

Fifth Day.
23 April 1907.

MILITARY
DEFENCE.

Mr. HALDANE : " Is of opinion," for instance.

Mr. DEAKIN : Something of that sort, safeguarding the statement " without wishing to commit to immediate action." If we agreed to it we would not wish to commit our Governments to immediate action. We could not. It is a matter for themselves.

Mr. HALDANE : The Conference is not an executive Conference, and I should have thought if you omitted those words and put in such words as " is of opinion " it would make it quite clear that the Conference is expressing only an opinion.

Mr. DEAKIN : Yes.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : It is nothing more than an opinion there. It is to be left to the different Legislatures to legislate upon.

Mr. DEAKIN : I suggest the omission of these words, and the Resolution would then run : " That this Conference welcomes and cordially approves " the exposition of general principles embodied in the statement of the Secretary of State for War and is of opinion that for the service of the Empire " a General Staff," and so on.

Mr. HALDANE : " Is of opinion that there is a need."

Mr. DEAKIN : Yes; " Is of opinion that there is a need of developing throughout the Empire."

Dr. JAMESON : Why substitute " is of opinion " for the more emphatic " recognises and affirms " ?

Mr. DEAKIN : In order to emphasize the fact that we are not executive but merely a consultative Conference, and that the governments are the people to decide. I have no objection to " recognises and affirms," but it is suggested that it might appear to go a little further than our function warrants.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : We say we are not, of course, committing our countries to immediate action.

Dr. JAMESON : We are only a Conference and cannot do anything. Why should not we " recognise and affirm " ? They are stronger words, and I do not see why we should weaken it.

Mr. DEAKIN : I have no objection to " recognises and affirms," but was endeavouring to meet Sir Frederick Borden's view.

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN : If the words " to immediate action " are left out, I am quite satisfied with the rest, and I have no particular objection then.

CHAIRMAN : It is suggested that the whole sub-sentence from " without " to " represented " should come out.