

Mr. DEAKIN : At this stage I do not press it. We really accepted it, but when one commences to criticise it is hard to stop.

Fifth Day.
23 April 1907.

MILITARY
DEFENCE.]

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : I would like it to stand as it is, with the two short amendments we have made.

Sir FREDERICK BORDEN : Put in "selected" instead of "recruited," and leave out the words "to immediate action," and leave out the word "fostering."

CHAIRMAN : Then it reads : "That this Conference welcomes and cordially approves the exposition of general principles embodied in the statement of the Secretary of State for War, and without wishing to commit any of the Governments represented, recognises and affirms the need of developing, for the service of the Empire, a General Staff, selected from the forces of the Empire as a whole, which shall study military science in all its branches," and so on.

Dr. SMARTT : Surely that does not meet the case? I understood the feeling was that some of the Governments represented here might not be able to take part in this at once. Consequently the Secretary of State for War very wisely put in "without wishing to commit to immediate action." But really we are now going to pass a resolution under which certain of the Governments will not be committed to anything except passing a pure opinion. They do not even commit themselves to act upon it in the near future, nor even in the distant future.

Mr. HALDANE : But having agreed upon the broad principle, we should now proceed to communicate with you with a view to seeing what you could do to carry this out, and as we are all of one mind we shall at least all approach the thing from a common point of view. We would take the first action in making suggestions to you for your consideration.

Dr. SMARTT : Then would not it be better to leave it as you worded it, "without wishing to commit to immediate action, recognises and affirms the principle of establishing."

Mr. HALDANE : I do not think the words make much difference; but the point is, we have agreed on the general principle. That is the real importance of it. We could not bind or force any Government, nor do we want to. This is a deliberating Conference.

Dr. SMARTT : We do not force the Government, but we come to a conclusion as to the necessity of it as quickly as possible. That is what I want to see affirmed in the Resolution.

Mr. HALDANE : Do you think you add anything by putting in the words?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : You would not help it forward in any way by putting in "committing to immediate action." It would not get over the suggestion you are making as to any Government not taking action.