AFTER THE QUEENSLAND COUP: TOWARDS A COMPROMISE: DOCUMENTS D12 to D17

After the Queensland coup in 1883, and despite Colonial Office disapproval of the form and manner of Queensland intervention, the movement for the annexation of New Guinea gained momentum. The Colonial Office did not close the door on Imperial involvement in New Guinea and the Western Pacific. (D10) Gradually a formula was worked out involving the unified action and policies of the Australasian Governments, and the firm financial commitment from one or more of them, as the twin conditions for Imperial action in New Guinea.¹ (D15; D17) Meanwhile, public pressure continued, particularly in Eastern Australia, for the annexation of New Guinea, and other islands in the Western Pacific. (D12; D14)

¹ Derby to the Governors of the Australasian Colonies, 9 May 1884, Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea And Other Colonies, C-3839, London, 1884, pp. 34-35

D12  The Melbournians Demand Intervention in the Pacific, 1883

The following speech was delivered by Mr Justice Higinbotham at a public meeting in the Melbourne Town Hall on 16 July 1883. The report is taken from the Melbourne Argus of the following day. The Mayor of Melbourne presided at the meeting, and was supported on the platform by a number of members of the Victorian Parliament and some clergymen, in addition to Higinbotham.

The annexation resolution moved by Higinbotham was carried unanimously. Further motions were passed, supporting the action of the Victorian Parliament in agreeing to contribute to the expenses of the annexation of New Guinea and other Pacific islands, and requesting that the resolutions passed at the meeting be forwarded through the Premier of Victoria to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the other Australian Governments.² This was done.²

Born in Dublin in 1826, George Higinbotham was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and at Lincoln’s Inn. Emigrating to Melbourne in 1854, he practised successfully as a barrister, edited the Argus for nearly three years, and was Attorney-General in the McCulloch Ministry from 1863 to 1868.

At the time of this meeting Higinbotham was a Supreme Court Judge, having been appointed to the Bench in 1880. He had a long career of opposition to Colonial Office interference in Australian affairs. As a result, after he became Chief Justice in 1886, he was not appointed to the vacant Lieutenant Governorship of Victoria, an office normally held by the Victorian Chief Justice for the time being, or his immediate predecessor. In 1890, at the time of the Maritime Strike, he outraged conservative opinion by giving £50 to the strike leaders with a promise of £10 per week while

‘... the United Trades are awaiting compliance with their reasonable request for a conference with the employers.’³

³ The Australasian Encyclopaedia, op. cit., sub. nom., Higinbotham
I do not anticipate that there will be a difference of opinion in respect to this resolution. It has been deemed advisable that the citizens of Melbourne should be invited to give their sanction and support in a public meeting, and in a direct and express form, to resolution in nearly the same terms as that which I have read of as having been proposed by Her Majesty's Government of Victoria, and as having been adopted unanimously by both branches of the Legislature. (Applause) It is to this effect—that the interest of all these colonies requires that there be long string of numerous islands extending along the north-eastern shores of Australia from New Guinea to the New Hebrides, and thence to Fiji, ought not to become the property of any other nation in the world than Great Britain. (applause) And in pursuance of that resolve, it is expedient that Great Britain should exercise a right which is assumed to belong to all civilised countries. I do not exactly know the origin of the right—it might be hard to define and defend it—but it is a right claimed by all civilised nations to take possession of islands anywhere on the surface of the world which are not occupied by peoples who are recognised to be within the ranks of civilised nations; and that if it should be possible that England is unable from any cause to annex these islands, that it is then expedient that she should establish and exercise a protectorate over them all, in our interests and for their own protection. (applause) I am aware that there is a difference and I believe in one respect even a conflict, of interest, between some of the colonies in this matter. But there are two grounds upon which I believe that a meeting of Victorian and Melbourne citizens will heartily unite in the opinion that the resolution which has been adopted by the Houses of the Victorian Parliament ought to be carried into effect, and they are these. I believe that in the first place all Victorians will agree with all Australians that it is to the interest of us all to protect this continent from contact with imported crime. (applause) Now, it must not be forgotten that in this matter our own country has set an evil example to the world. It is just about 100 years ago since England first adopted that evil system by which, abandoning her own duty in the meeting and reforming of the crime that took place within her own borders, she selected this continent of Australia as a refuse heap upon which she should fling her criminals. About 30 years ago England was persuaded that that was a wrong act; wrong in itself, injurious in its consequences, leading to detriment and damage, and also a shame to all free Englishmen who arrived in these colonies ...

France took possession of New Caledonia, as she had a perfect right to do, because it was an unoccupied country, and she had as good a right to occupy it as England had to occupy Australia. But the object of France, following the example of England, was to make New Caledonia a convict colony, and now we are told that France has a design—I don't know whether it is a well founded report or not—of extending her territory for the purpose of extending the importation of European crime. Now I venture to submit to you that we are entitled to call upon England to render us her best assistance for the purpose of preventing any extension of the terrible system by which this continent was once made a depot, and now is placed in the neighbourhood of depots, of European crime. (applause) If we could avert this evil ourselves, we ought not to ask for the assistance of England; but we are unable to do so. Our own powers are confined to the limits of our own respective colonies, and unless England exerts her power and puts forth her energies to protect us from this evil, we shall be wholly unable to do anything for ourselves to prevent it. That is one ground upon which I ask you to support the resolution that I have read to you, and there is another. I do not believe that we Victorians are better than our neighbours, but I do believe that we are free from the temptation to which our fellow-colonists in Northern Queensland are exposed. You are aware that the colonists in Northern Queensland import labour from the islands of the Western Pacific and from the New Hebrides. I venture to believe that in that system which is now in operation there are the elements of the greatest danger that could threaten any country—I mean elements of the danger of slavery. (applause)...

Now, it is only Great Britain that can give effectual assistance to those who are desirous of crushing out the elements of slavery in Australia. The Queensland Government can do nothing. It is only a power upon the spot, on the islands, always present and exercising a constant supervision, that can prevent the vessels which I have described from carrying on an illicit traffic ...

The act of the Queensland Government, when on the 4th of April last she took possession by a magistrate of the island of New Guinea in the name of the Crown of England, appeared at first sight to savour of a desire to force the hand of England. We have, however, heard intelligence within the last two or three days which removes that impression, and we now see that the Queensland Government had no such design. We now know that the act of taking possession of New Guinea appeared to the Queensland Government to be required and necessitated by a report that a German vessel had left for New Guinea with the intention of securing the island. We also know now that the Governor of Queensland wrote a despatch to the English Government about three weeks after possession was taken of New Guinea, in which he distinctly expressed his warm approval of the action of the Queensland Government. (applause) Now, that is all very important, for this reason—the Governor of Queensland, the late lamented Sir Arthur Kennedy, occupied, as you are aware, a twofold position. He was the representative of the Crown independent of the Colonial Government, and was responsible to no living man by law in respect to the internal affairs of the colony over which he presided. He was also an officer of the Imperial Government, in which character he had nothing to do with responsible advisers, being simply under the direct instructions of the Imperial Government. It was in the latter character—in the character of an officer of the Imperial Government—that Sir Arthur Kennedy wrote his despatch of the 26th April, 4 in which he expressed to the Earl of Derby his entire satisfaction with the conduct of the Queensland Government in taking possession, of their own authority, of the island of New Guinea. Now, I think, these facts go far to remove the impression that the Queensland Government could have been influenced by any desire to force the hand of the British Government. If they had been, I think it would have been very deplorable; but when their motives come to be considered I believe they will probably have the effect of removing the impression which I regret to say appears to have been expressed by Mr Gladstone, that the Queensland Government has unnecessarily, and without sufficient occasion or cause, taken a step which it certainly was not authorised by law to take, and which certainly will have no legal effect until it is ratified by England, but which will, if ratified by England, be found to have been called for by circumstances sufficient to show that no attempt was made to force the hands of the English Government. (applause)...

*Printed, supra*
At the present time all the nations of Europe are in a condition most highly sensitive. They are watching one another with keen and jealous eyes. Every movement is watched, and apparently the population of European countries, in accord with their Governments, are watching one another with the utmost jealousy, and each has a right to be inflamed against those who may be supposed to be taking advantage of them. Under these circumstances I think we are bound, in advancing this claim of ours, which may involve England in difficulties and differences with other countries, to remember that these differences exist, and that we must allow them to be dealt with and decided by the English Government, which alone is capable of dealing with and removing them. (applause) I venture to think that Australian Governments, when they press their claims, ought to bear these circumstances in mind. They will no doubt urge the claims strenuously and unitedly, and will continue to press them—as I hope they will—until they are either granted to us or sufficiently satisfactory reasons for not granting them be shown; but I hope that after they have done all that, they will not forget that they represent communities, which, after all, are only parts, though important parts, of a great empire, and that if our claims and our interests—urgent and great as they undoubtedly are in this matter—should be found to be inconsistent with the greater claims and the larger interests of the great body of our fellow countrymen at home, our Governments and we shall, if not contentedly, at least resignedly, agree to abandon them. (loud and continued applause) ...

Source: Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands, C-3863, London, 1884, pp. 12-16

**D13 The Scots Merchants' Petition**

Requests to annex or protect Eastern New Guinea came not only from the Australasian colonies, but also from pressure groups in the United Kingdom which in one way or another were connected with Australasian affairs, including trade and investment.

This Petition, of 30 November 1883, came from the Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce. The Glasgow Chamber sent a similar Petition to Lord Derby, on 1 November 1883.¹

To the Right Hon. Earl Derby, Her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs
The Memorial of the Chamber of Commerce of Aberdeen, incorporated by Royal Charter
Respectfully sheweth,

That this Chamber, representing the community and city of Aberdeen, and the whole of the north-east of Scotland in connexion with trade and commerce, is necessarily deeply interested in all that relates to the continued prosperity of the Australian Colonies, with which a large, rapidly increasing, and mutually-beneficial trade is carried on. Your memorialists have given consideration to the correspondence which has recently passed between your Lordship and the Colonial Government of Queensland respecting New Guinea, and, having considered this correspondence, at the monthly meeting of the Council of this Chamber of Commerce, held at Aberdeen, on Tuesday, the 27th current, the following motion was unanimously carried, to wit:

This Chamber, recognizing that the annexation of New Guinea is a question of great importance to the future welfare of the Australian Colonies, resolves to petition Her Majesty’s Government to give their best and, if possible, favourable consideration to any representation made to them on this subject by the Federal Council of Australian Ministers, to be held at Sydney this month.² Following on this resolution, the memorialists respectfully urge Her Majesty’s Government to give the same their most favourable consideration.

Signed in same, on behalf, and by appointment of the Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce, this thirtieth day of November in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and eighty-three.

[Signed] DAVID STEWART
President

Source: Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands, C-3863, London, 1884, pp.60-1

¹C-3863, op. cit., pp. 38-9

²This is presumably a reference to the Inter-Colonial Convention of 1883

**D14 The Intercolonial Convention of 1883**

Although repudiating the Queensland annexation of April 1883, the Colonial Office left open the possibility of Imperial intervention in the area at some future date. On 11 July 1883, Lord Derby, the Colonial Secretary, indicated that the Imperial Government would be unlikely to act in New Guinea unless it received a unanimous request to do so from the Australasian Colonial Governments, coupled with an
undertaking to pay for the cost of administering New Guinea. An Intercolonial Convention at which all the Australasian Governments were represented met in Sydney, and passed the following Resolutions, which were telegraphed to the Colonial Office on 5 December 1883.2

Alfred Deakin, a leader of the federal movement, who was later to become Prime Minister of Australia, wrote:

‘An intimation that any resolutions arrived at by the Australian Governments collectively would receive consideration led to the Intercolonial Convention of 1883. Dread of German aggression in New Guinea and of a French annexation of the New Hebrides coupled with the alarm occasioned by the arrival of escaped criminals from the penal settlement in New Caledonia were the chief operating causes of this gathering.” 3

The Resolutions of the Convention regarding the Pacific Islands are set out as follows.

Sydney, 5th December—Have telegraphed, at request of Convention, Resolutions verbatim regarding Pacific Islands.

Intercolonial Convention. Relations with the Islands of the Pacific. Resolutions arrived at. This Convention respecting (representing?) the government(s) of all the Australasian Colonies, unanimously resolves:-

1 That further acquisition of dominion in the Pacific south of the Equator by any foreign Power would be highly detrimental to the safety and well-being of the British Possessions in Australasia, and injurious to the interests of the Empire.

2 That this Convention refrains from suggesting the action by which effect can be given to the foreign (foregoing?) resolution in the confident belief that Imperial Government will promptly adopt the wisest and most effective measures for securing the safety and contentment of this portion of Her Majesty’s dominions.

3 That having regard to the geographical position of the Islands of New Guinea, the rapid extension of British trade and enterprise Torres Straits, the certainty that the Island shortly be the resort of many adventurous subjects of Great Britain and other nations, and the absence of (or?) inadequacy of any existing laws for regulating their relations with the native tribes, that Convention, while fully recognizing that the responsibility of extending the boundaries of the Empire belongs to the Imperial Government, is emphatically of opinion that such steps should be immediately taken as will most conveniently and effectively secure the incorporation with the British Empire of so much of New Guinea and the small islands adjacent thereto as is not claimed by the Government of the Netherlands.

4 That although the understanding arrived at in 1878 between Great Britain and France, recognising the independence of the New Hebrides,5 appears to preclude this convention from making any recommendation inconsistent with that understanding, the Convention urges upon Her Majesty’s Government that it is extremely desirable that such understanding should give place to some more definite engagement which shall secure those islands from falling under any foreign dominion, at the same time the Convention trusts that Her Majesty’s Government will avail itself of any opportunity that may arise for negotiating with the Government of France, with the object of obtaining the control of those islands in the interests of Australasia.

5 That the Governments represented at this Convention undertake to submit and recommend to their respective Legislatures measures of permanent appropriation, defraying in proportion to population such share of the cost incurred in giving effect to the foregoing Resolution as Her Majesty’s Government, having regard to the relative importance imperial and Australasian interests, may deem fair and reasonable.

6 That the Convention protests in the strongest manner against the declared intention of the Government of France to transport large number of relapsed criminals to the French possessions in the Pacific, and urges Her Majesty’s Government to use every means in its power to prevent the adoption of a course so disastrous to the interests of Australasia and the Pacific Islands.

7 That the Convention expresses a confident hope that no penal settlement for the reception of European criminals will long continue to exist in the Pacific, and invites Her Majesty’s Government to make to the Government of France such serious representations on this subject as may be deemed expedient.6

8 That these Resolutions be communicated to the Right Hon. the Secretary of State for the Colonies, together with a request that they may be submitted for Her Majesty’s gracious consideration, and for such action as Her Majesty may think proper to direct, with a view to giving effect to the earnest desire of her loyal subjects in Australasia.

Note—His Excellency Sir G. William Des Voeux, the Governor of Fiji, representing that Colony, while expressing individually his general concurrence with the Resolutions, considered himself as precluded by his position from voting upon them.

ALEX. STUART
GEORGE R. DIBBS
WILLIAM BEDE DALLEY, NEW SOUTH WALES
H.A. ATKINSON
FRED. WHITAKER, NEW ZEALAND1
S.W. GRIFFITH12
JAMES F. GARRICK, QUEENSLAND13
J. C. BRAY14
JOHN S. DOWNER, SOUTH AUSTRALIA15
W.R. GIBLIN16

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1 W. P. Morrell, Britain In The Pacific Islands, Oxford, 1960, p. 199
2 C. F. Lyons to Ferry, 20 December 1883, C-3863, op. cit., p. 84
3 Premier and Colonial Secretary of New South Wales
4 Colonial Treasurer of New South Wales
5 Attorney General of New South Wales
6 Premier and Colonial Treasurer of New Zealand
7 Former Premier of New Zealand
8 Premier and Colonial Secretary, Queensland
9 Postmaster-General, Queensland
10 Premier and Chief Secretary, South Australia
11 Attorney-General, South Australia
12 Premier and Attorney-General, Tasmania
Lord Derby's Circular Despatch

Nicholas J. Brown, Tasmania 17
James Service 18
Graham Berry 19
Geo. B. Kerferd, Victoria 20

17Minister of Lands and Works, Tasmania
18Premier and Colonial Treasurer, Victoria
19Chief Secretary, Victoria
20Attorney-General, Victoria
21Colonial Secretary, Western Australia

D15 Lord Derby's Circular Despatch of 9 May 1884

In his despatch of 11 July 1883, Lord Derby emphasized the necessity for the joint action of the Australasian Colonies in seeking and supporting Imperial intervention in the Pacific. The work of the Intercolonial Convention in Sydney at the end of 1883 seemed to indicate a new Australasian unanimity. This Convention adopted a draft Bill for establishing a Federal Council for Australasia, which was to deal with matters of joint interest to the various colonies, such as action in Western Pacific. However, for the Federal Council to be established, the legislatures of the various Australasian Colonies had to pass enabling legislation. This they had not done by May 1884, and the Colonial Office view at that time was that some Federal structure was necessary before there could be further Imperial intervention and annexation in the Western Pacific on an extensive and permanent basis. 2

Nevertheless, the Colonial Office was gradually moving towards the position that some form of jurisdiction should be established around the coasts of New Guinea, and the idea of a Protectorate of a limited and temporary nature, as opposed to out and out annexation, was gaining favour as an interim measure, pending the establishment of an Australian Federal Council, and the development of long term policies. In this despatch of 9 May 1884, addressed to the Governors of the Australasian Colonies, emphasis was placed primarily on the financial issue, as the principal condition for British intervention in New Guinea.

It should be pointed out that the Governments of Queensland, Victoria, and New Zealand, had committed themselves to contribute to the costs of British intervention in New Guinea by the middle of 1883, 3 and that the Colonial Office was unwilling or unable to name a specific sum representing the likely costs of intervention until the figure of £15,000 was mentioned in the following despatch.

Her Majesty's Government have not lost sight of resolutions adopted by the Convention of representatives of the Australasian Colonies at Sydney in December last, and have considered the provisions of the Draft Bill for constituting a Federal Council, which the representatives pledged themselves to submit to the Legislatures of their respective Colonies. I have been led to believe that addresses in favour of this Bill would be adopted by the Colonial Legislatures in time to enable Her Majesty's Government to introduce the measure during the present session of Parliament with a good prospect of its being passed, but the necessary action does not appear to have been yet taken in any Colony. As, therefore, the probability of legislation during this year is diminishing, it appears desirable to consider the position of Her Majesty's Government and of the Colonial Governments in regard to the proposals of the Convention.

I had explained in my Despatch of July 11, 1883 4 to the Administrator of the Government of Queensland, which was before the Convention, that in order to place Her Majesty's Government in a position to consider proposals for the protection or government of New Guinea or other places in the Western Pacific Ocean, it was desirable for the Australasian Colonies to combine together effectively, and provide the cost of carrying out any policy which it might be decided to adopt, and that in the meantime Her Majesty's Government must continue to decline proposals for large annexations of territory adjacent to Australia; adding, that if a reasonable annual sum were provided by the Colonies, Her Majesty's Government would be prepared to strengthen the naval force on the Australian station, and make the High Commissionership more effective.

3 The Convention does not appear to have taken this part of my Despatch into consideration, but it agreed that the Governments represented at it should recommend their respective Legislatures to make permanent provision, in proportion to the population, for the cost of the policy advocated, namely,

1) To check, in whatever manner might be deemed wisest and most effectual, the further acquisition of dominion in the Pacific South of the Equator by any Foreign Power;

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1C-3691, op. cit., pp. 22-24
2Ibid
3Service's Memorandum of 27 July 1883, C-3863, op. cit., pp. 2-11
4C-3691, op. cit., pp. 22-24
(2) To secure the incorporation with the British Empire of so much of New Guinea and the small islands adjacent thereto as is not claimed by the Government of the Netherlands; and

(3) To acquire, if possible, the control of the New Hebrides in the interests of Australasia.

The Legislature of Queensland has recorded its entire concurrence in these resolutions, but no Colony has taken measures to provide the requisite funds as suggested by the Convention.

4 As, therefore, in the absence of any joint action by the Colonies, Her Majesty's Government are not in a position to deal with those questions of policy to which I have referred and some further delay seems unavoidable, it may be desirable, that your Government should consider with the Governments of the other Australasian Colonies whether there may not be advantage in making provision for the intervening period in the manner suggested by me in paragraph 7 of my Despatch of July 11th last to Sir A.H. Palmer.5 As I then stated, Her Majesty's Government are confident that no Foreign Power contemplates interference with New Guinea, but in the absence of any controlling authority, it is always possible that the subjects of a Foreign Power might require the protection or intervention of their Government; and British subjects, also, by coming into collision with the natives, or by setting up claims to land, might cause complications which would give much trouble hereafter.

5 Her Majesty's Government are disposed to think that there should be a High Commissioner, or at least a Deputy Commissioner6 with large powers of independent action, stationed on or near the Eastern Coasts of New Guinea, and that he should be furnished with a steamship independent of Her Majesty's naval squadron, and with a staff sufficient to enable him to exercise protection in the name of the Queen over those shores. The cost of this arrangement cannot be accurately estimated, as I have previously stated, but if one or more Colonies will secure to Her Majesty's Government the payment of a sum of (say) 15,000l. during the year ending 1st June 1883, they will be prepared to take immediate steps for establishing the High Commissioner's jurisdiction, and will render to the contributing Governments an account of the expenditure incurred. It would be possible after some months to determine whether this arrangement should be further continued, and to consider fully with the Colonial Governments (or with the Federal Council if established) what arrangements should be made for the future supervision of the labour trade, if it should be decided that it can continue to be allowed. Her Majesty's Government have come to no conclusions as to the recommendations of the Western Pacific Committee, in regard to which the Colonies should first be consulted, but I think it doubtful whether it will be found practicable to place the regulation of the labour traffic under Imperial control.

6 I may state in conclusion that the annual expenditure of this country in the maintenance of the squadron on the Australian station, including schooners and surveying vessels, is estimated as amounting at present to about 157,000l. I need hardly add that it is desirable that I should learn as soon as possible the result of the careful consideration which I trust that this Despatch will receive from your Government in conjunction with the Governments of the other Australasian Colonies.

I have, &c.

[Signed] DERBY

SOURCE Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea And Other Islands, And The Convention At Sydney Of Representatives Of The Australasian Colonies, C-3839, London, 1884, pp.34-35

D16 A Voice in the Wilderness

There was not complete unanimity in the legislatures of Australasia as to the desirability of annexing New Guinea. As late as July 1884 a member of the Upper House of the New South Wales Legislature moved the resolution which is set out here. Needless to say it was defeated, but only after two nights' debate. At this time the movements for Federation in Australasia, and the annexation of New Guinea were closely identified. In New South Wales, the Federal movement was probably less popular than elsewhere in Eastern Australia.1 It is of interest that Stewart’s motion bracketed annexation and Federation together, and disapproved of both. Stewart was not the New South Wales Premier, whose name was Alexander Stuart. Stewart favoured both Federation and the annexation of New Guinea.2 Stewart's defeated resolutions were forwarded to the Colonial Office by the Governor of New South Wales on 24 July 1884.3

Mr Stewart moved pursuant to notice, That this House is of opinion,

(1) That the annexation, appropriation, or conquest of New Guinea by any Government, Imperial or Colonial, would be very widely regarded as a barbarous and unjustifiable invasion of the rights and liberties of the inhabitants of that island.

(2) That any attempt to establish a Federal Government,

1Deakin, op. cit., pp. 9-16

2Evidenced by his signature to the resolutions of the Inter-Colonial Conference, 1883, C-3863, p. 64

3Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea, C-4217, London, 1884, p. 22
having legislative jurisdiction over any two or more Australian Colonies, is not at present necessary nor desirable.

(3) That, considering the many criminals who have recently reached Australian territory, it seems expedient that an Act of the Legislature should prohibit the influx of escaped or emancipated convicts into any part of this Colony.

(4) That the foregoing Resolutions be communicated by Address to the Governor, with a request that His Excellency will be pleased to forward a copy of the same to Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Debate ensued

Motion made (Mr Charles Campbell), and Question, 'That this Debate be now adjourned until this day week', put and passed.

SOURCE: Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea and Other Islands, C-4217, London, 1884, p. 22

D17 The New Guinea and Pacific Jurisdiction Contribution Act of 1884 (48 Vic., No. 7)

This Queensland Act evidences the compromise reached between the Australasian Colonial Governments, and Queensland in particular, with the Colonial Office, as to the basis of British intervention in New Guinea. The Act was passed in August 21 in response to the offer contained in Lord Derby's despatch on 9 May 1884 to intervene in New Guinea should one or more of the Australasian Colonies undertake the costs involved to the extent of £15,000.

Although Queensland became primarily responsible for this sum, in fact all the Australasian Governments contributed in varying degrees to the costs of the Protectorate administration in New Guinea, between 1884 and 1888.3

In Lord Derby's despatch on 9 May 1884, there is a certain vagueness as to the precise nature of the jurisdiction to be exercised on behalf of the Crown in New Guinea. There is really no precise commitment as regards the geographical extent of British jurisdiction in New Guinea, nor even perhaps to establish a protectorate. This vagueness was reflected in Clause 1 of the Bill originally introduced into the Queensland Legislature, which read that:

'There will be issued and paid to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, in each and every year during the continuance of this Act, for and towards the expenses incurred in respect of the maintenance of a naval force and the exercise of Her Majesty's jurisdiction in the waters of New Guinea, a sum bearing the same proportion to the sum of 15,000 pounds as the population of the Colony of Queensland bears to the total population of the Australasian Colonies which for the time being contribute towards such expenses.'

By the time the Legislature was finished with the Bill, Queensland's financial commitment, as reflected in Clause 1 of the Act passed, was made dependent upon the establishment of a British protectorate over eastern New Guinea. It is significant that there is no suggestion in the Act that the sum voted is to be spent only on the administration of a protectorate over the southern coastline of New Guinea, and until German objections were made, the British proposal to establish a protectorate included the northern coastline up to 145° east of Greenwich.

AN ACT to make provision for the payment by the Colony of Queensland of a proportionate share of the expenses to be incurred by Her Majesty's Government in giving effect to certain Resolutions adopted by the Convention of Representatives of the Governments of the several Australasian Colonies, held in Sydney in November and December, one thousand, eight hundred and eighty-three.

[Asented to August 26th, 1884]

WHEREAS, at a Convention of Representatives of the Governments of the several Australasian Colonies, held at Sydney in the Colony of New South Wales, in November and December, one thousand, eight hundred and eighty-three, it was, amongst other things, resolved:-

(1) That further acquisition of dominion in the Pacific south of the Equator by any foreign Power would be highly detrimental to the safety and well-being of the British possessions in Australasia, and injurious to the interests of the Empire;

(2) That having regard to the geographical position of the Island of New Guinea, the rapid extension of British trade and enterprise in Torres Straits, the certainty that the island will shortly be the resort of many adventurous subjects of Great Britain and other nations, and the absence or inadequacy of any existing laws for regulating their relations with the native tribes, this Convention, while fully recognising that the responsibility of extending the boundaries of the Empire belongs to the Imperial Government, is emphatically of opinion that such steps should be im-

1 C-4217, op. cit., p. 33
2 C-3839, op. cit., pp. 34-35
4 C-4217, op. cit., p. 2
5 Further Correspondence Respecting New Guinea And Other Islands, C-4273, pp. 11 et seq.
Proclaiming the British Protectorate

On 21 August 1884 the Colonial Office was informed by telegram that 'The New Guinea And Pacific Jurisdiction Contribution Act Of 1884' (D17) had been passed by the Queensland Legislature.¹

Previously, on 8 August, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, had discussed New Guinea affairs with Count Munster, the German Ambassador in London, and had hinted that a British Protectorate would shortly be established in New Guinea.² (D28)

On 11 August Gladstone promised in the House of Commons that a Protectorate would be established ‘...sufficient to afford protection to the natives against lawless action,’³ (D43) while on 19 September the German Government was told that it was intended to establish a British Protectorate over all of Eastern New Guinea, apart from the north coast of the mainland between the meridian 145° East of Greenwich, and the Dutch border.⁴ (D29) The

¹C-4217, op. cit., p. 3
²C-4273, op. cit., p. 4
³C-4217, op. cit., pp. 35-36
⁴C-4273, op. cit., pp. 11-12