

and I had, subsequently, several private conversations with him, at which he expressed the desire that the Canadian and other Dominions' Ministers who might be in London as members of the Committee of Imperial Defence should receive, in confidence, knowledge of the policy and proceedings of the Imperial Government in foreign and other affairs. We pointed out to him that the Committee of Imperial Defence is a purely advisory body, and is not, and cannot under any circumstances become, a body deciding on policy, which is and must remain the sole prerogative of the Cabinet, subject to the support of the House of Commons. But at the same time we assured him that any Dominion's Minister resident here would at all times have free and full access to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, and the Colonial Secretary for information on all questions of Imperial policy. In a public speech which I made a short time ago I used the following words: "There is on the part of Canadian Ministers and people a natural and laudable desire for a greater measure of consultation and co-operation with us in the future than they have had in the past. This is not intended to, and it need not, open up those difficult problems of Imperial federation which, seeming to entail questions of taxation and representation, have made that policy for many years a dead issue. But, speaking for myself, I see no obstacle and certainly no objection to the Governments of all the Dominions being given at once a larger share in the executive direction in matters of defence and in personal consultation and co-operation with individual British Ministers whose duty it is to frame policy here. I should welcome a more continuous representation of Dominions Ministers, if they wish it, upon the Committee of Imperial Defence; we should all be glad if a member or members of those Cabinets would be annually in London. The door of fellowship and friendship is always open to them, and we require no formalities of an Imperial Conference for the continuity of Imperial confidence."

The foregoing accurately represents the views and intentions of His Majesty's Government.

From Mr. Borden's public speech in introducing the Canadian Naval Bill it appears that he accepts the proposals which we have made. The same offer is, of course, open to all the other self-governing Dominions if and when they wish to adopt it, but the proposal is not one of necessary or strict uniformity, and can be varied in the case of each or any Dominion to suit their wishes or the special circumstances of their case. I should be glad to know, at their convenience, whether your Ministers desire to adopt some such method of more continuous connection in naval and military affairs with the Committee of Imperial Defence in the United Kingdom.

I have, &c.,

L. HARCOURT.

COLONIAL OFFICE NOTE.—This despatch was telegraphed on 10th December, 1912, with the following addition: "His Majesty's Government propose to publish this despatch here in a short time, and you will be informed of date when publication will take place." At the same time it was also communicated to the Governor-General of Canada.

No. 2.

AUSTRALIA.—The GOVERNOR-GENERAL to the SECRETARY OF STATE.

(Received 10.45 a.m., 19th December, 1912.)

TELEGRAM. [*Answered by No. 3.*]

YOUR telegram, 10th December [*see note No. 1*]: It is impracticable for any Commonwealth Ministers to visit England during the ensuing year, but in view of great importance of the Dominions adopting a common policy and having a complete understanding on question of co-operation for naval defence, it is suggested that a subsidiary conference should be convened in Australia, in either January or February, 1913. If this is not practicable Ministers would be prepared to attend a conference in New Zealand, South Africa, or Vancouver, Canada.—DENMAN.

No. 3.

AUSTRALIA.—The SECRETARY OF STATE to the GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

(Sent 4.10 p.m., 8th January, 1913.)

TELEGRAM. [*Answered by No. 4.*]

YOUR telegram, 19th December [*No. 2*]: Is date of proposed conference correctly given in your telegram as 1913? Please telegraph reply.—HARCOURT.

No. 4.

AUSTRALIA.—The GOVERNOR-GENERAL to the SECRETARY OF STATE

(Received 9.30 a.m., 9th January, 1913.)

TELEGRAM. [*Answered by No. 5.*]

YOUR telegram, 8th January [*No. 3*]: Year named, 1913, correct. Ministers desired Conference might be held at once in view of general elections probably occurring May next.—DENMAN.