

1887.

—
VICTORIA.

COLONIAL CONFERENCE IN LONDON.

CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING THE HOLDING OF A
CONFERENCE IN LONDON OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE PRINCIPAL COLONIAL GOVERNMENTS.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

By Authority:

JOHN FERRES, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

ABSTRACT.

From Whom.	To Whom.	No.	Date.	Subject.	Page.
Sir H. B. Loch, Governor ...	Mr. Gillies, Premier...	P. 86/3516	1886. 6 Dec.	Forwards copy of a Telegram from Secretary of State for Colonies, announcing intention to hold in London, early in 1887, a Conference of a consultative character with Representatives of Colonies. Despatch will follow	3
Sir H. B. Loch ...	Mr. Gillies ...	P. 87/14	1887. 3 Jan.	Forwards copy of Colonial Office despatch above referred to	3
Hon. E. Stanhope, Secretary of State for the Colonies	Sir H. B. Loch ...	Enclosure	1886. 25 Nov.	Announces intended Conference. States what is proposed as to subjects for discussion and nature of Conference. Suggests date, April or May	4
Sir Graham Berry, Agent-General	Mr. Gillies ...	P. 87/141	1886. 10 Dec.	Forwards copy of Colonial Office despatch; expresses his sense of the value of the proposed Conference	6
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THE GOVERNOR TO THE PREMIER.

P. 86/3516.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HONORABLE THE PREMIER.

The Governor begs to forward to the Honorable the Premier a copy of a telegram he has received from the Secretary of State for the Colonies. a Dec., 1886.

HENRY B. LOCH.

Government House,
6th December, 1886.

TELEGRAM FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES TO THE GOVERNOR
OF VICTORIA, DATED 4TH DECEMBER, 1886.

Referring to Queen's speech proroguing Parliament, Her Majesty's Government propose Conference in London early next year, with Colonial representatives, to discuss Defence, Postal, Telegraph communication, and perhaps other important questions, but not Political Federation, which question not yet ripe. Conference consultative only, so number representatives each Colony not material. Suggested include, in addition to Agent-General or other specially-deputed representatives, any leading public men with special qualifications who may be here. Secretary of State for the Colonies to preside ; probably April or May. Despatch sent 25th November explaining fully.

THE GOVERNOR TO THE PREMIER.

P. 87/14.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HONORABLE THE PREMIER.

The Governor forwards to the Honorable the Premier a despatch, dated the 25th November last, from the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

This despatch calls attention to the manner in which Her Majesty was pleased to refer, on the prorogation of Parliament, to Her Colonial and Indian Possessions.

The despatch alludes to the patriotic action of the Colonies in offering contingents of troops to take part in the Egyptian campaign, and to the cordial co-operation offered to Her Majesty's Government by the Colonies with regard to the subject of Imperial Defence.

The despatch likewise refers to other questions of common interest to the Empire at large.

Her Majesty's Government have come to the conclusion that the Queen should be advised to summon a Conference, to meet in London, at which representatives of the principal Colonial Governments will be invited to attend for the discussion of those questions which appear more particularly to demand attention at the present time ; and the Governor is directed to inform his Ministers thereof, and to express the hope that the proposal will meet with their cordial approval and support.

In forwarding the despatch in question, the Governor would specially draw the attention of his Ministers to the statement that the Conference will necessarily be purely consultative.

The Governor would also draw the attention of his Ministers to the circumstance that this is the first time in the history of the Empire that the Crown has been

advised to invite representatives from all parts of the Empire to consider and advise upon questions of Imperial import, and the Governor earnestly trusts that the importance of the occasion may be recognised by his Government.

After the accompanying despatch has been before his Ministers, the Governor will confer personally with them with regard to the proposal, at a council to be specially convened for the purpose.

HENRY B. LOCH.

Government House,
Melbourne, 3rd January, 1887.

Downing-street,
25th December, 1886.

MY LORD,
SIR,

You will no doubt have remarked that in the Queen's Speech on the prorogation of Parliament, Her Majesty was pleased to refer to Her Colonial and Indian Possessions in the following terms:—"I have observed with much satisfaction the interest which, "in an increasing degree, is evinced by the people of this country in the welfare of "their Colonial and Indian fellow-subjects; and I am led to the conviction that there "is on all sides a growing desire to draw closer in every practicable way the bonds "which unite the various portions of the Empire. I have authorized communications "to be entered into with the principal Colonial Governments with a view to the fuller "consideration of matters of common interest."

2. The communications thus promised with the Colonies have engaged the careful consideration of Her Majesty's Government, and they have come to the conclusion that the Queen should be advised to summon a Conference, to meet in London in the early part of next year, at which representatives of the principal Colonial Governments will be invited to attend for the discussion of those questions which appear more particularly to demand attention at the present time. I request you to inform your Ministers of this proposal, which I am confident will be very satisfactory to them, and to express the hope which I entertain of their cordial co-operation.

3. In the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, the question which is at once urgent and capable of useful consideration at the present time is that of organization for military defence. The patriotic action of the Colonies, in offering contingents of troops to take part in the Egyptian campaign, made a deep and lasting impression on the public mind, and was the first practical result of much careful work during recent years. It is a necessity of the case that the measures which have been taken in each Colony, as well for the organization of the local forces as for the construction of local defensive works, are, to a great extent, not yet fully understood and appreciated in other parts of the Empire. The close and thorough examination of the whole subject of Imperial Defence, which was completed by the Royal Commission presided over by the Earl of Carnarvon, has led to the execution of extensive and important defensive works in various parts of the Empire; and the cordial co-operation offered to Her Majesty's Government by the Colonies in carrying out this policy indicates their desire to arrive, so far as may at present be practicable, at a common basis of action. This work is still being actively pressed on with the assistance of a Standing Committee, which is continuously occupied with matters relating to Colonial Defence.

4. Much yet remains to be done; and it is of course unavoidable that secrecy should continue to be observed with regard to many of the defensive measures in progress or in contemplation. The time has, however, now arrived when an attempt may fairly be made to attain to a better understanding as to the system of defence which may be established throughout the Empire. For this purpose, an interchange of knowledge as to the state of preparation or as to the capabilities of organization in each Colony would lead to a more thorough understanding of their wants and wishes; but whilst Her Majesty's Government would thus be prepared to recommend for the

consideration of the Conference certain principles calculated to promote the general defence of the Empire, it is not our intention in calling the Conference to commit either the Imperial Government or any Colony to new projects entailing heavy expenditure, but rather to secure that the sums which may be devoted to this purpose may be utilized to the fullest extent, with complete knowledge of all the conditions of the problem.

5. Second only in importance to this great question is one concerning in a special degree the interests of the Empire in time of peace. The promotion of commercial and social relations by the development of our postal and telegraphic communications could be considered with much advantage by the proposed Conference. It is a subject the conditions of which are constantly changing. New requirements come into existence, and new projects are formulated, every year. It is obviously desirable that the question of Imperial intercommunication should be considered as a whole, in order that the needs of every part of the Empire may, as far as practicable, be provided for, and that suggestions may be obtained from all quarters as to the best means of establishing a complete system of communications without that increased expenditure which necessarily results from isolated action.

6. Two leading subjects for consideration have been referred to, but it is not impossible that there may be some other important question which in the general opinion of the Colonial Governments might properly and usefully be brought under consideration. But I should deprecate the discussion at the present time of any of the subjects falling within the range of what is known as Political Federation. There has been no expression of Colonial opinion in favour of any steps in that direction; and Her Majesty's Government are of opinion that there would be no advantage in the informal discussion of a very difficult problem before any basis has been accepted by the Governments concerned. It might, indeed, be detrimental to the ultimate attainment of a more developed system of united action if a question not yet ripe for practical decision were now to be brought to the test of a formal examination.

7. The Conference will necessarily be purely consultative, and it will therefore not be material that the Colonies should have equal or proportional representation upon it. The desire of Her Majesty's Government would rather be that its constitution should be sufficiently comprehensive to include, in addition to the Agent-General or other specially-deputed representative of each Government, any leading public man who may be at liberty to come to England next year, and may be specially qualified to take a useful part in the deliberations. It will, I think, be convenient that I should preside at the Conference, and I need not say that I anticipate much advantage to myself and to Her Majesty's Government from the opportunities of acquiring information which will thus be afforded to me.

8. I will only add, in conclusion, that I am confident that your Government will, as I do, feel deep interest in this first attempt to bring all parts of Her Majesty's Empire into joint deliberation. However modest the commencement may be, results may grow out of it affecting, in a degree which it is at present difficult to appreciate, the interests of the Empire and of the civilized world.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) EDWARD STANHOPE.

TO THE GOVERNORS OF COLONIES
UNDER RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT.

P.S.—My own opinion is that the best time for meeting would be the month of April or May, but I should be glad in this matter to be guided by the general opinion of the Colonial Governments.

THE AGENT-GENERAL TO THE PREMIER.

P. 87/141.
No. 4523/86.

SIR, Victoria Office, 8 Victoria Chambers,
Westminster, S.W., 10th December, 1886.

I have the honour to enclose a copy of a despatch from the Secretary of State, which I received since the despatch of the last mail, and which, I dare say, has been already communicated to you by His Excellency, to whom, you will observe, it is addressed.

II. I have read this despatch, as I am sure you will, with considerable satisfaction. Without unduly exaggerating its importance, it must be regarded as a distinct departure from the traditional colonial policy of England; and the mere moral effect of summoning together in the capital of the Empire, on the auspicious occasion of Her Majesty's Jubilee, statesmen delegated by the British Colonies to take counsel on their common interests and policy must be great and salutary. The functions of the Council will, it is understood, be merely consultative. Still, its resolutions and recommendations will necessarily carry a great moral force and sanction with them.

III. The question of defence, for example, upon which the Australian Governments have been conferring lately with the Admiral on the Station, will necessarily be dealt with in a larger and more authoritative way when treated directly with the heads of the Imperial Government, and next door, as I may say, to the Admiralty and Horse Guards. So with the little less important question of the Mails and of Colonial intercommunication generally, so often the subject of dilatory and unsatisfactory correspondence.

IV. Although the decisions of the Council will not be in any way binding upon the Legislatures of the Colonies, I have no doubt you will carefully consider, not merely the representative character of your delegates, but also the instructions under which they will act, and that you will spare no pains, so that they shall be such as fully to express the views of the Government, and by necessity also of the Parliament of the Colony.

V. You will, no doubt, have already observed that this act of the Colonial Minister has been spoken of with great satisfaction by the organs of public opinion, irrespective of party.

VI. Finally, I may mention that there will, as I expect, follow from this Conference one indirect result of very great positive value, and that is the greater authority that will attach thereafter to the representations of the Colonial Governments through their authorized agents. Such a Conference will not exhaust its effect at the moment, but will leave to those who hereafter have to deal with the Imperial Government upon the lines it may lay down a portion of its own power.

I have, &c.,

GRAHAM BERRY.

THE HONORABLE THE PREMIER,
MELBOURNE.

THE PREMIER TO THE GOVERNOR.

87/294.

Premier's Office,
Melbourne, 26th January, 1887.

MEMORANDUM FOR HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR.

The Premier presents his duty to the Governor, and has the honour to request that His Excellency may be pleased to inform the Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Colonies of the appointment of

The Honorable Alfred Deakin, M.L.A., Chief Secretary and Minister of Water Supply,

The Honorable James Lorimer, M.L.C., Minister of Defence,

The Honorable Sir Graham Berry, K.C.M.G., and

The Honorable James Service,

as representatives of the Government of Victoria at the Conference of the Representatives of the Principal Colonial Governments, about to be held in London for the purposes specified in the Circular Despatch of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, dated 25th November, 1886.

Mr. Gillies also asks that His Excellency will be pleased to officially inform each of the gentlemen named of his appointment—for presentation, if necessary, to the Secretary of State.

In the case of the letter introducing the Honorable James Service, the Premier will be glad if His Excellency will express the pleasure that the Government feel in being able to ask Mr. Service to undertake the functions of a Representative of this Colony on such an important occasion, and also their sense that his acting in the capacity mentioned will, in their opinion, prove of great importance and advantage.

D. GILLIES,
Premier.