

25 May, 1911.]

IMPERIAL COUNCIL.

[2nd Day.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : We must have a body above us to force us to be good boys and pay our share while the superior body spent it.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : If the people of our respective countries were empowered to elect representatives to a corporate body for the preservation of their interests round their own coasts and the sea routes—if that is called a superior body to the people themselves, then I admit that your argument is right. But what I am suggesting is that the same people who create the individual Parliaments should elect their representatives and have a voice in the matter of their protection, and also upon the point of going to war or otherwise; that they should have a voice in the creation of a system which is going to be really of value to them.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : That is a very different position.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : That is what I am suggesting, and I know the difficulties surrounding it; I apprehend the difficulties fully, but I suggest this as one way, and if any other gentleman at this Conference can suggest as good or a better way, I would be only too happy to support it. But at present I say this—with all respect to every portion of the British Dominions—individually, though we are involved when Great Britain has a fight for the supremacy of the seas, we have no voice at all—we are helpless.

The PRESIDENT : I should like, if I may, to ask you this question : You say this proposed body is to have a voice—I suppose you mean a decisive voice—in the question of peace or war. How is that to be worked out practically? Are we to have a debate on the question of whether or not the Empire shall go to war, at which everybody is to speak, with a division, and so on—300 members?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I have not suggested anything of that sort.

The PRESIDENT : That is your suggestion—the only suggestion before the Conference.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I have not suggested anything of the kind, with all due deference.

The PRESIDENT : Then I do not understand it.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I have suggested an executive of 15, and if there was an executive of 15 I apprehend that they would accept the full responsibility of doing whatever they thought proper as representing the Imperial Council of Defence.

The PRESIDENT : Is the executive of 15 to be elected by or responsible to the parliamentary body?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : Entirely so.

The PRESIDENT : Then they are the ultimate arbiters?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : Yes. The 15 members of the executive, or whatever the number of the executive might be fixed at, would be representative of all portions of the British Empire, even although no man outside of Great Britain was on the executive. Then if the people of the several portions of the Empire selected representatives they would have no right to complain, as they have to-day, that they have no voice, even although I recognise that they would be in a minority under the new system. They have no voice or say at present in connection with matters in which they are deeply concerned, and I do not suggest a one-sided proposal, because I advocate the oversea Dominions contributing 10s. *per capita*.