

two or more different electorates are called upon to revise the relations of their several governments to each other, a different procedure must then be called into play if the issue is to be settled by public opinion instead of by some form of political conjuring. Where a political decision involves one electorate only, it can be agitated for until it 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