

23 May, 1911.]

OPENING ADDRESS AND REPLIES.

[1st Day.

THERE WERE ALSO PRESENT :

Lord LUCAS, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies;

Sir FRANCIS HOPWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies;

Sir C. P. LUCAS, K.C.M.G., C.B., Assistant Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies;

Rear-Admiral Sir CHARLES OTTLEY, K.C.M.G., M.V.O., Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence;

Mr. ATLEE A. HUNT, C.M.G., Secretary to the Department of External Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia;

Commander S. A. PETHEBRIDGE, Secretary to the Department of Defence, Commonwealth of Australia;

Mr. J. R. LEISK, Secretary for Finance, Union of South Africa; and

Private Secretaries to the Members of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT : Gentlemen, Colleagues, I offer you, in the name of His Majesty's Government, a most grateful and cordial welcome, and I express at the outset of our proceedings a hope which you will all share, that the deliberations of this, the first Imperial Conference, may conduce, in the language of the prayer which we are accustomed to offer for the High Court of Parliament, to the "safety, honour, and welfare of our Sovereign and His Dominions."

Four years have passed since some of us who are here to-day took part in the Colonial Conference of 1907. Even in such a relatively short lapse of time notable gaps have been created by the calls of mortality and the accidents of political fortune. The name of my lamented predecessor, Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman, who opened the Conference of that year, will always be associated in the history of the Empire with the grant of full self-government to the Transvaal and the Orange River Colonies, with the result that we have with us at this table to-day not (as then) the representatives of separate South African States, but the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa. And barely a year ago our beloved and illustrious Sovereign, King Edward VII, to whom in 1907 we owed and gave a whole-hearted allegiance, was suddenly taken from the Empire which he served so faithfully and loved so well, leaving behind him the best inheritance which any Monarch can bequeath to his successors—the memory of great purposes worthily pursued, and the example of a life which was directed and dominated by a tireless sense of duty, and an unquenchable devotion to the peoples committed to his charge.

You will join with me, I am sure, in offering, as our first corporate act, our homage to King George V, and the assurance of our fervent hope and firm belief that in his reign the British Crown will continue with untarnished lustre to be the centre and the symbol of our Imperial unity. It is, indeed, a happy coincidence that the time fixed for our deliberations will enable the foremost statesmen of the self-governing Dominions and Colonies to take a personal part in the solemnities, shared in spirit and sympathy by the whole Empire, which will attend the Coronation of the King and Queen.

It is natural, and I hope not inopportune, that on such an occasion I should invite you to survey with me, for a few moments, the stage of development which we have now reached in the evolution of that unique political organism which is called the British Empire. I am not going to trouble you with statistics of area, population, production, interchange, interesting and impressive as the figures might be made.