



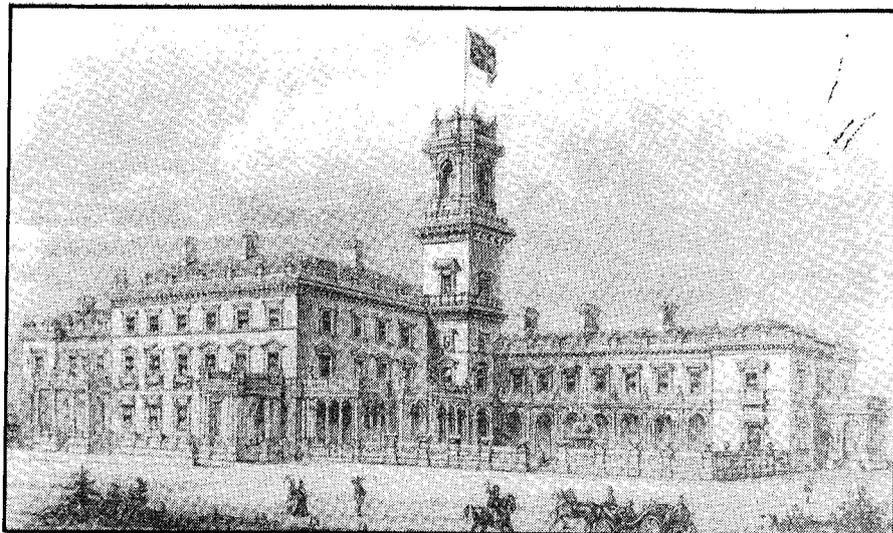
Judge Samuel Bindon

Samuel Henry Bindon, (1812-1879), minister of justice, judge and pioneer of technical education, was born in Limerick, son of Samuel Bindon and his wife, Eliza, nee Massy. His landed 'Cromwellian' ancestors for three generations had represented Ennis, County Clare, in the Irish Parliament. He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin (LL.B., 1838), and soon afterwards married Susannah, daughter of Sir Hugh Dillon Massy. The family property which he expected to inherit was alienated from him in the Encumbered Estates Courts in the famine of 1846.

In early life Bindon demonstrated his interest in Irish tradition; he edited and wrote a preface to a volume of James Duffy's *Library of Ireland*; he became a member of the Celtic Society, the Archaeological Society of Ireland and the Irish Federation; and he occasionally contributed literary papers to Gavan Duffy's *Nation*. In the 1840s he publicly adopted the Irish nationalist cause. One of his main concerns, significant in terms of his later Australian career, was to advocate Irish industrial independence. By 1850 he became secretary of the council of the Irish Tenants' League. However, political infighting and pledge-breaking soon soured his hopes. He decided to emigrate.

In 1855 Bindon arrived in Victoria where he practiced law in the county courts. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly for Castlemaine in 1864 as an independent supporter of the moderate McCulloch ministry, and conducted himself with tact and caution. He took a place on special committees which negotiated agreements with the Legislative Council on land legislation and tariffs. At the same time he consistently opposed the restrictive practices of the council. McCulloch appointed him minister of justice in July, 1866. In May, 1868, the Sladen ministry snatched up the reins of government for two months, and when, McCulloch recaptured his position of chief secretary, he did not reappoint Bindon to the cabinet.

Though usually mild-mannered and persuasive in a parliament not noted for such qualities, Bindon had proved too independent and radical of mind. Admittedly, he supported McCulloch's inadequate land reforms, which were acceptable to the squatters. There he showed no strong ideas of his own, but in other matters he obviously endangered McCulloch's shaky grip on party unity. Even as a minister he voted against McCulloch for such measures as payment of members. He had a passion to protect the under-privileged. Throughout his parliamentary career



Government House, Melbourne, Victoria.

he attacked the 'upper' or 'wealthy' classes and argued that they should be directly taxed to pay for protection of their property. In many ways he leaned towards a concept of the welfare state. He suggested that the government should 'devise some means by which property might be compelled to contribute something like a proportionate support to the poverty of the country'. Though he sought economy, greater efficiency and impartiality in administration he favoured higher spending by the government on education and charitable institutions. O'Shanassy once attacked him for being 'anti-British', by which he meant opposed to individual self-reliance, and accused him of seeking too much power for central authority. On matters religious Bindon believed the government should be independent or at least impartial. He strongly advocated secular education and in 1868 he successfully presented a motion for religious equality in taking oaths.

One of Bindon's most consistent convictions was the need to develop the agricultural and industrial wealth of the country, a concern born of the problems of his mining constituency and partly of his Irishman's hope for economic independence from England. Early in 1865 he moved for the establishment of a department under a minister for industries and instruction, but later had to withdraw the motion. He succeeded in passing special grants for industrial exhibitions, which led to the Melbourne Exhibition of 1866. His greatest single success was when he inspired and became chairman of the

technological commission of 1869, Australia's first official organization for technical education. His *Industrial Instruction in Europe and Australia* was published at Ballarat in 1872. Bindon resigned his seat in parliament in October, 1868, but remained publicly active as a trustee of the Public Library, Museum and National Gallery of Victoria, as chairman of the Industrial and Technological Museums Committee, and as a member of the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria. He also served on several committees and commissions connected with penal problems and industrial development. He was an antiquarian, a naturalist and a keen sportsman.

In April, 1869, the McCulloch government appointed Bindon judge of the County Court for Gippsland. In the Black Wednesday dismissals of public servants in 1878 he temporarily lost his job; he was reappointed soon afterwards, with only two other judges, to cover all county court duties for the colony. Overwork helped to undermine his health and he died at St. Kilda on 1 August, 1879, aged 67. In respect for his memory the Ballarat Schools of Design exhibition closed for the day.

Sources

C.G. Duffy, *My Life in Two Hemispheres* (Lond, 1898); G.M. Dow, *George Higinbotham: Church and State* (Melb. 1964); *Age*, 2 Aug, 1868; *Argus*, 2 Aug, 1868.

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(Reprinted from the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*)