

25 May, 1911.] RECONSTITUTION OF THE COLONIAL OFFICE.

[2nd Day.]

Mr. HARCOURT : It would be my duty to communicate to the Governor-General. It would be the duty of the High Commissioner to communicate under the instructions of his own Government to them.

The PRESIDENT : Of course, it would be *ad referendum*. The Governments must determine : just like the resolutions of this Conference, they have no executive authority.

Mr. HARCOURT : We are assuming this Committee would be dealing with certain questions which the Conference and the Dominions are anxious to see carried to a conclusion. This will be a sort of Committee which will carry to a conclusion those resolutions, and recommend the best method of carrying them out.

Mr. MALAN : Has the necessity for such a Committee been felt by the Imperial Government or by the Colonial Office here ?

Mr. HARCOURT : No, I cannot say that. This is suggested in order to meet what we thought was a want felt by the Dominion Governments. Of course, my communications are very full with the Dominion Governments through the Governors-General, and my knowledge of every movement there is very full by my personal communications with the High Commissioners, and I may say since I came into office, besides seeing the High Commissioners at any moment on any special subject, I have arranged to meet the High Commissioners of all the Dominions once every month, even though there may be no questions calling for special communication, so that we may talk over all matters they might wish to raise even without wishing to ask for an interview specially.

Mr. MALAN : I have seen the Reorganization White Paper* which has been distributed, giving the arrangement as it was given by Lord Elgin and communicated to the different Governments in September, 1907, giving the three departments of the Colonial Office now under the Permanent Under Secretary—namely, the Dominion Department, the Crown Colonies Department, and the General Department—and there are four Secretaries appointed under that. I must say, as far as the Union of South Africa is concerned, and I think General Botha will agree with me—I am speaking now more especially as the Minister of the Cape before the Union—that we found that arrangement worked very satisfactorily.

Mr. HARCOURT : You are dealing with question No. 1, the question of bifurcation—that is, you do not feel you desire any further bifurcation ?

General BOTHA : No, we do not.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : As the representative of New Zealand has put forward a proposition, it would be advisable to hear him now, and I should, for my part, be happy to hear his views.

Dr. FINDLAY : Do I understand it to be suggested that this Committee would have the function and jurisdiction to deal with the minor questions appearing on this Agenda Paper ?

Mr. HARCOURT : They would, subject to the desire of the Dominion Governments, be qualified to deal with all Conference questions.

Dr. FINDLAY : They would be all brought forward between the different Conferences.

Mr. HARCOURT : Yes, they would; but I think I ought to say, on important questions as to which there was any doubt as to the desirability of the Committee dealing with them, I should feel bound to consult the Dominion Governments through the Governors-General before such a matter was submitted.

*See [Cd. 3795].