

Foreword

John Stone

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In the Foreword to the initial volume of these Proceedings, deriving from the July, 1992 Conference of The Samuel Griffith Society held in Melbourne, I said that:

"... despite the earnest disclaimers of most of the principal actors, there appears little doubt that this campaign [to "reform" our Constitution] is coming from the same centralist quarter which, having been defeated in the debates of the 1890s, has worked throughout this Century to undo the original Federal compact, and whose efforts in that regard have been redoubled over the past twenty years."

It is therefore particularly apt that the opening paper in this volume constitutes an address by the Premier of Western Australia, the Hon. Richard Court, MLA on the topic Western Australia and the Federal Compact.

That address, and the other seven papers which make up the main body of this volume, were delivered to the Society's third major Conference, held at the magnificently restored Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle, Western Australia on 5–6 November, 1993. Coming as it did on the day following the introduction into the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia of the Land (Titles and Traditional Usage) Bill, both the timing and the venue of the Premier's address could hardly have been more apt.

On the following day, the Society heard two speakers on legal and political aspects of the fallout from the High Court's 1992 Mabo Case judgment; two other speakers on aspects of the shameful events summed up in the phrase W.A Incorporated; two more speakers on the Western Australian secessionist movement, and its "warning light" significance for those determined to destroy the Federal compact; and finally, the Hon. John Howard on the revival, and renewed retreat, of the republican issue in Australia during 1993.

In line with the precedent of our two previous Conferences, the Proceedings of this Fremantle Conference are now presented in this Volume 3 of the series Upholding the Australian Constitution.

Such fare alone would have been attractive enough. Since however the Fremantle Conference was somewhat shorter than its predecessors, the opportunity has been taken to incorporate into this volume five other papers which, at one time and another, have also been delivered to gatherings of the Society.

Thus, Appendix I comprises three papers associated with the launching of the first volume in this series. These papers, by Sir Harry Gibbs, Mr Justice Meagher, and (sadly, now the late) Sir Paul Hasluck were previously published by the Society in booklet form under the title *Native to Australia*, and are now reproduced here as part of the Society's more formal records.

In like fashion, Appendix II comprises two papers, not previously published, by Sir Walter Campbell and the Hon. Ian Medcalf, QC who, in Brisbane and Fremantle respectively, honoured the Society by launching Volume 2 of *Upholding the Australian Constitution*. Apart from their intrinsic merit, and the proper place which this will give them in the Society's records, their inclusion here will also make them available to all our members who were unable to be present on the occasions of their delivery.

In the Foreword to Volume 2 in these Proceedings I noted that all the issues with which that volume was concerned "come back, in the end, to one simple question: do we, or do we not, wish to see more power being exercised in Canberra?".

Irrespective of whichever side may be governing there, this Society's answer to that question is a resounding negative. That was, indeed, the basic reason for its foundation; it continues to be the central thread running through its deliberations; and it is thus the objective to which this volume, like its two predecessors, is dedicated.