

1895.

NEW ZEALAND.

COLONIAL CONFERENCE AT OTTAWA, CANADA.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable the EARL of GLASGOW, a member of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, a Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Colony of New Zealand and its dependencies:

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

Having been appointed by the Executive Council of New Zealand to represent the Government of the colony at a Conference to be held at Ottawa, Canada, on the 21st June, 1894, for the purpose of considering the trade relations and telegraphic communication between the Dominion of Canada and the Australasian Colonies, I received from your Excellency, 23rd April, 1894, a commission empowering me to act as such representative, with authority to confer and deliberate with the other representatives of colonies assembling at the Conference, and to report fully the proceedings of the Conference; and now I have the honour to submit to your Excellency for your information, and that of the Government of New Zealand, my report, and, in doing so, I desire to mention to your Excellency the extremely sympathetic and hospitable manner in which the delegates were received by His Excellency the Governor-General, the Government, and the people of Canada generally. I take this opportunity of again testifying to the hearty welcome given to them, and to the numerous proofs afforded of the interest taken in matters connected with their mission.

Whatever may be the immediate and practical outcome of the Conference, there can be little doubt that, in affording opportunity for representative discussion, it has given impulse and direction to a movement designed for the advancement of Imperial and colonial interests.

Dunedin, January, 1895.

A. LEE SMITH.

REPORT.

PART I.—THE CONFERENCE.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

BEFORE entering upon a review of the work done at the Ottawa Conference, it is, perhaps, desirable that some reference should be made to questions which for a long period have more or less engaged attention, and have gradually developed into points of supreme British and colonial interest. What is to be the future position of the colonies in relation to each other and to the Mother-country? Are the outlying portions of the British Empire to continue to occupy the position of a group of detached fragments—parts of a machine which, if properly put together, would possess immense potentialities; or are they to become federated, taking their due share in the moulding of Anglo-Saxon destinies? Such appears to me to be the concrete form which the many theories and discussions on the colonial question in the main assume. It is not too much to say that until the last decade there existed a feeling of much doubt and uncertainty as to the ultimate position in which the colonies would stand in their relations with the Imperial head, and that but little consideration was given to questions bearing upon the unity of interest as between themselves. Twenty years ago there was no such concurrence of feeling and opinion as has lately been exhibited in a manner so decided as to render possible a calling together—almost without demur—of an Imperial and colonial council.

Circumstances of a varying, and, in some sense, almost of an opposite, nature have conspired to bring about this change. To trace the growth of the sentiment which is in such marked contrast to that which formerly prevailed with regard to our Imperial connection would be outside the purpose of this report. But a few considerations may, perhaps, be referred to in explanation of the change which has occurred. Without attaching blame to the Home Governments of the past, it may fairly