

Third Day.
18 April 1907.
—
FUTURE
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
CONFERENCE.
(Sir
Wilfrid Laurier.)

which is somewhat unsatisfactory to them that in the meantime, as Sir William Lyne pointed out, they have simply to fold their arms and do nothing. Therefore the amendment I would suggest would be that the Conference should be composed, as stated here, of the Prime Ministers, but with the privilege (I do not like this word "Colonies"—the Governments of the Dependencies Beyond the Seas) "to be assisted by a certain number of their "colleagues," say not to exceed three, for instance. I would not like to make the body unwieldy in its number, and I would limit the number to three.

CHAIRMAN: May I make a personal explanation, I did not mean in any way to go back upon what we had settled, and, therefore, the only thing I dealt with here is whether they were *ex officio* members. When I proposed that it should be "discussed and considered as between His Majesty's "Government and the governments of the self-governing Colonies," I left it entirely open what the representation of the self-governing Colonies as of His Majesty's Government would be.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: The Conference should be composed *ex officio* of the Prime Minister of England, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, also *ex officio*, and then the Prime Ministers of the different self-governing Colonies *ex officio*, with the further privilege for the local governments to determine the number of representatives they should send here, but I would limit the number so as not to make the Conference unwieldy. If there were five, or six, or seven from each government, there would be too large a party to sit at this Board, but if you were to limit it to a certain number, I would suggest three, subject to amendment, and I think that would obviate the difficulty which Sir William Lyne has indicated.

Dr. JAMESON: And that these Ministers should be actual members of the Conference?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Yes.

General BOTHA: With the right of voting?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: No; I would only give one vote for one government, but give the right to participate in all discussions.

Mr. DEAKIN: That differs from the arrangement adopted on the last day—I forget on whose proposition—that Ministers should be always heard on questions affecting their Departments and at other times, but not more than two in any debate.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I do not mean it for this Conference, Mr. Deakin, we are settling now the Conference not for this time, but for the future. We have made special arrangements for the present case, and this proposal is not to come into force now. This is what I would suggest for the future.

Mr. DEAKIN: I understand; you propose a different procedure.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Lord Elgin proposes: "That it will be "to the advantage of the Empire if conferences to be called Imperial "Conferences are held every four or five years" (for my part I think five years a very good period) "at which questions of common interests "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