

Ottawa, Canada.
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EDITORIAL.

Commonwealth Relations.

Sir Robert Borden foresaw the need for action to clear the air when he urged, last year, that a constitutional conference should be called without delay by the nations within the British Commonwealth. It may seem to officials at Whitehall that Canada is making much ado about nothing. The Dominion premier declines to ask parliament to endorse treaties which have been agreed upon at conferences that exclude Canadian representation. But it is quite possible that a less firm stand on the part of Premier Mackenzie King would very soon produce a Nationalist movement in Canada as formidable as the movement which put Mr. Hertzog into office in South Africa.

Allowance must be made for the fact that Ramsay MacDonald is trying to do the work of several cabinet ministers. But it is inexcusable that the Labor government, so soon after the experience of the Lausanne Treaty, should have made it necessary for Canada to insist upon recognition of Dominion rights in accordance with the resolution of the last Imperial Conference.

Responsible ministers at Westminster led the public to believe that the dominions were to be invited to participate in the Inter-Allied Conference. Then at the preliminary conference the British premier made it plain to the high commissioners that the dominions were merely to be allowed to be sleeping partners. But the day has gone by when Dominion cabinet ministers will be satisfied to sit outside, in the corridors of the foreign office, while Messrs. MacDonald and Snowden or Birkenhead and Churchill settle the destinies of the British Commonwealth in the council chamber.

There, plainly occurred the issue. Canada asked no special recognition, but simply that the procedure which served satisfactorily at the Versailles conference, and at the Washington conference on limitation of armaments, should be adhered to at the present Inter-Allied Conference.

The dominions have had to fight to get any representation at all on the British delegation to the present conference. The British premier assured parliament that the dominions would be completely consulted so that they might feel they were partners with Great Britain in everything that the British delegation did at the conference. It is surely a very narrow view of partnership which would deny representation to the dominion partners. But it has taken since Ronald McNeill's question in the House of Commons on June 23 until the very opening session of the conference to get the present recognition.

Genuine partnership should mean that the delegates of the dominions and Great Britain would together decide, after consultation, who should be authorized to represent the British Commonwealth at the conference. It is more than likely that they would have readily agreed to the British government's decision, predetermined, that Messrs. Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden must be there at every session. The third delegate is probably all that the dominions would have asked to have any voice in selecting.

But the British ministers pursued no such course to enlist the co-operation of the dominions. Instead they decided first what the representation should be, then proceeded at a preliminary conference to inform the Dominion high commissioners just how they proposed to put the cut and dried arrangement through.

The colonial secretary, J. H. Thomas, is right when he speaks of the need for an early meeting to straighten out some constitutional questions affecting the representation of the dominions within the British Commonwealth.

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