

This Conference comes at a time in the world's history when radical changes in the whole fabric of inter-State economic and financial relationships seem to be a necessary preliminary to further progress, if indeed they are not absolutely essential to prevent a breakdown in our present civilization. The Government of the Irish Free State are fully conscious of the extreme gravity of the situation. We realize that a foremost part in finding adequate solutions for the crisis can be taken at this Conference, the success of which is of vital import to all nations. We enter into the discussions of the Conference in a spirit of friendly co-operation, and with the intention of making general trade agreements or particular agreements where such would be to the mutual advantage of the parties.

Special difficulties have recently arisen which affect about 85 per cent of our external trade and which may involve substantial changes in the form and direction of that trade as well as in the internal economic structure of our country. Apart from these difficulties, our economic position is in many respects unlike that of the other States here represented. Our economic development has hardly begun. We are still, and shall be for some considerable time to come, engaged in the task of building up the elements of an economic life suitable to the conditions of our people. It is, therefore, more difficult for us to see the lines along which our contribution to the common endeavour must proceed.

Our aim is the aim of all organized States, namely, to provide such economic conditions in our country as will allow the greatest possible number of our people to live there in peace and comfort. We seek to put an end to the anomaly of one-sided development which has caused a country relatively rich in natural resources to be the one country in Europe whose population has steadily decreased for almost a century. Like every other Government represented at this Conference, we seek, first of all, the interests of our own people, and any acceptance of general principles of economic relationship must be governed by the degree to which they serve that end. We believe that the freest possible development of each State of the Commonwealth is the best guarantee of mutual co-operation and friendship, and that no inter-State relationship can have a permanent character which is not established on a completely free basis or which leaves either party in a position of inferiority.

We most earnestly hope that the Conference will be a success whether or not the people of the Irish Free State can share in the ultimate benefits to the same full extent as the peoples of the other nations whose representatives are gathered here. We are convinced that the atmosphere of good will created by the Canadian Government and people will be of inestimable value in bringing these discussions to a successful issue.

The Chairman: The Hon. L. E. Emerson, K.C., Minister of Justice from the newest Dominion and the oldest colony, Newfoundland, will now address us.

Hon. Mr. Emerson: Mr. Chairman, I join first of all with the previous speakers in thanking His Excellency, the Governor General for the gracious speech of welcome with which he opened this Conference, and secondly, sir, I join with those speakers in thanking you for the reception which you have accorded us. The arrangements which have been made for the convenience of our work and comfort are marked evidence of the serious thought which has been given to them by yourself, your colleagues, and those of your staffs who have given such unremitting service in the interest of those who attend here to-day.

I join with previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as presiding officer of this most important Conference, the first of its kind held under, if I may so call it, the new constitutional "dispensation." I feel sure that it must be a source of pride to you to preside over, and to the people of Canada to have this country as the seat of, this unique assembly.

I regret very much the absence at our opening meeting of Mr. Alderdice, the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, and I assure you on his behalf, that he regrets most sincerely, as I do, that he is not here to join in our deliberations from their very beginning. Within the last few weeks an election has been held in my country, which has resulted in a change of Government. His departure from Newfoundland in time to arrive for the opening of the Conference was impossible.

In dealing with the problems with which the Conference is faced, I have to point out at the very outset that Newfoundland's position is, speaking generally, upon a footing very different from that of her sister Dominions. Her population is small, her resources, although large are only partially developed, and the