

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : Ours is five.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : The world is moving very rapidly, and I think five years would be a sufficient distance between the Conferences; but I agree with Dr. Jameson that it ought to be defined.

CHAIRMAN : Yes, that is only put in brackets, and you will observe that in case of emergency and a special Imperial Conference special arrangements would be made.

Dr. JAMESON : Cannot we propose it as five years now ?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I would not offer any serious objection to five years.

Mr. DEAKIN : I beg pardon, surely four years is quite long enough ? It depends, of course, upon and is governed by several considerations, among them the duration of Parliaments. In New Zealand and Australia, the duration of Parliament is three years; that practically means in each case that either a different Administration or an Administration that has appealed again to the people and received their confidence would be present. This period, so far as we are concerned, appears to meet the necessities of the case. I am far from saying that this ought to govern the period, but approach the question from that individual experience with the idea that the meetings of this Conference ought to be rather fixed at their minimum. If circumstances arise, as they did in regard to this present meeting, which make the term five years instead of four, that is a matter for the members of the proposed Conference, and it can be so resolved, but I venture to suggest that four years is quite a long enough time to permit, and indeed to call for a review of previous determinations, if they can be dignified by the use of that rather strong word.

A further question will arise presently with reference to the bridging of the interval between Conference and Conference. Obviously, the greater the interval the greater the difficulty of bridging it and the greater the strain. It may be that if these gatherings become regular in the future, if they are efficiently connected one with another, the question of the time, as it would be perfectly open to reconsideration at any moment, might come up again, but for us at this stage, with the Conferences in their present rudimentary position, with their uncertain influence, and with the many new factors which may require to be taken into account, it appears to me that four years is rather a longer than a shorter period than would be desirable. I believe, Sir Wilfrid, you have quinquennial Parliaments.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : Yes.

Mr. DEAKIN : I can quite understand that under those circumstances the longer period would harmonize with your circumstances, but, in spite of the great burden which attendance here imposes upon those who may happen to be in office at the time, I am inclined to think that four years leaves quite long enough a gap, and that, save under special circumstances, that should be the regular time of meeting. I would rather make it less than more, but certainly, so far as I am individually advised, not more than four years.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : What was the resolution passed at the former Conference ?