

but intelligent support throughout the countries we represent. It is therefore essential that we fully inform the public of our proceedings. There may, in respect of some questions, be limitations; we shall indeed at times be bound to respect what may be called the right of privacy of Governments and peoples other than our own. The problem is not a simple one, but I venture to suggest that it is better in the long-run to err on the side of publicity than on the side of secrecy. The other condition is that such conferences as these should be as frequent and as regular as the growing necessities of inter-Dominion and inter-Empire relations demand. Time, I know, is important. It is difficult for Canadian Ministers to be absent, and that difficulty is accentuated in the case of Ministers of other Dominions. The expeditious despatch of business while here will assist all round.

I shall reserve any further remarks until we reach the discussion of the definite subjects that are to be brought before us.

21ST JUNE, 1921.

OPENING SPEECH BY MR. HUGHES.

MR. HUGHES: I desire to congratulate you on the admirable review of the position that you presented to us yesterday. I am sure it was most valuable as well as most interesting. We were all very glad to learn from you, sir, that though the adjustment of those matters which arose out of the war is not yet complete, all our obligations, and our ex-enemies' obligations, under the Treaty were in a fair way of being fulfilled. We recognize that there are difficulties, and that it is not easy to satisfy those who preach a counsel of perfection, but I think we ought to congratulate you and the Government on having, during these last two years, weathered a great storm full of menacing possibilities, and though it would savour of too much optimism to say that we had yet reached the haven, still, on the whole, we have much to be thankful for. I very sincerely congratulate you as the head of the Government of the United Kingdom.

You have asked us to consider and review the situation as it presents itself to us, and I think we may do this with advantage before we pass on to the discussion of the various questions, or, indeed, decide the order in which we are to discuss them. The circumstances of this Conference are in themselves sufficiently remarkable. This is the first time we have met since the dark shadow of the Great War has been lifted, and we are showing to the world and to the various parts of the Empire that those counsels which we took together during the war were not ephemeral expedients, but that we are resolved to continue along that path in company, being guided by each other's counsel, and believing firmly that in co-operation and in unity lies the safety of all, and, in no small degree, the peace and welfare of the world.

NEED FOR A MEANS OF CONCERTING THE EMPIRE'S POLICY.

Well, sir, we are here—some of us have come very great distances, and all have come at great personal inconvenience—some of us, like Mr. Massey and myself, have come twelve thousand miles. We have each given our views to our representative Parliaments as to what this Conference intends, or hopes, to do. Much is expected from us, and I do venture earnestly to hope that this Conference will do something which will convince the people that we have found a practical and sure way of bridging that apparently impossible chasm which divides complete autonomy of the several parts of the Empire from united action upon matters affecting us all.

That we must do something is essential if this Conference is not to be a last magnificent flare of a dying illumination. I am sure, sir, you will realize how difficult it is for us to leave a Parliament for five or six months. I shall not, I hope, be suspected of trespassing upon the sacred domain of domestic politics if I ask you just to conjure up in that vivid Celtic mind of yours—as I do in mine—the possibility of your being away for six months.

Now, amongst the great problems that are to be considered three stand out. You referred to all of them yesterday. They are—foreign policy in general, the