

be known as States of the Empire, or some other expressive word, so as to make a distinction as between the Crown Colonies and the self-governing Dependencies. I would not presume for a moment to suggest how the work of the Colonial Office should be arranged, but if we were put under a separate category, and necessarily with a separate Administration for the working of our self-governing countries, that would be a great improvement, and, although perhaps not important in the minds of some people, would be a source of considerable satisfaction, certainly to our country. I should like, at all events before we finish our discussion, to say something further upon the suggestion made by Mr. Deakin, with a view to arriving at an understanding about it.

For my own part, I want to say that whether it be called an Imperial Conference or an Imperial Council, in my opinion it should consist of the Prime Ministers of the self-governing Colonies, the Prime Minister of England, and the Secretary of State for the Colonies. That is the opinion I entertain, and I have had that in my mind all along. Now, I suggest that we should consider the propriety of including the Prime Minister of England upon the Imperial Conference for the reason that it does in the eyes of the outside world impress upon the public at large the fact that the Government of the Old Land is part and parcel of the Conference. An ordinary individual who takes an interest in the carrying on of the affairs of a country like the one to which I belong cannot draw a line between the individual designation of the great Ministers of the Crown in the Old World, and I believe it would not derogate in any way from either the functions or position of the Secretary of State for the Colonies and it would add materially to the importance of the Conference if the Prime Minister of this country were included.

I want also to say that I think the functions and powers of the Council should be consultative and advisory only on everything—that is on all matters affecting the Empire or Imperial matters in which the States would be in any way concerned, and that it should have no executive or administrative powers.

Upon the question of the Secretariat, I am inclined to think that that is a matter that ought to be deferred for final settlement, and it ought to be deferred for the reason that if this Conference arrives at the decision that it is desirable to have a permanent Imperial Conference, then I think the present Prime Ministers should confer as to the best means of having the gap between the times of the periodical meetings every four or five years filled up. The meetings should not be too frequent, their frequency would weaken them to a very material extent and detract from their influence, but I think that the manner of the filling up of the gap by the permanent officer who is to be here to represent such an Imperial Council, requires to be very carefully considered before we arrive at a final conclusion about it. I am not favourable myself to the creation of what one might term a separate office, carried on in the Old Country as an intermediary between the respective Prime Ministers during the recess. I should feel rather disposed to consider whether the self-governing countries could not mutually agree to one or two of the more important representatives of their Colonies resident in England, that is, the High Commissioners or Agents-General, becoming the recognised channel through which communications should pass. I want to make it quite clear that the communications which we now are in the habit of sending from the Colonies through the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, should remain absolute, as at present, for the purpose of dealing with all matters of Imperial concern to our country about which from time to time we require to communicate, because I think we should be, above all things, strenuous in our desire to preserve our entity or individuality in the matter of the control of our own country. But a permanent Imperial Conference would in my opinion

Second Day.
17 April 1907.

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PROPOSED
IMPERIAL
COUNCIL.
(Sir Joseph
Ward.)