

Second Day.  
17 April 1907.

PROPOSED  
IMPERIAL  
COUNCIL.

(Sir Joseph  
Ward.)

the Prime Ministers of the Empire,—the Prime Ministers of England and of all the self-governing Colonies. My idea of the Secretariat was that each of those Colonies should appoint its representative upon it, the Prime Minister of England also being represented upon it. I think this the right arrangement as far as the self-governing Colonies are concerned, because, after all, at the back of the whole of this is the fear of the expense of any new body here and the possibility that that body might grow in power so as to interfere with the powers as they exist in the self-governing Colonies themselves. I think we are all unanimous in this room, and I know how strong the feeling is that we ought not to delegate any possibility of any power away from the self-governing Colonies, but that we ought to increase their powers. What we are anxious to do is, of course, to get each individually into constitutional equality with the Motherland; it may be a very disproportionate equality, but that is our idea, really that we are going to be nations, not separate from the United Kingdom but nations within the United Empire. But it is to be nations; so I want to disabuse General Botha's mind, he having mentioned the subject to me a couple of days ago, and also the mind of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, from the idea that we are not as strong as they are on this subject of maintaining absolute control over local affairs in our various Colonies. With that idea, to show that no power could accumulate to this Secretariat, I would propose, at first at all events, that that Secretariat should be composed really of our representatives in this country at the present moment, who are entirely under our control so far as we are concerned. In the case of Canada, New Zealand and Australia, it would be the High Commissioners, and in the case of the other Colonies it would be our Agents-General. Then, as to the work. What would they do during the three or four years with no guiding hand? I think there will be plenty of work for them to do—in fact, I consider each of these High Commissioners or Agents-General probably would create a department with perhaps one or two clerks under the Agent-General to do the investigation work that would be required in preparing what I call the brief for the coming Conference. Till then the Secretariat would consist of either the present or other representatives appointed by the various Colonies themselves, entirely under the authority of those various Colonies, and that would form, I think, a beginning only of the link between the Conferences as at present established. I understand the 1902 Conference passed a resolution that the Conference should be every four years, or at all events, should occur within four years, and I have no doubt that before we part we will pass a resolution that we should meet every four or five years, or whatever the term may be.

On that same point again Mr. Deakin said that in preparation for the Conference the Secretariat would work out these subjects as, I say, the brief for the Conference, and at the same time in working up this brief various subjects might be proposed which on investigation it might be found it was not worth while bringing forward, and they would be abandoned. Of course that Secretariat would have no power to abandon or create anything; they would be abandoned, as Sir Joseph Ward suggested, by correspondence between them and all the Prime Ministers, and by the authority of the Conference, although the Conference might be scattered at that particular time all over the Empire.

Mr. DEAKIN : Precisely.

Dr. JAMESON : Still the whole power is left with the Conference, and I may say I contemplate that this Conference will not attempt to get any further than merely consultative work even in the Conference itself; there is no possible increase of power. As I say, it is a kind of seed which may grow.