

Can we imagine the curious state of affairs that would ensue under those circumstances? What would happen if the British commonwealth had half a dozen separate ministers in Tokyo? Let us suppose that some grave question arises affecting Great Britain, ourselves and our sister dominions; how would it be possible in practice for us to all act together? What course would be taken by this government and by the other governments? The obvious answer is that the governments would communicate with each other, put forward their views and endeavour to reach a common point of agreement, and after that each government would have to instruct its representative in Tokyo in identical terms in order to bring about the desired result. If that did not happen, if instructions went out to the different representatives in different terms it would mean the breaking up of the British empire. I claim that this position would be full of danger in time of stress; I do not see how it could be otherwise.

I will admit that the whole question of the foreign policy of this British commonwealth is very serious and difficult, if the commonwealth is to be maintained and made permanent. I have an idea of my own how this might be worked out, but I will not take time to explain it this afternoon. However, I do say that in foreign countries we must have one voice if we are going to preserve this commonwealth of nations; we must present a united front to foreign countries in all matters of foreign policy which affect every portion of the commonwealth. I do not think we should follow out the present plan; if we are to make a success of the British empire we must have some other method of choosing and appointing the various ministers or ambassadors at foreign courts in order that they may represent the whole empire. I know there has been some objection raised to the suggestion that the foreign affairs might be administered by a committee on which each part of the empire would have a representative; some people say it would be dangerous to give so much power to anyone, but whoever was representing Canada would be definitely under the authority and the instruction of the government here, and it would be just as easy to keep him in order as to keep the minister at Tokyo in order. If that were done we would have a central body which would discuss these questions when they arose; each would advise his own government by cable or otherwise regarding the actual facts and would receive instructions from his own government in return. Then they would sit down together

[Sir George Perley.]

to talk over the question and try to find a solution. We have adopted that principle on several occasions. I remember that in Geneva, when some question came before the assembly about which there was quite a difference of opinion among the delegates from the various parts of the empire, we sat down in a room for a couple of hours one day, threshed out the matter, and found a solution.

All I wish to say to-day is that I think the government have made a mistake in this proposal; I think they have been in too much of a hurry. It seems to me that this is one of the most serious questions which must be faced by the British empire. This problem of keeping the British commonwealth of nations together has been called insoluble, but I believe it can be solved with patience and good will. The vital need is that we should present a united front to all other countries. I suggest that before the government appoint a minister to Japan this question should be more carefully considered and that it should be discussed at length with the other parts of the British empire, with an effort made to arrive at a satisfactory solution which will conserve our rights of self government, which will give us a voice in the appointment of foreign representatives and which at the same time will make sure that this commonwealth will become permanent. So I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the appointment of this minister to Japan be delayed and that the government take the first opportunity to try to thresh the question out, to find a solution of this most difficult problem.

Before I sit down I wish to express my feeling that this question should not have been brought up in this way. This appointment to Tokyo has been included as one of the items in the estimates, and until this time there has been no opportunity of discussion.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I beg my hon. friend's pardon; the estimate was called in committee, but at the request of the acting leader of the opposition it was held over for the express purpose of allowing the leader of the opposition to be here.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: Quite so; I was here when the Prime Minister acquiesced in that request.

Mr. BENNETT: And on Saturday night we said that rather than take time then we would discuss it on the third reading of the supply bill.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Yes.

Sir GEORGE PERLEY: Now we have come to the end of the session, and no one