

CHAP.
XXI

has been formulated with all the necessary detail in a document capable of ratification by both. It is only when that is done that both alternatives are before the Dominion electorate; and not till it is done has the electorate been put by its ministers in a position to make a free choice for themselves. If they reject such a scheme, whether by a general election or by a referendum, it is open to them to return members pledged to charge their government to assume a separate control of foreign affairs. But until such a scheme has been laid before them and they have been given the opportunity of accepting or rejecting it, they are in the position of men who are allowed to vote in favour of one alternative only, but prevented from recording their decision on the other.

The principle of government by public opinion at stake.

It will thus be seen that the question of preparing a scheme is one which goes to the root of popular institutions and raises the whole principle of government by public opinion. Those who condemn the framing of a plan are, in effect, opposing the right of the electorates to choose for themselves. The Convention, by meeting, by framing a plan of government, and by submitting it to the electorates, is deciding nothing. It is simply making it possible for the people at large to decide the question for themselves, if they will. It is the necessary procedure which must be adopted by those who believe in their hearts, as well as with their lips, that great public issues should be settled so far as possible, not by the blind course of events nor by the management of political wire-pullers, but by an informed and