

Fourth Day.
20 April 1907.

FUTURE
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
CONFERENCE.
(Sir Wilfrid
Laurier.)

I think it is quite surplusage and means nothing at all. If you have a conference upon various things, either defence, or education, or anything of that kind, it will always be called as a purely voluntary body, as is done constantly. But if, on the subject of education, for instance, the conference to be called were to put in question the terms of the Act which at present puts the subject of education under the Provincial governments, any amount of mischief might be created, and therefore, I do not think it is a good thing. But if it be that the Conference is called simply to advance and promote education, or give a larger scope to it, I can quite understand that it would be a purely voluntary conference to give advice. I would be afraid under the terms of this Conference you might bring in political questions which would create very serious embarrassment to us.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I understood this paragraph applied entirely to the governments represented by the Prime Ministers who are here, and it should not go beyond that. If it goes beyond that I foresee all sorts of complication.

Mr. DEAKIN : I do not press it then at this juncture.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : I am satisfied.

CHAIRMAN : What is the result ?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : Let it go as it is.

Mr. DEAKIN : Yes.

CHAIRMAN : Then I put it that this Resolution is the Resolution of the Conference.

The Resolution, as amended, was carried unanimously.

MILITARY
DEFENCE.

MILITARY DEFENCE.

CHAIRMAN : We have now the advantage of the presence of the Secretary of State for War, who will give us his views. I think it will be the wish of the Conference that I should ask the Secretary of State for War to address us.

Mr. HALDANE : My Lord Chairman and gentlemen, I think it will be for the convenience of the Conference that I should state very shortly what the point is that seems to us to be most important for discussion, and for arriving at some fairly clear conclusion.

To plunge at once into things, the effect of the war in South Africa made a profound impression on the minds of our advisers here. We realised that we had gone into that war without adequate preparation for war on a great scale, and that we had never fully apprehended the importance of the maxim that all preparations in time of peace must be preparation for war; it is of no use unless it is designed for that; it is the only justification for the maintenance of armies—the preparation for war. In consequence, when the war was over, the then Government set to work—and the present Government has continued the work—to endeavour to put the modern military organization into shape. In 1904 a very important Committee sat. It was presided over by a civilian who had given great attention to the study of military organization, Lord Esher, and it contained on it two very dis-