

self-governing powers to commit vital interests to a deliberative body of any kind which was not entirely of their own creation and especially a body representing a great variety of interests. But still, until there is a

CONFERENCE OF THE DIFFERENT BODIES

to consider the question, it is impossible to say that there are no important subjects which might not be committed to the decision of such a body. If there is to be a community of interest on given subjects much could be said in favor of there being somebody to settle questions which might arise from time to time. A Consultative Council would be beneficial at any rate, as subjects affecting the Empire could be discussed from all points of view. If Canada became a part of the United States she would have to give up many sovereign rights.

How then could Federation be fairly denounced, off hand, on the ground that it might involve the surrender of some rights. We had better learn first what rights we have to surrender and then what we are asked to surrender. But, as I have stated, a Parliament or Executive Council is not held by the League to be an indispensable part of the scheme of Federation. It is thought by many that after public opinion has been brought to bear on these questions a common understanding could be arrived at on many, if not all points, by means of conferences between delegates from the different sections of the Empire interested in Federation; and that when the subject had reached this stage it would then come within the domain of statesmanship and be dealt with first by representatives of the different Governments concerned, met for the purpose of trying to come to an understanding, and then by their Parliaments or Legislatures which might accept or reject or propose modifications.

THE ULTIMATE DECISION

would thus rest with the people so far as their particular interests were concerned. It is confidently believed that in this way Federation could be accomplished without any radical political changes; that Colonies could retain all the powers they might think requisite for working out their own destiny; and that difficulties would gradually disappear until what is now a complicated problem would become a simple one. An illustration will perhaps best explain what I mean. Supposing that one of the results of such conferences should be that Britain was willing to stipulate that our mercantile navy and coasts should be defended by the Imperial navy if we were willing to pay a stipulated annual sum towards its maintenance. The question of what we should do could be considered and dealt with by ourselves without delegation, and, speaking for myself, I have no doubt that many, if not all, of the matters involved in Federation could be similarly dealt with.

This is surely definite enough for us to work up to; and is it not worth working for? If the arrangements made required changing afterwards there is no reason for supposing that they would not be changed.

And finally as to the necessity of any action just now, on our part, to change our status. I for one would be well content to let matters go on as at present for many years. But is there any possibility of that?