

5th Day.]

INTERCHANGE OF CIVIL SERVANTS.

[8 June, 1911.]

“That it is desirable that all matters relating to self-governing Dominions, as well as permanent Secretariat of the Imperial Conference, be placed directly under the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.”

General BOTHA : The resolution of the Government of South Africa is withdrawn now.

The CHAIRMAN : After what the Prime Minister said the other day about it being impossible for him to accede to it, you would like to withdraw your resolution.

General BOTHA : Yes.

INTERCHANGE OF CIVIL SERVANTS.

“That it is in the interest of the Imperial Government, and also of the Governments of the Overseas Dominions, that an interchange of selected officers of the respective Civil Services should take place from time to time, with a view to the acquirement of better knowledge for both services with regard to questions that may arise affecting the respective Governments.”

The CHAIRMAN : We will take now the resolution proposed by the Government of New Zealand, as to the interchange of Civil servants.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : In submitting this resolution I would like to say that, in my opinion, it would be well if we could have, as far as the overseas Dominions are concerned, a system of interchange of Civil servants similar to what has been established in connection with the defence system of the Empire. I believe it would work out in all our countries very well indeed. I think a knowledge by some of the important offices in the Old World of the matters in operation in the New World, and in turn a knowledge by men in the overseas countries of the system that is in operation in the Old World, would be invaluable for the respective Administrations, and the permanent executive officers, the heads of Departments, would find in many ways great value as an outcome of such an interchange upon lines somewhat similar—though I do not pin myself to exact details—to what I suggest here. I think it would be of very great importance if some Treasury officers from our country could exchange for a few months with a Treasury officer in England, each country paying the expenses of its own officers, so as not to have any charge put upon the other country. So in connection with the various other services in our countries, I believe if we could have an interchange—not for long periods, but for short periods—of executive officers from time to time, it might be desirable and might act in the direction of smoother working of the machinery of government of our respective countries, and certainly would, with regard to questions which crop up from time to time, be of great assistance to the overseas countries.

I have had a fairly long experience of ministerial life, and I know that many matters have cropped up where a little knowledge on the part of some of the officers in our country would have avoided delay, and in some cases perhaps have saved not the best decision being arrived at as far as concerns the countries over the seas. An interchange has been arranged upon quite good lines in connection with defence matters as between the Home Government and the overseas Governments, and has, in my opinion, done an immense amount of good already; it has caused a number of men to believe that they are getting the benefit of the system which has been brought into existence in this Old Country, together with the great experience of the men who have been at the head of the armed forces here. Speaking for New Zealand, I know it gives the very greatest confidence and satisfaction indeed. In my opinion, if the respective Governments from time to time desire to give effect to an interchange of Civil servants upon the lines I have indicated, I believe, in the various Departments it would have an equally good effect, and would certainly be very useful for administration purposes.