

The then Canadian Minister of Justice, Hon. Edward Blake, secured in 1878 the issuance of a new set of instructions, in which the only provision that the Governor-General might act except on the advice of Ministers, related to the exercise of the pardoning power, providing that in cases where a pardon or reprieve might affect Imperial interests, the Governor-General should take these interests into his personal consideration in conjunction with the advice of his Ministers.

The development of inter-Imperial relations up to the Great War may be studied in the records of the Colonial Conference. In the first Colonial Conference of 1887, we have a purely consultative gathering in calling which the chief aim of the British Government was to devise a method of more effective co-operation in defence. After a second, but constitutionally unimportant Conference had been held in Ottawa in 1894, the third Colonial Conference, attended only by Prime Ministers, was held in London in 1897, and the fourth, which Dominion Ministers attended to assist their Prime Ministers, in London in 1902. At the latter Conference a resolution was passed favouring the holding of such Conferences at intervals not exceeding four years at which "questions of common interest could be discussed and considered as between the *Colonial Secretary* and the Prime Ministers of the self-governing Colonies." In 1905 the Colonial Secretary, Mr. Lyttleton, suggested to the Dominions that the Colonial Conference should be changed into an Imperial Council, consisting of the Colonial Secretary and the Prime Ministers or their representatives. On Canada objecting to the use of the term "Council" the name was changed to "Imperial Conference." In 1907 the first "Imperial Conference" assembled; by an extraordinarily significant change, it was provided that future Conferences should be between the Government of the United Kingdom and the Governments of the self-governing Dominions, and that the *Prime Minister* of the United Kingdom (not the Colonial Secretary) was to be *ex officio* President of the Conference, while the Prime Ministers of the Dominions and the Colonial Secretary were to be *ex officio* members. This was a move toward recognizing that the Home Government was simply *primus inter pares* among the nations of the Empire. The Conference of 1911 met under this arrangement, and in 1912 the British Government gave Canada an assurance that a Dominion Minister resident in London would be regularly summoned to all meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence and that no important step in foreign policy would be taken without consultation with such representatives. In 1917 there was evolved what was known as the Imperial War Cabinet, a gathering of the five members of the British War Cabinet and the Prime Ministers of the self-governing Dominions.

A resolution on the question of future constitutional relations passed unanimously at this Conference is of profound significance. It was as follows:—

"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."