

---

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

---

[2nd Day.

Mr. FISHER : If the Committee is a Committee to interfere by vote and embarrass the Dominions I am not in favour.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I am against the Committee voting, at any rate.

The PRESIDENT : I do not think anybody suggested it should take a vote.

Mr. FISHER : And I am against any record.

The PRESIDENT : Why are you so averse to a record ?

Mr. HARCOURT : It would not be published.

The PRESIDENT : The only body I know of which keeps no minutes of its proceedings is the Cabinet. I do not know whether it is so with you.

Mr. FISHER : We do not.

The PRESIDENT : But it is the immemorial tradition of the British Cabinet to have no record of any sort or kind.

Mr. FISHER : I think he was a very wise man who advised that.

The PRESIDENT : There is not a board of directors of any company that does not keep a sort of agenda or minute book.

Mr. FISHER : The Prime Minister said the High Commissioners at present have access at any time, but would there be any harm in their having consultative access ?

The PRESIDENT : I suppose it is consultative.

Mr. HARCOURT : They have that consultative access now. They come to me sometimes every week, and we discuss every detail of things in which their Governments are interested.

The PRESIDENT : The question is, is it in addition worth while having the High Commissioners assembled with these other officials and talking things at large ?

Mr. FISHER : You have adopted the principle of this already. You only want it confirmed.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : Let me give a case in point. I am sure it exists to-day, even in the present condition of things. Apparently in Australia they have given a great deal of importance to the Declaration of London. The Declaration of London is simply an agreement between the Powers which has not yet come into force. If you, Mr. Fisher, instructed your High Commissioner to represent to His Majesty's Government your objections to this agreement, Sir George Reid would come here and see somebody on this subject, or the Foreign Secretary, and put forward his objections. His objections would be weighed by the Cabinet. The Declaration of London is simply a proposed Treaty with certain Powers. It has yet to be passed.

The PRESIDENT : It is not yet ratified.