

zealous advocates of centralization, must have regarded the meeting as one that would tend to the promotion of the idea of Imperial Federation. That something would be done in that direction was expected too by other Imperialists, who feared that more harm than good would come from the movement. Mr. Richard Jebb, an able writer on Imperial questions and a firm advocate of local autonomy as against all centralizing proposals, had a letter, on the eve of the Conference, in United Empire, in which he called upon the opponents of centralization to organize against the movement which he believed was likely to occur. It seems, however, that Mr. Jebb and those who agree with him as to what is the true Imperial policy were needlessly alarmed. When the members of the Conference "came to grips" with the question they evidently found that the difficulties of the past remained and were, for the present and early future at all events, insuperable. The Conference very properly resolved that the time was inopportune for making constitutional changes, and that these matters should be the subject of consideration at another Conference to be held after the war. The Conference might have been content with such a declaration, but it went further. It expressed its opinion that when in another Conference the question had to be considered, it should be with the understanding that while the several parts of the Empire should be consulted in matters of Imperial concern, local autonomy,—the independence of each section respecting its own affairs—must be recognized and maintained.

Perhaps some of those who assented to this resolution would have preferred to allow its meaning to be left in doubt. General Smuts, the distinguished soldier statesman who represented South Africa, evidently was not of that mind. From the London Times we learn that General Smuts, in referring to the resolution, "spoke with great frankness about its effect." His address, the Times says, was "by far the most important speech on the resolution." We quote:

"If this resolution is passed, the one possible solution is negatived, and that is the Federal solution. The idea of a future Imperial Parliament and a future Imperial Executive is negatived by implication by the terms of this resolution. The idea on which the resolution is based is rather that the Empire would develop on the lines on which it has developed hitherto, that there would be more freedom and more equality in all its constituent parts, that they will continue to legislate for themselves, and continue to govern themselves; that whatever executive action has to be taken, even in common concerns, would have to be determined . . . by the several Governments of the Empire; and the idea of a Federal solution is therefore negatived, and I think very wisely, because it seems to me that the circumstances of the Empire entirely preclude the Federal solution. Here we are . . . a group of nations spread over the whole world, speaking different languages, belonging to different races, with entirely different economic circumstances, and to attempt to run even the common concerns of that group of nations by means of a Central Parliament and a Central Executive is to my mind to court disaster."

General Smuts' speech and the resolution which the Conference adopted—many of its members no doubt reluctantly—will go far

towards checking the Imperial Federation movement both in England and in the Dominions. The movement has always been a patriotic one—a magnificent dream—and the Empire is none the worse for dreaming of it. But the words so forcibly spoken at the Conference by General Smuts must commend themselves to all who look at the question from the practical side of affairs.

Civil Service

THERE was an interesting discussion of Civil Service matters in the House of Commons several days ago, in the course of which Mr. Bennett, the member for Calgary, said his observation of the work at Ottawa satisfied him that ten per cent. of the officials in the departments could be dropped, and the efficiency of the service at the same time improved. Perhaps Mr. Bennett's remarks were too sweeping, and failed to properly discriminate between departments. But there is much ground for what he said. The tendency towards increase of the number of officials at Ottawa has long been marked. Somewhat better conditions should prevail now, since the adoption a few years ago of the principle of competitive examination. One of the hardest things for a Minister is to resist the pressure of his friends for places in the public service. Not every Minister is able to do it. The Minister who has a right conception of his duty will be thankful for the measure of relief which the examination system affords. Ministers who have other notions concerning the service will chafe under the restraint, and endeavor to evade the law by obtaining appropriations in terms which will allow appointments to be made without examination. The Civil Service problem is always a troublesome one. Fewer officials, more work in many cases, and better salaries for those whose good services are beyond question, will be a good motto for all concerned.

A Happy Truce

ANYTHING like friction within the household of any of our great religious bodies is a matter of concern to the whole community. Therefore all will share in the satisfaction felt in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, at one of its meetings in Montreal last week, when a happy solution was found for a question which had threatened to produce disruption. From that solution may be drawn a lesson that will be found useful, too, in fields beyond the region of theology.

The Presbyterian Church is a democratic organization. Is not submission to the will of the majority a democratic principle? For a number of years a movement has been in progress for the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregationalist bodies. After long and patient negotiations a basis of union was reached which was acceptable to the Methodists and Congregationalists, and which, after full debate, was approved by a large majority in the Presbyterian General Assembly. The union was not to be consummated immediately, not until more than a year after the war, but plans were being made in the meantime. While the majority vote in the Assembly was in favor of union, there was a large and influential minority who complained of the proceedings, organized a resisting

association, and proclaimed their determination to maintain the Presbyterian Church as a distinct body. Leading men of both sides, men of recognized ability and influence, were drawn into the conflict. In the congregations, Presbyteries, Synods, Assembly, and in the press, warm discussions took place. It cannot be truly said that the Assembly met at Montreal last week in an atmosphere of serenity. The danger of the situation doubtless served as a call to all the members to find a common ground of action. When the leaders of the two parties came together in the right spirit, they found the happy solution. Since the scheme of union was not in any case to come into operation until some time after the war—a very uncertain date—why not drop all proceedings not absolutely necessary at this stage, especially all propaganda on either side, and defer further action until after the war, all parties agreeing that the question should in the future be dealt with in the light that might then be given to the church? The suggestion was accepted by all, and the restoration of harmony was welcomed with prayer and songs of praise by the assembled multitude. The time will now be given, not to conflict of the parties, but to harmonious effort in the good work of the church, all hoping and praying that in the new light that will come from such co-operation there will be found a ground upon which the two parties can unite.

The right of a majority to rule must be recognized wherever democratic institutions prevail. But the wisdom of the enforcement of that right is another question. There are times when such enforcement does not make for good. At such times a wise majority will go a long way to meet the wishes of a minority.

Dangerous

THE foolish youths who break windows and talk sedition in Quebec towns are not the only dangerous people who are at large. At London, Ontario, recently, the Trades and Labor Council of the city had a meeting. A telegram from that city says:

"Two hundred soldiers, including returned men and those now training here, unexpectedly took possession of a meeting of the Trades and Labor Council last evening and after guarding the doors and preventing the police being called, requested that a resolution be passed favoring conscription. This was done and the soldiers sang the National Anthem and departed."

If soldiers, whether they have returned from the war or are in training in Canada, are to be allowed by the military authorities to interfere with the lawful meetings of Canadian citizens, the respect which the people generally have had for the military service will not be increased; nor will resolutions favoring conscription, when passed under the circumstances described in the above telegram, help to remove the irritation which unfortunately exists on that question. It is to be hoped that the military authorities will take up this and similar cases, and let all soldiers understand that they, above all others, should stand for law and