

20 June, 1911.]

CONCLUDING SPEECHES.

[12th Day.

The PRESIDENT—*cont.*

Naturalisation is a very great step in advance. I will not speak of minor points, but there has been a general disposition, which I think is very characteristic of the whole spirit of the Conference, that while we must each of us preserve absolutely unfettered and unimpaired our local autonomy, yet where uniformity is possible in regard particularly to matters where the action of one part of the Empire by itself may affect injuriously another, where uniformity, or, if not uniformity, at any rate similarity, of co-operation is possible with regard to legislation as with regard to administration, that should be the keynote of our policy.

Then, finally, you have had a number of very important resolutions, which I am glad to say we have assented to with practical unanimity with regard to the improvement of means of communication within the Empire, postal telegraphic, and so forth.

Gentlemen, those are all very solid, practical results. They are results none of which I believe could have been attained, or at any rate none of which could have been attained so rapidly or so effectively, except by the procedure of the Conference, and when we survey the situation as it is to-day after the experience that we have had during these few weeks with the situation as it stood when we first assembled round this table, I am perfectly certain, although many of you have come here at very great sacrifice of personal convenience and, possibly, some detriment to the time being of the carrying on of public affairs in your own Dominions—I am satisfied there is not a man seated at this table who does not feel that those sacrifices were well worth while, and, as I said before, we shall all return to our respective spheres of duty with a stronger sense of our common obligations to the Empire, with a more complete confidence in one another, and with a more earnest determination to work together for the good of the whole.

Mr. HARCOURT: Gentlemen, I only ask to be allowed to say one word of deep and heartfelt gratitude for the greatly over-generous references which have been made to myself in relation to the Conference, and also to say how deeply touched I am by, and how much I appreciate, the references which have been made to my father and to my wife. It has, I admit, been a matter of pride to me that the preparations for, and the daily conduct of, the Conference should be as complete as I am happy to find they are satisfactory to the members, but I should like to be allowed to add that the satisfaction in this direction is entirely due to the untiring efforts that have been made by the Staff of the Colonial Office, and especially by Sir Hartmann Just and the Secretariat of the Conference. It will always be a pride to me to have been allowed to take part in a Conference which has made so notable an advance in the policy of Imperial co-operation, and in conclusion I hope I may be allowed to thank every member of the Conference sitting round this table for the invariable kindness and courtesy which I have received from them, which alone has rendered possible the success of our meetings in this room.