

REPORT.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable the Earl of Ranfurly,
Governor of the Colony of New Zealand.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Commissioners appointed by the Commission of the 26th day of December, 1900, under the hand of your Excellency and the Seal of the Colony, for the purpose of inquiring as to the desirability or otherwise of the Colony of New Zealand federating with the Commonwealth of Australia, and becoming a State under the Imperial Act known as "The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act"—special regard being had in such inquiry to the agricultural, commercial, and industrial interests of the said colony; to the question of the defence thereof; to matters of a judicatory nature; to matters affecting the Customs, railways, and postal arrangements of the said colony; to matters affecting the public indebtedness of the said colony; the public indebtedness of the States of the Commonwealth; and in respect to the social and political bearing of the question, and generally to all matters which, in the opinion of the Commissioners, might be of assistance in enabling Parliament to arrive at a proper conclusion in respect of the subjects of the inquiry—have now the honour to report to your Excellency as follows:—

SUMMARY OF "THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA CONSTITUTION ACT."

Before dealing with the particular subjects mentioned in the Commission, it will be convenient to indicate in general terms the scope of the Act constituting the Commonwealth of Australia. This Act was passed by the Imperial Parliament on the 9th July, 1900, and is cited as "The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act." In accordance with its provisions the Act was proclaimed to take effect on the 1st January, 1901, and on that day the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia, and Tasmania became united in a Federal Commonwealth under the name of "The Commonwealth of Australia." The States abovenamed are spoken of throughout the Act as "original States," but under section 121 there is power to admit or establish new States upon such terms as the Parliament of the Commonwealth thinks fit. It is under this enactment that New Zealand would have to seek admission into the Commonwealth.

The legislative power of the Commonwealth is vested in a Federal Parliament consisting of the King, a Senate, and a House of Representatives. The representative of the King is the Governor-General, who is appointed by the Crown, and whose powers and duties are defined by the statute. A yearly session of Parliament is to be held, "so that twelve months shall not intervene between the last sitting of the Parliament in one session and its first sitting in the next session" (section 6).

The Senate is chosen by the people of the State, voting at present as one electorate, with a certain exception as regards Queensland; and, until Parliament otherwise provides, six Senators are elected for each original State for a period of six years. Parliament may increase or diminish the