

5th Day.]

STANDING COMMITTEE.

[8 June, 1911.]

Sir JOSEPH WARD : In my statement about delays I should like to make it quite clear that I was not in any way intending to reflect upon the procedure of this Conference; on the contrary, I recognise that under the existing system it is the only sensible procedure that could be adopted. What I was endeavouring to make clear, and which I evidently failed to do, was that when those Committees report to this Conference on the detail work required on each matter we send to them, the Imperial Conference could take up that work to see what is required to be done by the respective Governments. I fully recognise the difficulty with regard to uniformity in relation to naturalisation when you have the colour question, which, in my opinion, in our respective countries makes it almost impossible to have uniformity in such law; but if we had a Committee sitting here, the Government of New Zealand, and the Government of Canada, and the Government of South Africa, and the Government of Australia would have sent their views on the subject to their representative. We each should have seen the views of the other, and might be enabled to have some elastic system put into operation upon which we could all legislate. What is the use, after we all get back to our respective countries, for the New Zealand Government to sit down and suggest some line of procedure by way of a Bill on which they want the consideration of the other countries?

Mr. BATCHELOR : We do not know the position in other countries on this question.

The CHAIRMAN : Naturalisation is a matter we are going to take on Tuesday next, when the Home Secretary will be here, and I hope we may be able to strike out some line of agreement—not of uniformity, because I am hopeless of that.

Mr. BATCHELOR : You cannot get uniformity, but you might get similarity.

General BOTHA : I have only to add that I do not like this proposal.

The CHAIRMAN : I have withdrawn my proposal.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : And I withdraw mine.

General BOTHA : I think it is essential that the Secretary of State should consult from time to time the High Commissioners, but, as I have already said, after what the Chairman has stated to-day I am quite satisfied that that will be done in future. With regard to anything that takes place here, I think, when we pass a resolution there is no better machinery, because you have the Dominion machinery to assist you in carrying out whatever happened here. If we cannot get a resolution about any particular matter passed at this Conference, no Committee appointed by us outside this Conference will be of any value in bringing about uniformity on that subject.

Mr. BATCHELOR : But if you have it you can get it.

General BOTHA : If we have it we can get it without any Committee. I voted for that Naturalisation Resolution, and after studying the whole question it was laid before my Government, and we unanimously decided against it, and informed the Secretary of State to that effect. If in the meantime we had had a Committee here, could they by their decision bind me and my Government out in South Africa on this question?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : Certainly not.

General BOTHA : Certainly not. Therefore what is the need of this Committee? After all, it is the Governments that are responsible in the Dominions to pass legislation, and we must look to the Governments to support