

OPENING SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Message to Their Majesties.

Mr. Bruce: Prime Minister and Ministers, I think perhaps it would be appropriate if I might exercise the privilege which is mine, as the representative of the second senior Dominion, to second the resolution which the Prime Minister of Canada has just proposed, and I do it with the greatest appreciation of the obligations which the whole family of British nations are under to His Majesty the King, and also remembering that he is the visible symbol of our unity, the centre of all our loyalties, and the link which binds us together. But I think throughout the Empire there is something more than that, and in considering our loyalties to the Throne we ever have in mind not only the functions of the Crown as an institution but the arduous and devoted personal service which His Majesty and the whole of his family have rendered to the Empire and all its people, and in seconding this resolution on behalf of His Majesty's subjects in Australia I would like to emphasize that they are a loyal and devoted people to the Throne and also to the person of His Majesty.

I second the resolution which the Prime Minister of Canada has moved.

I desire to associate myself with all that Mr. Mackenzie King has said in expressing appreciation at the welcome which you have been good enough to extend to us this morning. I would also, if I may, as one who has been here on a previous occasion, express a welcome to those Prime Ministers and Ministers and to the representatives of India who attend an Imperial Conference for the first time, and express the hope that our deliberations will be conducted in the same spirit which marked the last Conference which I was privileged to attend. I would also desire to associate myself with what both you and the Prime Minister of Canada have said with regard to Lord Curzon and Mr. Massey. We all remember those two figures very well at the last Imperial Conference, and I have equally vivid recollections with the Prime Minister of Canada of that masterly exposition of the position in connection with foreign affairs which Lord Curzon gave on that occasion. Any one who has attended an Imperial Conference must also miss Mr. Massey, because he held, I think, in the Empire a unique position. He was at the last Conference, as I think at previous Conferences he had been, almost in the position of the father of the Empire, and any one who came in contact with him must have been inspired with a great affection for him and a great regard for his character and his very sane and sound Imperialism.

At this moment I do not think it is desirable that I should touch upon the many things which you have said in your admirable and full exposition of the history of Imperial Conferences and where we have arrived to-day. The only thing I would desire to suggest is that with regard to all that has been accomplished in the past we should ever remember that we have progressed, and that when we meet together we should not again go through a long survey, which must occupy a great deal of time, of all that has been done, but that we should start from the point we reached on the last occasion and attempt to go forward and do something constructive towards further cementing the Empire.

I desire to endorse the remarks of the Prime Minister with regard to the solemn ceremony which we attended this morning. Nothing could have more fittingly preceded the opening of this Conference than a ceremony which symbolizes the unity of this Empire, and our mutual sacrifices in the late war. These are spiritual links which must strengthen the bonds which now unite us.

Nor can I let this opportunity pass without referring to the work of the Imperial War Graves Commission which is perpetuating in a most admirable manner the remembrance of the great sacrifices to which I have referred. I rejoice to think that, by the endowment mentioned by the Prime Minister, the sacred work of that Commission has been placed on a basis that will ensure its permanency.

Constitutional Questions.

We have to look at the questions that face us under three heads, the relations of the different parts of the Empire one to another, the question of our common defences of the Empire, and the question of inter-Imperial trade and economic development in the future. I think it is very unfortunate that so much has been suggested as to great constitutional difficulties which exist at the present time, for it amounts to an implication that there is friction between the different parts of the Empire and the Governments that represent them. I think the Prime Minister of Canada in his admirable remarks has, if he will permit me to say so, shown the position in a very clear light and has brought us all to the recognition, to which I hope we had come before, that the problems of the Empire, with the diversity of conditions which exist of race, and fortunately not of ideal but possibly of tradition, render it necessary that we should have the fullest discussion with a complete recognition by all of us that our desire is mutually to advance the interest of the Empire as a whole. If there are any misunderstandings let us clear them away by a frank interchange of views. For my part I am certain that those constitutional difficulties which some people are trying to suggest will disappear entirely when around this table we come to discussion. We have been able to solve all our problems in the past, we have gone through the system of progress and advance in the Empire which you have recounted to us to-day; we go right back to the first Imperial Conference, we come to the testing period of the war and the sittings of the War Cabinet, we pass on into the post-war period, and, as each new problem has arisen, we have met it. I am confident to-day that if we have to face further problems we shall be able to find a solution for them all. The one point at this stage I would desire to stress is that, while it is admirable that we should survey where we have got to, we should meet only the problems that confront us at the