

1930.
NEW ZEALAND.

IMPERIAL CONFERENCE.

STATEMENT MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE 12TH DAY OF AUGUST, 1926, IN REFERENCE TO THE BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED AT THE FORTHCOMING IMPERIAL CONFERENCE.

Ordered to be laid upon the Table, and to be printed.

WHEN I intimated to the House a few days ago the subjects to be considered at the Imperial Conference I undertook to afford members an opportunity of discussing these matters. I suggest, with the permission of the House, that with the discussion of this subject we should combine the discussion on three papers already laid before you—A.-5, the Report of the Dominion Representative on the Tenth Assembly of the League of Nations; A.-6, the Report of the Conference on the Operation of Dominion Legislation and Merchant Shipping Legislation; and A.-7, the London Naval Treaty.

Honourable members will, I am sure, readily recognize that on certain questions it would be premature to initiate a public discussion before they have been considered at the Conference. Defence and foreign policy are conspicuous examples on which a considered opinion could only be given after the fullest information, confidential and otherwise, had been supplied. I hope, however, in the course of my remarks to give sufficient indication of the general attitude of the Government towards the subjects on the agenda paper, and I shall be glad to hear and to consider any views that honourable members may see fit to express on these or any other subjects.

It will be understood, of course, that the decisions of the Conference will not bind any Dominion against the will of its Parliament, and a copy of the proceedings of the Conference will, in the usual way, be laid before you in due course. The House will, no doubt, agree that the representative of New Zealand must to a considerable extent be allowed a free hand in the discussion and decision of the various subjects to be dealt with at the Conference, but I hope to indicate in general terms the lines that it is intended to follow.

I wish to make it plain at the outset that the present Government share in no less measure than previous Governments the traditional attitude of New Zealand towards the United Kingdom. We value very highly our continued association with the Mother-country, and it is our wish to maintain this association as close and as intimate as possible both politically and economically. We have no complaints and no demands, and we shall enter this Conference as the representatives of New Zealand have entered previous Conferences, with the utmost spirit of good will to the Mother-country and to our sister Dominions, and with an earnest desire to bear our share in any measure that will serve the common welfare. The people of the United Kingdom have, I hope, learned to anticipate with confidence such an attitude on our part, and I know that it will be endorsed without reserve by the members of this House and by the people of the Dominion.