

8 June, 1911.]

STANDING COMMITTEE.

[5th Day.

Mr. BATCHELOR : Yes, and Lord Tennyson represented Australia.

General BOTHA : I quite agree that subsidiary conferences must be held. You have defence and various things as to which I think from time to time you will have to have Conferences here; but we cannot now arrange that this Committee is going to discuss these subjects. Therefore, I am very much in favour of subsidiary conferences standing, where a Minister will be sent over to deal with and meet other Ministers here on a special thing, like defence or anything of that kind. I do not think this Committee must discuss anything of that kind. I do not want to have a standing committee here which may lead in the slightest way to interference in the work of the responsible Government in any one of the Dominions. That is a point I want to make very clear. If that is the case I would rather not appoint any man on such a Committee. Therefore, let us be quite clear; let us have this Committee, but it must not be of an interfering character.

Mr. BATCHELOR : The subject has to be relegated by the Dominion Governments to this Committee.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : It does not interfere with the actual work of any of the oversea Dominions at all, either directly or indirectly. That remains intact as it is now, through the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State alone.

General BOTHA : But, Sir Joseph, cannot the Secretary of State who is there now carry out the work just as well as a committee? Cannot an arrangement be made with the Secretary of State whenever anything crops up to call in the High Commissioners and to discuss with them, without making it a hard and fast rule? As far as I know, our High Commissioner has been called in from time to time on various difficulties that have cropped up, and they have been discussed here, and I think that is the right thing. He is here as the representative of his Dominion and must be heard. I think that is the right thing, and, as the Secretary of State has already explained to us, he is having monthly meetings with them now to discuss various questions.

Dr. FINDLAY : A question cannot be discussed unless you approve. If you look at condition 4, it is entirely in your hands.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : "In all cases the Dominions' Governments will be consulted, through the Governors-General, as to their willingness for the submission of questions to this Committee."

The CHAIRMAN : I may say again that I have frequently consulted the High Commissioners on all the questions which have arisen with the Dominions, not only at the monthly meetings which I have newly established, but I have asked them to come and see me, and they have asked me to see them, on many questions relating to their Dominions, and we have had the very fullest discussion of those matters very frequently; but, of course, there was no formality about it. They were not authorized, I suppose, specially to give me information on the subject, and I sent for them in a purely informal way, in order to keep me to the full charged with the view of the Dominion and any circumstances which might be in their knowledge but which had not come to mine.

Sir EDWARD MORRIS : I should just like to say that I rather concur with General Botha in relation to this proposed Committee, for the reason that it appears to me that, if anything important should arise, a subsidiary conference could be held and delegates or representatives with power to make recommendations could attend. Now it seems to me that such a Committee as this could only deal with matters that at present are being dealt with by the various public departments here in England, in correspondence with the various Dominions. Suppose this Committee that is proposed desired to deal with the question of the unification of the Patent Law, Copyright Law, Bankruptcy Law, Weights