

The great Empire of India is now entering upon another stage of self-government. It has our warmest good wishes for the achievement of the full success which is to be expected from its own capacities and its association with the other countries under the sovereignty of His Majesty. Newfoundland is now represented by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, rather than directly; Southern Rhodesia and Burma, which were not directly represented in the Conferences of the "twenties," have sent their first ministers as observers to the present Conference.

I have been emphasizing changes in composition and personnel, as is perhaps natural in one who looks back fourteen years to his first Conference and who, from a much longer period spent in public life, has become somewhat familiar with its vicissitudes. Equally striking, however, to my mind, is the continuity which distinguishes these Conferences, and not these Conferences alone. For continuity through change, progress through development of proved courses and innate tendencies, permanence and flexibility, are the distinctive mark of the political institutions which are our common heritage.

THE CORONATION AND THE CORONATION OATH.

The great occasion which has given this week its colour and its imperishable place in our memories has appropriately illustrated this quality of British institutions. Those who participated in the Coronation of the King and Queen—and, thanks to the inventions of the years that have passed since the last Coronation, it may truly be said that all the King's peoples everywhere took part—must have been impressed by the blending of tradition and adaptability to new needs and new occasions which characterized that impressive service. It was marked by the continuing use of ritual and words and symbols which were ancient when the New World lands represented here were undiscovered and unknown, but it was marked also by the recognition of new political facts and constitutional relationships brought into being by the change and growth of the past generation and recorded in the Imperial Conferences of recent years.

Particularly significant was the new form of the oath by which the King solemnly declared the sense in which he has accepted the Crown. For the first time South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Canada are expressly named. His Majesty thus records that sovereignty is to be exercised in the interest of the peoples of Canada and the other countries set forth, according to their own laws and customs. For the first time in this great ceremony it was recognized that the relationship between the King and his people of Canada is direct and immediate. The oath has long embodied the principles upon which our system of democratic governance is built. It now recognizes that the relationships of the several peoples under the Crown, one with another, as well as with foreign states, have become interpenetrated by the ancient principles of freedom and the rule of law. Thus it may be said that the new oath, preserving the old and finding place for the new, embodies in simple fashion our political faith, and mirrors the structure of this group of free, equal and autonomous states known as the British Commonwealth of Nations.

INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS.

The experiment in ordered relationships between free countries, which we call the British Commonwealth of Nations, has, we may venture to hope, value for other countries as well as for our own. We are endeavouring to prove the enduring possibility of establishing peace and sharing the gains of progress among peoples situated in every continent, held together not by centralized control or reliance upon force, but by similarity of political institutions and political ideals, by common interests and common loyalties. Through the past three centuries Britain gave the world an example and a challenge in the political democracy and the individual liberty it achieved within its own borders. It should be the aim of the members of the wider Commonwealth of Nations which has been built upon that foundation so to order their relations and co-ordinate their policies that they, in their turn, in the twentieth century, by the success of this experiment, may contribute, in the peaceful ordering of international relations, something of equal value to the common stock of mankind.

The trend of events abroad, to which the Chairman has referred, makes it clear that it will be no easy task to hold these gains of the past, much less to make further advance. Democracy and individual freedom have been challenged and scorned abroad, and questioned and belittled in some quarters at home. Under the driving force of new social gospels, combined with old ambitions for dominance and glory, individual and political liberty have been sacrificed in many lands to the demands of the all-powerful state. In the countries in which liberty has taken deep and firm root its precious and indispensable quality has been realized afresh, and new bonds of sympathy have been established between democratic states. In nations where the struggle for political freedom and equality had been substantially won it was perhaps natural that in the wake of war some reaction should have arisen, and that the rights our fathers had won, the institutions they had built up, often came to be taken for granted or to be regarded as outworn. Sometimes even in this motherland of Parliaments it was contended that the institutions of democracy were inadequate to meet the needs of the twentieth century. Sometimes in other members of the Commonwealth it was contended that insistence upon the full measure of self-government was quibbling about academic constitutional issues of little practical importance. To-day such doubts have passed. Now that the stark contrast between liberty and regimentation has been made