

8 June, 1911.]

STANDING COMMITTEE.

[5th Day.

General BOTHA—*cont.*

us, and not the Committee which is sitting here. No Dominion will stand being ruled by any Committee or being interfered with by any Committee sitting over here. That is my point. I want the Dominions to be consulted, not the Committees.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: So do I; that is what the proposal says.

General BOTHA: We meet here as Prime Ministers and as Ministers responsible for large portions of the British Empire. Sentiment and mutual interest bring us here together. Now it is sought to create Committees. In creating these Committees we might take a false step which might lead rather to breaking down than to building up the Empire, and therefore I say we must hasten slowly. If we want to build up, and to remain builders-up of the Empire, we must not take hasty steps. We meet here and come together not only to pass resolutions on small and minor things, but to discuss the more important work relating to the British Empire. We have now seen what has happened. The British Government has now taken the Prime Ministers into their confidence fully on all subjects, and I say that is a step in the right direction. Along those lines we can build it up; but if the British Government must consult a Committee of officials here on those things, how will it help us? Must those things also be discussed with that Committee? No. Therefore I say, let us stick to the work as we have gone on. It is slow work, but it is sure work. Let us go slowly, and we will build up better than otherwise. I cannot for one moment see in what this Committee or how this Committee is going to assist us. It is a very easy thing to create bodies, but if it does not prove to be a practical body it becomes a nuisance afterwards, and then difficult to do away with. If it is not practical it becomes a complete failure, and by that time it has perhaps done such a lot of harm that it will injure the cause of the Conference entirely. Therefore I sincerely hope my friend Sir Joseph Ward will understand that I do not take a hostile attitude towards him, but it is a difference of opinion. I only differ from him on the method, and I think our ideal is the same—he wants it done through a Committee, while I cannot see how this Committee is going to assist us.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: The difference between General Botha and myself upon the question of the Committee is that if the Committee had the power of decision, which he appears to think it has, I would be with him up to the hilt. This proposed Committee has no power of decision, but only the power of preparing preliminaries for the purpose of advising the Secretary of State, the matter by him being referred to our respective Governments, and we accepting it or rejecting it as we think best.

Mr. BATCHELOR: Like the matters dealt with by the Secretariat.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: My opinion is that in the four years between the Conferences the Secretariat cannot do much unless there is some machinery for carrying on the work of the Conference.

The CHAIRMAN: I think this has been a useful and informative discussion which we have had upon the subject. I have no motion to withdraw, because I did not move one, but I understand Sir Joseph Ward does not now wish to press his resolution after the discussion that we have had.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: That is so.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps, however, the memorandum which I have circulated had better go on record.