

12th Day.]

CONCLUDING SPEECHES.

[20 June, 1911.]

Sir JOSEPH WARD—*cont.*

Government, from Mr. Asquith downwards, have extended to us. I also wish to acknowledge the courtesy shown to us by the gentlemen who represent His Majesty's Opposition here. This Conference will, I believe, be productive of great good, and speaking as one who has had the honour of being on former Conferences I do not know of one which has done more valuable work than the present Conference. I most heartily second the motion.

General BOTHA : Mr. Asquith, if I may say a few words upon this, I wish to associate myself with every word that has fallen from the lips of my two colleagues, and I can only add that this is the second Conference which I have attended, and this Conference has been a Conference of trust, a Conference of friends, which has brought our work on to practical lines. If we, Mr. Asquith, want to do good work for the British Empire, the only way that we can make the Empire greater is to do it through love and co-operation. This Conference, as far as I have seen, has called into life that friendship which must lead to co-operation, and better co-operation, in the future than we have ever had in the past. Therefore I can only say that my colleagues and myself from South Africa will leave this country quite satisfied with the work that has been done here, and I agree thoroughly with what has been said about it.

Mr. FISHER : Mr. Asquith and gentlemen, I have little to add to that which has been already said, and said so well, by Sir Wilfrid Laurier and by the other representatives in this Conference, beyond conveying to you and Mr. Harcourt, and the other Ministers who have been here, our feelings of gratitude for their courtesy and kindness on all occasions during our meetings and in the carrying out of our work here. I should like also to say a word of commendation to the staff, if you will allow me, who have so ably seconded the efforts of the Prime Minister and his Ministers, and to add that I noticed with pleasure this morning that that is not without recognition.

This is my first Conference, unlike the other speakers. I am pleased to have had the opportunity with my colleagues of being here. It probably matters little who the representatives of the Dominions are who may assemble round this table, or where another Conference is held.

I believe what has been done at this Conference has laid a foundation broader and safer than has ever hitherto been the case. I believe that the people do not yet fully understand what has taken place at this Conference. Hitherto we have been negotiating with the Government of the United Kingdom at the portals of the household. You have thought it wise to take the representatives of the Dominions into the inner counsels of the nation, and frankly discuss with them the affairs of the Empire as they affect each and all of us. Time alone will discover what that means, I am optimistic. I think no greater step has ever been taken, or can be taken, by any responsible Advisers of the King.

I hope, as I feel, that there will be no going back on that sound principle. I think it will be ever memorable in the history of the British nation that you have had the wisdom, courage, and foresight to do it. I hope, as I believe, that that confidence will not be misplaced. I feel sure it will not. I feel sure that the people we have the honour to represent will welcome it. At the same time I would like to add these words, not as words of warning, but words, shall I say, of wise reserve, that they should not be too anxious to know all the things that have been said by those who are responsible here to those who are immediately responsible in other parts of the Dominions, but that they should rest content with the assurances that those who have the responsibility of advising His Majesty on questions of moment and of great interest are doing the best they can in the interest, not only of the King himself, but of every subject who has the privilege of being under his reign.

I thank you again, Mr. Asquith, for the kindness of your welcome to us here, and for the great courtesy extended to my colleagues and myself during our stay in the centre of the Empire.