

representative institutions.¹ The powers conferred by the act were limited, yet these germs of political liberty and provincial autonomy, were capable of expansion into a complete system of parliamentary government. The organization of the executive was left unchanged. The new constitution was manifestly only a temporary compromise, which, however well adapted to the then condition of the colony, was altogether unsuited to the government of a body of free intelligent citizens.

A variety of circumstances hastened the consummation of a complete representative system. The three elements in the Council,—the official, the nominee and the elective, were in frequent strife, through the attempts of the popular representatives to secure some control over the conduct of the administration. With the growth of population and wealth, the demand for more liberal institutions became most insistent, until it could no longer be justly refused by the home authorities. The agitation which had sprung up for the separation of the Port Phillip district,² necessitated the interposition of the English government, and afforded a favorable opportunity for the revision of the constitutions of the several colonies. The proposed new constitution, outlined by Earl Grey, the Secretary for the Colonies, in his famous despatch of July 31st, 1847,³ met with an intensely hostile reception in New South Wales. The colonists strongly resented the introduction of political changes upon which they had not been consulted, and especially objected to the suggested mode of electing the legislature through the district councils, which threatened to destroy the small instalment of popular liberty they then enjoyed. These vigorous protests, together with the critical state of affairs in Europe occasioned the postponement of the measure, and its modification by a committee of the Privy Council, so as to make it more compatible with the wishes of the Australian people.

The Australian Colonies Government Act of 1850⁴ was designed to effect two main objects; first, the separation of the Port Phillip district from New South Wales and its erection into an independent colony under the name of Victoria, and second, the introduction into the several colonies of an improved

¹Speech of Lord Stanley, the Secretary for the Colonies, Hansard, 1842, vol. 2, p. 880.

²Turner, *Hist. of Vict.*, vol. 1, p. 283.

³G.B.P.P. 1847-8, vol. 43, p. 3.

⁴13 and 14, Vict. c. 59.