

# BRITAIN'S DOMINIONS IN THE FAR EAST

## Australia and New Zealand Lead in Political Innovations—Single Tax Flourishes—Both “White Man’s” Countries

The Truth About the Far East—XIII.  
By THEODORE E. BURTON  
Ex-United States Senator from Ohio

AUSTRALIA and New Zealand are so remote from the principal routes of communication and so distant from other peoples of Caucasian stock that they have been styled “the Hermit Nations.” Nevertheless, they are thoroughly typical of Anglo-Saxon civilization and in the last thirty years no other communities of equal population have made so large a contribution to social and political discussion.

Australia has a land area of approximately three million square miles, exceeding by less than one thousand square miles that of the continental United States. Nature, however, has not dealt so generously with the Southern Continent. Scarcely one-third of Australia is suitable for cultivation or pasture. Except along the coast, there are frequent droughts and a deficiency of rainfall. An additional disadvantage is that more than one-third—to speak more exactly, five-thirteenths—of the country is located in the torrid zone. Much of this portion is sparsely settled and very barren.

The population of Australia at the close of the year 1918 was computed at 5,030,000. More than four-fifths of the inhabitants are located in a strip not more than 100 miles in width along the eastern coast fronting toward the Western Hemisphere. The proportion of dwellers in the cities is very large. In the two States of Victoria and South Australia, the capital cities of Melbourne and Adelaide contain more than half the population.

**Australian Industries.**

The proportionate share of those engaged in farming in Australia is much smaller than in the United States, while the proportionate total of those engaged in mechanical, manufacturing and mining enterprises is larger. One explanation is the fact that the leading agricultural product is wool, of which Australia furnishes one-fourth of the world's supply and which requires no considerable number of employes except at shearing time. A typical sheep station comprises 50,000 acres of land, sustains 40,000 sheep and has only twenty herders who are permanently employed.

It is unnecessary to gather feed for the winter season, and the general plan has been to provide no store of provender for a dry season, depending on a transfer of the stock to other more favored localities, or even risking the loss of whole flocks. There are sheep farmers who maintain that it is more profitable to pursue this latter course than to provide for feeding in exceptional seasons.

Australia has great mineral wealth and is especially rich in gold, silver, lead, coal and copper. The production of gold has been very large, but reached its peak in the year 1903, and since then by reason of depletion of the mines and increased cost of labor the yield has fallen to one-third of the maximum. It was the discovery of gold in 1851 which aroused attention to Australia and caused the migration which has been the principal factor in the growth of the country. In addition to these minerals, there is an almost unlimited variety of others, including tin, zinc, platinum, wolfram, opals and even diamonds. Only a short time ago iron and steel mills were unknown in the Dominion of Australia, but this is now a growing and prosperous industry. There are unlimited supplies of coal and of iron ore, which, though distant from each other, are located conveniently near to the seaboard so that they can be readily brought together by water transportation, and thus there is every prospect that before the lapse of many years Australia will be self-sufficient in its supply of iron and steel.

Australia was divided into six independent colonies of the British Empire: New South Wales, which has much the largest population and contains the leading city of Sydney; Victoria, much smaller in area but second in population, the most conservative of the colonies; Queensland, the most radical, including a very large area in the torrid zone; South Australia and Western Australia, each of which has a very interesting political and social history; and the Island of Tasmania, separated from the mainland by a strait. After long agitation, these six colonies were united under the name of States in one Commonwealth with a Central Government at Melbourne on Jan. 1, 1901.

**New Zealand's Wealth.**

New Zealand, approximately one-thirtieth as large as Australia, unlike that country has almost everywhere a great abundance of moisture, and is capable of producing nearly all the fruits and products of the temperate zone. Four-fifths of its area is suitable for cultivation or pasturage. It is made up of two islands, the North and the South, extending over a length of 1,000 miles with an area slightly over 100,000 square miles, and had a population of about 1,100,000 in 1916. The country is remarkable for its scenic attractions. It is indeed a wonderland, and would be a favorite resort for tourists from the United States if the distance were not so great and the means of communication so deficient.

New Zealand differs from Australia in that there is a large middle class made up of small farmers. Its products are predominantly agricultural, though gold of a value of more than \$400,000,000 has been mined in the two islands. Wool, frozen meat, butter and cheese—nearly all of which are shipped to England—are the sources of its wealth.

There are certain distinctive features common to both these countries which stand out prominently. In the legislation which has characterized the colonies, New Zealand has been more frequently the pioneer, but Australia has become the more radical. That which is first to be mentioned is a boldness in political initiative and a readiness to adopt progressive ideas.

A second distinctive feature is the settled purpose to exclude all races except the Caucasian. It is the boast of each that it is a white man's country. The most rigid regulations have been adopted against Chinese or Japanese immigrants, as well as against all other races of different color. There is indeed a lack of cordiality for the admission of outsiders even of the Caucasian race.

**Outsiders Excluded.**

The exclusion of foreign immigrants is carried so far that latent possibilities in Australia for the raising of tropical or semi-tropical products, especially sugar, are neglected. It was at one time contended that Caucasian labor could be utilized, but when, after trial, this was proved not to be true, the

stand was taken that it was better to go without these products and be content with a smaller population than to admit aliens of a type not readily assimilated.

A considerable number of Chinese migrated to Australia before the exclusion laws were adopted, but now there is a requirement that each immigrant must be able to write from dictation not less than fifty words of a European language and add to the statement his signature. There is also provision for a medical examination of prospective immigrants in the country of embarkation. The laws of New Zealand are equally severe.

Both countries show an overwhelming preponderance of British stock. The census returns in both countries are strikingly similar and show that 97 per cent. of the population are natives or were born in other portions of the British Empire inhabited by the white race.

Some forty years ago Professor Seeley of Cambridge wrote that Australia was the most distinctively English of all the colonies of the empire. If he were writing now he would probably give this position to New Zealand, though the two have a marked similarity in this regard.

Closely associated with the feature just mentioned is attachment to the mother country. In New Zealand, even those of the third generation of natives, when they contemplate a trip to England, speak of going home. The ties that bind these outlying dominions to the parent State have been infinitely strengthened by the support given to the empire in times of emergency. At the time of the Boer war, Australia and New Zealand sent 25,000 men to South Africa. In the late war, the contribution of the two dominions, when the great distance from the seat of conflict is taken into account, assumes almost the first position in the defense of the British Empire. Australia enlisted 400,000 men, who went to Egypt, to Gallipoli and to France; New Zealand, over 100,000. These men proved to be fighters of the most stalwart type. The percentage of mortality and of wounded among them was very large.

**Unfriendly to America.**

The visitor to Australia will possibly meet with some disappointment in the attitude toward the people of the United States. There was a loud complaint in the early years of the war because our country did not enter. Criticism was more severe and conditions were less understood than in England. Since the war, great fault has been found because the United States has not entered the League of Nations.

The visitor also would take offense at the coldness and unjust attacks upon anything American by a section of the press. One periodical of very wide circulation published an article not long ago, full of inaccuracies, ridiculing President Lincoln, speaking of the Confederate States as a small portion of the Southeastern States of the Union, and comparing President Lincoln's difficulties to those of Lord Beaconsfield in the Ashantee war.

As regards trade with the United States, there has been a very great increase in recent years, due to the restriction of supplies from England and other sources. In the future, we shall

no doubt require very large quantities of wool from Australia and of other products, such as hides, and they will import from this country various manufactured articles. There has been for years an agitation for a higher tariff in Australia, which seems likely to succeed at the present session of the Commonwealth Parliament. It is contemplated that preferential rates shall be granted to Great Britain, though apparently not to Canada.

In this connection, it must be said that in these two countries, although complaints of the higher cost of living are very general, prices are nearer to former standards than in any other. The greater difficulty in marketing their products, with increased cost of transportation, has had much to do with this. Until last year the price of wheat was only \$1.25 per bushel, and articles of food were low in proportion.

In New Zealand there is a widespread misunderstanding of the scope of the Webb-Pomerene act allowing combinations for the export trade. The groundless fear is entertained that this means an effort by great combinations to obtain a monopoly of their trade and to make their country a dumping ground for surplus production. At a meeting of a large association of farmers held in January a proposition was enthusiastically received for a differential duty of 20 per cent. against imports from America. It does not seem probable, however, that this will be adopted.

**Political Power of Labor.**

Another distinctive feature is the regard which is manifested in legislation and the settled policies of the States of Australia as well as of the Commonwealth and in New Zealand for labor and the general welfare. Most emphatically, labor is in politics. Prior to 1890 there had been labor unions, but no strong central body. In August of that year ship masters and seamen sought affiliation with the Melbourne Trades Hall. The shipping companies opposed their association with any general organization of workmen. There was a strike. This was unsuccessful, but workmen were advised to use the weapon of the ballot instead of the strike.

Then followed a separate political organization, which for compactness and efficiency can hardly be surpassed. A labor party pure and simple was organized in Australia, which made its influence felt from the very start, and in April, 1904, obtained control of the Commonwealth Government. The labor unions elect a representative council, and the action of this body is held to be binding upon members of Parliament and other members of the unions elected to office. The present Prime Minister, William M. Hughes, made his entry into politics as a member of the Labor Party and soon became a leader, but his advocacy of conscriptions during the war and an accusation of growing conservatism caused his expulsion from the Labor Party, and he, with others, became identified with what is called the Nationalist Party. At an election on Dec. 13 last, the Nationalists gained a plurality of the Members of Parliament.

The Labor Party stood second. A third organization, known as the Farmers' Party, conservative as regards labor questions, but founded on class interest, gained an increased number of members. In New Zealand, the labor element gave its support in 1890 and since to the Liberal Party and sought to control its policies.

The legislation adopted in the two dominions includes a great variety. At first the achievements of the Labor Party were political rather than social. The one-man-one-vote principle was adopted. Universal suffrage, including women, became the law of both countries. Education was promoted and vital changes in taxation were made, aimed at large holdings of land, imposing graded taxation upon incomes, and discriminating between personal earnings and incomes upon investments.

**Single Tax in Effect.**

Radical measures have been adopted in land taxation. The levy is made upon the value of the land irrespective of improvements, following the ideas of Henry George, who was once a visitor in Australia. Land up to the value of \$500 is free from taxation. Large holdings are subject to graduated taxes varying from one-half penny up to 10½ pence per pound in New Zealand, and from 1 penny to 4 pence in Australia. Also, there is a surtax upon absent land owners. This is fixed at 50 per cent. in New Zealand upon those absent for a year or more, and in 1917 a penal tax was imposed upon those who had not contributed to the war loan in proportion to their incomes.

Invalid pensions and old-age pensions for those who have reached the age of 65 years and are dependent are granted in both countries.

In labor legislation in the States of Australia and in the two dominions, there have been many measures of a very advanced type and some experiments have been tried and abandoned. Wage boards were provided, with authority to fix minimum wages and to determine the conditions of labor as to hours and physical conditions in factories and elsewhere. Sweating was severely prohibited. Boards of conciliation were established, made up of an umpire and representatives of employer and employee. Courts were constituted in which either a judge was to sit alone or to sit with assessors representing both parties. The principle of compulsory arbitration has been adopted. The result has been that the State practically controls industry, for in all regulations and decisions the profits of employers are taken into account.

The aim of these regulations was not avowedly socialist. A French writer, M. Métin, has written a book upon Australia and New Zealand, entitled “Socialisme sans Doctrines,” maintaining that the theories of Karl Marx and other Socialists have not been the basis of legislation, but considerations of expediency which are largely local in their origin.

Certain questions arise for further consideration in later articles: How far are conditions in Australia and New Zealand similar to those in the United States? What suggestions do these countries offer to us in labor legislation? The policies adopted there are certainly characterized by a boldness and an intelligence which merit the most careful consideration.