

THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT.

While Sir W. Laurier favoured the substitution of "Imperial" for "Colonial" Conference, on the ground that it was a more accurate expression of the facts, he looked with grave suspicion upon the establishment of a permanent "Secretariat," a suspicion evidently shared to some extent by Lord Elgin and General Botha.* Such a body, though designed to be dependent upon the Governments in whose interests it existed, and to be purely informatory in its functions, might tend to "independence" and to the acquisition of some measure of real control.

This criticism of Sir W. Laurier, General Botha, and Lord Elgin was overborne by a recognition that it was necessary to make some sort of permanent provision for orderly communication between the Governments which in the future were to meet in regular Conference every four years, and it was finally agreed "That it is desirable to establish a system by which the several Governments represented should be informed during the periods between the Conferences in regard to matters which have been or may be subjects for discussion, by means of a permanent secretarial staff, charged, under the direction of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with the duty of obtaining information for the use of the Conference, of attending to its resolutions, and of conducting correspondence on matters relating to its affairs."

To the Colonial and British politicians who favour Imperial Federation, this Secretariat may come to be a stronger *point d'appui* than the periodic Conference. Behind the proposals of Mr. Deakin and Dr. Jameson may be seen an express desire to remove the relations between Great Britain and the self-governing Colonies from the control of the Colonial Office altogether, and to set them upon an entirely new footing under a body representing the several Governments and presided over by the British Prime Minister as representing the Crown. Mr. Deakin, who took the lead in

* Pages 36, 37.