

THE CLOSING DOWN OF THE MELBOURNE FRENCH CONSULATE GENERAL (1900 and 2000)

Twice in succession the French Government has chosen to mark the beginning of a new century by winding up its Consulate General in Melbourne and concentrating its local resources in Sydney. Shortly after the Sydney Olympic Games in September 2000 the Melbourne Consulate General will be closed down. Increasing claims in other parts of the world on finite resources have prompted the French Government to achieve savings where they were thought to be possible — the Government apparently judged that it could dispense with consular representation in the Southern States of Australia (Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania). This is a repetition, exactly 100 years later, of a similar although less drastic decision made by France on the eve of the proclamation of Federation, in 1900, when the French Consulate General in Melbourne was abolished and replaced by a Vice-Consulate.

This paper will examine the background to the closing down of the Melbourne Consulate General in November 1900, the implementation of this measure and some of its sequels.

BACKGROUND

In the closing years of the nineteenth century France was represented in Australia by two career consuls, Léon Dejardin in Melbourne and Georges Biard d'Aunet in Sydney, both of Consul General rank, both heading established Consulates General. By the end of 1900 Dejardin had been in Australia for over twelve years and Biard d'Aunet for over seven. As France had no diplomatic representation in the Australian colonies, Dejardin's and Biard d'Aunet's responsibilities went far beyond normal consular duties and covered diplomatic functions as well. It is worth noting that the French consular representatives in Australia reported directly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris rather than through the French Embassy in London.¹

During the depression of the eighteen-nineties Melbourne's recent predominance over Sydney began to fade. French observers tended to attribute this shift to the effects of protectionist policies in Victoria in the early nineteen-nineties contrasted with the ascendancy of free-traders in New South Wales. In an 1898 paper² written for the French Minister of Foreign Affairs (Théophile Delcassé), Biard d'Aunet reported on the Australian colonies' progress towards Federation and formulated some recommendations on the

best way for France to respond to these new developments. Among other suggestions he put it to his Minister that French consular services in Australia had to be centralised in a major city with direct access to shipping. Delcassé referred the report for comment to Léon Dejardin — unfortunately we do not have his reply. Two years later, on 19 July 1900, Biard d'Aunet no longer spoke in the abstract but explicitly promoted the Consulate General of Sydney for this new federal role, submitting a budget proposal³ in which the growth of the Sydney facilities and the creation of a new vice-consulate in Brisbane were to be financed from the downgrading of the Melbourne post. The proposal advocated the appointment to Melbourne of a bachelor or a married man with private means so that he could survive on a vice-consular salary at the lower end of the scale.

In arguing for the upgrading of the Sydney Consulate General to federal status Biard d'Aunet was motivated, as is often the case, by a mixture of sound political reasons and less avowable personal ambition. As early as 1893, the year of his arrival in Sydney, he had recommended to his Minister that French representation in New Zealand be placed under the Sydney Consulate General.⁴ In 1896 he informed his superiors in Paris that he would like to remain in his Sydney posting but as Consul General for Australasia and the French Government's Commissioner for the Western Pacific.⁵ Two years later he reiterated his request that "la circonscription de ce poste fut [sic] étendue à toute l'Australie et aux archipels australasiens britanniques."⁶

THE 1900 REVIEW OF FRENCH REPRESENTATION IN AUSTRALIA

Biard d'Aunet's 1898 report had been well received not only by Théophile Delcassé but also by President Félix Faure.⁷ In 1900 the Consul General was in Paris to ensure that his major recommendations were adopted and implemented.

Léon Dejardin, who lost his Consulate General in this reorganisation, was compensated by promotion to "Ministre plénipotentiaire de deuxième classe" from 2 October 1900. He and his family were to leave Australia a month later to wait in Paris for a possible posting. At the beginning of 1902 he was still waiting.⁸

The new arrangements came into force on 1 November 1900, two months before the proclamation of Federation, but were not implemented until 10 November, date of the Consul General's return to Sydney. The details of the

reorganisation, finalised in Paris on 30 September 1900, were announced in the *Courrier australien* of 18 October and 17 November 1900.

French consular representation would be centralised in Sydney, with all the Australian States of the new Federation coming under the jurisdiction of the Consulate General in Sydney. The Melbourne Consulate General would be wound up and a Vice-Consulate created in its place, under the control of the Sydney Consulate General. However, when the Consul General was absent, the Melbourne Vice-Consul (rather than the Acting Consul General in Sydney) would be responsible for relations with South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. Plans for the establishment of a Vice-Consulate in Brisbane were announced at the same time, and the possibility of the creation of a Consular Agency in Port Pirie, South Australia, was also mooted. The French Consul in Wellington would be required to keep the Consul General in Sydney informed of any important commercial and political developments in New Zealand.

Pending the arrival of a new Vice-Consul, the Melbourne Vice-Consulate would be run by Henri Brouland, former *Chancelier* under Dejardin, whilst in Sydney two new positions would be created to enable the Consulate General to handle the additional workload.

IMPLEMENTATION

A first inspection of Melbourne by the Consul General and his return to Sydney

In the first days of November “L’Australien”, a Messageries Maritimes steamship, carrying the Consul General back to Australia, put in at Melbourne. Biard d’Aunet used the opportunity to meet the Acting Vice-Consul and to inspect the premises of what used to be the French Consulate General.

The only account we have of Biard d’Aunet’s brief visit to Melbourne in November 1900 is a somewhat biased one, by Brouland, written more than five months after the events. A loyal supporter of his former Consul General, Brouland felt deeply hostile both to the Sydney takeover and the mastermind behind it.

Biard d’Aunet was full of complaints from the outset. The Manager of the Messageries Maritimes, M. de Possel, having failed (or having been unable) to advise the Acting Vice-Consul of the exact time of the ship’s arrival, Brouland was not there to meet him when “L’Australien” dropped anchor at Port Melbourne. When he eventually turned up, the Consul General showered him

with instructions: “Je vous attendais plus tôt, mon cher ami, j’ai beaucoup d’instructions à vous donner [...] sur ce que j’entends faire au sujet de Melbourne. Tout y est à faire ou à refaire.”⁹ He was so busy talking at Brouland that they missed the launch to go ashore. The Captain then refused to make another launch available as he had no men to spare. The Consul General complained that people lacked consideration for him: “Je suis le Représentant du Gouvernement Français en Australie et j’ai droit à plus d’égards.”¹⁰ When Captain Verron reminded him that everyone had been informed of the times of departure of the launch, he replied: “Mais, permettez-moi, Commandant, de vous faire observer que je ne suis pas tout le monde, moi. Je suis le Consul Général de France pour l’Australie et je vais me plaindre à la Cie des M^{ies} M^{mes} de la manière dont le Représentant de la République est traité sur un paquebot subventionné par l’Etat.”¹¹ When they eventually reached the rooms of the former Consulate General in the City, Biard d’Aunet complained that the sign “Consulat Général de France” had not been taken down — it had to be removed immediately since it was an incorrect description of the downgraded post.

This first brief contact with Melbourne prefigured the tone of the relationship between Sydney Consulate General and the Melbourne Vice-Consulate in the following few months. The Consul General was certainly not happy with his first visit to Melbourne in his new capacity, nor was Henri Brouland.

By contrast Biard d’Aunet’s arrival in Sydney on Saturday 10 November 1900 should have been a triumph. Ironically, however, the seed of his disfavour with his Paris superiors was sown on that very day. Louis Vossion, Biard d’Aunet’s temporary replacement during his leave, who, in the course of his five and a half months’ term in Sydney, had developed a profound dislike for the Consul General, insisted on the handing-over protocol being established in the name of Georges Biard, rather than the Consul General’s preferred style, Georges Biard d’Aunet.¹² Vossion had the *Annuaire diplomatique et consulaire* as well as the wording of his own letter of appointment on his side, whilst the Consul General defended his stance by reference to his passport as well as long established local practice. It was a stalemate. When Vossion threatened to consult the Quai d’Orsay by cable, the Consul General gave in, although he signed the document as Georges Biard d’Aunet.

Before the day was out, Vossion had posted a report to the Quai d’Orsay, setting in motion a process which was to cause irreparable damage to the Consul General’s standing in Paris.¹³ On 20 December 1900 Théophile Delcassé sent a “please explain” letter to the Consul General, which he answered on 25 January 1901. His justification having failed to convince his

superiors, he was directed to drop the “d’Aunet” in all official documents and correspondence. His self-respect, however, prevented him from accepting this direction and he continued to use the “Biard d’Aunet” style, thus earning the disapproval of the Minister and his advisers.

Vossion and his wife embarked on the same steamship, “L’Australien”, which had brought Biard d’Aunet back to Australia, to begin their journey home. In Melbourne they spent a few hours with the Acting Vice-Consul. Vossion and Brouland quickly discovered that they had in common a profound dislike of Georges Biard d’Aunet, or rather Georges Biard, as they called him. In a highly undiplomatic personal letter, written on the ship between Melbourne and Adelaide,¹⁴ Vossion was to offer Brouland advice on the best ways of sabotaging the Sydney takeover. Although several of the adverse comments about the Consul General might well have been justified, the letter is nonetheless remarkable for its spitefulness and lack of balance. Vossion having allowed Brouland to make use of it as he saw fit, the Acting Vice-Consul forwarded it to the Quai d’Orsay, where it found its way into the Consul General’s Personnel file, that is to say where it could do most damage. The reasons for Vossion’s venom are difficult to understand: he had not met Biard d’Aunet until 10 November, and the Consul General did him no harm. Vossion’s spite appears to have been inspired by a genuine antipathy for everything the Consul General stood for. Was it political? Was it professional? Was it personal? Perhaps all three.

Biard d’Aunet’s official visit to Melbourne (December 1900)

In the second half of November there was a flurry of correspondence between Sydney and Melbourne in preparation for the Consul General’s forthcoming official visit to Melbourne. The exchange, however, was typically unbalanced, insofar as for each letter from Brouland there were two or three letters or telegrams from the Consul General. Brouland tended to ignore his superior’s requests and directions, or at least to postpone acting on them until such time as he could not do otherwise. When taken to task, he excused himself on the grounds of his excessive workload. Biard d’Aunet was not impressed.

The Consul General’s formal Melbourne visit took place in the first week of December 1900.¹⁵ He saw Sir John Madden (the Lieutenant-Governor) and Sir George Turner (the Victorian Premier), as well as members of the Melbourne Consular Corps. At a reception held at the Menzies Hotel he met the French community. Having taken on the role of Patron of the Melbourne Alliance Française, he also attended a meeting of its committee and encouraged it to

place more emphasis on pedagogical and cultural activities, especially on the organisation of examinations for the local school population, a tradition discontinued by the intensely "social" Melbourne Alliance. This was later followed by the despatch of information on the programme of activities of the Sydney Alliance (of which the Consul General was the founder and the president), together with a copy of its library catalogue.¹⁶ Not surprisingly a subsequent proposal for a merger of the Sydney and Melbourne branches in a hypothetical "Alliance Française of Australia"¹⁷ was declined by the Melbourne committee at its meeting of 1 May 1901.

The Consul General's visit to Melbourne took place without any major mishap but it is clear that he failed to understand the sensitivities of the people he was dealing with and possessed neither the tact nor the interpersonal skills needed to win them over. The downgrading of the Melbourne Consulate General was a highly unpopular measure, which could only be resented by the local French community as well as Melbourne's political and social establishment. After all Léon Dejardin had served there for an exceptionally long period of time, twelve years, during which time he built up a loyal following. Biard d'Aunet could not expect to be received with open arms a month after the former Consul General's departure, for which he was held responsible. Nor could he count on Brouland to smooth things over.

Possibly the contretemps that most irritated Biard d'Aunet at the end of his Melbourne trip and in its aftermath was the Lieutenant-Governor's failure to "return" his visit. The custom in Sydney, at least before Earl Beauchamp's term,¹⁸ was for the Consul General's visits to be "returned" in the form of a call by an Aide-de-camp who would leave a card at the Consulate General, thus establishing the fiction of the Governor reciprocating the Consul General's courtesy. Brouland had led Biard d'Aunet to believe that this would also occur in Melbourne. As he discovered subsequently, Brouland only spoke to the Secretary's secretary, who had no authority to commit the Lieutenant-Governor to such formal arrangements, and the Acting Vice-Consul also failed to make a second visit to Government House to have them confirmed (as originally instructed by Biard d'Aunet and as he claimed to have done). The matter was made even more embarrassing for the Consul General by both the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* and the *Courrier australien* reporting that Sir John Madden had returned his visit.

This mix-up led to a lengthy exchange of letters between Biard d'Aunet and Brouland in December 1900 and January 1901. Once again the number of messages from Sydney by far exceeded the replies from Melbourne. The Consul General repeatedly demanded a detailed report on how such a

misunderstanding had occurred, clearly implying (correctly, it would seem) that it was all Brouland's fault. Brouland simply ignored these demands, although he did inform Biard d'Aunet that according to Colonel Campbell (Sir John Madden's Secretary) Governors in Victoria only returned visits by captains of visiting warships, never consular visits.¹⁹

The matter was subsequently taken up by the Consul General in an exchange of letters with Sir John Madden (who, incidentally, had been partly educated in France), without however a resolution being reached. At least Biard d'Aunet had the satisfaction of being able to point out to the Lieutenant-Governor "les erreurs contenues dans sa lettre"...

Falling out with the Melbourne Consular Corps

Another incident (which was to have long-term effects on the Consul General's career) was the rift which developed during this same period between him and the Melbourne Consular Corps. Since Biard d'Aunet was unwise enough to use Brouland as his intermediary in his dealings with his Melbourne counterparts, it is difficult not to conclude that if the Acting Vice-Consul was not actually responsible for the rift, he did nothing to heal it and probably made it considerably worse.

The tension between Biard d'Aunet and the Melbourne Consular Corps was at least in part a by-product of the confusing arrangements made for the proclamation of Federation. For several years Biard d'Aunet had been the *doyen* of the Sydney Consular Corps, both on account of his length of service and his senior rank. One of his major concerns had always been the place of the Consular Corps in the Colony's precedence rules.²¹ Since the incoming Governor General, Lord Hopetoun, a former Governor of Victoria, was in Sydney in December 1900 for the proclamation of Federation in Centennial Park on 1 January 1901, Biard d'Aunet undertook to negotiate with him the place of the Consular Corps in the ceremonies. He knew perfectly well that he would have derived much less joy from negotiating with the Australian authorities as they had less experience in dealing with foreign representatives. His assumption was later vindicated when the Australian organisers overturned the arrangements Biard d'Aunet had reached with Lord Hopetoun and the Consular Corps was assigned a lower rank.²²

The Consul General was aware that he had no formal authority from the Melbourne Consular Corps to negotiate on their behalf, being *doyen* only of the Sydney Corps, but he felt that under the circumstances he would have their

support. His written request (a perfectly reasonable one) for their backing remained deliberately unanswered. Irrespective of the outcome of his negotiations with the Governor General and the Australian authorities, the Melbourne consular representatives repeatedly objected to Biard d'Aunet speaking on their behalf. As their recalcitrance lacked any rational basis, it is likely that their hostility to Biard d'Aunet was an expression of their continuing loyalty to their former colleague Léon Dejardin. One of the formal objections to Biard d'Aunet acting as their *doyen* was that several of them had been granted federal status (or rather responsibility for all the Australian colonies) well before the French Consul General.

However that may be, typewritten transcripts of the correspondence between Biard d'Aunet and the Melbourne Consular Corps were sent by someone to Dejardin in Paris who promptly deposited them at the Quai d'Orsay where they were added to Biard d'Aunet's Personnel file. On 30 April 1901 the Minister admonished the Consul General for his indiscretion: "Je ne mets pas un seul instant en doute que vous n'ayez été guidé en cette circonstance par le seul désir d'établir des droits que vous jugiez devoir vous revenir en centralisant entre vos mains de doyen les intérêts de tout le corps consulaire en Australie. Toutefois je dois attirer votre attention sur les inconvénients qu'il y a à soulever de pareils conflits de préséance dont les règles n'ont rien d'absolu et qui échappent à toute sanction. Il est donc à tous égards préférable de chercher à les trancher à l'amiable et par une entente préalable entre tous les membres du corps consulaire"²³

The Consul General's dealings with the Melbourne Vice-Consulate

Biard d'Aunet was not completely unaware of the identity of those trying to undermine his position in Paris. When in the first days of November 1900 he visited the rooms of the former Melbourne Consulate General, he said to Brouland that he knew Léon Dejardin was working against him at the Quai d'Orsay: "Mon cher Monsieur Brouland, [...] je ne désire nullement consulter les archives. Je sais très bien que M. Dejardin a écrit au Dép¹ à mon sujet des choses désagréables; j'ai pris connaissance de ces dépêches au Ministère, mais peu m'importe."²⁴

He also realised that Vossion would be hostile: "J'ai su, depuis mon retour, que dès son arrivée à Sydney, mon successeur intérimaire avait pris une attitude singulière. Affectant de trouver le service de mon poste mal organisé, il en avait

entrepris la réforme d'après ses vues personnelles, oubliant qu'il ne possédait aucune expérience des affaires d'Australie et n'était investi que d'une mission provisoire."²⁵

He was not so sure of the true nature of Brouland's attitude towards him. In a letter to the Ministry he expressed the view that Brouland was unsuitable for the vice-consular vacancy but his criticism was not entirely damning: "Il m'est nécessaire d'y avoir [in Melbourne] un collaborateur actif, intelligent et dévoué. M. Brouland n'est pas en état de faire convenablement cette gérance. Il ne jouit d'aucun crédit moral auprès des résidents français, non plus qu'auprès des autorités. Personnellement, il a été correct avec moi en ma présence; c'est tout le bien que je peux dire. Mais il est urgent qu'il aille à son poste [San Francisco] et soit remplacé à Melbourne par une personne capable d'occuper cette position pour laquelle il n'a pas les aptitudes nécessaires."²⁶

In the aftermath of his official visit to Melbourne in December 1900, Georges Biard d'Aunet suspected that some of his problems in that city were caused by Brouland, although he was unsure whether this was due to the latter's incompetence or his ill-will. On 29 December 1900 he reprimanded Brouland: "Je suis obligé de vous redire que vous n'apportez pas assez de soin à la partie de votre service qui est relative à vos rapports avec ce Consulat général."²⁷ In the same letter he diplomatically requested that Brouland mind his own business: "Je vous serais bien reconnaissant, pour le temps que vous avez encore à passer dans ma circonscription, de répondre aussi complètement que possible aux demandes que je vous adresse, et de ne pas entrer (à moins d'intérêt évident de service) dans des considérations étrangères à ces demandes." In his undated reply Brouland pointed out that he was virtually alone to run the Melbourne post and that he was aggrieved that his efforts were not appreciated.

By the middle of January the two protagonists had calmed down and on 12 January the Consul General congratulated Brouland on his appointment to San Francisco. In fact they both looked forward to the arrival of the new Melbourne appointee, M. Monnet, who was due to take up his post early in February.

Monnet was appointed Vice-Consul to Melbourne on 3 November 1900 and he arrived on 1 February 1901. Having promptly refused to travel to Sydney to meet Biard d'Aunet, he returned to France three weeks later, on the very steamship which had brought him to Australia. The official reason he gave for his decision was his deteriorating state of health but no one believed him. According to Brouland, "M. Monnet, comprenant la situation, n'a rien voulu savoir: il est reparti par le paquebot qui l'avait emmené [sic]."²⁸ The Consul

General himself was of the same opinion, realising that Monnet's problem was the subordination of the Melbourne Vice-Consulate to the Consulate General in Sydney: "Il est indispensable au bien du service qu'il y ait unité de vues entre le Consulat général et ce vice Consulat. Cette unité de vues implique de la part de notre agent de Melbourne une sincère et franche acceptation des directions venant de Sydney. Cette nécessité me semble avoir échappé au jugement de M. Monnet. Peut-être n'était-elle pas compatible avec son caractère.[...] Il se peut que le motif réel de sa demande de congé ait été sa crainte, justifiée d'ailleurs, de ne pas être indépendant, car le climat de Melbourne, quoique un peu brutal, est très sain.»²⁹

An unintended consequences of Monnet's withdrawal, and one equally deplored by Biard d'Aunet and Brouland, was the necessity for the latter to remain in Melbourne for a little longer. In fact Brouland lost the San Francisco posting altogether and eventually went to Chicago instead.³⁰

The vacancy was filled³¹ by the return to Melbourne of Paul Maistre, at the time Vice-Consul *Chancelier* in Cardiff and temporarily Head of the Swansea Vice-Consulate, this latter post having once been occupied by Georges Biard d'Aunet himself. Maistre had served in Melbourne from 1886 to 1898 — he was therefore no stranger to the city or the post, and no doubt this was the reason for his appointment to what, by then, the Quai d'Orsay must have identified as a difficult posting.

We have no information on the crucial question of how Biard d'Aunet and Maistre got on in their consular capacities, although there is strong evidence that they saw eye to eye on the role of the Alliance Française in their respective cities. Maistre used Biard d'Aunet's somewhat austere Sydney model, which focussed on pedagogical and cultural aims, to reform the overly social and English-language dominated Melbourne Alliance. Whilst Maistre enjoyed the active support of the Alliance headquarters in Paris in his efforts, the Melbourne establishment, using its London connections and London's *entente cordiale* with the Quai d'Orsay, eventually made him pay the successful reform of the Alliance Française of Victoria by his recall in 1908.³² Biard d'Aunet was no longer in Australia to support him, and in any case he himself had fallen in disfavour after his various (mainly Melbourne-related) difficulties during the period from November 1900 to April 1901.

CONCLUSION

The downgrading of the Melbourne Consulate General to Vice-Consulate would have been a difficult exercise by any standards but to undertake it with

the slightest chance of success it would have required a very different personality from Georges Biard d'Aunet's. Vossion and Broulard, whilst deeply unfair in their assessment of the Consul General's abilities and achievements, could see that Biard d'Aunet was not good at working with others, either as an equal or in a supervisory (or subordinate) capacity. His Sydney record clearly indicates that he was what in our contemporary parlance we would call a "control freak". In Sydney he ran both the Consulate General and the Alliance Française as an absolute monarch.

He also had social aspirations possibly beyond his station and a very high opinion of his professional importance and personal dignity, which did not endear him to everyone.³³

There is little doubt that Georges Biard d'Aunet mishandled the downgrading of the Melbourne Consulate General. He was unaware that damage control required a larger than usual dose of patience, tact and understanding.

Was the Biard d'Aunet-inspired pre-Federation review of French consular services in Australia a mistake? Not necessarily. Consular representation had to be centralised in one or the other of the two main cities. According to the *Daily Telegraph's* London correspondent, "the man in the street here [is inclined...] to suggest that the seat of the Federal Government should be decided between Melbourne and Sydney by the spin of a coin as apparently either place would be reckoned quite suitable [...]."³⁴

Whilst Vossion, always ready to contradict Biard d'Aunet, thought that "c'est à Melbourne et à Melbourne seul, que va battre, pendant peut-être dix ans, le cœur politique et social de l'Australie",³⁵ by 1908 five of the world's main powers were represented in Australia by a Consulate General in Sydney. They were the Austro-Hungarian Empire, France, Germany, Japan and the United States.³⁶ This trend can only be seen as a vindication of the course chosen by Biard d'Aunet, despite the part self-interest played in his motivation.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

On Georges Biard d'Aunet, see Wallace Kirsop, "Some Notes on Georges Biard d'Aunet (1844-1934)", *Explorations* 19 (1995) [issued in December 1997], pp. 31-36; Colin Nettelbeck, "Looking ahead: an 1898 French view of Australian Federation", *Explorations* 19 (1995) [issued in December 1997], pp. 3-30; Ivan Barko, "The French Presence in Sydney and the Establishment of the French Chamber of Commerce", *Journal of the Royal Australian*

Historical Society, vol. 85, June 1999, pp.47-64; Ivan Barko, "The Foundation and Early History of the *Alliance française* of Sydney", *Explorations*, 26 (1999), pp. 3-42; Ivan Barko, "The *Courrier australien* and French-Australian relations during the Biard d'Aunet years (1892-1905)", in *The Culture of the Book: Essays from Two Hemispheres in Honour of Wallace Kirsop*, Melbourne, 1999, pp. 430-445; Wallace Kirsop, "Mme Juliette Henry writes to Félix Faure", *Explorations* 21 (1996) [issued February 2000], pp. 31-36 and Ivan Barko, "The Cobar Incident", *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* (forthcoming).

On Paul Maistre, see C.B. Thornton-Smith, "Paul Maistre, Vice-Consul and later Consul for France in Victoria. 1886-1898, 1901-1908", *Explorations* 17, December 1994 [issued October 1997], pp. 3-47.

NOTES

¹ See letter of G. Biard d'Aunet to the Minister of Foreign Affairs on 26 February 1895: "le poste que j'occupe ne dépend que nominalement de notre ambassade à Londres et n'a jamais eu de correspondance avec elle". (In G. Biard d'Aunet's Personnel file in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Quai d'Orsay, Paris, henceforth "Personnel file".)

² See Colin Nettelbeck, "Looking ahead: an 1898 French view of Australian Federation", *Explorations* 19 (1995) [issued in December 1997], pp. 3-30.

³ "Note sur la réorganisation de notre représentation consulaire en Australie", 19 July 1900, in Personnel file.

⁴ "Note relative au Consulat général de France à Sydney", in Personnel file.

⁵ Annual staff review, 12 February 1896, in Personnel file.

⁶ Annual staff review, 5 March 1898, in Personnel file.

⁷ See Nettelbeck (1995), p. 7.)

⁸ *Annuaire diplomatique et consulaire*, 1902.

⁹ Letter to Léon Dejardin, 16 May 1901. (In Personnel file.)

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The Consul General's patronymic was Biard. After his mother died, he applied to be allowed to add her maiden name, d'Aunet, to his father's. Although permission was refused, he consistently used the "Biard d'Aunet" style from then on. For many years the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs tolerated this practice but in its own publications always referred to him as "Georges Biard".

¹³ See his letter of 10 November 1900, in Personnel file.

¹⁴ Dated 30 November 1900. (In Personnel file.)

¹⁵ He left for Melbourne by train on Friday 30 November and returned to Sydney on Thursday 6 December. The Consul General was hoping to stay at the Melbourne Club where accommodation was to be arranged for him by the Manager of the French Bank, Charles Shard, but we have no confirmation as to whether this took place.

¹⁶ Letter of 3 March 1901. See C.B. Thornton-Smith, "Paul Maistre, Vice-Consul and later Consul for France in Victoria. 1886-1898, 1901-1908.", *Explorations*, no 17, December 1994 [issued October 1997], pp. 3-47.

¹⁷ It would have been the precursor of the modern Federation of Alliances Françaises in Australia.

¹⁸ The last Governor of the Colony of New South Wales, with whom Biard d'Aunet had countless disagreements.

¹⁹ Letter of 17 December 1900. (See the Consul General's Personnel file, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.)

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- ²⁰ Biard d'Aunet's letter to Brouland, 23 January 1901 (Personnel file).
- ²¹ This was one of the reasons for his conflicts with Earl Beachamp. As Brouland put it, somewhat inelegantly: "Les questions d'étiquette [...] sont sa marotte." (Letter to Léon Dejardin, 16 May 1901, in Personnel file.)
- ²² Biard d'Aunet's letter to P. Corte, Italian Consul General for Australia (Melbourne), 12 January 1901, in Personnel file.
- ²³ Letter of 30 April 1901. (See Personnel file.)
- ²⁴ Brouland to Dejardin, 16 mai 1901 (Personnel file).
- ²⁵ Lettre du 25 janvier 1901.
- ²⁶ Underlined by me. Biard d'Aunet's letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 25 février 1900. (In Personnel file.)
- ²⁷ See Personnel file.
- ²⁸ Letter to Dejardin, 16 May 1901. (Personnel file.)
- ²⁹ Letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 25 February 1901. (Personnel file.)
- Biard d'Aunet's description of the ideal appointee for the Melbourne vacancy is not without interest: "un jeune homme, ayant très bonne tenue, instruit, appliqué, de caractère posé, parlant bien l'anglais, célibataire (ou marié à une femme distinguée), espérant être promu sur place."
- ³⁰ 8 October 1901. See *Annuaire diplomatique et consulaire*, 1914.
- ³¹ *Annuaire diplomatique et consulaire*, 1907-08. Recorded date of the appointment: 17 April 1901.
- ³² On Maistre's efforts on behalf of the Alliance Française and his recall, see C.B. Thornton-Smith (1994).
- ³³ According to Brouland, Sir John Madden's Secretary, Colonel Campbell, declared: "Pauvre France, [...] elle est maintenant représentée ici par un Consul Général qui est la risée de tous et considéré comme fou." (Letter to Léon Dejardin, 16 May 1901, in Personnel File.)
- ³⁴ *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 7 December 1900, p. 5.
- ³⁵ Letter to Brouland, 30 November 1900, in Personnel file. Vossion's judgement was largely accurate for the period in question.
- ³⁶ The United States was the last of the five powers to make that choice. (See *Le Courrier australien*, 19 June 1908.)