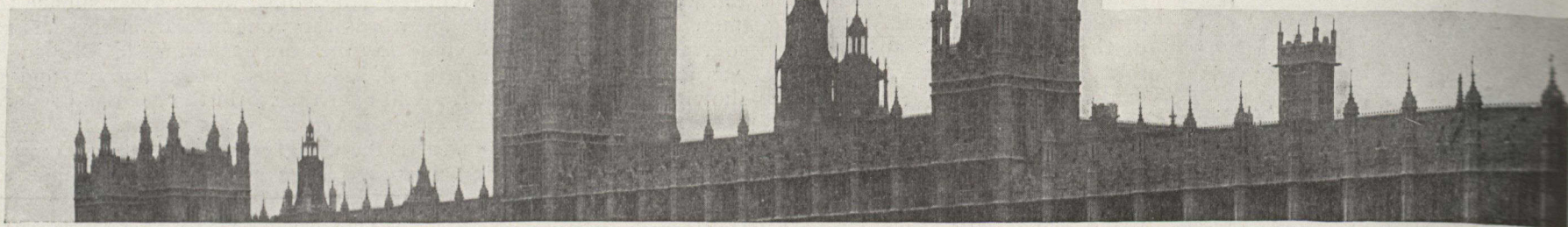


SHALL THERE BE AN IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT

THE
IMPERIALISTS VIEW

By
H. LINTON ECCLES

*Is this Scheme
of
Imperialism Acceptable*



WE are less than twelve months distant from the opening of the next Imperial Conference. Imperial statesmen have something like ten months ahead of them in which to make up their minds as to the course they will take upon the greatest opportunity ever presented to Empire policymakers. Will they improve upon the occasion, or will they allow it to pass, as they have allowed other but less great occasions to pass, without clinching the business which seems obviously waiting to be clinched? Who can tell? They may do one thing or the other, but it is as certain as things mundane can be that they will never again have in front of them such a glorious golden opportunity.

Upon the eve of this superlative chance, will no supreme emotion, no powerful influence sway the minds that must decide, to make their decision an unbiased one, above petty politics, above insular interests, above the things which are neither here nor there when the Empire's welfare is in the balance? This is surely no time for axe-grinding, for thinking in little circles which lead nowhere but round and round their own circumference, for wasting words on minor matters which only serve to remind the waiting world of the average mothers' meeting. Is not there a large ideal behind the details, a great painting in the pigments?

Somehow or other—it matters not how or by whose initiative—we have established a round table conference among the members of the British Empire family. The criticism of the work of the conference has been ample and pointed, and the question has been seriously asked, is the conference, as at present constituted, worth while? The question may be left where it is, but very few people fall out with the simple idea of such a family gathering. The conference, whatever its limitations and its shortcomings, is established, the idea is in being. It may or may not have done lasting good, but it has proved, at least, that the experiment was worth making, and that it is worth going on with.

What has yet to be proved is whether the conference shall become a powerful instrument of Empire or degenerate into a replica of a learned society paper-reading with "Discussion to follow." Is the Imperial Conference to be vested with real, executive powers, or is it to remain simply a congress of talking, pious-resolution-passing delegates? It rests with Empire statesmen as a whole, and very largely with those who represent the overseas Dominions, to decide the all-important point. And the Imperial Conference of 1911, meeting upon the significant occasion of the coronation of a new king, is the fitting place at which to make the final decision.

By some ironic circumstance the members, elected and hereditary, of the British Legislature are called the Imperial Parliament. Why they are so called, I, for one, have never yet understood, apart from the sort of veto which they are supposed to exercise over the representative assemblies and executive councils of the dominions and dependencies. I always ask myself when I see or hear the title used, is it not time that this farce, this pretension to a name, was ended? I can never get beyond this puzzle: How can a parliament be called imperial—that is, representative of the empire—when its members are selected from only one por-

tion of the empire? The anomaly is more absurd when one considers that the electors as a body who send the members to the House of Commons—which is supposed to have the predominating voice in the British Parliament—have and can have no adequate knowledge of the needs, the aims, and the conditions existing in the parts of the empire which they know only by name and hearsay.

That is just where the opportunity of the approaching Imperial Conference comes in. The delegates to that conference, with the full authority of their respective governments, should insist upon the establishment of the right of the British colonies to be directly represented in the Imperial Parliament. That is a plain straightforward policy, it is a policy that is in line with the best interests of the empire, and it is a policy that should be presented to the British government in a plain straightforward way, without any lesser interests or policies to obscure it. It is the dominions' right, and the dominions' representatives should be instructed

tion from his holding of one miserable tenant in Ireland. These may be big affairs for the local newspapers and the parish and urban councils in those particular neighbourhoods, but why should they be allowed to take up hours of valuable time, or be mentioned even, in an imperial parliament? The other side of the picture would be farcical if it were not really serious. Here are illustrations of it. The discussion of the annual budget statement for the Indian Empire is crammed into one sitting. The problems of emigration, affecting the whole of the empire, have never yet been dignified by a separate discussion. Nor have trade arrangements and shipping facilities within the empire; nor has commercial development, as, for instance, in the directions of corn and cotton growing and cattle rearing. And the instances can be multiplied until one gets tired of recounting them.

Shall we have an Imperial Parliament, or shall we still muddle along in the old eighteenth century parochial way? The question will be open at the coming conference, and the Dominion delegates by their attitude can easily let the members of the British government know their feeling, and the feeling of the government which sent them, upon the matter. If there is proper and sufficient authority behind the delegates, the ministers in London cannot fail to take careful and adequate note of any considered expressions of opinion which they may make. Action will follow the words.

Only when we get a true Imperial parliament established can imperial affairs be properly and efficiently controlled. An empire senate for the discussion, and not only the discussion but the management of empire affairs. That is the statesmanlike answer to the impatience and unrest—most of which is thoroughly honest and justifiable—prevalent amongst the citizens of the great dominions under the British flag; who have progressed and developed ideas which are wide and widening; whose sturdy and vigorous mental growth will not for ever be content to feed upon the pabulum of the parish pump or pulpit; who know their strength, and knowing it, chafe at the bonds with which traditional British conservatism still binds them. The empire child has grown into a man, strong and self-reliant in his manhood, and he is asking for the privileges and rights that should go with his manhood for a voice in the control of the affairs which concern him, for, in a word, his birthright.



The New Form of Imperialism.
Drawn by C. W. Jefferys.

definitely to ask for the right to be acknowledged and to take nothing less. If the demand is made with one voice by the self-governing colonies, it must be conceded as a simple duty by the Mother Country, and the first real Imperial Parliament will be established.

The Parliament which at present sits in London to rule the destinies of the empire is unworthy to be called the Imperial Parliament. Besides merely representing the views of a section of the empire, the procedure is so antiquated that it is possible, and even customary, for the most trivial affairs to be discussed at quite disproportionate length, whilst gravely important concerns are dismissed after an hour or two of so-called consideration. I give two common instances to prove my assertion. Within my own experience of parliamentary proceedings I have known whole afternoon sittings to be devoted to the housing of crofters in Scotland and the evic-

Lifting Yourself

A STRUGGLING young lawyer went to a famous attorney for advice and encouragement. After patiently hearing his tale the older man replied:

"There's nothing like encouragement in the legal profession, my friend. When I was going through the mill there was only one man who stood by me."

"You'll succeed, old boy," he used to say, "you've got the stuff in you, no matter what others say. You just go on plugging and you're bound to nail that mark Success." And it was these stimulating words that really brought me through a winner!"

"Who was this very encouraging person, may I ask?" inquired the eager young man.

The great attorney looked upon him with a reminiscent smile: "Myself!"—*The Circle.*