

and in a lesser degree Sir Joseph Ward, advocated differentiation between business of the Self-Governing Dominions and the Crown Colonies, with the establishment of a Secretariat of a composite and semi-independent character under the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Sir Wilfrid Laurier was entirely opposed to the idea of an Imperial Council, which Australia and New Zealand were prepared to favour, and only accepted the Secretariat on the distinct understanding that it would be under the ministerial responsibility of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. He realized and emphasized the fact that the Prime Minister being a very busy man, could not be expected to undertake the responsibility for the Secretariat, and it was understood that he had no complaint to make as to the way in which Canadian business was conducted by the Colonial Office. Now, as I understand from your letter, the proposition has taken a somewhat different form, the suggestion being that two Ministers, both I suppose of Cabinet rank, should be appointed in place of the present Colonial Secretary; and the further proposal to house under one roof all the London Agencies of the Self-Governing Dominions, would either be a substitution for, or a tentative advance towards the creation of an Imperial Council. I shall be very grateful if you can tell me what has caused this apparent change of thought and attitude on Sir Wilfrid Laurier's part, and in particular whether you conceive it to have simply proceeded from further consideration of the entire question, or whether it is founded on any dissatisfaction with action of ours.

You will, I am sure, agree that the question is a very large and serious one, demanding the closest and the most thorough investigation. It is evident that if the Self-Governing Dominions as a body, put forward this demand, and were prepared to agree on the precise method in which it should be carried into effect, the idea could not be dismissed except on the highest grounds of public policy. I have imagined hitherto that some fear was felt by those who are content to let the existing arrangements stand, at any rate for the present, lest the creation of an Imperial Minister in London, as such, especially if combined with more regular and continuous joint action between him and the representatives of the different Dominions, would lead in fact to some loss of liberty by each of the members of the Imperial body. This might be inevitable and even not undesirable, but we have understood that some of the Dominions shrank from it, partly because at present the Mother Country is bound to be able to throw the heaviest weight into the scale, and must continue to do so for some time to come.

From another point of view, there are difficulties which cannot be ignored. Such an important and