

that his health will be quite restored, and that he will take his place again in the public affairs of this great country and Empire. Nothing could be more grateful to us, no better commencement of this Conference could take place, than the message which has been read to us coming from His Majesty the King; the next to this message we welcome the presence of the Prime Minister of the Crown. This Conference is not, as I understand it (I give my own views) a Conference simply of the Prime Ministers of the different self-governing Colonies and the Secretary of State, but it is, if I may give my own mind, a conference between government and governments; it is a Conference between the Imperial Government and the Governments of the self-governing dependencies of England. I recognise all the difficulties which beset us; they have been expressed by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. We all hope and we all believe in the future of the British Empire. There are ways and ways by which it can be increased and improved. We are here to discuss those questions. Upon many things we can agree; upon many things, I believe, we cannot agree at this moment; but, above all things, we all agree we all move towards the same goal and the same end. The observations which have been offered to us by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman upon this subject have been excellent, and could not be improved upon, I am sure. He recognises that there are things upon which public opinion is not in the same groove that it is perhaps in the Colonies. We must recognise that there are many questions upon which public opinion in our respective countries may not be the same as in this country. But upon one thing we are all agreed, and I believe that if we can keep this in view we can never go astray, that is to say, that if the basis of the union which now binds the British Empire remains as it is now, a proper and always permanent recognition of the principle that every community knows best what does for itself, then we cannot go wrong, and our deliberations must be fruitful. This is the spirit, at all events for my part, in which I approach the great subjects we have to discuss. The time is not fitting to-day to take these subjects in detail, and I will confine my few remarks upon this point to the same spirit which has inspired the observations of the Prime Minister; but I have only one word to say, to express my great satisfaction that our proceedings are commencing under such favourable auspices.

First Day.
15 April 1907.

(Sir WILFRID
LAURIER.)

Mr. DEAKIN: My Lord, Mr. Prime Minister, and Gentlemen, the wise and weighty words which you have been good enough to address to us to-day, furnish a fitting opening, and, if I may be pardoned for saying so, coming from your lips, the most fitting opening for a Conference whose character and principle you have so aptly defined. Your address, Sir, contains many memorable sentences, summing up with felicity some of the aspects from which this gathering will, we hope, come to be generally regarded. We acknowledge your presence as a recognition of the principle alluded to by my friend and senior, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, as one which we are anxious to uphold, that this is a Conference between governments and governments, due recognition, of course, being had to the seniority and scope of those governments. In addition, we owe to you a propitious and happy exposition of the nature of this Conference for those to whom we, at all events, naturally turn our eyes. We may be pardoned for laying what might appear to many residents of this country an undue stress upon the importance of your speech, not that it will fail of adequate recognition, but because to the distant communities from whom we come, for whom we speak, and in whose name alone we wish to be heard, it means much more than it can to the people of this country, accustomed as they are continually to hear from your lips political utterances relating to what I may term the home politics of the United Kingdom.