

First Day.
15 April 1907.
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(Mr. DEAKIN.)

of a mutual understanding, one of those ties which was happily referred to by the late Lord Granville, when, following Lord Salisbury at the first Conference in 1887, he referred to them as "ties of steel and of silk." It was at that Conference, to which my memory returns, that the precedent was set which you have happily followed by addressing us as a Prime Minister. Lord Granville, representing the then Opposition, also did us the honour to speak on that occasion. The chivalrous reference which you made to Mr. Chamberlain, the statesman who lately presided over these gatherings, may almost be taken as equivalent to a representation here of the present Opposition in the British Parliament.

In the future, Sir, we hope that the principle to which you have given your adherence, which has led to your presence here to-day, will be given a still further expansion. We may consider whether the Prime Minister of Great Britain, if not the actual, ought not to be the titular President of all these gatherings, so that the principle of governments conferring with governments would be recognised. Such a course would not detract in any sense or by any possible suggestion from any future Secretary of State for the Colonies, and, certainly least of all, the Right Hon. statesman of experience who occupies that post to-day, but merely in order to impress upon the public the cardinal fact that these are meetings of governments with governments for the sake of the Empire.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: My Lord, Mr. Prime Minister, and gentlemen, unlike my two friends, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Mr. Deakin, this is the first occasion upon which it has been my privilege and honour to attend this great Conference, which is looked forward to by the people whom I represent with the deepest possible interest, and I want to say how much I appreciate the sentiments conveyed in the address delivered by the Prime Minister. We approach this Conference with a full recognition of the difficulties that must necessarily exist, not only in Great Britain, but in each of our countries, upon matters concerning which there is very great room for differences of opinion, and it is because of the fact in the outlying countries that those differences of opinion and difficulties attending them exist, that we are anxious to have the benefit at the consultation and the discussion of them, of the ripened judgment of the men who are responsible for the government of the Empire. For my own part I want to say how much I appreciate that reference to perhaps a minor matter made by the Prime Minister. I refer to the Conference which is sitting in another place for the purpose of regulating and dealing with the Navigation Laws of the Empire, and I take the opportunity of saying that, under the able presidency of Mr. Lloyd George, that Conference already has dealt with some of the most complex matters, and has arrived at decisions which, before we went into Conference, appeared to be almost impossible (to my mind, at least) of solution. It is from a knowledge of what we have already done in one great department affecting various parts of Britain and her possessions there, and the solutions that have been arrived at, that I look forward with some confidence to the discussions, and the results from those discussions, which must take place upon matters doubtless of wider and greater moment and of very great difficulty that will come up for consideration at this Conference.

New Zealand is far distant from the seat of the Empire. One arrives in the old land and feels on every side that one is amongst New Zealanders in the sense that they are British. The sentiment of the people, the desires and ambitions of the people here, though covering a very much wider area, are very similar to what we find in our own country, and it is one of the fine sides of being a member of the British Empire that one realises on coming to the old land that there is amongst every class a desire to bring all parts of our dominions as closely together as possible for the purpose of our