

the various portions of the Empire. What is that change, and can the hon. gentleman furnish any information as to the permanency of the institution to which he refers?

Mr. ROWELL: I thought I had dealt with that phase of the subject the other day, but I shall be very glad to supplement what I then said in answer to my hon. friend's question, and it must be largely by way of a re-statement. Prior to 1917, when the Imperial War Cabinet was constituted, the Dominions did not share, in any real or full sense, in the consideration of questions of foreign policy, or in the consideration of questions relating to peace or war. It is true that during the process of our constitutional development the status of the Dominions has steadily advanced, and that the Dominions have from time to time been consulted, and latterly were in reality largely responsible for the negotiation of their own commercial treaties. At the Imperial Conference of 1911 a resolution was passed that in future the Imperial Government before concluding treaties which, by reason of their general nature, would affect the Dominions, should communicate with the Dominions in reference to them. All this indicates a growing desire on the part of the Dominions to be consulted in these vital matters, and a growing recognition on the part of Great Britain of the necessity of consultation, but as a matter of fact that consultation was uncertain, spasmodic and not really effective in the larger sense. The constitution of the Imperial War Cabinet meant that with respect to matters so vital as the ones I have mentioned to-night the Dominion ministers sat at the same table with the representatives of the Mother Country and talked them over in the frankest manner. The inmost secrets relating to the conduct of the war, were laid before the Dominion ministers, and if there was any additional information they desired and asked for it was provided. At these Imperial War Cabinet meetings the Dominion ministers sat as equals with the British ministers in considering these questions of policy. I think the Prime Minister (Sir Robert Borden) was entirely justified in saying that that was an important development in our constitutional relations. It was the recognition of the equality of the status of the Dominions with that of the Mother Country.

Now, my hon. friend has also referred to the permanence of this Imperial War Cab-

net. It was created for the period of the war, and he will recall that at the Imperial War Conference of 1917 the resolution then passed declared that a conference should be held following the war to consider the relations which would exist between the different portions of the Empire. I have the resolution here, No 9; it reads as follows:

The Imperial War Conference are of opinion that the readjustment of the constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire is too important and intricate a subject to be dealt with during the war, and that it should form the subject of a special Imperial Conference, to be summoned as soon as possible after the cessation of hostilities. They deem it their duty, however, to place on record their view that any such readjustment, while thoroughly preserving all existing powers of self government and complete control of domestic affairs, should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, and of India as an important portion of the same; should recognize the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations, and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern, and for such necessary concerted action, founded on consultation, as the several Governments may determine.

While that resolution provides that these constitutional relations shall be considered at a special Imperial Conference, it also lays down the principles upon which that consideration shall take place, and that declaration is most important, because it negatives the idea of a central Imperial Parliament controlling all the affairs of the Empire. It declares expressly in favour of the autonomy of the different component portions of the Empire, and that the development is to be along the lines of consultation and co-operation, rather than of concentration of power in the hands of any one portion; and I take it that that resolution is a landmark in the history of the constitutional development of the Empire; and that it settled—because it received the assent of the Mother Country and of all the Dominions and of India—the basis upon which future development shall be made.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Kamouraska): But there is nothing to ensure the continuance of the institution. It rests now merely upon the goodwill of the British Prime Minister.

Mr. ROWELL: There is nothing to ensure its continuance, because it is created only for the period of the war. What is to take place after the war is to be settled at this special Imperial Conference—and