

President Harding's wise and courteous initiative. In saying this I know that I speak for the Empire as a whole. The world has been looking to the United States for such a lead. I am confident that the House will esteem it as an act of far-seeing statesmanship and will whole-heartedly wish it success. I need hardly say that no effort will be lacking to make it so on the part of the British Empire, which shares to the full the liberal and progressive spirit inspiring it."

In accordance with the suggestion which was believed to have been made by the American Government, that the Conference on Disarmament should be preceded by friendly conversations or consultations between the Powers who were principally concerned in the future of the Far East and the Pacific, the Imperial Conference, anxious that for the Anglo-Japanese Agreement should be substituted some larger arrangement between the three Great Powers concerned—namely, the United States of America, Japan, and Great Britain—and holding the firm conviction that the later discussions on disarmament, to which they attached a transcendent importance, could best be made effective by a previous mutual understanding on Pacific questions between those Powers, devoted many hours of examination to the question how such an understanding could best be arrived at, where the proposed conversations could best be held, in what manner the representatives of the British Dominions who were so vitally affected could most easily participate in them, and upon what broad principles of policy it was desirable to proceed. It was difficult for the Dominion Prime Ministers, owing to the exigencies of time and space, to attend at Washington late in the autumn. On the other hand, advantage might be taken of their presence in England to exchange views with representatives of the other Great Powers who had been invited to Washington later on. It was in these circumstances that the idea was mooted that the preliminary conversations or consultations, to which the American Government had in principle agreed, should be held in London.

When it transpired a little later that there was some misunderstanding as to the nature of the preliminary conversations which had been suggested, the British Government, in the earnest desire to remove any possible misconception, and to meet what they believed to be the American views at each stage of the impending discussions, volunteered to attend a meeting on the other side of the Atlantic, at which the agenda of the forthcoming Conference at Washington could be discussed, and a friendly interchange of views take place in order to facilitate the work of the main Conference later on. The British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, together with the Dominion Prime Ministers, were prepared to attend such a meeting if invited to do so by the American Government.

The Japanese Government signified their willingness, if invited, to take part in the suggested conversations.

The American Government, however, did not favour the idea, which was accordingly dropped.

This conclusion was viewed with the utmost regret by the members of the Imperial Conference, who had devoted no small portion of time to the working-out of an arrangement, which they understood would be equally acceptable to all parties, and the abandonment of which could not, they feared, be otherwise than prejudicial to the great objects which all had in view. At no stage had it been suggested that the results of such a consultation as was contemplated should either anticipate the work or tie the hands of the Washington Conference at a later date. On the contrary, holding, as they do, the firm belief that without a Pacific understanding the Conference on Disarmament will find it less easy to attain the supreme results that are hoped for by all, the Imperial Conference made the proposal before referred to, anxious to remove every possible obstacle from the path of the Washington meeting, which they desire to see attended with complete and triumphant success.

IV. LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

A discussion took place in regard to the League of Nations, during which Mr. Balfour explained at length the work which had been carried out by the League and the special difficulties with which it has had to contend. Mr. Balfour's statement was published in full and is attached to this summary. (See Appendix II.)