

Sir JOSEPH WARD—*cont.*

what it was they were trying to represent at this Conference : and I felt exactly that way when I ascertained that the exigencies of the situation, peculiar as they were, were governed by the fact that the Australian readers only wanted information regarding their own representative, and were not at all concerned as to what I was doing. Still, the people across the water in New Zealand were just as much concerned as to what I was trying to do, either making mistakes or otherwise, as the people of Australia or Canada or South Africa were concerned in the expressions of opinion to which their representatives were giving utterance. It is not upon the score of vanity that I refer to what took place at the last Conference so far as I was concerned, because I want to assure the Conference that I am not a vain man; but I want to know that the people in the country I have the honour to represent shall have a proper opportunity of knowing what is going on at a Conference such as this is.

I believe it would be the very much stronger course to have the Conference open to the Press, and to allow the Press either to report or not, as the case may be, the views of any of us in connection with the work of the Conference. I want to make that clear. I do not think I have let anything fall myself which would suggest otherwise; but I am in full accord with Mr. Asquith in stating that the moment we come to this Conference—in fact, the moment we leave our shores, New Zealand or any other country—we cease to be party politicians. I want it fully understood, as far as I am concerned, that I am here to represent every class of people and opinion in New Zealand, and I should be sorry if in any sense whatever there was an attempt to make anything in the shape of capital out of anything I should say at this Conference, because we are here upon the bigger and broader grounds of trying to do good for the Empire as a whole.

I simply want to say, in view of the expression of opinion to which all the other members of the Conference have given utterance, that I withdraw the motion.

AGENDA AND DAYS FOR MEETINGS.

The PRESIDENT : Gentlemen, if you will be kind enough now to take in your hands the paper which is headed "Imperial Conference—Provisional Agenda," this is merely a scheme of business which is submitted to you for consideration. It maps out both time and subject, and, to some extent, the method of procedure of practically the whole Conference. I might just perhaps call your attention, without expressing any opinion upon them, to the different points.

The hour of meeting is fixed at 11 o'clock in the morning, with the exception of Monday the 29th, when we propose to have an afternoon sitting. There is a levee in the morning of that day, which Ministers, or some of them, may desire to attend, and therefore it is unfortunately necessary to have a meeting on the afternoon of Monday, otherwise 11 a.m. is fixed for the meetings, with no afternoon meetings. Sometimes we may be obliged to sit on in the afternoon, and I expect we shall have to sometimes.

Mr. FISHER : I understood you to say the sittings would be in the morning, with no afternoon sittings.

The PRESIDENT : It is not safe to assume that there would be no sittings in the afternoon, and I have no doubt we shall have to sit in the afternoon sometimes. The days of meeting suggested are Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. The reason we have given up Wednesday is that Wednesday is our weekly day for the meeting of the Cabinet; our Cabinet always meets on Wednesday morning, and I am afraid it will be almost impossible, without great dislocation of public business here, and very great inconvenience too to my colleagues of both Houses, to alter the day of meeting of the Cabinet, and I should hope that the members of the Conference would make it convenient to allow us to have Wednesday morning for our own domestic purposes. That would give you Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday for the meetings of the Conference, and I expect that nobody would want to sit on Saturday. What do you say to that?