

cause at the conference for stereotyping the *status quo*, instead of endeavouring to move forward to something better.

Meanwhile a Liberal Government has been returned to power in the United Kingdom, and though it contains men who are known to be as much devoted to the interests of the Empire as any of Mr. Balfour's Cabinet, it has many pre-occupations. Those who think that the Conference might become a great instrument of Imperial unity were disappointed that no place was found for any reference to it in the King's speech at the opening of Parliament. It is only right, however, to note that Lord Elgin lost very little time in taking up Mr. Lyttelton's work. Without binding himself to his predecessor's proposals, the new Colonial Secretary, in a despatch dated 22nd. Feb., 1906, intimated his opinion that it would be desirable freely to discuss them when the Conference meets, and asked to be informed beforehand of any subjects the Colonial Governments might wish to discuss and any resolutions they might wish to bring forward. On 26th. September, 1906, in reply to a telegraphic message from London, urgently pressing for a reply, the Canadian Government stated that "ministers do not desire at this date to present any new subjects for discussion at the Conference." The tenor of subsequent correspondence seems to show that the Dominion Cabinet has always had before it the possibility that conditions at Ottawa might make it difficult or impossible for the Canadian Prime Minister to attend. On 17th. October, 1906, the Committee of the Privy Council, while accepting the date set for the Conference (15th. April, 1907) "can only express a hope that the business of the session of the Canadian Parliament may be concluded at a date early enough to permit Canadian representatives to attend the Conference." A meeting without the Prime Minister of the Dominion, who has been one of the central figures of recent Imperial celebrations, would be robbed of a great part of its interest; and it is a rather bad omen for the future that a conference which is held only once in four years should be considered of subordinate importance to current business at Ottawa.