

their standard or status is in the States of the Empire. The members of this Conference, with their great experience of the cumulative effect of these institutions and the position which India now occupies here and in the League of Nations, will realize how much all these changes have contributed towards the growing self-consciousness and sense of dignity of India.

India's Feeling for the Empire.

Now, I want to say this, and in the most plain way that I can : if I thought, and if my colleagues thought, that this desire for equality of treatment was inspired in any sense by a desire not to be part of, or to take part in, this great Empire, neither I nor my colleagues would be pleading the cause at this table. It is, indeed, the desire and it is the ambition of Indians—I will exclude the negligible class of extremists, who can be found, I suppose, in any country—it is their intent and ambition to share in the splendours, the glories, and the traditions of the British Empire.

They believe, moreover, that they can bring their own contribution of thought, culture, and loyalty to this great combine. There are those who suggest that these disabilities under which Indians labour in some parts of the Empire are of little importance, that they do not interfere with their liberty, and that the denial of the vote does not very much matter one way or the other. Now, these views are, as one knows, the common form of objections put forward, either here or in any country, to franchise extensions and franchise grants. But, though the question has importance from the purely material point of view, I should be very ill discharging my duty to this Conference if I were to represent this matter as one to be regarded merely from the practical point of view. It is very largely with the Indians a matter of national sentiment and feeling, and it is with this feeling that we have to reckon.

Importance of India to the Empire.

Now, in all situations of Imperial activity—in matters of Imperial defence, matters of Imperial trade, Imperial communications, or the development of Imperial resources—in all these India plays a most prominent part, and, as we have granted to India a large measure of representative institutions, it is quite clear that in dealing with these large matters we cannot disregard the opinions of the representative bodies which we have set up. And, supposing they were disregarded, how, after all, are you going to expect India to co-operate whole-heartedly in the great work of consolidating the Empire, and how, without this co-operation, can the Empire attain its full measure of strength? We know, too, that economic policy is very often influenced by political considerations; and I feel that both on the political and the economic side the task of governing India may be greatly increased, and that there will be, unless we settle this question, no real unity in the Empire, not merely on the material side—on which I am not laying so much stress to-day—but on what is so vastly more important, the moral side.

Scope of Problem.

Moreover, the scope of this problem as regards many of the Dominions is not really very great. For the moment I am excluding from that general proposition South Africa, where I know a great many currents and cross-currents of opinion complicate the issue; but as regards Australia, and as regards New Zealand, where much has been done, and as regards Canada, the numbers that we have to deal with are very small—about two thousand in Australia, in all that vast country, about six hundred in New Zealand, and about twelve hundred in Canada, of whom, I think, rather more than eleven hundred are in the Province of British Columbia.

Resolution of 1921 Conference.

I want to reaffirm what was stated at the Conference in 1921 as to the complete acceptance by the Government of India and Indian opinion of the right of the great Dominions to determine the composition of their own community. May I read the words of that resolution? They are as follows: "The Conference, while reaffirming the resolution of the Imperial War Conference of 1918 that each community of the British Commonwealth should enjoy complete control of the composition of its own population by means of restriction on immigration from any of the other communities, recognizes that there is an incongruity between the position of India as an equal member of the British Empire and the existence of disabilities upon British Indians lawfully domiciled in some other parts of the Empire."

Therefore, that principle is laid down quite clearly, and consequently there need be no anxiety on the part of any of the Dominions that there is any desire on the part of Indian feeling to go back on that decision. Thus, in pressing this matter upon the generous consideration of the Dominions, I feel that, vast as are the implications of the problem, the solution of the practical question is perhaps not so difficult as it appears. Well, justice and expediency are often divided. Sometimes they approach each other, and when, as I think in this case, they combine and are merged in one another, the appeal is surely irresistible, and I am going to ask this Conference if the time has not come when these disabilities should be specifically removed.

Indian Government's Duty of safeguarding Indian Nationals Overseas.

I want to add this point, about the interest—possibly some may think the unnecessary interest—which the Government and the Indian people take in the position of Indians in the great Dominions. Now, so long as to any extent Indians in the Dominions may be regarded as a foreign body in the great body politic of those Dominions, so long is the Government of India bound to take an interest in their fate and to assure themselves as to the manner in which they are treated. But once they