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25 May, 1911.]

IMPERIAL COUNCIL.

[2nd Day.

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Sir JOSEPH WARD : Perhaps it would be more convenient if you would wait until I explain what it is I suggest should be done.

The PRESIDENT : While we are on the point that Sir Wilfrid Laurier put, which I should like you to give us a little further explanation about, the proposition which I understand you are making contemplates, when the Imperial Council is brought into existence, the establishment of a policy of what is called naval contributions on the part of all the different parts of the Empire. That would involve, would it not, the reversal of the new departure, as I might call it, which has taken place, certainly in Australia and Canada, of having separate local navies of their own? You contemplate that as a desirable possibility?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I contemplate that the power should be given to the Imperial Council, which would, of course, include representatives from Canada and Australia, of providing uniformity of system as far as the sea defences of the Empire are concerned.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : That would mean that the Council would fix the policy of Canada.

The PRESIDENT : It would impose a system. It is important that we should have that clearly in our minds.

Mr. FISHER : Would it have the power of coercion by a legislative Act or otherwise—that is the point.

The PRESIDENT : We shall come to that presently.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I wish to make some further observations in connection with the defence of the Empire, and then I propose to show what I believe to be the way in which the different parts of the Empire should proceed in order to establish a system of government in connection with defence matters that would conduce to the best interests of the whole.

Mr. PEARCE : May I say this before you proceed? I understand that there is to be a meeting to discuss the question of naval co-operation?

The PRESIDENT : To-morrow.

Mr. PEARCE : I would point out to Sir Joseph Ward that the remarks which he is now making will call for a reply, certainly from the representatives of Canada and Australia, because he is attacking the principle of a local navy, and in some way he is connecting it with an Imperial Council. I understand the interpolation by Sir Wilfrid Laurier was to get an understanding as to whether that was a condition on the Council; and I think we should have some assurance upon that point, otherwise we shall be compelled to defend the policy we are putting forward, and this seems not to be the time to defend it.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I want to say at once that I am here, as I presume the other delegates are, for the purpose of freely discussing all matters affecting the Empire as a whole. I do not suppose for a moment that Mr. Pearce suggests that I am going to defer my observations upon matters of Imperial consequence to the portion of the world I represent until we get where I recognise secrecy is necessary upon some matters. I am fully cognisant of the fact that anything I am saying here is subject to criticism, perhaps of the most destructive character, from any other representative at this Conference; but that is no reason whatever for its being suggested that I should not address to the Conference any line of argument which I consider necessary.