

The terms of the message were:—

“The Prime Ministers and other representatives of the Governments of the British Commonwealth of Nations, assembled in Conference in London, at their first meeting, and as their first official act, desire to present their respectful duty to the King, and to offer to Your Majesty and Her Majesty the Queen their tribute of loyal devotion.

“They pray that Your Majesties’ reign, which has been inaugurated so auspiciously by the Coronation ceremony celebrated two days ago, may be happy and prosperous, and that under Divine Providence Your Majesties may long be spared to strengthen the ties of affection and loyalty which unite all the peoples of the British Commonwealth under the Crown.”

The following gracious reply, signed by His Majesty, was received during the meeting and was read to the Conference by the Chairman:—

“I sincerely thank the Prime Ministers and other representatives of the British Commonwealth of Nations for the message of loyalty and devotion which they have addressed to the Queen and myself on the opening of the first Imperial Conference of my Reign.

“It is very fitting that the solemn ceremony of Wednesday last should be succeeded immediately by your deliberations. I shall follow them with the greatest interest, in the confident hope that they will advance the happiness and prosperity of all my peoples.

“(Signed) GEORGE, R.I.”

IV. OPENING STATEMENTS.

At the opening plenary meeting on the 14th May statements were made by the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa, and by His Highness the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda on behalf of the Indian delegation.

In the course of these statements tributes were paid to the memory of His late Majesty King George V.

Short statements were also made by the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia and by the Chief Minister of Burma.

The statements were published in full immediately after the conclusion of the meeting and are reproduced in Appendix II hereto.

V. ARRANGEMENT OF THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE.

At the opening plenary meeting of the Conference it was agreed that the following subjects should be discussed, at any rate in the first instance, at meetings of principal delegates:—

- (1) Foreign affairs.
- (2) Defence.
- (3) General review of the progress of Empire trade.
- (4) Colonial affairs.

It was also agreed that the following questions should be referred to Committees:—

- (1) General questions arising in connection with shipping policy, including a review of the work of the Imperial Shipping Committee.
- (2) Civil air communications.
- (3) Certain economic questions—viz., the work of the Imperial Economic Committee and a proposal for the establishment of an Empire Agricultural Council.

At the first meeting of principal delegates it was agreed that a Committee on Constitutional Questions should also be appointed to deal with certain matters which had been raised by His Majesty’s Government in the Union of South Africa and which had formed the subject of preliminary and informal discussions between advisers prior to the opening of the Conference.

It was also agreed subsequently that a Committee should be appointed to consider questions of mutual interest in the supply and production of munitions and food supplies.