

Second Day  
17 April 1907

PROPOSED  
IMPERIAL  
COUNCIL  
(Mr. Deakin.)

information, or deal with matters of that kind, which, so far as you are concerned, need not reach you at all, except in the sense that you are satisfied your officers do their duty.

CHAIRMAN: I think I made an observation with reference to that point that it would mean the creation of a new office of considerable size.

Mr. DEAKIN: The idea we have of it would be that those matters would still go to the Departments which now deal with them. There is no idea of appointing an immense Secretariat to cope with them. All the Departments of this Government would remain—the Colonial Office, the Foreign Office, the Board of Trade—and matters of inquiry and ordinary communications would go to those Departments as a matter of course. What I thought might be attached to the Prime Minister personally were those despatches which have respect to the exercise of the self-governing functions of self-governing communities, all great constitutional questions of matters involving constitutional questions. Those happily do not arise frequently, and would not therefore involve so great a tax upon his time as might at first sight appear to be implied. As I said at the beginning of the discussion, I have hesitated to speak at the length that the subject really demands, because I thought we were rather approaching a general agreement to be followed up by dealing with points detail by detail. I apologize for having taken so long, but cherish these ideas believing they can be realised at once with great profit and with a still stronger conviction that ultimately the development of these Conferences is likely to be in this direction. I do not belittle the work of the Colonial Office—it is simply gigantic—but the Colonial Office finds it necessary to omit India. It was recognised to be perfectly impossible for this office to include the administration of that vast country, with its enormous population. In the same way the Colonial Office must expect to see the self-governing communities outgrow its capacity for control, which is not capable of being definitely extended. I think the Secretary of State has told us that he has as much work as he can transact at the present time, yet, so far from the calls upon him diminishing from this great array of countries whose names I see emblazoned on the outside of those wall-maps, I know, and we all know, that these calls are increasing, owing to the strides being made in the development of those countries. I had the pleasure of reading one speech of yours, Lord Elgin, and another by your able associate, Mr. Winston Churchill, which conveyed to the people of this country and our people some proper sense of the immensity of the great Crown colonies of which we confess we do not possess much knowledge, any more than the people here possess much knowledge of us. You have an enormous task of administration there. But the successful administration of those colonies calls for methods of administration and treatment and begets an attitude of mind, based upon presuppositions and preconceptions, which cannot be escaped from but which do not at all attach to self-governing States, which are quite foreign to us, and give us a general sense of discussing a question with persons who have already made up their minds upon it on another basis altogether. Consequently, I wish to say that it is no reflection to say that this great Department has already ample and growing work on its hands apart from the self-governing communities, and that in course of time it must expect to see those communities, first of all relieving the Department by undertaking a good deal more for themselves, and next, by sending their despatches to the Prime Minister, where they will not be jostled in a Department overburdened with administrative work like and yet different in character.