

for a Conference; if it were possible to frame a Constitution by which a Conference could be set up the word "permanent" would be unnecessary as the constitution itself would imply permanency. In the absence of a Constitution I think we ought to affirm permanency or continuity in some way, so that at all events the public could understand that this is intended to be a permanent Imperial Conference. I do not attach very great importance to the actual word "permanent," but I think up till now it has been looked upon as a sort of irregular assemblage of the responsible heads of the Governments of the different parts of the Empire, and in my opinion it is desirable to state that it is a permanent Imperial Conference.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Do you not think that is met by the new draft? Would you please read it again, Lord Elgin?

CHAIRMAN: "That it will be to the advantage of the Empire if Conferences, to be called Imperial Conferences, are held every four or five years, at which questions of common interest affecting the relations of the Mother Country and His Majesty's dominions over the seas may be discussed and considered as between His Majesty's Government and the Governments of the self-governing Colonies. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom will be *ex officio* President, and the Prime Ministers of the self-governing Colonies *ex officio* Members of the Conference. The Secretary of State for the Colonies will be an *ex officio* Member of the Conference, and will take the chair in the absence of the President, and will arrange for such Imperial Conferences after communication with the Prime Ministers of the respective Colonies. In the case of any emergency arising upon which a special Imperial Conference may have been deemed necessary, the next ordinary Conference to be held not sooner than three years thereafter."

Sir JOSEPH WARD: Yes, I think that does carry it out clearly, Sir. That is really a definite proposal to have a permanent series of conferences every four or five years; that resolution, if passed, will, I think, meet the point I have been urging.

Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL: You cannot have any higher sanction for the Conference than the resolution of the previous Conference.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: That is so; I am perfectly satisfied.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I am perfectly satisfied also with the draft as far as it goes, as far as it has been read, that the Conference should meet periodically; but I would like to suggest, on the lines of the suggestion made by Sir William Lyne, that it would be greatly to the advantage of the members of the Conference if they could have the advice of their colleagues. We come here to meet questions of general interest, upon which the Prime Minister is quite able to talk for his Government; but there are of necessity questions of a peculiar character which are better dealt with by the Minister of the particular Department concerned — for instance, questions of war, questions of navigation, and questions of emigration. I feel that upon all these questions it is greatly to my advantage that I have my colleague, who is the Minister of Militia and Defence, and my colleague who is the Minister of Marine and Fisheries. I feel, also, the loss of my colleague, the Minister of Finance. Those gentlemen come for the very purpose, and they can simply, as we have done in the past, talk upon these peculiar subjects in which they are more directly interested. But their position is rather awkward, because they have simply to dance attendance, having nothing to do, although they are qualified to speak more even than I am, and more than my friend, Mr. Deakin, on the questions of their special departments. It is a position

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FUTURE
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
CONFERENCE.
(Sir
Joseph Ward.)