

Africa eminently suitable for providing all the particulars required with the minimum of trouble and friction to all concerned. The Conference devoted some time to the discussion of migration statistics, and this is the system which is recommended in Resolutions Nos. 74 and 75 of the report. I arranged with the Statistician in South Africa to send me a complete set of their forms, and I strongly recommend the adoption of the individual card system in New Zealand from January, 1921. The mode of operation could be discussed with our Immigration Officers on my return.

6. I reached Liverpool on the afternoon of the 26th January, and caught the 5.25 train for London the same day, reaching there about 10 p.m. Next morning I called at the High Commissioner's Office and found that the Conference had already sat four days. I immediately reported at the meeting then sitting, and ascertained that no subject had actually been disposed of. The previous sittings had been all taken up in preliminary discussions as to the ground to be covered by the Conference, formation of and allocation of work to sub-committees, &c. I was much relieved, therefore, that the unfortunate delay in my arrival had not actually caused me to miss any of the real work of the Conference. I was added to several of the Committees already formed, and from that date until conclusion of the Conference was fully occupied on work in connection therewith.

7. I attach for your information a printed report* of the work of the Conference, with the text of the several resolutions adopted. On page 64 thereof will be found a list of the Home and overseas Government officers attending the Conference. In addition Sir Henry Row, K.C.B., attended and gave valuable assistance during the discussions on agriculture statistics; Mr. L. J. Kershaw gave information in regard to the work of the International Labour Conference at Washington; whilst Mr. Haldane Porter and the representatives of the Overseas Settlement Committee attended during the discussion on migration statistics. Professor Bowley addressed the Conference on points relating to trade statistics on which he had given evidence before the Dominions Royal Commission. The Conference attended at the offices of the League of Nations and discussed with the Secretary-General (Sir Eric Drummond) "the relations of the contemplated Empire organization of statistics to the plans which are maturing in the minds of League of Nations Secretariat with reference to an international organization," while the overseas representatives of India and the self-governing Dominions also met the Secretary of the Imperial Mineral Resources Bureau (Sir R. Redmayne, K.C.B.) in regard to the supply of mining statistics.

8. The work of the Conference falls generally under two main headings, viz.—

- (1.) Proposals for the establishment and organization of a British Empire Statistical Bureau in London; and
- (2.) General statistical work—*i.e.*, the general lines of inquiry and presentation, methods of work, &c., desirable in regard to the main branches of official statistics, with special reference to statistics of trade, production, population, prices, labour, and finance.

Since the printed report with the resolutions adopted cover the ground and are self-explanatory, it will not be necessary to report them here, but the following brief remarks in regard to them are respectfully submitted for consideration:—

9. British Empire Statistical Bureau: The Conference unanimously recommended the establishment of such a Bureau in London. The functions of the Bureau, its work and publications, its control and staffing, with an estimate of costs, are set out in detail in Resolutions Nos. 1 to 10 on pages 13 to 17 of the report. The defects of our Empire statistics have been generally recognized, and experience during the war years has clearly shown the disadvantages resulting from "the lack of systematic statistical investigation and of complete and comparable records relating to Imperial resources and developments." The proposal is that the Bureau should be controlled by a Council incorporated by Royal Charter, consisting of representatives of the several Governments (United Kingdom ten members, India and self-governing Dominions two members each, and colonies and protectorates two members), with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom as President in his capacity as *ex officio* President of the Imperial Council; that it should be adequately equipped and staffed under a Director (an expert statistician of approved administrative and official experience), with a number of chief professional assistants and such other technical and clerical assistants as may be necessary: it is recommended that as far as practicable the assistants be representatives from the statistical staff of the Home, Indian, and Dominions Statistical Offices. The Bureau, as proposed, would provide the co-ordinating link between the various statistical organizations throughout the Empire, and would be a body to which all Statistical Offices in the Empire could refer; it would be in a position to furnish advice as to methods for the tabulation, mechanical or otherwise, the analysis, and the presentation of statistics; and it is obvious that the professional assistance obtainable from a Bureau of the character proposed would prove of great value and be much appreciated. Sir Auckland Geddes, President of the Board of Trade, the Right Honourable Edward Shortt, Home Secretary, and Mr. Bridgeman, Parliamentary Secretary, Board of Trade, addressed the Conference at different times, and conveyed to the delegates the impression that the British Cabinet was favourably disposed, so far as the United Kingdom was concerned, to the creation of such a Bureau. The Secretary of State for the Colonies wrote: "I understand that in the course of their deliberations the Conference has surveyed the whole field of statistics, and has made recommendations dealing with statistics of such subjects as trade, agriculture, mining, finance, population, cost of living, labour, and migration, apart entirely from the recommendation which it has submitted on that most important subject of all—which, indeed, furnished the main motive for the summoning of the Conference—the creation of an Imperial Statistical Bureau. It is unnecessary for me to say that I am convinced of the importance—or, rather, the necessity—of having available the fullest possible statistics on all the matters referred to and their proper co-ordination if we are to develop and utilize to the fullest extent the resources of the Empire. I am sure that the deliberations of the Conference have contributed in no small degree to the attainment of that end, which, I need hardly say, I shall do anything in my power to further."

* "Report and Resolutions adopted by the First Conference of Government Officers engaged in dealing with Statistics in the British Empire, held at the Board of Trade on 20th January–26th February, 1921," presented to Parliament by command of His Majesty. (Cmd. 648.)