

Third Day.
18 April 1907.

FUTURE
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
CONFERENCE.

CHAIRMAN : Four years; it was a compromise.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : So far as I am concerned, the point is not worth pressing.

CHAIRMAN : As far as His Majesty's Government are concerned, they are only too pleased to see you at any time, and what weighed with us was really the question of the great inconvenience to those who have to come.

Mr. DEAKIN : It is a great inconvenience, but it has to be faced.

CHAIRMAN : What do you say, Dr. Jameson ?

Dr. JAMESON : I am in favour of the shorter period; I agree with Mr. Deakin about that.

Mr. F. R. MOOR : It has been aptly put, Sir, that we are here to plant a seed which may develop into a tree hereafter, and I think the more closely that tree is being watched and matured the better, and I vote for the shorter period. In process of time we may find, as the world is developing so rapidly, that four years is quite a long enough time to elapse before calling together again such a Conference as this. I therefore vote for the shorter period.

General BOTHA : I have no serious objection against the shorter period of four years, although personally I think five years would suit me very much better.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : You will find in practice great inconvenience, but I do not care about it; the point is not worth pressing.

Mr. DEAKIN : The inconvenience is in a greater degree ours.

CHAIRMAN : Then shall we keep it four ?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : Yes; in deference to the expressions of opinion from the different members that I have heard I concur.

CHAIRMAN : Four years. We are now in a position to pass on to the next point.

Mr. DEAKIN : "Questions of common interest," is perhaps as wide a phrase as it is desirable to employ, because after all there is no such strict restriction of common interest as to imply that each must necessarily affect the interest of all. I merely mention this in passing, but the idea with which we used this phrase was that any question which touches the interests of more than one of the dominions beyond the seas is a matter of common interest and, further, that any matter which affects even one of these dominions at a time, if it involves a principle capable of application to other dominions is also a matter of common interest. I assume, Sir, that you will take that broad reading.

CHAIRMAN : I, certainly, myself, should not put a restrictive construction upon it to limit the force of the expression.