

Mr. DEAKIN : Lord Elgin, the emphasis which you laid upon the assertion of the principle that you could not consent to the creation of any body which should be independent of the Government of this country is one which will be cordially re-echoed by every representative from the self-governing colonies. We could take back no proposition more unpalatable to those whom we represent than one for the creation of an authority which would have control over them and not be subject to their control. No such suggestion was ever intended. Certainly it was never present in my mind, and certainly it would be repudiated by our Parliaments. I do not, however, quite apply the same doctrine as Sir Wilfrid Laurier did. He, at all events, had not excluded it from his mind, when dealing with the question of the secretariat. Before coming to that second branch of the subject, let me hope no remark that I made would bear one interpretation which you appeared to think possible with regard to the submission of work to this Conference. I have to say that the first Conference, so far as I am aware, which has been in any way properly equipped, has been this Conference. You have been good enough also to add to the information supplied some other information—I think at the suggestion of some of us—most of it already complete, which is very valuable. I had not certainly any intention of implying any defect on the part of the submissions to this Conference under present conditions. The difficulty is that the result of those submissions reaches us just as we are arriving or have arrived in this country, and I candidly confess that with the best will in the world and with long hours of wakefulness, and constant occupation, I have not yet been able to read a single line of them. On coming to London, especially after a long interval, being met with the overwhelming kindness which all visitors experience, and also met with a rush of official and business communications of one kind and another, which have been apparently suspended for the purpose of constituting a shower when we arrive, it has been perfectly impossible, at least so far as I am concerned, to give that valuable information the consideration which it deserves. One of the objects of the secretariat is that not only that the information should be obtained up to date, but that it should be available at a time and in a place where it could be properly weighed and criticized beforehand. I have no doubt as we proceed we shall be able to make use of it.

Second Day.
17 April 1907.

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PROPOSED
IMPERIAL
COUNCIL.

CHAIRMAN : Of course some part of the information can scarcely be prepared until the last moment.

Mr. DEAKIN : Some portion of it, but it is necessary, if we are to come here equipped for work, that it should be in our possession much longer than these valuable summaries have yet been.

With respect to one allusion your Lordship made to this very interesting paper, which is called "Notes upon the action taken pursuant to the resolution of the last Colonial Conference of 1902," there is on page 2, the resolution of 1902 quoted "That so far as may be consistent with the confidential negotiations on treaties with Foreign Powers the views of the Colonies affected should be obtained, in order that they may be in a better position to give adhesion to such treaties." There is a statement that a despatch was sent to the Colonial Governments, and a memorandum on the means of facilitating such communications is to be laid before the present Conference. What I should like to be informed, and am not informed by this memorandum, is whether any treaties of any kind have been negotiated since that resolution was carried; and, if so, did any communications pass with any and which of our governments in relation to them.