

Third Day.
18 April 1907.

FUTURE
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
CONFERENCE.

Mr. F. R. MOOR : May we have the last paragraph read again ?

CHAIRMAN : I will read the whole of it from the beginning : " That it will be to the advantage of the Empire if Conferences, to be called Imperial Conferences, are held every four years, at which questions of common interest may be discussed and considered as between His Majesty's Government and the Governments of the self-governing Dominions. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom will be *ex officio* President, and the Prime Ministers of the self-governing Colonies *ex officio* members of the Conference. The Secretary of State for the Colonies will be an *ex officio* member of the Conference, and will take the chair in the absence of the President, and will arrange for such Imperial Conferences after communication with the Prime Ministers of the respective Dominions. That it is desirable to establish a system by which the several Governments represented shall be kept informed during the periods between the Conferences in regard to matters which have been or may be subjects for discussion by means of a permanent secretarial staff, charged under the direction of the Secretary of State for the Colonies with the duty of obtaining information for the use of the Conference, of attending to its resolutions, and of conducting correspondence on matters relating to its affairs. That upon matters of importance, either in this country or in His Majesty's Dominions beyond the seas which require consultation in common between two or more of the Governments, or which cannot be conveniently postponed until the next Conference, or which involve subjects of a minor character, or such as require detailed consideration, subsidiary Conferences should be held between the representatives of such Dominions and the Mother Country specially chosen for the purpose."

Dr. SMARTT : Surely the word " Dominions " would not refer to the various Colonies in South Africa. It would not be a dominion unless it were federated like Canada or Australia; New Zealand might be called a Dominion, it being two islands under one Government, but you could not call Cape Colony a dominion.

CHAIRMAN : Yes,—“ self-governing Dominion ” is what we call you here.

Dr. SMARTT : Is not the word " Dominions " in the title of the King ?

CHAIRMAN : In the King's title the words " Dominions beyond the seas " cover everything, and it was in order to restrict the term to self-governing parts of the Empire beyond the seas that we put in the words " self-governing."

Mr. DEAKIN : I prefer the words " Dominions concerned " which point back directly to those engaged in the Conference. The words " such Dominions " leave it at large.

CHAIRMAN : Personally, I agree with Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and should like to look through it when it is copied.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : I think we should consider it. It is too important a matter to pass over without having a moment of reflection about it. We know the importance of this document, and I think it is worth while to be a little careful about its wording.