

## FEDERAL QUARANTINE.

### CONFERENCE OF HEALTH OFFICERS.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL REPORTERS.)

MELBOURNE, Wednesday.

The conference of officers of the Boards of Health of the various States was opened this morning at the office of the Minister for Customs, to consider a number of questions connected with the institution of a system of quarantine by the Commonwealth. Those composing the conference were:—Dr. Ashburton Thompson, president of the Board of Health, New South Wales; Dr. Gresswell, chairman of the Board of Health, Victoria; Dr. B. B. Ham, Commissioner of Public Health, Queensland; Dr. W. Ramsay Smith, chairman of the Central Board of Health, South Australia; Dr. T. H. Lovegrove, principal medical officer, Western Australia; and Dr. Elkington, of the Health Department, Tasmania. Mr. J. F. M'Guinness, of the Customs Department, was appointed secretary.

Mr. Fisher, Minister for Customs, in opening the conference, expressed his pleasure at meeting gentlemen so capable of dealing with the matters to be brought forward. The subjects on which their advice was sought were:—1. The advisability of taking over the administration of the quarantine laws of the several States. 2. Provisions necessary or desirable to introduce in the Federal Quarantine Bill in regard to—(a) The prevention of the introduction of diseases from abroad; (b) prevention of dissemination of disease; (c) quarantine of animals and plants. 3. Generally in regard to—(a) Method of administration of the central staff, etc.; (b) any matter in connection with which it may deem that the Commonwealth legislation should deal. The Cabinet would also like the advice of the conference on any other matters that it was deemed advisable to bring under notice. It was desirable that the results of the deliberations should be furnished as soon as possible, in order that the necessary bill for Parliament should be drafted. In conclusion, he trusted that, as the result of the conference, the health of the Commonwealth, would be completely safeguarded.

After delivering the opening speech, the Minister withdrew, and members of the conference sat in private. They were afterwards entertained by the Minister at luncheon at Parliament House.

The conference lasted until nearly 6 o'clock this evening, and on adjournment Dr. Gresswell, who was appointed chairman, said the discussions that day had been general. Several matters had been partially considered, but legal opinions would have to be obtained with regard to some of them before a decision could be arrived at. The circumstances of each State also had to be considered, and recommendations framed in the light of them. He did not think it would be practicable for the conference to draft a quarantine bill, but some suggestions would be made on which a bill could be founded. Some of the delegates to the conference could not remain in Melbourne more than a week, therefore it was not likely that the bill could be drafted by the conference.