

Third Day.
18 April 1907.

FUTURE
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
CONFERENCE.
(Mr. Deakin.)

Colonies we may obtain whether in one Chamber or the other, such a statesman, but even he, the longer his stay in the office may be, is more and more likely to be impregnated with the same methods and the same associations. I do not wish to labour the point or unduly elaborate it, but ventured to put it yesterday that it would be no loss to the Colonial Office in one sense to part with the self-governing communities whose major communications of a constitutional and important character are few, and the great bulk of whose correspondence and despatches relate to matters of administration that need never come under the purview of the Minister himself. In their great issues they do feel that the efficiency of the Governments they are called upon to undertake would be assisted by a more sympathetic understanding both of the difficulties by which they are confronted, and the means which they must adopt in order to cope with them, I believe it would be of advantage to us, and no derogation from an office of this magnitude if it were to part with us. This it can afford to do and yet retain a great part of the earth's surface and a great portion of its population under its control. Any proposal, therefore, which keeps this secretariat associated with the Colonial Office will always be liable at all events to the imputation, and will probably continue to furnish some evidence from time to time of the fact that there are grounds for that imputation, that it will not approach us as we would approach each other in matters of that kind. If Canada and Australia, or Australia and South Africa were exchanging communications their attitude would be different from that often adopted by this Office, but ours would be the same attitude in each case, because no matter how far apart we are, or our subjects or circumstances, our ends are always sought subject to the same considerations and in much the same manner. I do not wish to labour this, but assert that if you wish to give the greatest confidence to this new secretariat, if you really wish to give it a free hand and an opportunity of justifying itself—if you wish to dissociate it from the prejudice or prepossession, which now exists, if you wish to see it established in complete consonance with the principle laid down of governments consulting governments, I think it would be a distinct advantage to have it from the outset severed from this Department or any other department of the kind. Only in its own atmosphere and in suitable surroundings, and if possible under the Prime Minister of Great Britain, can it fulfil the important functions it will be called upon to discharge. I ask pardon for detaining the Conference so long.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: I certainly prefer this draft to any other that has yet been offered to the Conference, but I must say I would not like to express a definite opinion at this moment. It was understood yesterday when this draft was proposed that we should receive it last night, but I did not receive it until 10 o'clock this morning, and did not read it until I came to this Office.

CHAIRMAN: It was sent to you yesterday at 3 o'clock.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Possibly, but I did not get it until this morning.

CHAIRMAN: I am in the hands of the Conference, if they wish to consider it further.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: I would like to say, Lord Elgin, that while I would not for a moment presume to put my oar in and say how it should