

executive prevented any effectual exercise of the right of self-government. The movement for the attainment of complete autonomy with a responsible ministry similar to that enjoyed by the Canadian colonies, was given a great impetus by the gold immigration of the early fifties. It was no longer possible as the Colonial Secretary, Sir. J. Pakington, clearly saw, to hold the thousands of free-born citizens in subjection to a distant administration.¹ In a despatch of Dec. 15th, 1852, to Governor Fitzroy, he admitted both the necessity of extending to the Australias a full measure of self-government and the capacity of the colonies to efficiently exercise it. Her Majesty, it was announced, would be pleased to accede to the desire of the Legislative Council of New South Wales for the establishment of a constitution similar in principle to that of Canada, when the Council shall have prepared a constitutional measure embodying a provision for a double chamber, one of which should be nominated by the Crown or appointed subject to its approval, and conditioned upon the appropriation of a civil list for the maintenance of the permanent officers of the executive. A similar offer was soon after conveyed to the Governors of the other colonies.² Under these conditions, the home government was ready to take such steps as would be necessary, to surrender to the local legislatures the imperial control over the crown lands and the civil lists, and to practically withdraw from participation in the domestic concerns of the Australian group.

Upon receipt of this encouraging communication, the provincial legislatures soon began to bestir themselves to exercise their power of constitutional revision under the provisions of their several constitution acts, which permitted a partial modification in the form of their governments. Under the influence of Mr. W. C. Wentworth, the most influential member of the liberal party in New South Wales, the Legislative Council of that colony took the lead in appointing a select committee to frame a new organic law. The other provinces shortly after followed the example of the mother colony, in undertaking a thorough revision of their several instruments of government. The result of these separate labors was the enactment by the respective legislatures, in some cases after a long drawn out struggle, of four popular constitutions, which, notwithstanding some minor divergences, were all practically of the same type

¹Quick and Garran, *Annot. Const. of Aust.*, p. 42. ²*Ibid*, p. 55.