

At the present moment we are all anxious to try to assist the intricacies of trade development; we are all desirous—at all events, the self-governing Colonies are—to enter into reciprocal treaties with one another on matters of trade. If we had an Imperial Conference or Council established of which the Prime Minister and Secretary of State of England were members, that is a matter which might, with enormous advantage both to the Old Land and to the newer ones, be taken up by the Imperial Council, and be gone into with a view to see what anomalies and what difficulties exist on the side of the Mother Country and what anomalies exist in the Colonies, to enable something like a unanimity of decision being arrived at. My opinion is that we should give and take upon matters of great importance so as to bring the Mother Country into line with us, on a difficult question of this kind. For my own part I do not see why the Imperial Council should not consider among other things, with full information furnished to it from the Secretariat, the desirability of omitting some items that we are deeply concerned in from the proposed tariff between our respective countries, possibly foodstuffs. That is a matter which a Conference, sitting as we are now, cannot go into the detail of, but we could get an immense amount of information concerning it which would be of great use to us in arriving at a decision. New Zealand has taken up the matter of a Council at the instigation of the Secretary of State for the Colonies in the despatch referred to by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, sent out in 1905. The three previous Conferences to the present one have all felt, though they have derived practical good from the interchange of ideas between the representative men in charge of the affairs of the respective countries, a certain amount of hopelessness owing to the difficulty of putting into some practical effect the decisions arrived at at the casual Conferences that have been held.

I merely wish to say upon this question that if it is possible as the result of the discussions for us to arrive at some basis upon which we could construct an Imperial Conference of a permanent character, then I think the meeting of the representative men of the respective countries would certainly have done good.

Dr. JAMESON : Lord Elgin, I would first say that I recognise what Sir Joseph Ward has said, the advantage of having unanimity upon this subject, or any other subject which comes before this Conference. Nothing will be done unless we are all unanimous, and I was very glad to hear the extremely moderate and very lucid statement of Mr. Deakin on the question of Conferences. I was glad to see from that lucid statement that he was able to remove from the mind of Sir Wilfrid Laurier the idea that he had any elaborate scheme to propose with regard to the constitution of this so-called Imperial Council, which I may say at once I would be glad to see changed in name to the Imperial Conference. We did not wish to initiate any new scheme whatever, as Mr. Deakin has explained; all that we desired was to make more efficient the work of the Conference, as the Conference stands at present.

I noticed that Sir Wilfrid Laurier still practically stands to the objection to the second portion of the scheme, that is the Secretariat, the new office to be created in England. Sir Joseph Ward says he does not want to see any new office created in England; at the same time there is a desire that there should be some connecting link between the Conferences during the three or four years when we do not sit, and unless you have something in the form of a Secretariat I do not see how you will get that desirable link. Then I do not think Mr. Deakin exactly expressed his answer to Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Sir Wilfrid Laurier asked : "Who is it to be the Secretariat of—the Prime Minister of England?" and Mr. Deakin said : "Yes," but I do not think Mr. Deakin meant that exactly; he meant it should be the Secretariat to all

Second Day.  
17 April 1907.

PROPOSED  
IMPERIAL  
COUNCIL.  
(Sir Joseph  
Ward.)