The Association served Australia well in supporting the principle of federation. Long before official conventions had been called and the movement well launched the A.N.A. held unofficial conventions and put forward suggestions for the framing of the new Commonwealth. It is interesting to note that the Association as well as some people outside it wished New Zealand to be part of the Commonwealth. The Association's Convention of 1890 discussed ways in which the proposed Houses of Parliament should be elected and what powers they should have. This interest in federation is reflected in the early years of the Cheltenham Branch which was opened by J. L. Purves, K.C., one of the Association's early leaders on the 7th May, 1891. In April 1899 the Branch "expresses its unbounded gratification" that N.S.W. had, after much reluctance, agreed to hold a referendum on federation. When the Victorian referendum three months later resulted in an overwhelming majority for federation members "hailed with delight the splendid affirmative vote which assured nationhood for Australia.".

The Branch was interested in other public matters. At one meeting the Secretary was asked to convene a meeting of other local friendly societies to discuss "the railway services"; at another it supports a motion on the agenda of the annual conference to discuss old age pensions. And Cheltenham delegates were doubtless interested in other topics - land tax, women's suffrage, minimum wage, one man - one vote - discussed at the conferences. to tibusit's sailitis one saw it camit feet to

The central body of the Association - the Board of Directors and a Metropolitan Committee, to which each branch sent delegates, seems to have kept a strong hand on the Branch in its early days. There is a great deal of correspondence between them and Cheltenham - about federation, about appeals for a "winter fund" and for bushfire sufferers, about the Association's annual fete held on or near Foundation Day (26th January). Sometimes the Branch is reprimanded; a delegate from Cheltenham on the Metropolitan Committee loses his seat for non-attendance and the Board of Directors gives notice that the Branch will be fined £1 if the balance sheet is not forwarded.

The Chelterham Branch met fortnightly at the Mechanics Institute - the old hall on the Highway destroyed in 1960 to make way for the present Cheltenham Hall - paying 15/- per night. Sometimes it used the hall free for a social function "if gas be paid for." The usual officers and a committee were elected every half year when a syllabus for the ensuing six months was drafted; there were also several trustees of the Branch's funds and property. By 1913 there were two vice-presidents, an assistant secretary and three auditors. The secretary received

over)