

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 deve'op 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 convention of the constitution." Both Sir Robert Borden and Mr. Lloyd George look forward to such a development,³ and other members of the Conference were deeply impressed with the importance of this new body. Mr. Massey, of New Zealand, expressed thus his conviction: "I think that when the Dominions were asked to send representatives

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

²Minutes, p. 53.

³Canadian Hansard, May 18, 1917, p. 1601.