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IMPERIAL CONFERENCE, 1937

Preparatory Meetings on Constitutional Questions

TREATY PROCEDURE

Letters from the High Commissioner in London for the
Union of South Africa

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High Commissioner, Union of South Africa,
South Africa House,
Trafalgar Square,
London, W.C.2.

P.S. 18/13.

8th June, 1936.

SIR,

I have the honour, under instructions from His Majesty's Government in the Union, to bring to the notice of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom their observations based on the following facts arising out of the proceedings of the London Naval Conference, and in particular, that part of the report of the proceedings of the Fourth Meeting of the First Committee on the 13th December last which deals with the international position of the Dominions.

I am to recall the words used at that meeting by Admiral Nagano, who, in elucidating the Japanese proposals, said—

"The common upper limit should not be applied to the three countries Great Britain, America, and Japan alone. If, however, it is your desire that our proposals should be considered by all five Powers here, Japan has not the slightest objection."

Viscount Monsell, the Chairman, then observed—

"... in view of what the Delegate for Japan has said to-day, we have now to look at the proposal of a common upper limit from a different angle altogether. The original proposal put forward by the Japanese Delegation was that the common upper limit should apply only to Japan, the United States of America and the Members of the British Commonwealth, but to-day the Japanese Delegation are prepared to extend the common upper limit to all Powers represented here. That, I take it, would mean that eventually we should have to get all the countries with navies into an agreement; and I am not at all sure whether that would not mean that the Dominions if they so wished, could each have a common upper limit of their own."

Whereupon Admiral Nagano expressed himself as follows:—

"... as regards the Dominions, if they are to be considered as independent states, may I ask whether it is the intention of the British Delegation to suggest in the proposal that they may fix the size of the forces for each of the Dominions; and I should like to ask whether the same procedure would be followed by the United States. We came with the understanding that we were attending a five-Power Conference, but if each of the Dominions is to be counted as an independent country what will be the number of participants in the Conference?"

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W. L. M. King Papers, Memoranda and Notes, 1933-1939
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