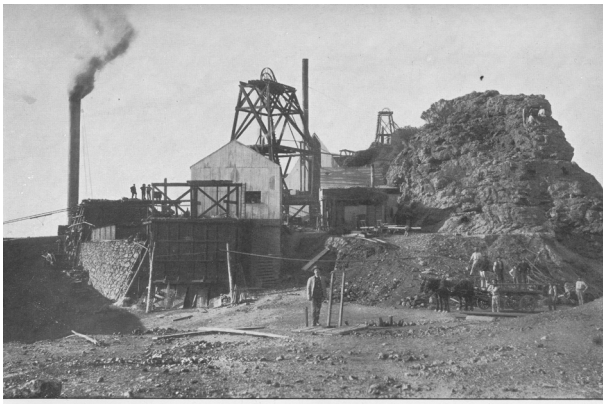
In 1887 the intercolonial express between Adelaide and Melbourne went right through without the need for passengers to change trains. It was an interesting situation of two colonies pulling together to give Melbourne the advantage over Sydney by two days.

And finally in 1888, Brisbane was connected to NSW by rail, but the task of joining the four capitals was not completely finished. That was in the following year when the bridge over the Hawkesbury was opened.

Sir Henry Parkes had distanced himself from the Federation Council of 1885. In 1887 there was an Imperial Colonial Conference in London. All of the Australian colonies were represented. A major topic was the defence of the colonies in the Pacific.

In the 30 years or thereabouts leading up to 1889, those four eastern colonies had developed their railway networks, designed in such a way that they contained the commerce within the colony. The borders were a sort of invisible boundary barrier. They built railways nearly to the borders but with the exception of those three* border stations, the track arrangements were not favourable for commerce between colonies.

* Albury, Serviceton, Wallangarra.



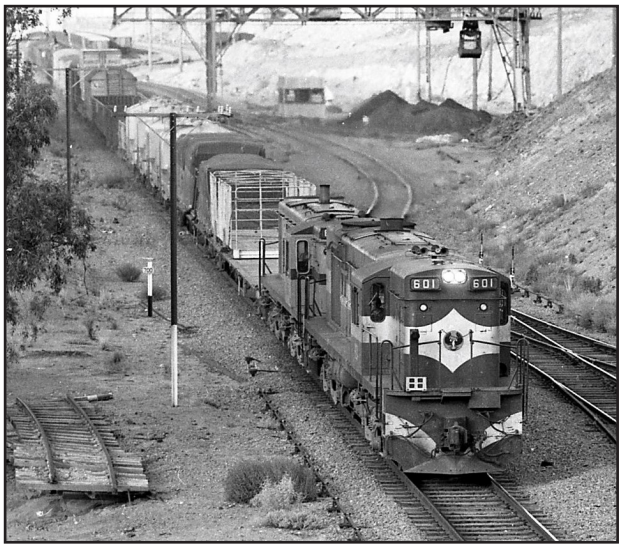
BROKEN HILL. An early photograph of the Proprietary Company's first shaft. Photograph taken from the Company's official history *From Silver to Steel*,by Roy Bridges 1920.

But there was no stopping people and within six months of that intercolonial link between Adelaide and Melbourne, the Victorians were flooding into Adelaide for the Jubilee Exhibition and South Australians were soon over the border to the Melbourne Cup. The following year it was the turn of New South Wales with the Centennial celebrations.

And far out of sight of Sydney and Adelaide, there were people by the score, backwards and forwards across the SA/NSW border. Broken Hill was tearing down the barriers. And Victoria had a slice of the Broken Hill action. Mount Gipps station was the pastoral lease that included the Broken Hill. Its manager was George McCulloch and he became a very wealthy shareholder of the Broken Hill Proprietary.

He was the nephew of Sir James McCulloch who had previously been Premier of Victoria. The result was that the Broken Hill mines had their board rooms in Melbourne. That was where most of the Broken Hill wealth went.

SERVICETON. A shrine of Australian Federation. Prior to 1885, the accord between the colonies of South Australia and Victoria had been frosty, due in part to a dispute over the position of the border. The colonial Premiers in 1885 were Sir John Downer and Sir James Service, both ardent Federationists. They were able to set aside their differences and get the intercolonial railway built. This was the border station. John Downer held Sir James Service in such high esteem that he proposed that the station be named after him. The Victorian Premier said it pleased him that his name would be associated with the joining of the two colonies. **JLW.**



A WESTBOUND FREIGHT departing from Broken Hill. Approximately level with the first flatcar is the 700 mile-post (miles from Sydney by rail). A few hundred metres past this point was the junction of the two systems (NSWGR and SAR). The distance from Adelaide to Broken Hill by the standard-gauge railway was 330 miles. 13 February 1972. **JLW**.

Thus, Broken Hill was to have a major impact on three of the four eastern colonies. Within a few more years, Broken Hill would become of the source of modern mining and smelting technology that extended to all the colonies. The wealth that flowed from it, and the labor movement would change Australia.

Broken Hill was a long way from Sydney and the response by the colony of New South Wales to the needs of the people of Broken Hill, such as water supply, municipal services and police, was tardy and inadequate. The population of Broken Hill had come from the South Australian mining centres of Burra and Moonta, and from the Victorian gold region. Broken Hill was 700 miles from Sydney and about 300 miles from Adelaide. Most of the Broken Hill commerce was with Adelaide. Most of those who lived in Broken Hill did not regard themselves as citizens of New South Wales but citizens of Australia. South Australia had promptly provided rail communication to Broken Hill, and that in turn had been the means of getting water to the Silver City.

1888 was the year of the Centennial celebrations in Sydney. There had been earlier attempts at Federation but they were mostly grand eloquence delivered in a post-prandial setting and leading nowhere. 1888 had been the year when two intercolonial rail links were established. Wallangarra on the NSW/QLD border, and the Silverton line at the NSW/SA border. The Silverton line had not been part of any great plan. The border was just another fence line along the dusty track from Terowie.

Broken Hill would also be a significant factor in the outcome of Federation in that a large proportion of the population of Kalgoorlie was from Broken Hill.

Sir Henry Parkes has long been touted as the 'Father of Federation'. He had certainly been a tenacious battler for the cause but diplomacy was not one of his strengths as witnessed by his lecture to Berry at the opening of the railway from Sydney to Albury on 3 February 1881.

In 1888 the Imperial Government responded to the defence concerns by sending Major General Sir James Bevan Edwards to assess the colonial defences and report accordingly. He was in Australia from June to October 1889. He departed Australia on 10 October. He found the colonial forces to be lacking cohesion, organisation, training and equipment.

He regarded the gauge problem as being a major weakness in colonial defences. His report was sent to all the colonies and was available to the public within a few days.

Major General Edwards also drew attention to the need for railways to Perth and Port Darwin.

> Railways are now such important factors in war that no combined operations are possible without them.The break of gauge which exists between the Colonies would be fatal to celerity of movement; it would practically prevent Victoria and South Australia from coming to the assistance of New South Wales. A uniform gauge must be established – at all events on the through lines.

Quick and Garran page 118.

Sir Henry Parkes … had been watching the signs of the times and had come to the conclusion that the time was ripe for a definite Federal movement the head of which he resolved to place himself. At the time he was on a short visit to Brisbane where he had been in consultation, and had received encouragement from the leading men of both political parties; and on his return was no sooner within the territory of New South Wales than he opened out, at Tenterfield, with his famous speech of 24 October. He seized the opportunity of Major General Edwards' report to emphasise the importance of defence.

Sir Henry's speech at Tenterfield was made in the context of a response to the welcome that had been extended to him at a hastily convened banquet held in the School of Arts before an audience of about 80. It is reproduced here from the the ***Daily Telegraph*, 25 October 1889.**

‘THE TENTERFIELD ORATION’ by Sir Henry Parkes

24 October 1889

As reported by the Daily Telegraph (Sydney), 25 October 1889.

The oration relevant to the topic of federation.

Sir Henry then made reference to Major-General Edwards’ visit and the excellence of the reports he had sent in. So far as this colony was concerned, he (Sir Henry) was happy to say that nothing could exceed the terms of praise in which he (Major-General Edwards) spoke of them. General Edwards had advised that the forces be brought together for operations as a great federal army. It might be necessary, should an attack be made at any one point, to bring the forces from other colonies to that spot, so as to meet the enemy with a strong hand, or a lodgement might be gained by the enemy on one spot, and it would be needful promptly and effectually to drive him out.

But as there was no provision for the troops of one colony crossing over to another without the colony to which they belonged losing control of them it was found that something more was wanted in the way of executive and Parliamentary government than we are at present possessed of. It was necessary to take means to defend ourselves, and the very fact of doing this was calculated to keep the enemy away. This question of uniting the forces had brought the colonies to the consideration of a question which was greater than we had ever had before as previously. It would have to be solved, and he would in a few words state his views on this subject. Some statesmen in Australia said that the forces could be brought together in one army by the Federal Council at Hobart; but this council, being without effective powers, was quite ineffective for the purpose. Even if the Imperial Parliament passed an Act authorising that the troops could come together as a whole there would still be the want of an executive power. The question, then, was whether the time was not ripe for creating in Australia an Australian Government as distinct from local Governments and one Australian Parliament (loud cheers) in other words, to try and make himself as plain as possible.

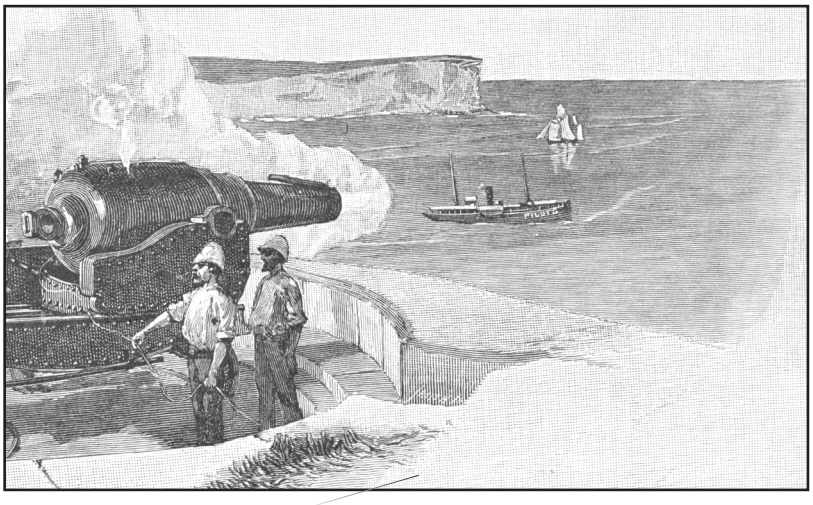
We were now pretty nearly three and a half millions of people, and he believed that our numbers were greater than those of the American colonies when they declared their independence and fought for it and won it. We should have no occasion to take any course of that kind — (hear, hear) — but surely what the people of America did by war we might be able to do by means of peace. (Cheers.)

Believing, as he did, that it was preserving the security and the integrity of the colonies from outside insults, that our various forces must be amalgamated in a great federal army, he said again that the time had come when we should set about creating this great national government for all Australia. (Cheers.)

There was another subject of importance and that was the question of the difference in the railway gauges in the various colonies. From South Australia to Queensland there was a length of fully 2000 miles of a railway line, and serious inconvenience would be caused even if there were the power to move the troops from one colony to another, and to properly utilise them when moved. The time, therefore, seemed to have arrived when we must think of having a uniform railway gauge. He had recently visited Brisbane, and one of his objects was not certainly to force his advice upon the attention of the authorities there, but if they were willing to discuss them to afford them that opportunity of doing so.

Owing to the illness of the Premier of Queensland certain difficulties had arisen In prosecuting the question; but without disclosing any secrets, or saying anything about the matter that he thought the gentlemen in Queensland would object to being stated, he believed that both political sides sympathised very heartily with the views he had expressed. In bringing about this new form of government a convention must be appointed of the leading men of all the colonies with the action of the Parliaments of the different colonies. There must be delegates, say from New South Wales, representing both sides of the existing House, appointed by the authority of Parliament. Each colony would, in this manner, appoint delegates to the convention, which would define the constitution necessary for bringing into existence the Federal Government, with a Federal Parliament, for dealing with great national questions. (Cheers.) The only argument in opposition to this was that the time had not yet come for this action.

TOWN AND COUNTRY JOURNAL, 10 August 1882



THE FORTIFICATIONS AT THE SYDNEY HEADS

From the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*

Sir Henry wasted no time in moving forward and rallied support from the Premiers of the other colonies. A meeting was convened in Melbourne on 6 February 1890. It was attended by two representatives of each colony (including New Zealand; there was only one delegate from Western Australia.) But they did acknowledge the 'lion on the path'. This was the parable coined by Sir James Service, former Premier of Victoria and supporter of federation. He was referring to differential freight rates and protectionist tariffs. The task before the delegates was to kill the lion before it killed them.

***The Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 11 January, 1890** wrote enthusiastically ahead of the 1890 conference about the prospects for the conference dealing with the break-of-gauge:

> The respective limits of colonial and federal legislation, the number and mode of electing federal representatives, the establishment of a military union and a uniform railway gauge, and the constitution of the federal executive – all these questions offer wider fields over which intercolonial views may greatly diverge.

Sir Henry was supported by the New South Wales Governor, Lord Carrington and the matter was taken up by the colonies as the Australasian Federation Convention which was held in Melbourne in February 1890. That was followed by a Convention in Sydney in March and April 1891 that produced a document that was known as the Draft Bill.

Most colonies were represented by their Premiers. The Melbourne meeting occupied itself mainly with establishing the guidelines for moving forward, and the colonies to pass enabling legislation.

The *Daily Telegraph*, 23 May 1890, reported that there was opposition fom New South Wales to the Commonwealth taking over their railways. Some of the delegates from New South Wales likened it to 'taking away our sugar lands and giving them to Queensland, or handing over Broken Hill to South Australia and the Riverina to Victoria'. The second meeting would frame the draft bill for the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia. The membership would be comprised of seven delegates to be nominated by each colony. These delegates were mostly QCs and elder statesmen. When viewed in retrospect there was a near absence of expertise from a 'nuts and bolts' background.

There were important issues (clauses) that had to be resolved such as elections, head of state, High Court without which the Commonwealth could not function. There were some heated debates. But at the end of the 1891 convention there was only one statement about the railways and absolutely nothing about the break-of gauge.

HMCS *PROTECTOR* The South Australian gunboat.

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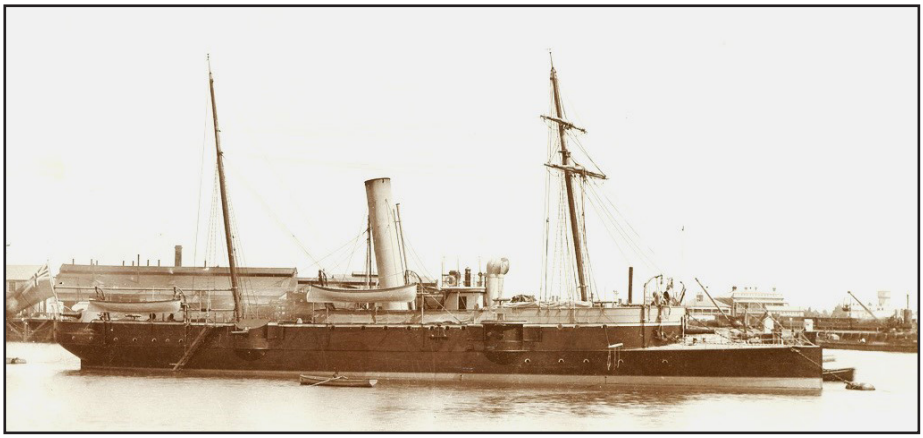


There was no clause providing for the acquisition of the state railways or railway construction or concerning transport for the purposes of the Commonwealth which was not limited, as it is now, to naval and military purposes.

Think about that a while. Did that wording give the power to the Commonwealth to move forward with a gauge-rationalisation programme if and when it chose by using the argument that the railways needed to be in a state of readiness? Quick and Garran have not included any mention of why that wording was inserted. A search of newspaper reports of that time has offered no answers. The Draft Bill remained exactly that. I suspect that there were some delegates at the Convention, who were against or were in favour of federation for the railways but chose to pursue a line of discretion being the better part of valour, and take a middle course. One othe few reports that included any mention of the railways was from the ***Launceston Examiner*, 20 March 1891:**

> Mr Gordon, one of the South Australian representatives, has raised some interesting points concerning the adoption of a free trade policy, and no doubt, his contentions will at a later period of the work of the session be brought out.. It would appear that Mr Gordon was not the only member who thought of this regulation of the railway tariffs and the bounty question, as immediately he touched on it, ejaculations were frequent, and general approval was expressed for his ideas (I think the editor was meaning **interjections!** JLW).

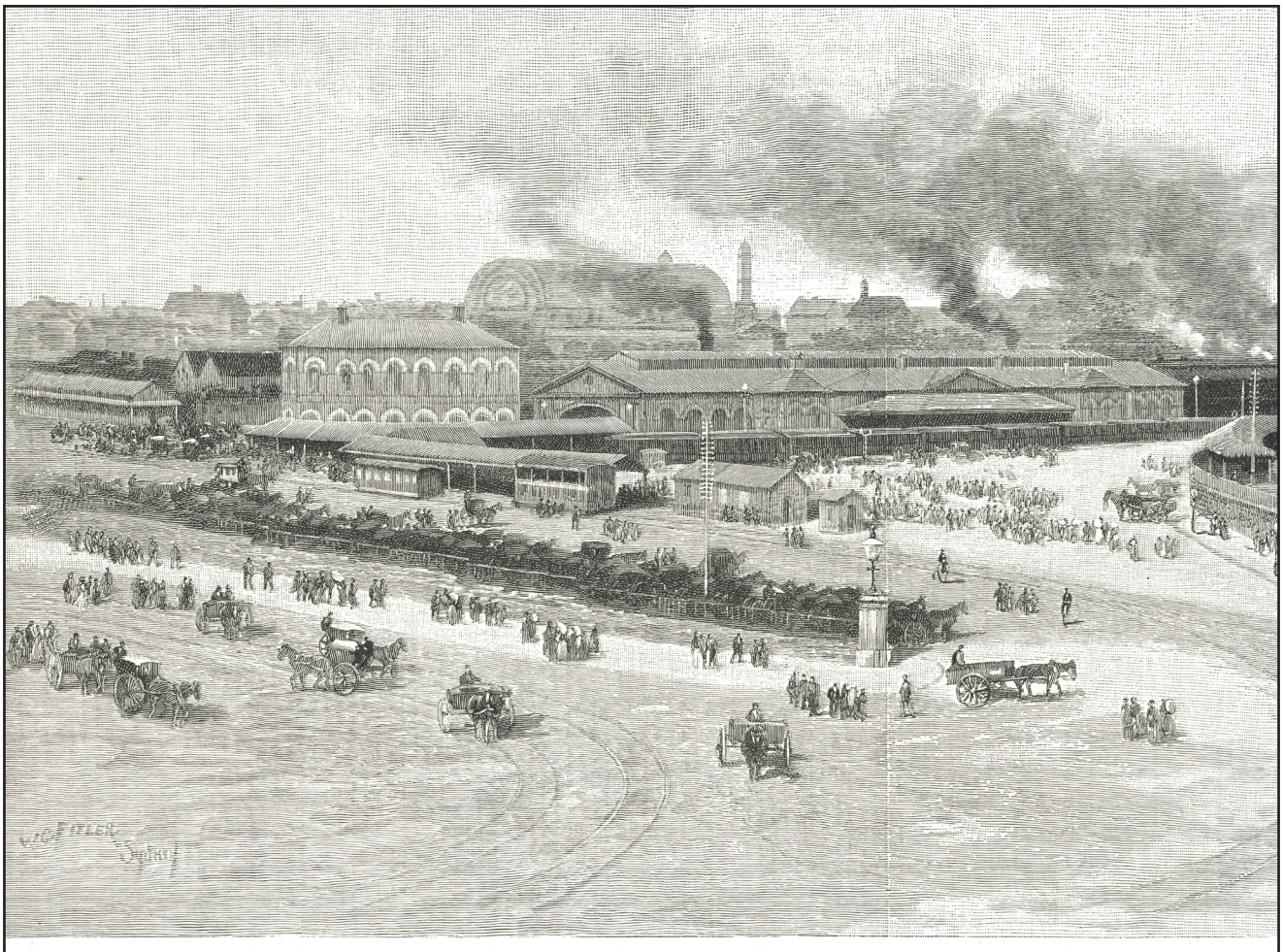
The Draft Bill of 1891 came at a time when Australia was experiencing a drought and recession. Federation fell down on the list of priorities. But it was not forgotten and there were meetings and the steady flow of letters to the editors.

In 1892 Parkes proposed a new model, but the reality was that with the circumstances of the times, the Commonwealth Bill had 'broken down hopelessly'.

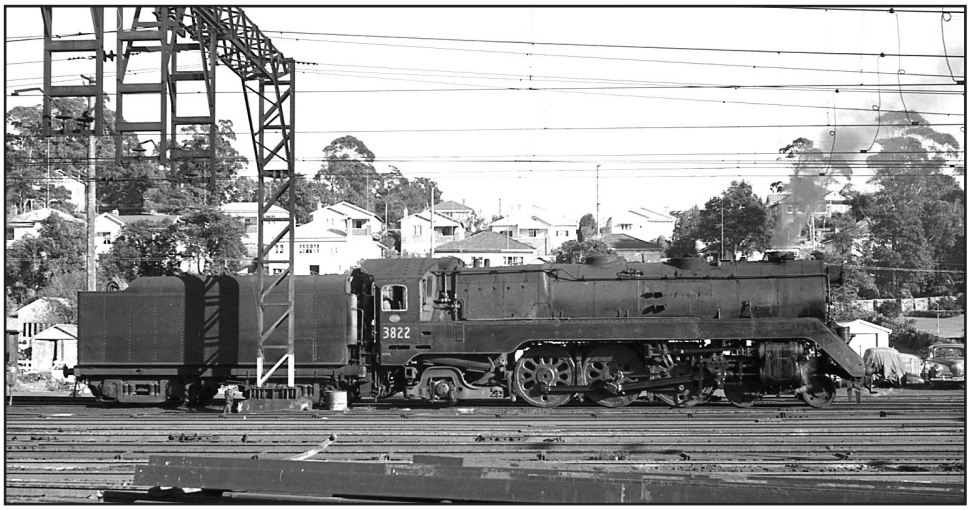
Readers should be aware that I have not attempted to summarise the formative years of the Constitution and the Federation of Australia. There have been others, over the years, who have produced texts on the Constitution, but the railways have received scant mention. Thus, I believe that the contents of this chapter appear to be the most thorough to have been offered on the subject.

SYDNEY RAILWAY STATION

The *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia 1888* contains hundreds of examples of the fine art of the steel engravers. It is a matter of regret that copies had been sought by antique dealers who ripped them apart (vandals!) for the full-page plates, which they framed and sold at a tidy profit. Hence they have become quite scarce. In the1970s I happened upon a full set of three volumes at an auction and bidding against one of these dealers. I scan the images to a high resolution. The result is close to conveying the magic of the original and I am pleased to be able to share them. It would not be possible without the attention to detail by our printers, OpenBook Howden of St Marys, Adelaide.



RAILWAY STATION, REDFERN.



THE 38 CLASS PACIFIC EXPRESS LOCOMOTIVE of the New South Wales Government Railways could have been, in its day, the standard express locomotive of a federated railway network, with a fleet of over 100 and working passenger trains across the Australian mainland from the *Albany Progress* to the fast express to Cairns. Picture taken at Gosford at a time when these 38s were still working the *Newcastle Flyer* between Gosford and Newcastle. 20 May 1968. **JLW.**

It is time to consider the advantages that could flow from a federated national railway network. Many of these advantages are as relevant in 2023 as they were when we were moving towards federation. The pity is that the delegates who attended the conventions that drafted our Constitution, and were in favour of a federated rail network, did not have such a list. But the forces against them were so formidable that it is doubtful if such a list would have changed the outcome.

GAUGE. It would have been an intolerable situation to have moved forward without a plan. There would have been strong legislation that would have conveyed the power to the railway administration to not be constrained by the petty intercolonial jealousies that had previously been at the root of all attempts to fix the gauge problem.

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE. A Federal system would bring an end to members of the state legislatures scheming railways to win votes.

STANDARDISATION OF LOCOMOTIVES AND ROLLING STOCK. There would be, for example, only one class of mainline express locomotive. I will use the (historical) example of the 38 class Pacfic locomotive of the New South Wales Government Railways. These locomotives, in their time, would have hauled the Sydney to Melbourne Express, and also the Melbourne to Adelaide Express to Murray Bridge where a 60 class Garratt would have taken over. The 38s would have also be on regional expresses. They would have been supported by standardisation of workshops which would carried spares for only the few classes of locomotives, as compared to the dozens of types of locomotives. As there would been many of these locomotives the captal cost would be lower. There would be dedicated construction facilities specialisng in locomotives and rolling stock.

SHIFTING OF ROLLING STOCK TO MEET SEASONAL NEEDS. Suppose there was a bumper year in the west, and drought in western Queensland. Hundreds of trucks could be sent across the country.

RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTER AND DEFENCE. The transport needs would be capable of moving within hours. It also opens the possibity of carriages fitted out as operating theatres or intensive care units.

PASSENGER FACILITIES STANDARDISED. We have seen a decimation of interstate and regional passenger services brought about by conflicting policies and ambitions by the state railway systems, that shared such icons as the *Southern Aurora* and *Spirit of Progress*. We are left to speculate whether a federal railway administation may have done a better job.

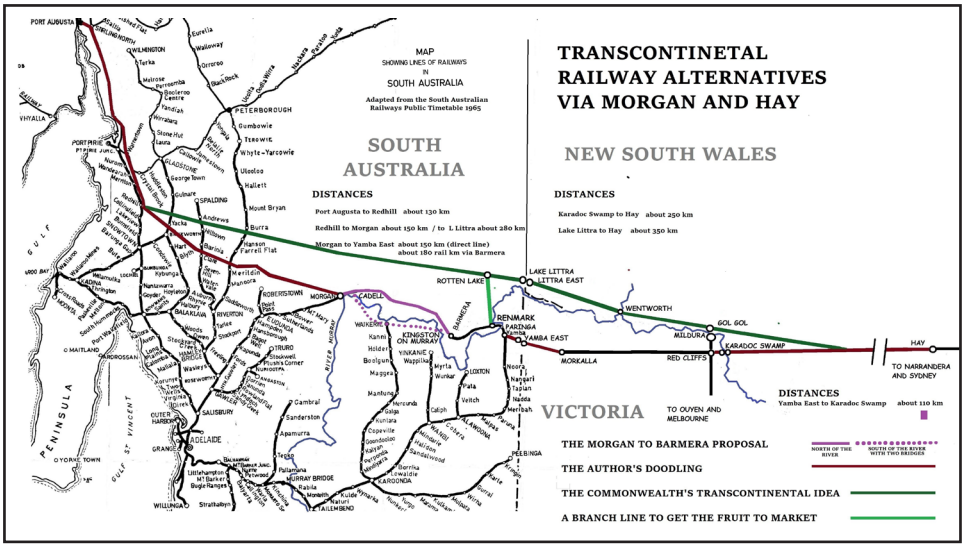
RATES. Rates would be uniform.

NEW ROUTES. With railway routes no longer contained within state borders there could be opportunities for joining up some lines in border districts. Boggabilla and Goondawindi maybe. Or perhaps Penola to Casterton. But the interesting one is the connection between Port Augusta and Hay. This was suggested about 1920 by Commonwealth Railways Commissioner, Norris G Bell. It never progressed beyond a few newspaper items. The suspicion is that Bell put this plan up, out of frustrstion because South Australia would not move forward with the direct railway from Adelaide to Port Augusta. But the State had the power of veto, which South Australian Premier, Sir Henry Barwell promptly exercised.

FLEXIBILTY OF STAFF. A national railway networtk would have standard safeworking, rules, regulations and training. So if there was a driver shortfall in say Queensland, an Adelaide driver, subject to the requirement of 'learning the road' could be on the job the next day.

A WORLD-CLASS R&D FACILITY. Presently there is no serious rail industry Research and Development in Australia. A federated system would have mass and momentum that could support this.

AN ABSTRACT CONCEPT TO CONSIDER. Federation has failed in the sense that Australians do not regard themselves as belonging to one nation. Instead, we cling to the old colonial model of belonging to a particular state, and we persist with some of the same intercolonial jealousues and hostilities. The mentaltiy of State vs Commonwealth persists. Could a federated railway network become the embodiment of a national identity for the people?



LEFT. THE PORT AUGUSTA TO HAY RAILWAY was a concept floated by Norris Bell, the Commissioner of the Commonwealth Railways in 1920. Its viabilty was never formally evaluated as South Australia promptly killed the idea. But a federated railway administration would have been able to evaluate the plan, and if viable, proceed.

BELOW. A map of the Riverina district,from the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia 1888.* The maps that were provided in the *Atlas* were very accurate and up to date.

THE RIVERINA

When the Colonial Office in London defined the boundaries of the Australian colonies it had no regard, indeed it had no knowledge, of the nature of the country it was sub-dividing, and it was inevitable that those lines it drew on the map would have little relevance to the natural flow of trade that would develop. This was a particular problem for New South Wales, where all three of its terrestrial boundaries came under commercial attack from the neighbouring colonies. To the north the Queenslanders would have ambitions on their Sunday roast beef and leave them with no sugar for their cup of tea. The western boundary was penetrated by the railway to Broken Hill but this was so far from Sydney that there was little that they could do. So, they did exactly that.

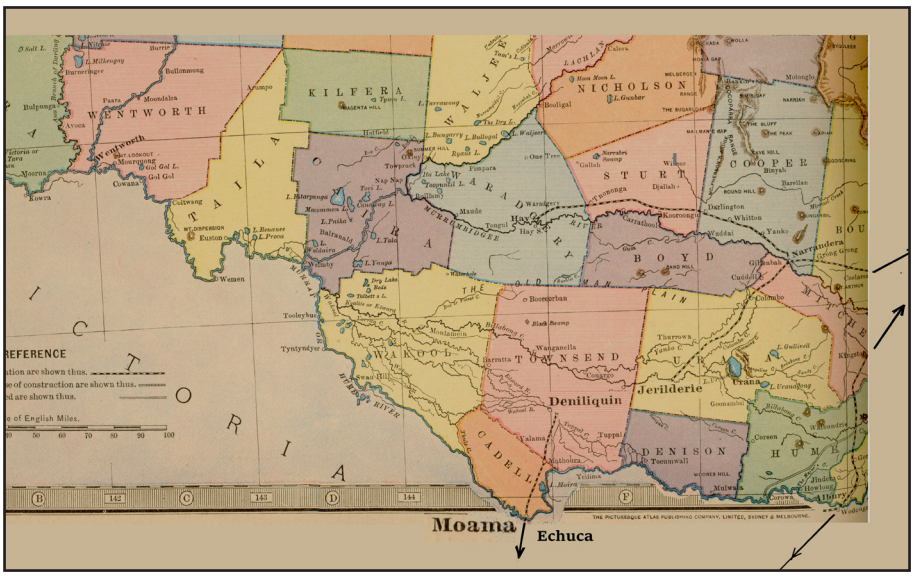
It was the part of New South Wales to the south that was giving them much grief. It was the part of the colony between the Murray and the Murrumbidgee known as the Riverina. Access to this part of the colony from Sydney was doubly difficult. It was about 400 miles from the capital and the route over the Southern Highlands was challenging. Melbourne was much closer, and the country made better travelling. There was another means of tapping the wealth of the Riverina and that was the rivers themselves. It was South Australia that developed the inland navigation of the Murray-Darling river river system from 1853. Mannum and Milang in South Australia became the major centres of commerce with the riverboats bringing all the Riverina wool and heading back upstream with building materials, agricultural equipment, and everything else that was needed.

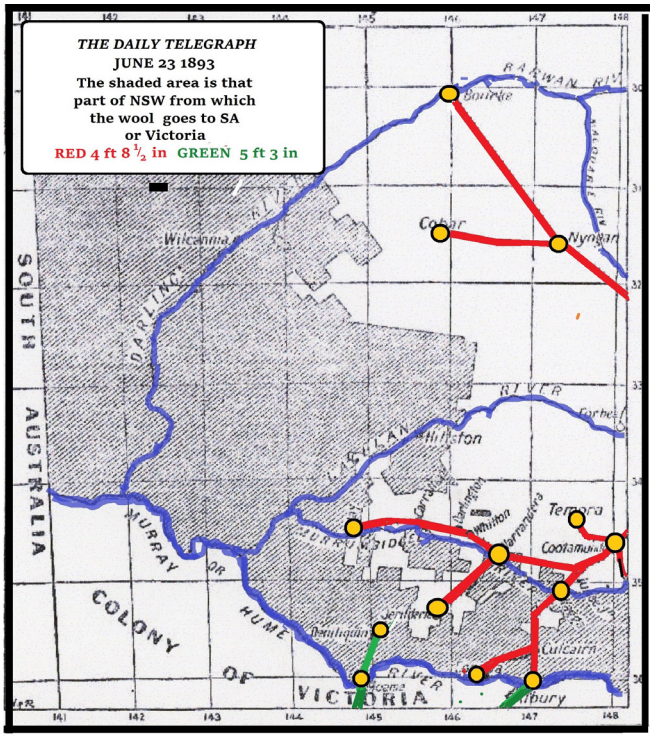
Railways were the one tool that could counter this diversion of commerce and draw the produce back to the capital. Victoria had spied an opportunity and in 1864 had extended its railway from Sandhurst (Bendigo) to Echuca.

It had 84 hotels. New South Wales had been slow to respond, more so by the nature of the terrain in the Southern Highlands than by a lack of will. Victoria had opened the line to Wodonga in 1873. The New South Wales lines were opened to Albury in February 1881 and to Narrandera later the same month. The line to Hay was opened in 1882. The railway to Bourke was opened in 1885 and restored some of the flow of trade back to Sydney.

But Victoria had responded to this by offering cheaper rates for produce destined for Melbourne. To use an example, to send a bale of wool from Echuca would cost 8 shillings, but if that bale had been brought to Echuca from the Murrumbidgee, the cost would be 7 shillings and threepence, and a bale from the Darling would pay only six shillings and six pence. New South Wales then set competitive rates. The next page describes the legal implications and the issues that had to be considered by the Constitution Convention. But by the 1890s they were talking about a rate war and in this situation with the railways had progressed from being mere tools. Weapons was an appropriate metaphor.

Now, when you are in a war and under attack by a foe that wants to take away your weapons you resort to every trick possible. Clean tricks and dirty tricks.





And if you have previously been in battle with an adversary who is under threat by this new aggressor, you smartly make a truce, and mount a combined defence.

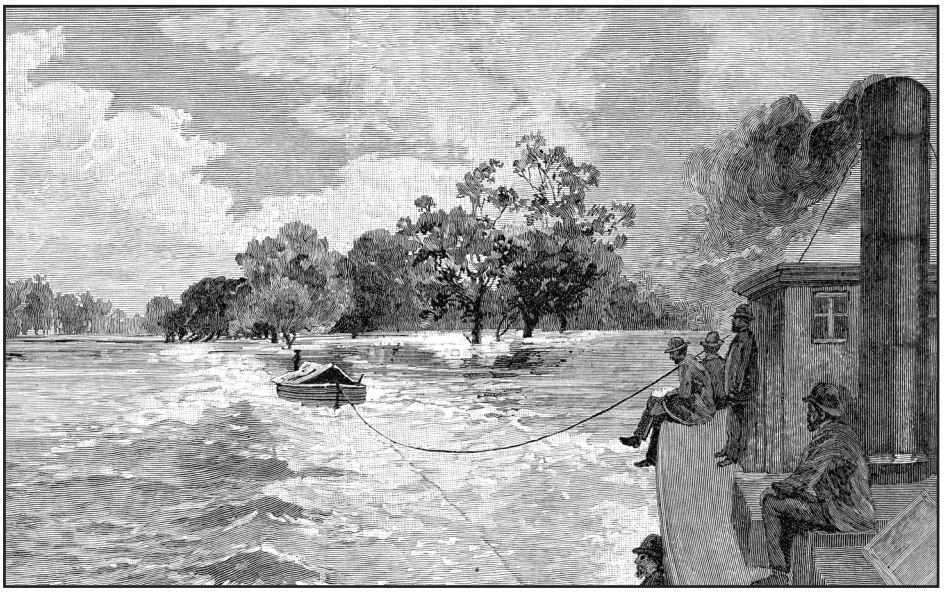
We could look at it another way. Sydney and Melbourne were great octopus creatures spreading their tentacles outwards. Those tentacles had become entwined in southern New South Wales and were locked in combat. That was bad enough for Sydney and Melbourne but now they were facing another foe. The Federation wanted to chop off their tentacles.

As always, it was the people who lived on the battleground who would lose in the long term. Thus, whilst we may lament the outcome for the railways, we can see how Melbourne and Sydney threw in their lot together. They were being good Victorians and New South Welsh, but bad Australians.

RAIL MILEAGES taken from the ***Leader* (Melbourne), 18 December 1897.**

To Melbourne, from: Wahgunyah 170 miles, Yarrawonga 161 miles, Cobram 155 miles, Echuca 156 miles, Deniliquin 200 miles.

To Sydney, from: Hay 458 miles, Berrigan 434 miles.



ABOVE LEFT: An 1893 map that shows the extent of the cross-border movement of wool.

ABOVE RIGHT: A series of maps showing the development of rail communication to the Riverina. Victoria was able to access this region ahead of New South Wales.

LEFT: The junction of the Darling and Murray Rivers. The inland navigation of the Murray-Darling river system had been established in 1853 by South Australian riverboats. With the opening of the railway to Echuca in 1864, Victoria was able to capture a large part of this trade. From the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*

FROM Quick and Garran,

The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth 1901.

Pages 178 to 180

Railway Rates. —A somewhat indefinite debate took place on the subject of preferential rates. On the clause prohibiting derogation from freedom of interstate trade, Mr. Gordon* moved an amendment trying to define with some minuteness an unfair preference. The test by which he proposed to determine the fairness of a preferential rate was to enquire whether or not the trade attracted by that particular rate was or was not profitable; but the proposal was overwhelmed with criticism and was ultimately withdrawn. In the clause dealing with the powers of the Inter-State Commission, the Victorians objected to the prohibition of preferential rates made "for the purpose of drawing traffic from the railway of a neighbouring State," on the ground that it was one-sided, and tied the hands of Victoria in competing for the Riverina trade, whilst it left New South Wales free.

The problem was a most difficult one, involving important commercial and political interests. Under the provincial system, each colony had reinforced its barrier of custom-houses by a war of railway rates and railway policies. This was especially the case between New South Wales and Victoria. Each colony had built its railway lines and arranged its rates with a view to concentrating as much trade as possible in its own capital. New South Wales, having an immensely larger area than Victoria, had tried to gather into Sydney all the trade of that area, and had built octopus railways into the south western or 'Riverina' district taking care not to extend them quite to the Victorian border, lest some of the trade might flow the wrong way. A large area of New South Wales, however, is geographically nearer to Melbourne than to Sydney; and Victoria ran numerous lines to the border in order to tap the trade of these outlying districts of New South Wales. Then began a system of frankly competitive rates; Victoria offering special reductions —in some cases amounting to 66 per cent. —to goods coming from across the border,while New South Wales endeavoured to retain the trade by prohibitive rates for produce travelling towards Melbourne, and by extremely tapering long-distance rates for produce travelling to Sydney. This "cut-throat" competition between the two railway systems was moreover complicated by the competition of both with river steamers trading to South Australia. As regards the 'long-haul' rates in New South Wales, there was also the difficulty that tapering rates for long distances are required by the soundest principles of railway management; and it seemed impossible to ascertain the precise point at which it could be said that a differential rate became preferential and unfederal in character, or the precise degree of tapering which was necessary for the development of territory, and in the interests of the producer and the carrier alike.

The only obvious test —that of the direct profitableness or unprofitableness of the rate to the carrier—was inapplicable because the carrier, being the Government, had public and political interests which might justify it in running the railways at a loss for the public benefit.

This war of railway rates had resulted in considerable bitterness between the colonies, and considerable loss to the railways and the public; and everyone was agreed that the Constitution ought, if possible, to contain some power of regulating the competition. Sir George Turner** and his colleagues, however, feared that the particular provision in the Bill would prevent Victoria from competing to draw trade from beyond her boundary, whilst it would allow New SouthWales to compete to retain trade within her boundary. In other words, they feared that it recognized the right of each colony to charge preferential rates with a view to drawing the trade from its own outlying territory to its own ports; that instead of being mutual, it was anti-federal, inasmuch as it restricted each colony to its own produce; and that it thus favoured the long distance railways of New South Wales at the expense of the short distance railways of Victoria.

The answer on behalf of New South Wales was that the clause was mutual so far as inter-State traffic was concerned, and that the Constitution ought not to interfere with the purely internal trade of a State.

The arguments may be summed up thus: The Victorians and with them the South Australians —claimed that 'trade should flow in its natural channels'. The New South Wales representatives did not dispute this as an abstract proposition, but objected to extending the federal control to any trade that was not 'inter-State trade' and claimed the right of each State to control its internal trade, subject only to the condition that freedom of trade should not be derogated from. There was no attempt to justify the policy of Victoria in carrying New South Wales goods at cheaper rates than her own, nor the policy of New South Wales in charging prohibitive rates on goods destined for Victoria. The real question as to which opinion was divided was whether a limit ought to be put to the right of New South Wales to taper her long-distance rates. Victoria objected to giving up her admittedly anti-federal weapon unless New South Wales were disarmed also; New South Wales argued that her tapering long-distance rates, though they might indeed be used as an anti-federal weapon, were an essential means to the settlement of her land and the development of her resources. No definite solution of the difficulty was arrived at; but on Sir George Turner's motion the objectionable limitation was struck out, and the powers of the Inter-State Commission were left unhampered by any definite instructions.

*Mr John Gordon, delegate from South Australia

**Sir George Turner, Premier of Victoria.

POLLITZER'S PAPER. The opening paragraph is shown here. There is a map on page 20 that summarises his work.

Samuel Pollitzer was a Civil Engineer who had previously worked in Adelaide, but in 1897 was resident in Sydney. He had avidly followed the progress of the Adelaide Federal Convention and made the observation, of which we thoroughly concur, that it has produced a vast amount of literature. In June 1897 he produced a treatise, *Unification of Australia's Railway Gauges,* which purported to offer some solution to the gauge problem.

THE ADELAIDE FEDERAL CONVENTION

MARCH - APRIL 1897

Charles Cameron Kingston was a 'love him or hate him' character. On researching the man some century or more after the event, one is struck by the fact that his behaviour fits the modern-day description of a narcissist* of the worst kind.

He had been the South Australian Attorney General from 1884, and in 1893 was able to form Government with the support of the United Labor Party. It was remarkable that he was able to keep that unlikely coalition togethether for the next seven years. He didn't give the Labor members any ministerial portfolios. In fact he had a small ministry composed almost entirely of former premiers.

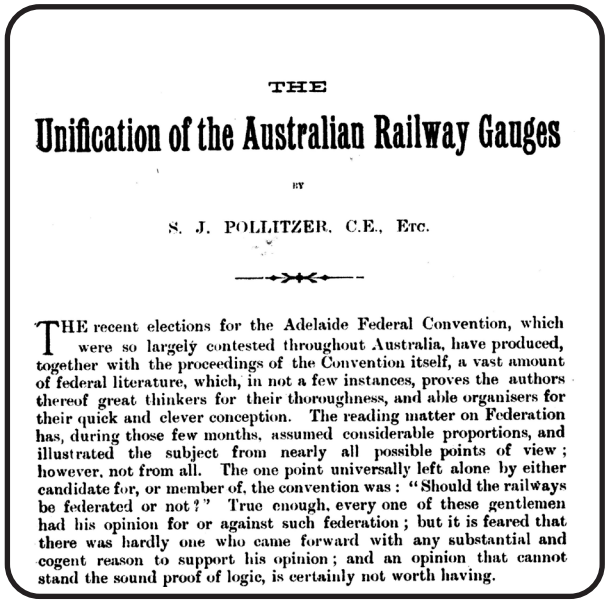
His Government gave women the right to vote and went one step further by giving them the right to sit in Parliament. But that was not initiated by Kingston. He was initially opposed to giving women the vote until it was pointed out to him that most of the women would respond to that by giving him their vote.

He was a social reformer but not one for infrastructure projects like railways. During his seven years in office the total distance of new railways authorised by his Government was one mile (Grange and Henley Beach).

The Premiers' Conference in 1895 gave Kingston the task, along with Victorian Premier, George Turner, of drafting a Commonwealth Bill. They would pick up the pieces from the 1891 draft.

There would be three Federal Conventions in 1897/8. It was the tradition that the Premier of the host city became the President of Convention. That appealed to Kingston's sense of inflated importance and he made sure that the first woud be in Adelaide. Kingston had set the date and had, with Turner, established a timetable. The second Convention would be in Sydney and the third in Melbourne. Each colony would send ten delegates and the delegates would be chosen by the people. The Federal Convention in Adelaide commenced on 22 March 1897. Queensland did not participate and Western Australia was a late starter.The railway question was low on the agenda list. It had been dropped at the 1891 Convention and the Draft by Kingston and Turner had left it with the states retaining the railways.

*In 2019 I wrote and published *Bob's Railway* -- subtitled *Turbulent Political Times in South Australia and a Remarkable Railroading dog*. Within it I presented evidence relating to Kingston's psyche.



THE

Unification of the Australian Railway Gauges

BY

S. J. POLLITZER, C.E., Etc.

THE recent elections for the Adelaide Federal Convention, which were so largely contested throughout Australia, have produced, together with the proceedings of the Convention itself, a vast amount of federal literature, which, in not a few instances, proves the authors thereof great thinkers for their thoroughness, and able organisers for their quick and clever conception. The reading matter on Federation has, during those few months, assumed considerable proportions, and illustrated the subject from nearly all possible points of view; however, not from all. The one point universally left alone by either candidate for, or member of, the convention was: "Should the railways be federated or not?" True enough, every one of these gentlemen had his opinion for or against such federation; but it is feared that there was hardly one who came forward with any substantial and cogent reason to support his opinion; and an opinion that cannot stand the sound proof of logic, is certainly not worth having.

THE RIVERINA

We find varying levels of support in the columns of the newspapers. The *Riverine Grazier*, for example, left voters in no doubt that the railway issue was a major consideration and the future prosperity of the region was strongly tied to the federation of the railways which promised to bring and end to the rate war.

***Riverine Grazier*, 23 February 1897**

The railways are a formidable power for centralisation or decentralisation, according to the principles upon which they are applied. At present they are managed so as to concentrate trade in Sydney and to prevent it finding its way from the border districts to the nearer metropoli of the other provinces. NSW with hostile tariffs cannot be said to be justified. It is for this purpose that many federal candidates advocate that the control of the railways should be retained in the colony. In the Riverina, where the railway administration is of such vital importance to the material interests of the people it behoves the electors to take this into very serious consideration. It is of vital importance to Riverina that there should be federal control of the railways. It is of vital importance that we only have free access to the Victorian markets, but that we should have the means of access. At present we have not the means, and under a system of selfish state control we are not likely to get them.

For years the New South Wales legislature has not only abstained from constructing a railway from Hay to Deniliquin itself, but it has refused to allow other people to construct it. The same principles had been applied to other localities near the border, and that attitude will be continued if the states control the railways.

We are sorry to say that amongst what may be called 'the leading candidates', for the Federal Convention, there are only six who are in favour of the control of the railways being handed over to the Federal Government.

WHO SAID WHAT?

Colour coding relates to the voting of 19 April 1897. **Red** indicates a vote **against federation** of railways. **Green** indicates **for federation.** **Blue*** indicates delegate not included, inadequate or conflicting data. I have arbitrarily placed a limit on the length of comment but in effect, most of the delegates have said little on the topic of railways and heavy editing was not necessary.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Barton, Edmund. Q.C. 48. As to the control by the Federal Commonwealth of the railways with respect to the purposes of the Commonwealth, that was a portion of the Draft Bill which has been very much misunderstood. That clause of that Bill did not give to the Commonwealth control over the railways for ordinary purposes but only gave power to use the railway systems of the States for defence: ***Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 February 1897. (**He) inclines to the opinion that the railways should not be handed over to the federal government. ***Maitland Daily Mercury*, 6 March 1897.** Regarding the federation of railways, the Draft Bill simplifies the matter by leaving each State to manage its own lines in its own way. ***Observer* (Adelaide), 17 April 1897.**

O'Connor, Richard. Q.C. M.L.C. 56. The only advantage that could accrue from the federation assuming control of the railways was the abolition of the differential rates and this could be arranged without handing over the railways: ***The Evening News* (Sydney), 8 February 1897.** He was opposed to handing over the lines to a federal authority. The difficulties of management would be too great. ***Observer* (Adelaide), 27 March 1897. Author's comment**. He has, along with many others, become disconnected from the history of this federation movement that came about because Major General James Edwards had drawn attention the urgent need for a uniform railway gauge.

Reid, George. Barrister, Premier. 52. On the subject of the federal control of the railways, Mr Reid is very nebulous and goes out of the difficulty by arguing on the basis of the Draft Bill formulated six years ago, viz., that each State will have control of its own lines. Perhaps he is wise, however in refraining from nailing his colours to the mast. ***Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate* of 27 January 1897**. Objects to federation of railways.

Mr Lyne, William. Primary producer, Leader of the Opposition. 53. Not at present in favour of the federation of the railways. ***Maitland Daily Mercury*, 6 March 1897.** Another objection was the handing over the railways to the Federal Government, and even now he found men who had supported that proposal, hesitating or refusing to entertain it... If the railways were handed over to the Federal Parliament the first thing would be the removal of differential railway rates, a serious matter for the residents of the border dealing with Melbourne. ***Geelong Advertiser*, 12 February 1897**. **Author's comment.** This last statement is at odds with the position declared by the *Riverine Grazier*.

Carruthers, Joseph. Solicitor, Minister for Lands. 41. He touched on diversity which existed in regard to the railways in the several colonies. Concludes that railways should be under federal control: ***Maitland Daily Mercury*, 6 March 1897.** ... then in regards to defence, if an enemy landed on any part of Australia they would not be able to move troops ... if they had a wise system of federation they would have their railways put to proper use... the sooner they removed the excuse of retaliation in regard to their railways, the better it would be for the whole community. ***Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 February 1897.** Concludes that railways should be under federal control. ***Maitland Daily Mercury*, 6 March 1897.**

Wise, Bernhard. Barrister, ex Attorney General. 39. Mr Wise is insisting on Mr Eddy being asked to report on the railway question...It is not a bad idea and I notice Mr Carruthers has followed it up...he has a very strong opinion about the different railway gauges in the various colonies... every mile of railway opened will add to the expense of establishing a uniform gauge: ***Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 February 1897.** Holds that the railways should be under one control. As to the method of control, (it should) be guided by the railway and financial experts. ***Maitland Daily Mercury*, 6 March 1897.** Much of the confusion that exists at present about the effect on our railways and federal control could be dissipated if we could get from Mr Eddy a clear statement. It is quite clear that the convention could come to no determination on that point without the evidence of Mr Eddy and the commissioners in the other colonies. ***Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 6 March 1897.**

Edward Eddy was the Chief Commissioner of the New South Wales Government Railways and did produce a report. This will be further considered on page 17.

McMillan, William. Merchant, M.L.A. 47. Regards the federalisation of the debts and railways as indissoluble: ***Maitland Daily Mercury*, 6 March 1897.**

Abbott, Sir Joseph. Barrister, Speaker. 55. In favour of the railways and finances being controlled by the Federal Government. ***Australian Star*, Sydney 11 March 1897.**

Walker, James. Financier, M.L.A. 56. He has written extensively in support of a federated railway network. Further comment on James Walker on page 18.

Brunker, James. Businessman. M.L.A. 67. Grand as the idea of a Federal railway appeared with a uniform gauge and no differential rates, the project was out of the question at the present time. The railways of New South Wales formed one of the strongest assets of the colony.

*There were 50 delegates at the Convention in Adelaide and 30 voted on the railway question. Some of the delegates had left Adelaide when the vote was taken. The quotations cited have been taken from newspaper reports of public meetings ahead of the Convention. There is inconsistency with some of the delegates regarding the vote and their stated position before the Convention. Some may have changed their position ahead of the Convention and there may have been some inconsistencies in the recording of the votes.

It was questionable whether their creditors in the Old World would consent to the system being handed over to the Federal Government. ***Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 February 1897.** Holds the idea of the federalisation of the railways and the consolidation of the provincial debt to be an impossible one. ***Maitland Daily Mercury*. 6 March 1897.**

VICTORIA

Turner, Sir George. Premier The management of the railways formed a difficult question regarding rates to be imposed. ***Prahran Telegraph* (Victoria), 27 February 1897.**

Isaacs, Isaac. Judge, Attorney General. 42. He objected to handing over the control of our railways but was prepared to have the intercolonial railway tariffs made uniform. Of course the Federal Government must have the power of sending troops over the lines, if the necessity arose for so doing. ***Mount Alexander Mail*, 2 March 1897.**

Berry, Sir Graham. Speaker, 75.

Deakin, Alfred. Barrister. 41. Said he was in favour of giving the federal government control of railways for federal purposes only. ***Ballarat Star*, 2 March 1897.**

Higgins Henry. It was proposed that each colony should keep the control of its railways: **The *Age* 10 February 1897.**

Trenwith, William. Trade unionist. Member of the Legislative Assembly. 51. He did not think that that the railways should be handed over to the Federal Government. It was difficult now for one man in each colony to manage the railways and if they were handed over and placed under one general manager it would be even worse**: *Broadford Courier and Reedy Times*, 26 February 1897. Author's note.** He was probably referring to Richard Speight who was the Chairman of Commissioners of the Victorian Railways from 1884 to 1894. Granted that Speight had some shortcomings but Trenwith's reasoning in support of his opinion flags him as a liability rather an asset to the cause of the convention.

Peacock, Alexander. Former Premier. 36. Strongly opposed to the control of the railways forming part of the federal administration. ***Ballarat Star*, 22**

Fraser, Simon. Pastoralist, 65.

Quick, John. Lawyer. 45. Concerning the railways, which he said he was not in favour of being transferred to the Federal Parliament, he looked on railways as the property of the respective colonies which they were able to control. But the federal parliament might interfere with railways for defence purposes, also regulate differential rates, which sometimes were of a cut throat description.

Zeal, Sir William. Engineer, President of Legislative Council 67. The Federal executive…should have the control of the revenue from railways, customs, excise and the post office and that the Federal Parliament should control the defence forces. ***Weekly Times*, Melbourne, 27 February 1897.**

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Kingston, Charles Cameron. Q.C. Premier. 47. He made a speech in the Adelaide Town Hall on 15 February that showed a word count of nearly 7,000, but nowhere can we find the word 'railway'**. The *Advertiser*, 16 February 1897.**

Josiah Symon. Q.C. The railways of the colonies represent the expenditure of £112,000,000 out of an aggregate national debt of some £180,000,000 and it is obvious that the railways represent the vast bulk of the loan expenditure and that it would be absurd to pass on the debt to the federation without passing on the greatest of our public works…it does seem to me that the complete and straightforward way will be found in the long run to be the best of handing over the railways to the federal authority. ***Chronicle* (Adelaide) 20 February 1897.**

Glynn, Patrick. Lawyer, member of the House of Assembly and former Attorney General. 42. Favoured the federalisation of the railways and suggested a scheme for the taking over of the lines on an equitable basis**. *Observer* (Adelaide) 27 March 1897.**

Holder, Frederick. Newspaper proprietor, 47.

Gordon, John. Judge, Member of Legislative Council, 47. He feared that New South Wales would construct the line to Broken Hill but stop it at that town without joining our lines so as to obtain all the traffic possible. If we were to have cut-throat railways of that sort what was federalisation but a hollow sham. He had moved a change in the Constitution Bill to forbid cut-throat railways but it was defeated by a large majority including all the delegates from New South Wales, ***Advertiser* 16 May 1897.**

Cockburn, John. Medical practitioner, former Premier. 47.

Downer, Sir John. Q. C. former Premier. 54.

Howe, James. Farmer, Member of the House of Assembly and former Minister. 58.

Solomon, Vaiben. Businessman, Member of the House of Assembly. 45. The Federal Government would take over the railways …rival lines would then be stopped, and all cut-throat competition between colonies would cease. The railways would be under one central head and would be removed from political control. ***Northern Argus*, 5 March 1897.**

Baker, Sir Richard. Barrister, President of Legislative Council. 56.

TASMANIA

The Tasmanians had no break-of-gauge and did not have to deal with a neighbouring colony competing with rival rates. It is difficult to see what they would gain from a federated railway system. Accordingly we find there are no comments of significance on the railway matter.

Braddon, Hon. Sir Edward. Civil servant, Premier 68.

Fysh, Hon Sir Philip. Merchant, Treasurer. 62.

Grant, Charles. Engineer, member of the Legislative Council. 66.

Lewis, N.

Douglas, Sir Adye. Lawyer, President of the Legislative Council. 82.

Brown, Nicholas.

Moore, William.

Clark, Andrew. Barrister, 49.

Henry, John. Merchant, 63.

Dobson, Henry. Former Premier, 56.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

There is very little to report regarding the views of the Western Australian delegates. Western Australia was in a similar position to Tasmania regarding the railway question. There was the additional factor that Western Australia had seen fit, in the late 1880s, to have railways built on the land-grant system by private companies. The Great Southern Railway (to Albany) had been taken over by the government in 1896 but the Midland Railway had continued as a private operation. The Western Australian Government had been a late entrant to railway operations.

The ten representatives to the convention didn't spruik their views, and the railway issues that had caused such havoc in the eastern colonies were not a concern. Furthermore, the majority in and around Perth did not favour federalisation. The population in the goldfields was predominantly made up of what were known as 't'othersiders'. There was a significant number on the goldfields that had come from Broken Hill, where there was a strong pro-federation sentiment. Another emerging issue at that time was the call for a railway from the Goldfields to Esperance which was considered by some as more desirable than the railway across the Nullarbor. (see chapter 14).

The basic biographical information of the delegates to the 1897 Adelaide Convention is included. Of the Western Australian newspapers that reported on the delegates, the comments of the editor of the ***Geraldton Express and Murchison Goldfields and Yulgo Chronicler,* 19 March 1897** are as entertaining as the title of his newspaper.

Forrest, John. surveyor, explorer, Member of Parliament. 50.

Le Steere, Sir James. He has long outlived his time, a mouldering weather-beaten relic of the past who can only serve as a block in the path of progress.

Leake, George. Lawyer 41. The funny man who has made the House a sort of hippodrome and played the part of the leader of the opposition and chief ministerial boomster.

Hackett, John. Editor, 39. He is as able a man as could be got and should do himself credit.

Piesse, the Commissioner of Railways. Little is known about him, good or bad. (He was not a Commissioner in the sense of being an expert railway administrator, but the Minister, JLW).

Loton, William. Merchant and Landowner. 59. A specimen of the superannuated politician and can have no weight in an assembly of progressive men.

James, Walter. Lawyer. 34. A clever young man with a brilliant future. He is always abreast of the times and we are glad to see him chosen.

Hassell, Sholl and Taylor are bulgy figureheads that cannot claim even the merit of being fairly ornamental.

EDWARD MILLER GARD EDDY

and the other Railway Commissioners.

In the first two decades of railways in Australia, it was generally the Parliament that was running the operations and making decisions about the routes of new railways. At best they were inept, and at worst some members of Parliament were corrupt. By the 1870s there was some central control by the Engineers-in-Chief. In earlier chapters we had encountered Mais, Higinbotham and Whitton.

From the mid-1880s the railways of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia were managed by Commissioners. The structure of the hierarchy in all three colonies was a board of three Commissioners, of which there was a Chairman or Chief Commissioner, and two other commissioners, who in all three colonies, were ineffectual. Victoria was the first such colony to adopt this model of management. Their function was to run the railways as a business and to be independent of political interference.

The Chief Commissioner of Victoria was Richard Speight who had commenced in 1884. The other two colonies observed this for about three years and then, almost simultaneously, adopted the same management approach. They could have been better to wait a while. There was increasing disquiet in Victoria regarding Speight's expenditure.

In South Australia the Chairman was Joseph Henry Smith from the Great Western Railway in England. He was an efficient administrator but in South Australia had to deal with Premier C C Kingston, who still wanted to run the railways and took offence when Smith said 'No'.

In New South Wales the Chief Commissioner was Edward Eddy who had previously been Assistant General Manager of the Caledonian Railways.

Meanwhile in Victoria the *Age* newspaper was drawing attention to the the extravagances of Richard Speight, which resulted in much public interest and controversy. Speight departed in 1894.

The early experience in New South Wales was not an easy one as one of the other Commissioners, Fehon, had been involved in irregularities prior to the time of his appointment. This set in place a procession of crises that resulted in the fall of the Parkes Government in January 1889 and a Royal Commission. Eddy was not implicated.

Eddy was regarded as a competent administrator and a benevolent one to the railway employees. He had better locomotives and rolling stock and was much respected by the travelling public for providing better passenger facilities.

He took a special interrest in the break-of-gauge problem and sought to get the other colonies involved in addressing the problem.

'Bonhomie' is not the right word to describe the decorum that prevailed at the Adelaide Convention. Kingston had managed to have the Convention held in Adelaide, against some opposition from Sydney and Melbourne, by enlisting the support of Tasmania and Western Australia. The process that had been established with previous conventions had been for the Premier of the host city to be President of the convention. That would have appealed to Kingston's grandiose sense of self-importance. Kingston had been a long-time adversary of other prominent legal minds in South Australia, Sir Richard Baker and Josiah Symon.

One of the first considerations was whether the Convention would use the Draft Bill from the 1891 Convention as the starting point or whether it would take a fresh look at all sections. They chose the latter. The 1891 Convention had been against federation of the railways.

When the delegates arrived in Adelaide they formed themselves into committees. There were three committees. The Constitution Committee, the Finance Committee and the Judiciary Committee. Of particular interest was the Finance Committee which had railways as one of its agenda items.

The membership of the Constitution Committee was dominated by the best legal minds. The only member who was not a QC was former South Australian Premier, Dr John Cockburn. It is logical that the Constitution Committee should draw upon the best legal expertise.

Logic would be that the Finance Committee should have the best financial expertise. It didn't happen.

By Friday 9 April the three Committees had done their work. At this point we should remember that this slow and bumpy road to Federation had been started in 1889 by Major General Edwards who was sent from the mother country out of concern that there were 'unfriendly nations" with ambitions in the Pacific and the urgent need for the colonies to have appropriate defence capability. Prominent on that list had been the urgent attention to the gauge problem.

After nearly three weeks of intensive debate and discussion, the weekend of 10-11 April set aside for the delegates to see some of South Australia. There needed to be one more vote. Mount Gambier, the Murray or Broken Hill? The result was nearly unanimous.

And so, at 4.50 pm that Friday afternoon they were aboard the Broken Hill Express. The need to change trains at Terowie could have been a wake-up call to the delegates that the break-of-gauge had fallen off the agenda. But the change to the narrow-gauge train caused them no grief and they settled into their sleeping car berths for the journey to the Silver City.

Now, we have to pinch ourselves as a reminder that Broken Hill was not in South Australia. We may wonder whether there were some or most of the New South Wales delegates who had never previously been to this outpost of their own colony.

Of the ten delegates from New South Wales, nine were not aboard that Broken Hill Express. The one delegate from New South Wales who was aboard the Broken Hill Express was James Thomas Walker.

HANSARD

From the ***South Australian Register*, 31 May 1897.**

The newspaper provided the staff to report the proceedings of the Convention. In time the newspaper presented some interesting statistics derived from the Hansard reports. In consequence the Government Printer had, within two months, produced a 'book containing no fewer than 1,218 pages, besides indices which extend to 26 pages'. It was claimed that no other volume of equal size has ever been prepared so rapidly in Australia.

The debate on Mr Barton's initiatory resolutions extended over about 33 hours, during which time some 264,600 words were spoken. In the 18 days of the convention three quarters of a million words were uttered.

The report provided the interesting statistic that the average rate of public speaking in England was 120 words per minute. The average at the Convention was 133. The most rapid talker was Mr Deakin, from whose lips words rushed forth like bullets from a gatling gun at the average rate of at least 170 words a minute. Mr Barton, the eloquent leader of the Convention averaged about 150. Mr Kingston and Mr Carruthers ranged from 148 down to 140 words a minute.

Mr Glynn was as fast as Mr Barton, with a brogue in addition, to mystify the shorthand writers. The report then ventured into some analytical commentary on the quality of utterances and concluded that neither Mr Turner nor Mr Kingston had so great a command of language as Mr Symon. Of the 22 representatives who talked most, no fewer than 16 were members of the legal profession.

Had Broken Hill made it quietly known that they were not welcome or was it the delegates themselves who decided they didn't want to go there? Memories were still fresh of the 1892 strike, and the action of the Government in sending in the police, travelling via Melbourne and Adelaide.

There were 17 of the delegates who made that weekend journey along with six ladies. Broken Hill turned on a grand banquet and welcome on the Saturday. The delegates were back in Adelaide at 10.48 am on the Monday morning. ***The Adelaide Observer*, 17 April 1897** and ***Barrier Miner* 12 April 1897** reported.

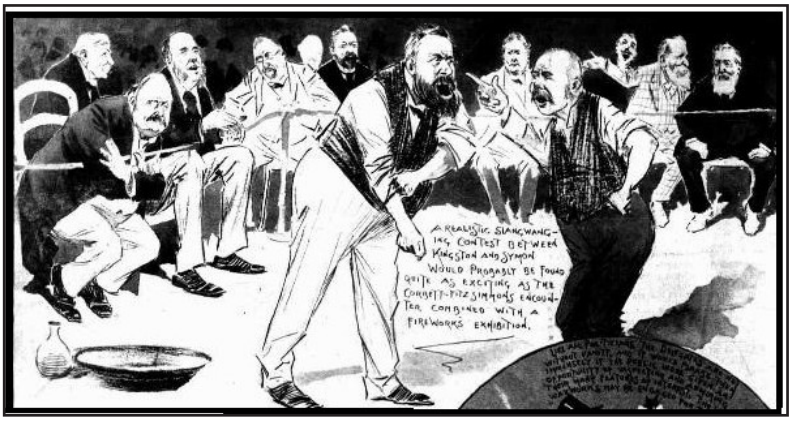
Of the many speeches was a welcome by former Mayor, Mr John Souter, who attracted much cheering with his comment that the nine New South Wales delegates, in absenting themselves, had cast a "great slur on Broken Hill", but then added that "Broken Hill did not belong to New South Wales, it belonged to Australia."

He said that New South Wales had done very little for Broken Hill. He further added, but in a more jocular tone, that "no more appropriate place could be found for the capital of a Federated Australia."

About twenty of the entourage, including two ladies, Mrs Fenton and Miss Sholl* dared the experience of a rapid drop of 100 yards into the darkness and were taken in charge by one of the underground managers.

* It was part of Broken Hill folklore that women were not allowed underground and this tradition was broken, it was told, when Queen Elizabeth II became the first woman to go underground. Evidently not.

FROM *MELBOURNE PUNCH* of 25 March 1897 which had done this cartoon of Kingston (on the left) and Josiah Symon (right) sparing in the boxing ring. Those two legal minds in Adelaide had long been at odds. By sheer co-incidence the scene illustrates the outcome of the railway question. The only delegate that can be confidently identified is NSW Premier, George Reid, in the foreground leaning forward in his chair. It is probably Deakin behind Kingston's right shoulder. Kingston voted for the railways to remain with the states. Symon supported them being with the Commonwealth. Of those who were barracking for state ownership there was none louder than Reid. We can imagine that a long-faced James Walker is amongst the spectators.



Some of the party, including one of the ladies, clambered up one of the stope ladders for 300 feet to the level above to gain mining experience.

> Amid loud cheering, expressions of thanks and the singing of Auld Lang Syne the train passed out of the station and the last view of the mines and the town was taken by the aid of a brilliant glare of the red hot slag as it poured down the side of the dump heap. Thanks to the extra speed put on by the engine-driver the train reached Terowie at just the right time, but there was no rejoicing when, at 5 o'clock in the morning, the travellers had to turn out of their warm berths and face the cold south-east wind, which during the night had been blowing fiercely and carrying with it clouds of dust. After a warm cup of tea the broad gauge was sought.

Maybe there were some of the delegates on board who could grasp the fact that the convention had not provided a result regarding the break-of-gauge, and that it was still not too late to make a change. But they were faced with the reality that those delegates from New South Wales who had not been aboard the Broken Hill Express were resolute in their determination to keep the railways out of federal hands.

Those New South Wales delegates (the nine, that is, who were not aboard the Broken Hill Express) who had advocated strongly in the direction of railways remaining with the states were universally glib in articulating the motives for that position. We are left to speculate on their motives. It seemed that there was more than the Riverina rates. It would have been Victoria that stood to lose most from the abolition of competitive rates.

We need to look at the route mileage figures of the rail networks of the various states in the decade or two following Federation. During the 1880s the main trunk routes had been completed. There was a slackening of new construction during the 1890s, largely a legacy of the drought and depression. With the coming of the new century new railways sprouted and vast distances of new track were clocked up. Many were into country that was marginally productive and would be loss-making propositions.

However, these railways served a very important purpose.They won votes for the politicians who supported them. We can understand why those politicians (AKA delegates) were unsettled.

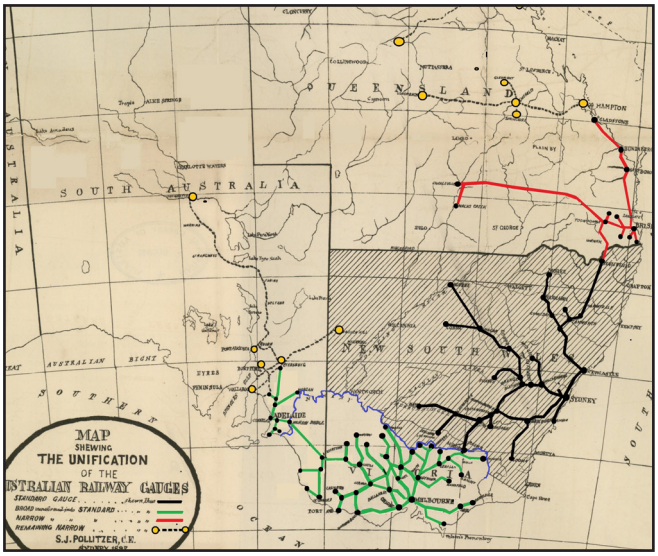
There was possibly another factor. The railways were the largest enterprises in the colonies. If it all went wrong it could make the life of a politician very unpleasant.

James Walker had been in the Parliament only recently, so there was no question about him being involved in the 1892 decision to send in the police to put down the strike. Prior to his entry into Parliament he had been the President of the Bank of New South Wales, and he continued his directorship of that organisation after entering Parliament. He was also a director of the Australian Mutual Provident Society and the shipping company Burns, Philp & Co.

He was well respected in New South Wales and had been 9th in the poll for delegates out of a total pool of 49 candidates. In the weeks leading up to the poll he had articulated his views and, somewhat in contrast to most, had given the railway question considerable thought and had formulated some ideas about how a federated railway would operate.

> Federation of the colonies, would, in my opinion, be very far from complete without federation of the railways. Unless the railways were under federal control it is hard to say what time would elapse before a uniform gauge is adopted.

According to his entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, James Walker had arrived in Adelaide for the 1897 convention, confident that his financial expertise would be valuable to the convention but was disappointed to find that the legal fraternity had closed ranks to keep him out of the finance committee. He was 'dismissed' by Alfred Deakin as a 'mere commercial man' and ignored by those of the finance committee at the social events. The same source reports that his 'Sydney admirers feared that he was one crying in the wilderness'. It is also reported that Walker's proposals were adopted at the Melbourne sittings in preference to the ideas set forward by the politicians'. But there was no revision of the railway policy.



POLLITZER'S MAP

His plan had been to convert the broad-gauge lines of Victoria and South Australia to 4 ft 8½ in. He would also convert the narrow-gauge lines in the south-east of South Australia, and the narrow-gauge lines in Queensland south of Rockhampton. The Clapp Report of 1945 closely followed this plan.

Pollitzer's treatise is from **The National Library of Australia.**

In the weeks leading up to the poll, James Walker had announced his policies. The following is from the ***Maitland Daily Mercury*, 26 February 1897.**

> Many opponents of the federation of the railways are anxious to know how the difficulty could be got over in reference to the construction of new lines.

Walker then proceeded, at some length, to outline an arrangement whereby the State would meet any deficits in the operating costs of the line, and any profit would be distributed to the State. He closed with the comment:

> It will, I think, be seen that there is no reason why a federal control should unduly interfere with the liberty of each province (referring to State) to have such lines as it is prepared to pay for.

James Walker had suggested (as also had Carruthers and Wise), that in advance of the Adelaide Convention, the desirabity of having Edward Eddy prepare a report. Eddy did write a report but it is not clear whether it was in direct response to Walker (or Wise) or if it was of his own initiative. Six days before the Adelaide Convention it was presented to the Premier (George Reid), intended for distribution to the delegates. It was not distributed. We have seen that Ried, of all the delegates from New South Wales, was probably the one who was most vehemently opposed to federation of the railways.

The report eventually became known and was published in its entirety by the ***Daily Telegraph*, 27 August 1897.** This report is included within the Appendices.

We must remember that railways in Australia had evolved into tools of Government, and very powerful tools at that. Unfortunately those tools were not always put to honourable use. The colonies were not going to let them go, and there were more than a few who sat in the Parliaments who would scheme and use them to further their ambitions. In the chapters that follow we will find many such examples.

There was a general belief that Eddy was formulating a strategy that involved a separation of the metropolitan and country rail services from the interstate services. This had been an issue that had emerged as a barrier to federstion of the railways. He had put little on paper and had privately conveyed, to those who were close to him, that he was optimistic that a detailed scheme could be presented to the Melbourne convention.

Pollitzer's treatise finished with an addendum.

> **This pamphlet was finished when the sad news of the death of the late lamented Mr Eddy reached Sydney. In the demise of the Chief Commissioner of Railways it is not alone that New South Wales has lost one of her ablest men, but to Australia at large his premature death is deplorable; for had he lived he would have been the chief agent to bring about the unification of Australian Railway Gauges.**

Eddy was only 49. There had been concerns about his health for some time. Some reports suggested it was a viral infection. Others pointed to the burden of work.

At the Adelside Convention, James Walker moved an amendment, which if carried, would have placed the railways with the other functions such as the Post Office and Defence as a Commonwealth instrumentality. It was negatived 12 vote to 18. If there had been just five more delegates at that Convention, with a 'nuts and bolts' outlook we would now have a national railway network and no break-of-gauge.

There were further Conventions in Sydney and Melbourne but they did not result in any changes to the railway clauses. The Melbourne convention closed on 17 March 1898 with cheers for the Queen. It was then for the people to have their say.

We may speculate whether the railway question could have been resolved if more time had been given. But Kingston had set a timetable for Federation on 1 January 1901.

The Convention did make one resolution regarding the railways and that was to refer the matter to a meeting of Railway Commissioners. That, it is suspected, allowed the delegates to move forward with a clear conscience. The meeting of the Commissioners was in August 1897. It would be for the states to fix the gauge problem.

The delegates to the Federation Convention had fixed the problem on paper. The voices of 'nuts and bolts' people were not heard, but they would be the ones to inherit the mess.