

the Jubilee celebrations, together with the Agents-General and many Governors and other officials of the Crown Colonies.

4. No definite arrangement was made at this Conference for the holding of further meetings, but at the close of the proceedings Sir Henry Holland (afterwards Lord Knutsford), then Secretary of State for the Colonies, said that he "looked forward hopefully to future Conferences."

5. The second Colonial Conference, which met in the year 1897, was convened in the following manner: In his despatch of the 28th January, 1897, conveying to the Premiers of the self-governing colonies the invitation to be present at, and take part in, the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of Her late Majesty's accession, Mr. Chamberlain expressed the "hope of Her Majesty's Government that their presence here might afford a valuable opportunity for the informal discussion of many subjects of great interest to the Empire." Accordingly, on the 24th June, 1897, the Prime Ministers of Canada, New South Wales, Victoria, New Zealand, Queensland, Cape Colony, South Australia, Newfoundland, Tasmania, Western Australia, and Natal assembled at the Colonial Office for the discussion of certain Imperial questions with the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

6. The questions to be discussed were proposed by Mr. Chamberlain in his speech at the opening of the Conference, and included political relations, defence, commercial relations, and matters connected with ocean cables, the establishment of an Imperial penny post, and alien immigration laws. It is worthy of observation that in connection with the subject of commercial relations Mr. Chamberlain referred to a suggestion which had been made at a meeting of the Australian Prime Ministers at Hobart that a Commission should be appointed to inquire into the feasibility of closer commercial arrangements within the Empire, in favour of which a resolution had been passed at that meeting. Mr. Chamberlain stated that if it were the wish of the other self-governing colonies to join in such an inquiry Her Majesty's Government would be glad to take part in it, and to make arrangements for the purpose.

7. On the question of the political relations between the United Kingdom and the self-governing colonies the following resolutions were carried:—

"(1.) The Prime Ministers here assembled are of opinion that the present political relations between the United Kingdom and the self-governing colonies are generally satisfactory under the existing condition of things."

Mr. Seddon and Sir E. N. C. Braddon dissented from this resolution, thinking that some step in advance might be taken.

"(2.) They are also of opinion that it is desirable, whenever and wherever practicable, to group together under a federal union those colonies which are geographically united."

"(3.) Meanwhile the Premiers are of opinion that it would be desirable to hold periodical Conferences of representatives of the colonies and Great Britain for the discussion of matters of common interest."

The second and third resolutions were carried unanimously.

8. The third Colonial Conference took place in the year 1902. In a telegram on the 23rd January of that year Mr. Chamberlain intimated the desire of His Majesty's Government to take advantage of the presence in London of the Prime Ministers of the various self-governing colonies in connection with His Majesty's coronation to discuss with them various important questions of public interest. The subjects intimated in that telegram were political and commercial relations of the Empire and its naval and military defence. The various Governments were also invited to furnish a statement of any subjects which they thought might be usefully discussed, and, with a view to facilitate and give a definite direction to the discussion, they were asked to furnish the text of any resolutions which they might desire to submit to the Conference.

9. In addition to the Prime Ministers of the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand, Cape Colony, Natal, and Newfoundland, the Conference was assisted by the Minister of Defence for the Commonwealth of Australia and by the Canadian Ministers of Customs, of Militia and Defence, of Finance, and the Canadian Postmaster-General. The Secretary of State for War, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and the President of the Board of Trade were also present at the discussion of the questions affecting their special Departments.

10. Important resolutions were passed at this Conference with regard to the proposal to establish a system of reciprocal preferential treatment of products and manufactures within the Empire in respect of Customs duties, and as to other matters. The resolution to which it is desired at present to call attention is the following:—

"That it would be to the advantage of the Empire if Conferences were held, as far as practicable, at intervals not exceeding four years, at which questions of common interest affecting the relation to the Mother-country and His Majesty's dominions over the seas could be discussed and considered as between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of the self-governing colonies. The Secretary of State for the Colonies is requested to arrange for such Conferences after communication with the Prime Ministers of the respective colonies. In case of any emergency arising upon which a special Conference may have been deemed necessary, the next ordinary Conference to be held not sooner than three years thereafter."

11. It will be observed that these Conferences have, step by step, assumed a more definite shape and acquired a more continuous status. Their constitution has lost the vagueness which characterized the assembly of 1887. The Conferences now consist of the Prime Ministers of the self-governing colonies, together with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, assisted, when the subjects of the discussion make this advantageous, by other high officials of the United Kingdom and the colonies.

12. Again, the first three Conferences met in connection with the presence of the colonial representatives in London incidental to important Imperial celebrations. But by the resolution passed at the last Conference, and already quoted, future meetings will be at prescribed intervals, and will be