

CHAIRMAN : I do not think he can.

Third Day.
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FUTURE
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
CONFERENCE.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I understand that, and also agree that it must be under direct ministerial control. We all recognise that should be the case. Upon the point referred to by Dr. Jameson, may I suggest that I think it would be very valuable to the Colonies and also to the Colonial Office, if when the secretarial staff is formed, you recognised the importance of allowing some one connected with that staff to spend some time out in our Colonies, if only for the purpose of obtaining information, upon the methods of carrying on your business with us, as, on the spot, a capable officer would get a useful insight into the work and system of administration of our Governments. That is a very important matter, and if the suggestion were carried out it would add invaluable to the working of the Colonial Office at home in connection with the Colonies. Speaking for my own country I think it would be a matter of very great importance if such a thing could be done. In view of the very important statements made by Lord Elgin as to division of the self-governing and Crown Colonies, I have only to say that I very heartily congratulate him and the Conference upon it. We have his assurance that he proposes to divide the Administration of the Colonial Office in such a way as he may think best in his own Department, so that the self-governing Colonies will be treated separately from the Crown Colonies, and from my point of view I regard that as very important. I am very glad indeed to find that Lord Elgin concurs in what I have previously said. In our countries, we consider it of the first importance in the administration of our affairs that from time to time that we should confer with the Colonial Office. I suggest that the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for the Colonies should confer as to what should be done in regard to the secretarial staff. I do not seem to be quite in accord with some of my colleagues upon that point, but I should be quite content with the already important steps we have achieved towards the continuity of the Conference and the creation of a link to be kept up during the period of four years between meetings, and I think it would be a very great pity that any difference of opinion should prevent us coming to a unanimous conclusion on the matter. Under the circumstances, I shall support the proposal as it is, and shall look forward to it working out with satisfaction to all concerned.

I am very glad to know that the important men who carry on the representation of our countries here—our High Commissioners and Agents-General—will be recognised as being a medium, at all events, through which the Colonies may from time to time make representations that will be heard, as they always have been so far as my experience has gone, at the office of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in connection with this Imperial Conference on matters we desire to bring forward.

CHAIRMAN : One of the first meetings I had in this room was with the Agents-General of all the Colonies, and I specially asked, if they had any business at any time to bring forward, if they would be so good as to let me know.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I think, Sir, they have the most cordial feeling towards you, so far as I know.

Mr. DEAKIN : Do you propose to omit these words “ under the direction of the Secretary of State for the Colonies ” ?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : No, I propose to leave them in.