

APPENDIX XV.

CONCLUDING SPEECHES.

23RD NOVEMBER, 1926.

Mr. Mackenzie King : May I add a word of personal appreciation of the spirit which has marked all the proceedings of this Conference? Nothing could have exceeded the courtesy and kindness of His Majesty's Ministers in Great Britain, as a Government and as individuals. The arrangements for the conduct of our business could not have been more thorough and complete, and the opportunities afforded for personal and social intercourse have been more than exceptional. Above all, I think, we appreciate the friendliness and the frankness of the attitude of the members of the Government throughout our discussions in Conference and in committee. This, if I may say so, could have found no finer expression than in the manner in which you have presided over these deliberations. In the midst of the most onerous and exacting of public duties you have given unsparing time and thought to the proceedings of the Conference, and have at all times exercised a degree of patience and judgment which has commanded our highest admiration.

As regards all the delegations present, I think we shall agree that there has been a striking readiness and desire to understand and appreciate one another's point of view and special difficulties. It in no way subtracts from the importance of any specific report or conclusion to acknowledge, as I believe we all shall, that the greatest achievement of the Conference is the evidence its proceedings have afforded of the common standards, the fundamental unity of purpose and ideals, and the desire to work out a sound basis for enduring co-operation, which have marked all its deliberations. If what we have accomplished in these past six weeks contributes anything to the maintenance and extension of that spirit, as I believe it will, we may face the future with all confidence.

I should like also to express appreciation of the work of the Conference Secretaries. The untiring energy, exceptional skill, and never-failing good will of Sir Maurice Hankey and Mr. Harding have made smooth many difficult paths, and have unified the proceedings in many material particulars. To all those who have co-operated with and assisted them in the difficult tasks of these crowded weeks we are equally grateful.

It is not easy to take farewell of colleagues whose place of meeting has been amid surroundings so replete with historic interest, and to whom, as the days have gone by, attachments have become increasingly strong. It is some compensation, however, to be able to carry away a friendship greatly strengthened between all parts of the British Empire through personal contact with those who have represented its many interests here, and an enhanced appreciation of the greatness of the common inheritance we share.

Mr. Bruce : Before this Conference dissolves I desire to express my appreciation of the manner in which you, Sir, as Prime Minister and Chairman, and your Cabinet colleagues have met us. I have previously stated that in my opinion one of the main results of Imperial Conferences is the effective way in which they focus the attention of the public throughout the Empire upon great Imperial questions. This has been achieved to a very marked degree in the present instance. It is true that in the five weeks which have passed we have accomplished a great deal of important and useful work. In some directions, perhaps, it may have been impossible to go as far as we individually would have liked, but even on these matters we have made considerable progress. In other directions, it is not too much to say that we have made an epoch-marking advance. The result has been that not only throughout the Empire, but throughout Europe and America, the Press reports indicate a very widespread public interest in our deliberations. They have followed very closely and interestedly the doings of this great Imperial family, and what we have done here has given to the world a clearer conception than ever before of what we mean by an Empire of completely self-governing Nations, jealous of their autonomy, yet proud of their Imperial unity. I feel that our status as individual nations has been increased, while at the same time the prestige of the whole Empire has been considerably enhanced.

I think we may well be proud of the material achievements of this Conference. It marks a very definite step forward on the road of Imperial progress. But I wish to refer more particularly to what I may call the spiritual effects. We are here, in the first place, as representatives of our respective countries; we are in one sense merely portions of the machinery of government, but we are also men who react and respond to influences and atmospheres, and whose work in the one sphere is seriously affected by what occurs in the other. The manner in which you, Prime Minister, and your colleagues have met us, the sympathetic way in which you have approached our problems, and the practical assistance which you have always given us have contributed in a far greater measure than appears on the surface to the achievement of the important results about which I have just spoken. The report of the Conference will indicate to our Parliaments and people only one part of what has been achieved. We who have had the privilege of meeting each other will go away feeling, even more deeply than I can express, how closely this great Empire is linked together, and what a warm vein of friendship permeates every portion of it. Such a happy result could only have come from personal contact, and could only have been made possible by the cordial atmosphere which you, Sir, and your colleagues have done so much to create. We more deeply appreciate your unremitting attention to