

23 May, 1911.]

OPENING ADDRESS AND REPLIES.

[1st Day.

General BOTHA—*cont.*

I have been deeply touched by the words of our Chairman about our late good friend Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. In him South Africa has lost a good friend, whose memory we shall always cherish.

Since we assembled last a most important event has taken place in the history of the British Empire, the Union of the South African Colonies. On the last occasion South Africa was here represented by three Governments, while one Colony was not represented at all. To-day my colleagues and I have the honour to be present on behalf of the whole Union—the youngest nation in the row of nations under the British flag.

We are grateful to be able to assure you that in that country where up till then there was so much discord, and where so many tears and so much blood had flowed in the past, concord and harmony now reign. Both sections of the population have worked together to attain that much-desired union, and we may say to-day that our first Parliament has proved that we were ripe for union. We have not only united countries, but also hearts. We are to-day in South Africa inspired with new hope and new courage, and we look forward to the future with the greatest confidence.

All in South Africa now work together loyally for the development of our part of the British Empire, and the building-up of a healthy and strong young nation of which the Empire will be proud.

My colleagues and I are proud to be able to say that we represent all sections of our population, who will follow the proceedings of this important Conference with the greatest interest.

Sir EDWARD MORRIS: Mr. Premier, I am in entire accord with what has been said by those who represent the other, and greater, Dominions, and I am sure that we are all to be congratulated in having the privilege of taking part in a Conference presided over by the Premier of England, and I congratulate you, Sir, on the very fine Imperial spirit and sentiment that permeates the whole of that address.

It was not my privilege or advantage to be present at any of the other Colonial Conferences that have been held during the last few years. I was present at the Conference referred to by you a moment ago, in relation to the defence of the Empire. I took part in the whole of the deliberations of that Conference, and I can only hope that the spirit of unity that prevailed at the deliberations of that Conference will characterise the present one. I am quite certain it will, because I feel that every one here, no matter whether it be those who represent the great Dominions, or those who represent the smaller ones, is actuated by what was so well expressed by you—namely, that when they come in here they leave party outside; and, although there may be great party resolutions, involving large fiscal and other questions in this country and in the Dominions, here there is no question, except it be the one to advance in every possible way the interests of the Empire as a whole. I should not suppose there would be any difference upon that point, and if there appears to be a difference it can only mean that we differ as to the means by which that can be accomplished.

I desire also to tender, on behalf of Newfoundland, an expression of loyalty, through you, to His Majesty the King; and I am quite satisfied—as has been so very well expressed by the others—that the evidence which His Majesty has already given, in relation to ruling over this great Empire, will be more than sustained as the years go on.

I was particularly struck with one of the principles laid down by you in your address, and that is the characteristic of the British law, as it may be termed in the Empire—that is, the Reign of Law. I suppose there is no other country in the world that has established such a record, or whose record is so unique as that of the British Government, whether it be in the Motherland or in the Colonies, “Law and Order” is respected everywhere, and I am sure that anything that can be done by this Conference by resolution, or by suggestion in any way, to further perfect that will meet with the approval of those whom we represent.