

Majesty might from time to time direct to be summoned to it, the Colonial Secretary might be empowered to refer such questions as he should think proper for their advice. The reports of this Committee would, of course, have no legal authority till confirmed by the Queen on the advice of her Ministers, whose responsibility for all the acts of the Government would thus remain unaltered. But the Colonial Agents representing the several Legislatures would exercise a powerful influence in guiding the policy of the Government. Questions arise which more immediately affect the colonies, but on which peace or war for the Empire may eventually turn—such as those relating to the maintenance of British rights of fishery. These would naturally be referred to such a Committee; and if a quarrel with some foreign State should arise from the course taken by our Government, it would have far more hearty support from the colonies if they had, through their representatives, been consulted on the steps that had led to it. There are very many other matters on which the wishes and opinions of the colonies ought to have weight in deciding on the measures of the Government, and on all these the proposed Committee would enable them to make themselves heard. The Imperial Government would not rightly resist what might be found from the proceedings of the Committee to be the general wish of the colonies; and, on the other hand, it would derive from it valuable support in resisting unreasonable wishes sometimes put forward by the colonies. That unreasonable wishes and demands are sometimes urged by the colonies is very clear. Nothing, for instance, can, I think, be more unreasonable than the demand which seems now to be made by the Australian Colonies, that England should set up a claim to dominion over the whole Pacific, with a right to exclude all other nations from islands which neither she nor her colonists are able to occupy and administer. If this demand were gravely put forward in the Colonial Committee which I have suggested, the Secretary of State would almost certainly find himself supported in opposing so preposterous a demand by representatives of all the colonies not immediately concerned. At the same time the claim of the Cape colonists that no foreign Power should be allowed to occupy Zululand would probably be supported by the whole Committee. In short, the English at Home would be able to secure support for their opposition to manifestly unreasonable colonial propositions among the reasonable colonial representatives; but when the English beyond the sea were unanimous in opposing Home policy, there would be a free presumption that we were in the wrong. Such at least," said Lord Grey, "seems to me to be a reasonable and a practical suggestion, which only needs to be worked with prudence and common sense in order to arrest the tendencies working in favour of disintegration and to operate directly in favour of the restoration and the maintenance of the unity of the Empire."

No. 29.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(Telegram.)

Sydney, 14th July, 1885.

FEDERAL Council Bill distasteful to this colony in present shape. If following amendments be made, there is more chance of this colony coming in. I cannot guarantee its joining even then, but it is worth the chance, for without this colony and New Zealand the whole thing will be a *fiasco*. In fifth clause, line thirteen, after word "each," insert, "or such enlarged number, but in same proportion, as the Council may from time to time determine;" clause fifteen, subsection (i), line eight, after word "desirable," insert "by the Legislatures of all the colonies;" clause sixteen, omit in line twenty "relating to those colonies or their relations with one another," and insert "which such Legislatures are empowered to refer under clause fifteen;" clause nine, line fifteen, after word "interest," insert "which have been referred to it by the Legislatures of all the colonies." Clause thirty-one must be retained; we prefer it to that suggested in Dillon Bell's letter 2nd June. Remember our Parliament alone can give its assent; my present object is to make a possible opening for that assent. See Secretary for Colonies at once; represent strongly these views, and that without them I do not think this colony will join; explain that to-morrow official telegram will reach him to this effect through Governor.

No. 30.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY to the AGENT-GENERAL.

(Telegram.)

Sydney, 14th July, 1885.

READ my telegram with following alterations: Omit fourth word. Substitute for "the whole thing will be a *fiasco*," the words "it cannot be truly a Federal Council of Australasia." Omit from suggested amendment of fifth clause the words "but in same proportion." Make proposed insertion in subsection (i) govern the whole clause, by substituting for the words "two or more," in second line, the words "all the;" which involves alteration of sixteenth clause, first line, by omitting "any two or more."

No. 31.

The AGENT-GENERAL to the COLONIAL SECRETARY.

(Telegram.)

London, 15th July, 1885.

FEDERAL Bill: Have seen Secretary of State. Will consider your proposed amendments. Bill has been postponed until Monday.

No. 32.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY to His Excellency the GOVERNOR.

MY DEAR LORD AUGUSTUS,—

Colonial Secretary's Office, Sydney, 15th July, 1885.

Observing that the present Imperial Government intend to proceed with the Federal Council Bill, this Cabinet has had under its consideration whether it should take any, and what, steps