

Mr. HARCOURT—*cont.*

two co-equal permanent heads is very great. In fact, in any case, there must be some man who is responsible for the final control of the Office, and, therefore, even with those two Under Secretaries, one must be constituted by some method or other the superior, for the general control of the Colonial Office as a whole. There is another disadvantage of separating the Office so completely in the permanent part of it. Then the only person who will have common knowledge of the work in the Dominions and the Crown Colonies at the same time will be the political head, who is liable to change at any moment, and carries his memory and knowledge of the two sides of the Office away with him, leaving only the two permanent officials separated absolutely in duty and interest and with no common knowledge of the work of the two sides of the Office.

There is, I think, another side affecting the Dominions specially. If they are looking to the interest of the Under Secretary who has to deal with Dominion work, many of them, I think, would feel that it is not to their advantage or his, that he should be wholly divorced from knowledge of the proceedings in the Crown Colonies, Protectorates, and other places which are contiguous to those Dominions. I cannot think that Australia and New Zealand would really like that their Under Secretary at the Colonial Office should have no knowledge of the work in and of the control over the Pacific and the islands which are situated in it. I do not think it would be for the convenience of South Africa that the Under Secretary dealing with the Union Government should know nothing of what was being done in the Protectorates or in Rhodesia, or even in Nyasaland. I am not sure that it would be to the advantage of Canada that their Under Secretary should know nothing of the movements which might be taking place in the West Indies, which are their neighbours. Those are the two kinds of objection which occur to me to the separation. But as I say, if the Conference really press it and see any advantage to themselves and to their Dominions from such a separation, we are willing to accept it and to carry it out, though with some inconvenience, no doubt, in the Office, which I will say no more about.

Then I come to No. 3. I will not deal with it exactly in the words which are upon the paper, but I would like to make this suggestion: We have now a Secretariat which maintains a certain amount of correspondence with the Dominions, and has knowledge of the work which is going on, and carries out either the resolutions of recent past Conferences or prepares resolutions for the one which is approaching. I think the Secretariat has done admirable work in that respect under Mr. Just, and I am grateful for some words which Sir Wilfrid Laurier used in the Canadian Parliament a short time ago on that subject.

I quite understand the desire to extend the Secretariat, and the continuity of the work to make it a little more formal, but still to leave it a good deal of flexibility. We are prepared, if it would meet your wishes, to set up a Standing Committee of the Imperial Conference. You might call it a sub-conference if you like, but I prefer to call it a Standing Committee of the Imperial Conference, which would contain the Secretary of State, the Parliamentary Under Secretary, the Permanent Under Secretary—I am assuming for a moment you are not bifurcating the Colonial Office, because if you do bifurcate it it would contain only the Under Secretary for the Dominions—to whom should be joined the High Commissioners of all the Dominions or any representative in their place whom the Dominions liked to appoint for that purpose. In the case of Newfoundland, not having a High Commissioner, there would be a special appointment. And some responsible person in the Dominions Department should be appointed secretary to that Committee. That Committee would then, under the presidency of the Secretary of State, meet at intervals which may be as frequent as necessary to consider the carrying out of any resolutions which we may have come to at these Conferences, any proposals for the new Conference which is to take place, and any subsidiary matters which seem to arise out of them, or any cognate matters which may be properly referred to it. It is important, I think, to say that such a Committee must be absolutely advisory and not executive. It would be a Standing Committee of the Conference which would be advisory, of course, of the Secretary of State and informative of all members of the Conference, or rather of all Dominions constituting the Conference. The communications by the Dominions Governments to that Com-