

This resolution passed unanimously (according to Sir Robert Borden), but there was the same division of opinion with regard to the future government of the Empire as had been shown at the 1911 meeting. The representatives of New Zealand again favoured an Imperial Parliament, and Sir Joseph Ward repeated the arguments he had advanced in 1911; but the other speakers saw grave dangers in any proposal "for an Imperial Parliament which should have taxing powers for certain purposes over all Dominions as well as over the United Kingdom." Sir Robert Borden later expressed in the Canadian House of Commons his conviction that such a proposal was "neither feasible nor wise,"¹ but it fell to the lot of General Smuts of South Africa to express most clearly and forcibly in the Conference discussion the objections of those who opposed the creation of a new Federal Imperial Parliament.

"If this resolution is passed, then one possible solution is negatived, and that is the Federal solution. The idea of a future Imperial Parliament and a future Imperial Executive is negatived by implication by the terms of this resolution. The idea on which this resolution is based is rather that the Empire would develop on the lines upon which it has developed hitherto, that there would be more freedom and more equality in all its constituent parts; that they will continue to legislate for themselves and continue to govern themselves; that whatever executive action has to be taken, even in common concerns, would have to be determined, as the last paragraph says, by the several governments of the Empire, and the idea of a Federal solution is therefore negatived, and, I think, very wisely, because it seems to me that the circumstances of the Empire entirely preclude the Federal solution. Here we are, as I say, a group of nations spread over the whole world, speaking different languages, belonging to different races with entirely different economic circumstances, and to attempt to run even the common concerns of that group of nations by means of a central parliament and a central executive is, to my mind, absolutely to court disaster."²

Important as were the discussions and the decisions of the Imperial War Conference, the precedent set by the meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet is of far greater importance. For the first time in the history of the Empire, a small group of men representing the self-governing parts of the Empire and India met together week after week to decide what action should be taken with regard to the conduct of a war. It is true that this Imperial War Cabinet is unlike any other British Cabinet, since it is not responsible exclusively to any one parliament, but it is an effective instrument for co-ordinating the war efforts of the autonomous parts of the Empire, and is likely to become a "permanent con-

¹ Canadian Hansard, May 18, 1917, p. 1603.

² Minutes, p. 53.