

Third Day.
18 April 1907.

Sir WILLIAM LYNE : May I be allowed to ask a question ?

CHAIRMAN : Certainly.

Sir WILLIAM LYNE : Yesterday I tried to listen to the discussion which took place; I could not hear it very well, and I want to know exactly what my position, at any rate, is at the Conference. If it is to sit and listen I might as well be somewhere else. I am sitting a long way away from my Prime Minister and I cannot communicate with him when the discussions are going on; and what I want to know, Sir, is whether it would be out of order if I, or any one who desired to say a word or two upon any question, were either to ask to be allowed to do so or to do so. There was a matter yesterday which I did not understand was completed until I saw it this morning in reference to the word "Imperial." I wanted to say a word or two about that because I do not agree with it unless the word "Imperial" is explained as to what its intended meaning is. All I want to ask you, Sir, now, is exactly what position I hold at this Conference. I understood we were to be full members of the Conference, but I did not feel I was so yesterday.

CHAIRMAN : I think, Sir William, you were not present when we were discussing this on the former occasion.

Sir WILLIAM LYNE : I was, part of the time.

CHAIRMAN : What I understood—and I speak in the presence of my colleagues—the position to be was this, that in future we would not maintain the absolute rule which was laid down at the last Conference by which the membership of the Conference was confined strictly to the Prime Ministers themselves but that we would admit to the Conference-room freely any Minister belonging to the Governments of the colonies who accompanied their Prime Ministers. They were therefore to come into the room and to be entitled to sit at the table, but I also suggested, and I think it was accepted by the members of the Conference, that we should continue the practice, that their presence was to assist the Prime Ministers and that, therefore, it depended on the subject under discussion which of any number of Ministers in attendance should take part in the particular discussion, and that it should be an honourable understanding between us that not more than one Minister from each colony should give assistance to his Prime Minister at one and the same meeting. I think that correctly represents the state of affairs. If there is anything in which I have not correctly represented it perhaps some one will correct me.

Sir WILLIAM LYNE : You will see it is quite impossible for me to confer with my Prime Minister, and, therefore, I cannot be of any assistance to him.

CHAIRMAN : With regard to places at the table, I am entirely in the hands of the Conference, but as soon as any question came up on which a Prime Minister wished to confer with his Minister we would place him next to his Prime Minister. I thought on this occasion as it was a question of the constitution of the Conference itself it would be more convenient that the Prime Ministers should sit near this end of the table, but I am entirely in your hands in that respect.

Sir WILLIAM LYNE : I do not want to seem persistent, but the position that I feel myself placed in is this : I am present, my mouth is shut. I