

the representatives of all the overseas dominions in London. These conferences were held at intervals from 1887 until a comparatively recent date. The time at my disposal will not permit me to go into the detailed history of those conferences deeply interesting and illuminating as it is. Suffice it is to say that the Imperial statesmen and representatives with steady perseverance pursued their aims until they were crowned with success. Their main objective was made perfectly clear at the very first conference — the overseas dominions were to contribute to the general military and naval defence of the Empire, but they were not to expect any share in the direction of the Empire's affairs "that authority could not be shared." This objective was kept in view until its triumph was virtually secured. But that triumph was not won without stubborn opposition. The successive Canadian representatives opposed the movement from beginning to end. At the very first Conference, Sir Alexander Campbell, one of the Canadian representatives took advantage of the occasion to remind the Imperial authorities that the British Government had agreed to undertake the naval defence of the Dominion, the Canadian government on its part undertaking the land defence of the Dominion and that it was upon that basis and understanding that Confederation was established.

The Canadian representatives did not therefore regard themselves as under any obligation to make any contribution for Imperial defence. The strongest possible objection was taken at subsequent conferences by Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who persistently on more than one occasion upheld Canada's national interests, and objected most strenuously to any idea of interfering with the autonomy of the Dominion by placing the burden of military and naval defence upon it without its having any real voice in the direction of the Empire's affairs. But all his opposition was without avail and the culminating point of the Imperial Conferences was reached in 1911, when despite Sir Wilfrid Laurier's efforts on behalf of Canada's interests the acquiescence of a majority of the Colonial repre-