

23 May, 1911.]

IMPERIAL COUNCIL.

[1st Day.]

Sir JOSEPH WARD—*cont.*

or New Zealand. The proportion of increase there, by comparison with Canada, which is situated so close to this Old Country, cannot be expected to be so great; but within the next 25 years—I am certain there is no practical man sitting at this table will contradict the statement—that the combined populations of the overseas Dominions will be very much greater than the population of the United Kingdom and Ireland, which I put down at 45 millions. Then if the calculation that I make regarding Canada is correct, and I support it with all sincerity—one of the problems that the people who are controlling the destinies of the British Empire will have to consider before many years go by is the expansion of those overseas countries into powerful nations, all preserving their local autonomy, all interested in seeing that their people are governed to suit the requirements of the people within their own territory, but all very deeply concerned in keeping together and entering into co-operation with the whole Empire, by means of some loose form of federation in the general interests of all parts of it. Because after all (and Mr. Asquith, in the course of his admirable speech earlier to-day, made a similar statement in better language than I can use) at the present moment it is sentiment that is keeping the whole of us together. There can be no doubt in the wide world that it is sentiment and sentiment alone, and a very fine sentiment it is; but if we remember that all the countries are drawing what I may term a cosmopolitan population to them from places outside British territory, we have to realise the fact that in the overseas countries the tendency of this very cosmopolitan character, so far as population is concerned, is to present in all parts of the British Empire in the years to come a problem of a very serious nature. There is certainly to-day a tendency for people of a different tongue to ours to emigrate to the attractive overseas Dominions.

The experience of the United States of America ought to impress upon us the tremendous change that can take place in a country in a comparatively short period of years according to the class and nationality of its immigrants. It is only 50 years since America had less than half its present population. In 1848 the American population was almost wholly Anglo-American, and to-day over 50 per cent. is of foreign birth or extraction. New York itself to-day possesses 80 per cent. of foreign element, and Chicago possesses 66 per cent. of foreign element. Now, 50 years in the history of the United States of America is not a very long time.

The PRESIDENT: By “foreign element” you do not mean people born abroad, you mean either born abroad or descended from those born abroad.

Sir JOSEPH WARD: That is so; but I want to emphasize the fact that in the case of those born in the country, even although their parents and grandparents may have been foreigners, there is an element of attachment to their native country, which must be considered when you are dealing with a matter of this kind. I am pointing out, however, that the history of the United States goes to prove that questions of great racial interest must arise in connection with the development of the overseas Dominions in the course of the next 25 years, unless our growth and development, or our environment, or our circumstances are so essentially different from what they were in the United States of America years ago, as to preclude the possibility of a problem such as I am indicating arising for the men of both the Old Country and the newer countries in the years to come. I feel, as the result of studying the matter and reading the history of the different countries, that the statesmen will have to deal with this problem in the years to come as assuredly as we are sitting round this table.

But sparsely populated countries of to-day (I refer to the overseas Dominions) cannot be measured by anybody on the score of their present populations. If a country is to be measured upon the score of its population, on the score of its numbers, then, as a matter of fact, we ought to put China before every other country of the world, because the Chinese population is estimated by those qualified to give an estimate at between 450 millions and 500 millions.