

failure. The Australians themselves said so and a committee of the Labor Conference held in Sydney (N. S. W.) a few weeks ago turned it down." An Opposition member in the New Zealand House remarked that the New South Wales Legislature had not repealed the system, whereupon Mr. Massey said, "No, they have not had an opportunity yet, but it is coming."

These conflicting opinions as to the advantages of the system warn us not to be too confident of its success. But it will be well to have it tried out in Canada under fair conditions, so that its character may be better understood than at present. Therefore the action proposed to be taken in Ontario should be welcomed.

### In the House of Lords

The Irish Home Rule bill has passed the critical stage of second reading in the House of Lords by a large majority. The noteworthy feature of the debate was the unsuccessful effort of Lord Midleton to obtain a postponement of the bill in the hope that, with a further opportunity for consideration, the Government would be able to make the measure more acceptable. Lord Midleton (formerly Mr. St. John Broderick) represents a section of the Irish people who are placed by the bill in a very unsatisfactory position. His interests and influence are in the South of Ireland. He is a staunch Conservative and Unionist. He was among those who, at the earlier stage of the discussion of Irish affairs, were strongly opposed to Home Rule. In later days he reached the conclusion that some form of Home Rule was inevitable, and for that reason he has been endeavoring to assist in devising a satisfactory Home Rule measure. The solution found by the Government is eminently unsatisfactory to him and the Southern Unionists. If there has to be Home Rule these would prefer one Parliament for all Ireland. In such a body they would, of course, be in a minority, but they would have the sympathy and cooperation of the Unionists of the North, and the two sections would form a party strong enough to exercise great influence in the Irish Parliament. The Government's bill provides for two Parliaments, one in the North and one in the South. In the North the Unionists will be in control and will be able to protect themselves against some of the evils which they have always regarded as likely to arise from Home Rule. In the Southern Parliament the Unionists like Lord Midleton will be in a hopeless minority. If they had any ground for fear of injustice in a Parliament of all Ireland they will have much greater fear in a Parliament for the South, in which their members will be very few. Thus the bill protects in some degree the Unionists of the North, but leaves their brethren of the

South at the mercy of a majority who it is feared will be hostile.

The Home Rule bill pleases few if any people, yet it is likely to be adopted, because nobody is able at present to devise anything better.

### The Conference Postponed

It is satisfactory to learn that after further consideration the British Government have decided to abandon the Imperial Conference proposed to be held in 1921. In the final statement on the subject it is said that the postponement is desired by the Dominions. If the Conference were held the members would find little of importance to confer about, and as idle hands proverbially find mischief to do, the Conference might do more harm than good. A Conference for 1922 is now talked of. There will be time enough to think about that.

### The Absence of Smuts

As South Africa has a seat in the Assembly of the League of Nations, it is much to be regretted that the place is not filled by the Prime Minister, General Smuts. That soldier-statesman had a large part in the preparation of the scheme of the League of Nations. Indeed there is evidence that he divided the honors in that respect with President Wilson. In any consideration of proposed changes in the Covenant the presence of the South African Premier is much to be desired. The Union of South Africa is, however, well represented by Lord Robert Cecil, a capable and quite independent English statesman.

It is not difficult to see why General Smuts is unable to be at Geneva at this time. There is a critical political situation in South Africa, which demands the close attention of the best minds of the country. There are four political parties in the Union. One of these is known as the South African party. It was headed by General Botha and since his death is under the leadership of General Smuts. It is composed largely of Dutch people who, like Botha and Smuts, loyally accepted the generous policy adopted by Great Britain at the close of the South African war, and are desirous of working out the welfare of the country as a part of the British Empire. Then there is the Unionist party, largely composed of the British people, led by Sir Thomas Smartt. This party has been giving a measure of support to Smuts, while still maintaining its independent organization. There is also, as in most countries now, a growing Labor party. Lastly, there is the National party led by General Hertzog, which has openly declared its purpose to take South Africa out of the Empire and make it an independent Republic. General Smuts had cherished a hope that the Nationalists would

refrain from such an extreme position. He has now, however, awakened to the fact that there can be no compromise with the Hertzog party, and that if South Africa is to remain within the Empire, there will have to be a readjustment of parties, and that the Unionists and the South African party must come together. He has issued an earnest call to his fellow countrymen along these lines. It is a cause in which he will have the hearty sympathies of the British people everywhere.

### Banking in B. C.

A telegram from Victoria B. C., reports Hon. John Hart, the Minister of Finance, as stating that "it is the intention to establish a Provincial bank, so that the Government can assist dependents and keep the money of the people in the Province for the development of the country, instead of having it sent East by the banks of Canada through their branch system and loaned out at high rates in Toronto, Montreal and New York. Another feature of the policy," the telegram continues, "is the proposal to establish a capital reserve fund in which all moneys from the sale of natural resources must be placed. This capital fund would never be impaired, but loaned out on interest for the development of British Columbia."

There is an election campaign on in British Columbia. At such a time the political leaders are apt to bring forward their most attractive schemes. Probably an intimation that the Government will go into the banking business and provide cheap money for those who desire to borrow it presents a pleasing picture. Mr. Hart may, however, find more difficulty than he anticipates in the carrying out of his scheme. "Banking," in the ordinary sense of the word, is not one of the lines of business in which a Provincial Government is authorized to engage, and the extent to which the Government can exercise the functions of a bank is very limited. It can, perhaps, receive money on deposit at a rate of interest agreed upon. Another Provincial Government does that and its legal right to do so has not been challenged. The claim may be advanced that such a transaction merely means the borrowing of the money by the Government. The Government may, of course, lend its money as it pleases, if so authorized by the Legislature. The lending of money to the public by the Government is a business which may easily lead to trouble. To the Western eye the business of banking, as carried on by the monetary interests of "the East," seems a very profitable one. It is to be remembered, however, that the good folks of the Pacific coast tried their hands at it without much success. Their old established bank was absorbed by an Eastern bank. Another bank started in the Province had a short life.