

8 June, 1911.] CONGRATULATIONS TO UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA. [5th Day.

The CHAIRMAN : Gentlemen, you sent a telegram* of congratulation to the Union of South Africa on its anniversary, and I have received the following telegram in reply from Lord Gladstone : "Your telegram, 30th May. Ministers request me to convey to Imperial Conference their thanks for its congratulations on the first anniversary of Union of South Africa, and to express their appreciation of warm feelings which exist in all parts of the Empire towards the people of this country. They further desire to express the hope that deliberations of the Conference will tend towards the strengthening of the bonds of brotherhood between the various peoples of our great Empire.—GLADSTONE."

STANDING COMMITTEE.

In the unavoidable absence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to-day, I ventured, with your concurrence, to put down for our business the consideration of the Memorandum,† which I have circulated in accordance with the request made by the Conference at our previous discussion. Perhaps I might briefly recapitulate the position. This offer is made on behalf of the Imperial Government in order to meet the express wishes of New Zealand, and the supposed wishes of some of the other Dominions. It is a strengthening and enlarging of the Secretariat, in order to secure greater continuity and co-operation in the work between one Conference and another, and on any allied questions which may properly come up for consideration as Conference questions; but those questions would always be submitted to the Dominions concerned or interested in them before they were considered by such a Standing Committee as this.

In formulating a Committee I had no alternative but to suggest the only permanently resident representatives of the Dominions in Great Britain—the High Commissioners—but I was very careful to say that we should receive with equal satisfaction on such a Standing Committee any representative whom they might like to send or to nominate in place of their High Commissioners. His Majesty's Government do not wish to press this proposal upon the Conference unless it commends itself to their unanimous judgment. It would obviously be impossible to establish such a Committee unless all the Dominions were taking part in it. Therefore, gentlemen, I would leave the discussion and decision of this matter entirely to yourselves.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : Have you got any resolution on the subject?

The CHAIRMAN : There is no resolution put down.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : I thought there was a skeleton resolution.

The CHAIRMAN : I have got a skeleton—shall I read it? This was only a suggested resolution : "That, with a view to promoting continuity of co-operation in the work of the Conference, any matters for discussion upon which it is not deemed necessary or desirable to hold subsidiary conferences should be referred, with the consent of the several Governments, to the Standing Committee outlined in the Secretary of State's memorandum." There is another form of it—I do not attach any importance to the form : "That this Conference, having read Mr. Harcourt's memorandum dated May 26th, and entitled 'Proposal for a Standing Committee of the Imperial Conference,' is of opinion that a Standing Committee should be established in the form, with the representation and subject to the conditions suggested by the said memorandum."

Mr. BATCHELOR : You do not suggest in the resolution that there are to be periodical meetings?

* NOTE.—The following telegram was sent to the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa on the 30th of May : "I am asked to communicate to you the following message for your Government :—

"The Imperial Conference desires to congratulate South Africa on the occasion of the celebration of the first anniversary of the establishment of her political Union, sharing most warmly the feelings of thanksgiving and high hope which animate her people to-day and which find a hearty response in all parts of the Empire.—ASQUITH."

† See Volume of papers [Cd. 5746.—1].