

Proposal of Sir Joseph Ward for closer political union.

After settlement of procedure the first question discussed was the possibility of a closer form of political union between the self-governing parts of the British Empire, as to which Sir Joseph Ward, Prime Minister of New Zealand, submitted a resolution in favour of the creation of an Imperial Council of State. Certain concrete proposals which he explained were however regarded as impracticable by his fellow members of the conference; and the resolution was by leave withdrawn.

Consultation of Dominions as to international agreements affecting them.

Twenty resolutions were adopted by the conference. Amongst them were several of particular interest as affecting the commercial relations of Canada with other countries. Resolution I was as follows:

That this conference after hearing the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs cordially welcomes the proposals of the Imperial Government, viz: (a) that the Dominions shall be afforded an opportunity of consultation when framing the instructions to be given to British delegates at future meetings of the Hague Conference and that conventions affecting the Dominions provisionally assented to at that conference shall be circulated among the Dominion governments for their consideration before any such convention is signed; (b) that a similar procedure where time and opportunity and the subject matter permit shall, as far as possible, be used when preparing instructions for the negotiation of other international agreements affecting the Dominions.

Abrogation of most favoured nation clauses in commercial treaties.

Another aspect of the same question relates to the effect, both present and future, upon the commercial interests of the overseas Dominions of the most favoured nation clauses in certain ancient treaties still in force between Great Britain and other countries. It was pointed out by Sir Edward Grey, Imperial Foreign Secretary, that certain existing treaties were made in the time of Oliver Cromwell and Charles II and were not therefore applicable to the conditions of the present. Difficulties in the way of the denunciation of treaties were mentioned, and eventually resolution XIX was adopted, on the motion of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, as follows:

That His Majesty's Government be requested to open negotiations with the several foreign governments having treaties which apply to the overseas Dominions with a view to securing liberty for any of those Dominions which may so desire to withdraw from the operation of the treaty without impairing the treaty in respect of the rest of the Empire.

Steps have since been taken by the Imperial Government towards the opening of negotiations with the countries concerned.

Royal Commission on natural resources and trade of the Empire.

Resolution xx, also adopted on the motion of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, suggested the appointment of a Royal Commission representing the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland to investigate and report upon the natural resources of the Empire and the development of mutual trading relations. Effect has been given to this suggestion and steps are being taken towards constitution of the commission. The representative of Canada upon the commission is the Hon. George E. Foster, Minister of Trade and Commerce.