

ANNEX I

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS at the Opening Session of the Conference, held in the House of Commons Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, on Thursday, the 21st July, at 11 a.m.

At 11 o'clock a.m. His Excellency the Governor General proceeded to the Commons Chamber and took his seat upon the Throne.

His Excellency the Governor General: I have the honour to communicate to you a message from the King, which His Majesty has been graciously pleased to command me to deliver to you:

"My thoughts and prayers are with the delegates of my Governments who are gathered in Conference to-day, to explore the means by which they may promote the prosperity of the Peoples of this great Empire.

At this Conference you are opening a new page of history, on which, within a few weeks, will be written the record of a determined effort to solve the difficulties weighing so heavily, not only on us, but upon the whole world. It is my earnest hope that when this Conference rises there will be a record of results worthily reflecting the frankness, the sincerity, and the spirit of helpfulness with which, I feel confident, your deliberations will be conducted.

The British Empire is based on the principle of co-operation, and it is now your common purpose to give the fullest possible effect to that principle in the economic sphere. By so doing you will set in motion beneficial forces within the British Commonwealth which may well extend their impulse also to the world at large. I pray that you may be given clear insight and strength of purpose for these ends.

21ST JULY, 1932.

GEORGE R. I."

Having delivered to you His Majesty's message, I now have the privilege, on behalf of the Government and people of Canada, of welcoming to the Capital City of this Dominion those of you who come from Overseas.

My Government appreciated very deeply the cordial manner in which other Governments throughout the Empire have accepted their invitation to send representatives to Ottawa, and I know well that, from coast to coast, all Canada echoes that appreciation.

You come here, therefore, as the honoured guests of Canada. But, Gentlemen, you all meet here—guests and hosts alike—burdened with great responsibilities; you meet to-day as the chosen Trustees of Empire, knowing that your deliberations will materially affect the future welfare of millions.

Twenty-eight years ago, it fell to my predecessor, Lord Aberdeen, to welcome here a distinguished assembly of delegates from the British Empire overseas, but that gathering was a Colonial Conference and not an Imperial Conference as are the meetings initiated to-day; for, in the years that have intervened, immense and far-reaching events have occurred, affecting profoundly the development of that Empire; yet they have left unchanged the spirit which unites it, the common allegiance to the Crown, and the common ideals which have brought you now to Ottawa.

When, in 1914, war shattered the peace of the whole world, those ideals were subjected to their sternest test; they emerged from it unimpaired, for the units of the Empire, united, perhaps, as they had never been before, gave freely of their best to serve the common cause. It is appropriate to recall that, in this very building where you meet, is set the Memorial Chamber, consecrated as the national shrine of Canada's glorious contribution to that cause; to all of us, from whatever land we come, it may serve as a solemn reminder of the strength that unity, and unity alone, can achieve.

To-day, though the shadow of war is not upon us, we are still faced by the inevitable, sombre, consequences of war; the economic crisis, under the load of which the whole world staggers, is its most bitter legacy.

It is, indeed, in exceptional circumstances that the Conference meets. Unique in its setting, in that no Imperial Conference has hitherto met save in London, it may well be the most momentous gathering ever held within the British Empire. The outcome may change its whole destiny; and, if your meeting achieves, as all hope it may, results that will strengthen the Empire to