

"The Imperial War Conference are of opinion that the readjustment of the constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire is too important and intricate a subject to be dealt with during the war, and that it should form the subject of a special Imperial Conference to be summoned as soon as possible after the cessation of hostilities.

"They deem it their duty, however, to place on record their view that any such readjustment, while thoroughly preserving all domestic affairs, should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, and of India as an important portion of the same, should recognize the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations, and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern, and for such necessary concerted action, founded on consultation, as the several Governments may determine."

In regard to the first paragraph of the above, the 14th resolution of the Conference of 1921 stated that "having regard to the constitutional developments since 1917, no advantage is to be gained by holding a constitutional Conference." This sentence undoubtedly had reference to the consultation of the Dominions in regard to the terms of peace and their membership in the League of Nations. On Oct. 29, 1918, the question of representation of the Dominions in the peace negotiations was raised by the Prime Minister of Canada in a despatch to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. The Imperial War Cabinet eventually accepted the proposal, but when the question came before the Peace Conference at Paris on January 12, 1919, strong opposition was encountered. This opposition, however, was finally overcome. Through a combination of the panel system, by which the representatives of the British Empire might be selected from day to day as the nature of the subject demanded, with distinctive representation of each Dominion, the Dominions secured effective representation, and took no inconsiderable part in the Conference.

As a natural development of this representation came the signature by the Dominion plenipotentiaries of the various treaties concluded at the Conference, the submission of these treaties for the approval of the Dominion Parliaments, and the appearance of the Dominions as Signatory Powers. Further, the Dominions claimed that they should be accepted as members of the new League of Nations, and represented on its Council and Assembly. This claim was finally accepted, and the status of the Dominions as to membership and representation in the Assembly is precisely the same as that of other signatory members. As to representation on the Council, the Prime Minister of Canada obtained from President Wilson and Messrs. Clemenceau and Lloyd George, a signed declaration that "upon the true construction of the first and second paragraphs of that Article, representatives of the self-governing Dominions of the British Empire may be selected or named as members of the Council." At the first Assembly of the League of Nations at Geneva, from Nov. 15 to Dec. 18, 1920, Canada was represented by the Rt. Hon. Sir Geo. E. Foster, the Rt. Hon. Chas. Jos. Doherty and Hon. N. W. Rowell, the first of whom acted as a Vice-President of the Assembly.¹

¹An account of the proceedings of this first Parliament of the Nations was given on pages 738 to 742 of the 1920 edition of the Year Book.