

time for anxious care about the defence of the Empire, and for an attempt to draw the colonies closer to the Mother Country.

The Colonial Secretary of the day was Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, who had chosen what, up to that time, had been regarded as a second-rate post, in order to carry into effect his ideas concerning the consolidation of the Empire. He sent invitations to the prime ministers of the self-governing colonies to attend a conference in London on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Eleven colonial premiers assembled, and Canada was represented by Sir Wilfred Laurier. In his opening address Mr. Chamberlain proposed three main topics for discussion, the political relations of the colonies to Great Britain, defence, and commercial relations. He advocated the creation of a central council to which the colonies would send representative plenipotentiaries, not mere delegates. He rejoiced that Australia had already set an example of contribution to the navy. Finally, he proposed that the delegates should consider carefully how the commercial bonds of the Empire might be strengthened. Mr. Goschen, First Lord of the Admiralty, urged that all the colonies should give cash contributions towards the upkeep of the British fleet. The Secretary of the Colonial Defence Committee explained the military measures the colonial governments should take, and the premiers present promised to take his suggestions under their serious consideration when they went home. But, in spite of the efforts of the most forceful Colonial Secretary Great Britain had ever had, almost no progress was made. The premiers expressed their unanimous opinion "that the political relations between the United Kingdom and the self-governing colonies are generally satisfactory under the existing condition of things". Only in the matter of trade did they suggest any change. They urged "the denunciation at the earliest convenient time of any treaties which now hamper the commercial relations between Great Britain and her colonies", and undertook to confer with their colleagues as to what preferences might be given to the products of the United Kingdom. As the debates of this conference have never been published, we are left to conjecture why so little was accomplished. Judging, however, by the records of other conferences, we may well believe that the growing national feeling of the larger colonies was an effective bar to any scheme for a central executive, and that the long-established devotion of the Mother Country to free-trade prevented even Mr. Chamberlain from arranging reciprocal trade preferences between Great Britain and her colonies.

*Conference of 1902.*

**London, 1902.**—Soon after the conference of 1897 the South African war broke out, and for three years the attention of British statesmen was centred on that struggle, which had led the colonies for the first