

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

[2nd Day.]

The PRESIDENT : That is an argument for a Committee.

Mr. BATCHELOR : Yes, for a Committee. I am saying there are some reasons why this Committee would have some advantages, I am inclined to think. You have a monthly meeting of the High Commissioners now with Mr. Harcourt.

Mr. HARCOURT : Not a meeting of all the High Commissioners together, but every month I see them individually, whether they wish to see me or not, if I may put it in that way. But between those meetings, which are a new feature, I see them at any moment when they wish to do so upon any definite point.

Mr. BATCHELOR : The only advantage of the Committee would be that they would meet together.

Mr. HARCOURT : With other people added.

Mr. BATCHELOR : And consult.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : But not upon the same points which they see Mr. Harcourt upon, which would not come up before the Committee.

The PRESIDENT : The Declaration of London would, because that would apply to all.

Mr. BATCHELOR : There is another question which concerns two of the Governments. I do not know that it is raised by either of the Governments directly, but the question is where the High Commissioner for the Pacific should reside—a matter on which there is more or less difference of opinion, I believe, or there is said to be, between the New Zealand Government and ourselves.

Mr. HARCOURT : That is obviously not a Conference question. That would not come up.

Mr. BATCHELOR : Not in any case ?

Mr. HARCOURT : Not before a Standing Committee of the Conference.

Mr. BATCHELOR : I suppose it would not. But there are several matters here which I think will very well come up, and when each Government had instructed its High Commissioner on certain principles and certain details of policy, there are still some other little matters which could very well be left to such a Committee.

Mr. MALAN : It seems to me that there are distinct questions covered by the discussion here now, and it would be perhaps advisable to take these questions separately. The first question is under which Secretary of State the affairs of the Dominions should fall. They now fall under the Colonial Secretary. Mr. Fisher has thrown out the suggestion that they may come under the Foreign Minister. The South African Government has sent in a resolution which I think could be discussed in this connection—that it is desirable that all matters relating to the self-governing Dominions, as well as the permanent Secretariat of the Imperial Conference, should be kept under the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. As regards this I should say, Mr. President, that this resolution was sent in not on account of any dissatisfaction with the present arrangements, but rather with a view to raising the status of the Dominions, if I may so put it. If there are serious practical difficulties in the way of giving effect to the suggestion, seeing that it is not a very practical question, I do not know that we would press that very strongly.