

Second Day.
17 April 1907.

PROPOSED
IMPERIAL
COUNCIL
(Chairman.)

whether the time will come when science and the inventor may make that practicable—and one feels a doubt whether one ought to put any limit to the triumphs which await science and the inventor—still, at any rate, that is not a part of the discussion to-day, and we must deal with the problems as we find them. I would only just say, therefore, that with regard to this meeting I understand the Conference is, with practical unanimity, agreed—I think I may put it as far as that—to accept the designation of “Imperial Conference.” I think, as far as I am able to speak for His Majesty’s Government, that we would be perfectly prepared to accept that designation, and to allow the matter to stand as regards that branch of the subject, on that footing. I think that designation originally came from Canada, and, therefore, I suppose I may assume that Canada would carry us so far. I think that can be taken as one result, but I should not like to limit the resolution to that. The Prime Minister spoke with emphasis on Monday of his desire for some means of “maintaining the impetus.” This is really a discussion of business relations, not quite on the same grade, perhaps, as the former part of the subject, but still of immense importance. I should like, with all deference to Mr. Deakin, to say that I am not prepared to admit that I am ashamed in any way of the submissions which have been made to this Conference. It is not only the Colonial Office, but every department, I think I might say, of the British Government, who have been concerned in laying before the Conference what I venture to maintain are a remarkable series of papers. It has been our business in the Colonial Office, of course, to co-ordinate and arrange them, but we do not profess to take credit for more than it has been our duty to do. What I hope is that the Conference will now, or, at any rate, when the business of these meetings has been completed, feel that the Colonial Office have done all they can to put the subjects before them orderly and with full information, and will, so far, at any rate, express approval of the efforts of my friends the Secretaries, who have been mainly responsible in this matter. But it is said that even if that is so this work is ephemeral; when the Conference is dissolved the organization disappears and the thread is lost. I am not quite clear that I should even admit that altogether. I think, in justice to my office, and in justice to the other offices of the British Government, that if you study these papers—for instance, this paper laid before you describing the progress of events—you will find that a good deal has been done on a number of subjects between the last Conference and this. I am not in the least inclined to dispute that there would be an advantage in more continuity, but I would say so under one condition, that I think that any organization established for that purpose must be under a responsible head. We must remember that many, if not most, of the subjects which come before the Conference are highly confidential. They are matters which deal with information from official sources. If we advance so far as to approach a remedy, that remedy must be obtained, either in this country or in the Colonies, by the efforts of the legislature.

I may refer to some observations that have been made in the course of this discussion with regard to the position of the Colonial Office. It has been suggested that the Colonial Office should cease to be in communication with the responsibly-governed Colonies, and should restrict its energies to the Crown Colonies. No doubt at one time most of the responsibly-governed Colonies, if not all of them, were Crown Colonies, and the change has come gradually. To a certain extent that has been recognised in the Office itself. Within the last year we have been brought face to face with the fact that in the Transvaal, and very shortly in the Orange River Colony, we have two additions to the number of self-governing Colonies, and some re-organization of our office would be desirable, and we have had it under consideration. I do not know whether the Conference will call upon the Colonial Office to provide for the continuity which it desires. If the Conference should so call,