

to-day in this country than they were when my right hon. friend went to the conference, and are they better as a result of his having participated in it? Are the relations between the government of Canada and the government of Great Britain better to-day than they were in the past? These are fair questions and we are entitled to judge of the results of his visit to London by the answers to be given to them.

The house is well aware that there is a well-known method of procedure followed at all Imperial conferences. This was not the first Imperial conference, nor was it the first Imperial economic conference. If I am not mistaken there have been altogether some twelve or fourteen different conferences during the last thirty or forty years. In that period of time public men belonging to different political parties have met and discussed the affairs which they went into conference for the purpose of considering. In that period of time there have grown up certain methods of procedure, certain practices and certain precedents, all of which have a bearing upon the work of Imperial conferences. These practices and precedents are well known, and the business of conferences is so arranged as to meet the difficult and perplexing situations that arise, particularly inasmuch as the business of conferences has to be conducted in relation to the possible opinion which foreign countries may get of the empire from the discussions which take place in the attempted solution of the different problems. In order to facilitate the work of the conference considerable preparation is made in advance. The different governments to be represented make known to each other what subjects they wish to have taken up; and the order in which the subjects are to be taken up is set forth in an agenda. The conference opens in a manner intended to help to create a favourable atmosphere for discussion. The first meetings are intended for informal discussion and for the making of such statements as can be given immediately to the public expressive of the attitude towards each other of the different governments represented at the conference. It is important to keep in mind that conferences are exactly what they are termed to be—they are conferences. They are neither cabinets laying down Imperial policies, nor are they parliaments in which members meet to discuss in public matters of mutual concern. Unless it were understood there was to be a certain method of approach and a certain amount of privacy thrown around

the proceedings at the outset, it would be impossible to get governments to go into conference with each other. If my right hon. friend says that all that is to be discussed at a conference ought to be proclaimed from the rooftops right from the outset, that all should be made known, I would say that if that is to be the known procedure, governments will refuse to go into conferences with each other. They must be secured to a certain extent, at least until all positions are known, against having their positions publicly criticized. Let me make myself plain by saying that I am the last one who would sympathize with any proposal that whatever is done must be done wholly in camera, or that policies should be made in secret. A conference has no power to lay down a policy. The different representatives at a conference may present to one another their own points of view; they may present views which in their opinion will be of the greatest service, but they are expected to do so in a manner which will not embarrass the governments to which they are speaking or which are there represented.

It has always been understood at Imperial conferences that any member of the conference is free to state to his own parliament when he returns the position that he took and the objections, if any, which were offered to his attitude and proposals. He is perfectly free to make to his own parliament whatever statement he pleases, so that every phase of the situation may be well known; but he is not expected to embarrass all proceedings by talking publicly at the very outset an attitude which makes all conference impossible.

So obvious are these things that it is extraordinary that one has to mention them. In an Imperial conference, just as in all conferences between governments, each government must of necessity respect what it knows to be the known policies and domestic affairs of another government. No government has any right in a conference to criticize the domestic affairs of another, to take up matters of domestic policy, or to find fault with the policies of the governments with which it is conferring. It may seek to bring about a change but not to force a change. When in conference governments have to respect the position of the other, they have to respect the point of view of the other. If a Conservative government is in office in Great Britain and a Liberal government goes there to represent Canada, as was the case in 1923 and 1926, it would be highly improper for the