

becomes an issue at a general election; and whenever a clear majority is elected in favour of a decision in this way or that, the government shapes a measure and carries it into law. But when two or more parliaments and electorates are involved the case is otherwise. The question cannot be decided either by parliaments or by electorates, until each parliament or electorate has before it a proposition in identical terms, which, when carried into law by each, will have the effect of a definite decision. A necessary preliminary therefore of all decisions which require the assent of two or more electorates is an agreement upon one identical form in which the question is to be put to all the parliaments or electorates concerned. The question must be reduced to the form of a document capable of submission to each parliament or electorate, but no such document can exist until their representatives have first met to draft it. That is the whole meaning of a Convention. It is not an ingenious device invented by the fertile brains of Scots and Englishmen in 1706, or of Americans eighty years later, and thereafter imitated by Canadians, Australians, and South Africans. The holding of a Convention is the procedure dictated by the necessities of the case. A parliament is not an ingenious device, but the necessary condition of representative government. But wherever two or more parliaments are called upon to revise their mutual relations, a Convention to formulate one scheme capable of adoption by all is no less essential to the principle of government by public opinion. Any attempt to settle such questions, without first holding a Convention, means that politicians are