

in doubt they cannot be settled by the free choice of the peoples concerned without transcending the machinery of parliaments and parties. Some expedient of the nature of a Convention is necessary to frame a scheme upon which the electorates can register a decision ; and to bring into existence a Convention capable of drafting such a scheme an agreement is required not merely between governments but also between parties. For governments consist only of leaders whose parties happen to have won the last election. The national unions of the American Commonwealth and of Canada, Australia, and South Africa, could scarcely have been settled on lines drawn merely by those parties which chanced to be in office at one particular time. A question so much the gravest that any people can be called upon to face can only be dealt with on its merits in an atmosphere cleared of mutual distrust. Before it is submitted to parliaments or peoples for decision the terms of reference must have been settled, not merely by governments with each other, but also by those governments with their oppositions. Now, clearly, this cannot be done merely through the agency of an Imperial Conference which claims to be no more than 'a conference of governments with governments.' A task so delicate can only be entrusted to a Convention in which the peoples of all these communities in all their different sections are represented. The first step must, of course, be taken by the existing Imperial Conference, which must call to its counsels spokesmen of all the parties in all these countries, or else advise the creation of a special body for the purpose. Such an operation is by no means easy to