

13 June, 1911.]

CELEBRATION OF KING'S BIRTHDAY.

[8th Day.

Mr. MALAN: I am sorry that the point which was raised in the previous conversation here is not referred to in this resolution—namely, that Empire Day, the 24th May, should coincide with the celebration of the King's birthday.

The CHAIRMAN: That is what I hoped would be the effect, but I thought perhaps you would not wish it laid down by resolution of the Conference.

Mr. MALAN: The reason why I would like to have it in the resolution itself is to get uniformity.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: I think probably this resolution might be agreed to and a second resolution moved that, in the opinion of the Conference, Empire Day should be celebrated on His Majesty's birthday.

The CHAIRMAN: Will Mr. Malan move that?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: We are wedded to the 24th May in Canada for Empire Day, but I do not know that we could not substitute for it another suitable day. The present Sovereign's birthday is on the 3rd June, and we could have the holiday on that date; but suppose the next Sovereign's birthday is in January, it might be all right in New Zealand, but January would not do for us.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: 24th May and 3rd June are too close together.

Mr. BATCHELOR: I am afraid I must ask you to alter this in some way before I can feel justified in committing Australia to it. This necessitates legislation: "That the 3rd June shall in each succeeding year be duly honoured and celebrated throughout the British Empire." That is a matter for our Parliament. If you put it "that it is desirable" that it should be, I have no objection to giving a vote in that form.

The CHAIRMAN: The official celebration of the King's birthday has nothing to do with Parliaments anywhere; it is instructions by the King to his Governors-General that they as the representatives of the Sovereign shall celebrate his birthday on a particular day. This is only a suggestion to make the celebration rather more general.

Mr. BATCHELOR: You say that such measures should be taken by legislation or otherwise as may be deemed necessary.

The CHAIRMAN: That is as to a public holiday and matters of that kind.

General BOTHA: The difficulty we have in South Africa is that we have already got three holidays in May—Whit Monday, Empire Day on the 24th, and Union Day on the 31st. When there was a Bill proposed in the last session, the commercial people objected very strongly and said "No, do not have the 3rd June, but have a later date."

The CHAIRMAN: The first Monday in August.

General BOTHA: So we have the first Monday in August; but our idea was that if you could unite Empire Day and the 3rd June there would be no difficulty.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think it is necessary that Empire Day should be changed in each Dominion of the Empire. I quite agree to the convenience of it, and if South Africa chose to celebrate Empire Day on the 3rd June I think it would be very suitable. There is no reason why Canada should change the date if she does not want to.