

central authority instead of having severally to consult six independent Governments. Whatever is good for Australia is good for the whole British Empire. Therefore we all of us— independent of party, whether at Home or in any other portion of the Empire—rejoice at this proposal, welcome the new birth of which we are witnesses, and anticipate for these great free and progressive communities a future even more prosperous than their past, and an honourable and important position in the history of the Anglo-Saxon race.

- 4 I hope the House will not think I am unduly occupying time if, in a few brief words, I give some account of the history of this great movement. The House is aware that the first colonisation of Australia took place in New South Wales in 1788, and that for nearly a generation after that time as other settlements were made at vast distances along the coast they all came, in some measure, under the control of what I may call the central Administration existing at Sydney. But it will readily be seen that, as these settlements gradually became more populous and of greater importance, the difficulty of such a system of central administration became almost intolerable; and accordingly in 1825 what I was then known as Van Diemen's Land became a separate colony under the name of Tasmania, and the example of Tasmania was followed in succession by Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, and lastly by Queensland in 1859. Now, Victoria, which was then known as the Port Philip Settlement, was separated from New South Wales by Act of Parliament in 1850; but in 1847, when giving assent to this proposal, Earl Grey, to whom we all must feel we owe most of the principles by which our colonial policy is guided, laid down the views then entertained by him and Her Majesty's Government of the time in reference to the ultimate necessity I for some central authority in Australia. He said:—

- 6 "It is necessary, while providing for local management of local interests, we should not omit to provide for the central management of all interests not local. Questions having a bearing on the interests of the Empire may be left appropriately to the Imperial Parliament; but there are questions which, though local to Australia collectively, are not merely local in relation to one colony, though each may have part in a common interest, and in regard to which it may be essential to the welfare of all to have a single authority, and they may more appropriately and effectually be decided by a single authority in Australia than by the more remote, less accessible, and, in truth, less competent authority of Parliament."

- 7 It will be seen that Earl Grey foresaw that in the future, at any rate, this necessity would arise. He was a little before his time, for when, in 1856, he introduced proposals for constituting such central authority, his proposals met with no general support, and the Bill, when it became an Act, was confined to the establishment of the Colony of Victoria, separating it from the older Colony of New South Wales. But from this time, and continuously down to the present day, the subject of some closer union between the separate Australian provinces or states has attracted the attention of all far-seeing and patriotic statesmen, especially in Australia. And among those who laboured in this movement I think it would be ungrateful not to mention the name of Sir Henry Parkes. Sir Henry Parkes was certainly a most remarkable individuality; he had his peculiarities, as most of us have, but no one would deny that he was a man of great capacity, of great power of work, of great resource, and of intense local patriotism; and I think that to-day, when the consummation of the work for which he laboured so long is clearly within sight, we may well bear his memory in respectful regard. In 1867 the Dominion of Canada was established. This gave to Sir Henry Parkes an opportunity which he was not slow to seize, and, although he had raised the question before, he now again emphatically urged his fellow Australians to follow the example of the Dominion of Canada. Still, however, no progress was made. A little later the somewhat sinister activity of certain foreign Powers in the Pacific brought the matter home in a clearer degree to the majority of the Australian people; and in 1883, accordingly, a conference was called, again at the instance of Sir Henry Parkes, of all the colonies, which resulted in certain recommendations, in the adoption of certain general principles, which led almost immediately to the establishment of what is known as the Federal Council. The Federal Council, however, I

(c.) At the rate of 150 words a minute. Takes 5 minutes.

- We have been blamed for withholding important information from the Government. We have been denounced for publishing despatches. If a general failed in the operations we have been condemned, but we were responsible for his appointment. If a general was censured or recalled, the people who have clamoured for punishment were precisely the people who cried out against the injustice. Well, I am prepared here also to take, without complaint, all the blame for every failure of every kind which has occurred or which may occur in the course of the negotiations or in the course of the war. That I will do readily on behalf of my colleagues if only you will give us a fair share of credit when success comes. But, first, think for a moment; put yourselves in our position. We are conducting what I have called a great war under absolutely novel conditions. It has fallen to our lot to make the first experiment in actual warfare with an enemy armed with Mauser rifles, with smokeless powder, with the most powerful modern artillery. We have had to meet a foe as brave as ourselves, and skilful in a particular form of defensive warfare of which no experience on a large scale had hitherto been had by any military Power, and, under those circumstances, our generals have made mistakes, and we are responsible for them. I would like to know which of our critics, whether they be at home or abroad, would have done better under similar circumstances. What is the experience of past wars? I have lived to see many great wars. I have lived to see the Crimean war, the Civil war in America, the Prusso-Austrian war, the Franco-German war, and, more recently, the Spanish-American war, and in all of these at the commencement of the war, and possibly throughout the war, mistakes have been made which are as great, and,