

1932.
NEW ZEALAND.

IMPERIAL ECONOMIC CONFERENCE, OTTAWA, 1932.

STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT HON. J. G. COATES, LEADER OF THE
NEW ZEALAND DELEGATION, 13TH OCTOBER, 1932.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

MR. SPEAKER,—

The summary of the proceedings of the Ottawa Conference was circulated amongst honourable members last week. I now wish to lay on the table the full text of the Agreement between the United Kingdom and New Zealand. It may assist if I make a statement bearing on the Conference and the Agreement before I move certain resolutions affecting the Customs duties levied on imports; later on, after ample opportunity for debate has been given, there will be a motion expressing approval of the Agreement, and a Customs Bill embodying to-night's resolutions will come down at an early date.

Sir, the Ottawa Conference of 1932 marks a milestone in the history of our Empire. No previous Colonial or Imperial Conference was charged with issues—with menacing dangers if it should fail, with richer promise if it should happily succeed—with issues more vital to the welfare of our people. The world-wide depression had passed beyond the stage at which it was within the power of any nation by its single-handed efforts to arrest the drift. Co-operation on a wide scale was necessary, and urgently necessary, not merely to effect recovery but to prevent further collapse. The countries of the Commonwealth of British Nations looked to Ottawa to set them by co-operative effort on the high road towards recovery.

Nor were the nations within our Empire alone in looking to Ottawa and recognizing its significance. Other nations, equally in the grip of the depression, were alive to the bearing of the Conference on their own welfare. Anything that would hasten recovery in the one-fourth of the world which is included within the Empire would be the most effective way of assisting also the other three-fourths. Events prior to the Conference, Great Britain's steadfast calm in the face of adversity, and the success of her great conversion loan, had strengthened the ability of the British Empire to play its traditional part in leading the world towards recovery. We were not seeking the selfish advancement of our own country or our Empire, regardless of the welfare of the rest of the world. Judged even by the narrow standards of the material gain to the nation pursuing it, such a policy of isolation is unwise. It brings its own undoing. Rather was it our ideal and our immediate purpose to contribute our part towards general recovery, in which our people would reap their share.