

criticised procedure in the case of the Halibut Fisheries Treaty with the United States, where they had refused to permit the co-signature of the British Ambassador at Washington. It has seemed to be the Canadian contention that it is both practicable and desirable for the Crown to authorise negotiations and ratify a treaty on the advice of Canadian Ministers alone, if in their own opinion the subject matter affects Canadians exclusively, and, further, that this can be done without involving other Governments of the Empire in any sort of responsibility. Against that contention it has been argued that in practice his Majesty does not, and could not, accept the advice of Dominion Ministers without first consulting his British Ministers, who would take into account the general interest of the Empire. If so, the action of the Canadian Government in deliberately confining the signature of the treaty to their own representative was a futile gesture, ineffective to limit the responsibility of the Empire as a whole, for which alone his Majesty can act. But, characteristically enough, this crucial point was left ambiguous in the carefully drawn formulae of the 1923 Resolution, which certainly remain to be "interpreted" as and when occasion may arise. In any case, to carry into "other matters affecting foreign relations" the principle embodied in that resolution would seem to imply an attempt to delimit spheres of foreign policy in which the principle of consultation and joint responsibility should by agreement be excluded. In short, it suggests a separatist rather than unionist line of inquiry.

Replying to Mr. MacDonald's invitation the Canadian Government recognised "the difficulty inherent in the existence of several self-governing communities scattered over the globe, with . . . different neighbours and different problems," and the further difficulty of lack of precedents in working out this new experiment in co-operation; but they felt that it could be overcome, as hitherto, by mutual good will. As might have been expected, they "agree that it would be helpful to consider the possibilities of a further extension of the principle embodied" in the 1923 Resolution. To follow out these ideas, we may imagine the discussion beginning on the basis that Canada should have the right to play a lone hand in America and Britain in Europe. To that general rule exceptions might be sought and some admitted; resulting in an agreed schedule of the exceptional cases in either hemisphere where consultation would be proper. But we need not at present pursue the speculation. The Conservative Government are pledged to uphold the principle of the "diplomatic unity" of the Empire, which the 1923 Resolution at least obscures if it does not antagonise. Well might Mr. Amery remark that, in regard to the suggestion of interpreting and extending the resolution, "on this point, in particular, his Majesty's Government feel that the time which has elapsed since the Resolution was passed is hardly sufficient to enable any very definite opinion to be given. For themselves they would prefer to defer a considered judgment until they have had an opportunity of studying for a longer period the working of the Resolution in practice." Meanwhile the appointment, long since authorised, of a Canadian "Minister plenipotentiary" to Washington, is still delayed. *Solvitur ambulando.*

If the tone of Canada in Empire affairs has been of late years somewhat negative, that of Australia has been decidedly positive. The Commonwealth Government agreed, under pressure, to send representatives to the subsidiary conference, "on the principle that anything which even remotely tends to improve the relations between the various Governments of the Empire is worthy of trial." But they did not themselves set any store by the suggested inquiry. They had "already given a great deal of consideration to this most important question" of consultation—a very reasonable claim when one remembers Mr. Bruce's devoted work at the Imperial Conference only fifteen months ago. They had, however, a definite proposal

of their own, which has since been carried out. A specially selected Australian officer has been appointed to join the High Commissioner's staff for the purpose of keeping in intimate touch with the Foreign Office, where he is to have special facilities, thus being enabled to give his own Government independent information on the foreign questions of the day.

This is, no doubt, an important step forward. Hitherto the information regularly conveyed, by cable and mail, from the British to the Dominion Governments has been drafted in the Foreign Office, giving therefore the official British view of affairs abroad. For example, the protracted episode of the Ruhr occupation in 1923 was doubtless coloured in the official story by the anti-French bias of our diplomacy. An independent Dominion observer, having access to all the secret facts, as well as to the Continental newspapers, might have thought it worth while to balance the Foreign Office version by a statement of the French point of view, as set forth in M. Poincaré's weekly speeches and confidential dispatches, and to warn his own Government that public opinion here was acutely divided. Perhaps it was a surprise to General Smuts, when he came here in the autumn of 1923, to find that, despite his official intelligence, the country was by no means ready for a crusade against France.

Information, however, is one thing and consultation another. It may assist Mr. Bruce in Melbourne to form his own judgment if he gets a supplementary account from his own man of what is going on in Europe. But what then? It has long been felt that there can be no equal responsibility for "Imperial" policy in foreign affairs without direct personal consultation between the Governments. Mere exchange of cablegrams has been found quite inadequate. It is a question of how to bring responsible Ministers, or sufficiently authorised representatives, of the several Governments into daily contact. In other words, the Imperial Conference has to be made a continuous instead of an intermittent institution. Mr. Bruce's new expedient is hardly an obvious step in that direction. Rather it may seem a recognition that, for the present, continuous consultation remains an unattainable ideal. It signifies the acceptance of a situation in which there can be no assurance that the Governments of the Empire will act in concert at all. It does not openly concede, but neither does it specifically deny, to Britain that right of playing a lone hand in European affairs which the Canadian Government perhaps would readily grant as the logical corollary of Canada's right to go her own way in American affairs.

Following the publication of this correspondence have come Press reports from the various Dominions indicating that the conference desired by the British Government on the Geneva Protocol is not considered necessary. It is intimated that in this instance an exchange of views by cable may suffice. Which means, one may surmise, that the Dominions have already decided against accepting the Protocol. Once more the inevitable moral obtrudes itself. Britain cannot have it both ways. She must choose between the Empire and Europe. All the New World shrinks from European entanglement. The Dominions do not want any extension of the liabilities they have already incurred by signing the Peace Treaties. Canada, indeed, has already tried to have her existing liability, under the Covenant, curtailed by amendments. To the overseas mind Europe could and should now take care of herself. If there is to be a common foreign policy for the Empire, collectively supported, Britain must cease to subordinate Empire development to European reconstruction. Until then, Canada and Australia, each in its own way, will continue to find insurmountable obstacles to any plan for continuous consultation as to foreign policy.

As regards other subjects of common interest, Mr. Bruce places them in a different category, and has made an important proposal which will be discussed in a second article.