

APPENDIX II.—OPENING STATEMENTS.

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

WELCOME TO DELEGATES FROM OVERSEAS.

The Right Hon. Stanley Baldwin: My first and very pleasant duty is to extend a cordial welcome to the representatives of the Dominions and India here assembled. Three of the Prime Ministers present here this morning—Mr. Mackenzie King, General Hertzog, and myself—are attending their third Imperial Conference; others are present for the first time. Since we last met, Burma has ceased to be an Indian Province, and we greet to-day her Chief Minister as witness of her separate political existence. (Hear, hear.) We are glad to have with us also representatives of Southern Rhodesia, who with the representative of Burma have come to take an appropriate part in those aspects of our deliberations which especially concern them. Newfoundland, whose recent difficulties will be familiar to most of us here, is being represented by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, with such advice as may be necessary from the Commission of Government. The Colonial Empire is being represented as at previous Conferences by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, who is a member of the United Kingdom Delegation. To all alike, whether old friends or new-comers to our council table, I give a most hearty welcome.

TRIBUTE TO HIS LATE MAJESTY KING GEORGE V.

When I look round the table this morning I reflect on the last occasion when many of us met, and my first thought is of the grievous loss which all of us have sustained in the death of our late loved Sovereign, King George V. Little did we think when we gathered from all the corners of the earth to celebrate his Silver Jubilee how soon he would be taken from us. By the wisdom, insight, and sympathy with which he presided over the destinies of the Empire, he contributed in a unique manner towards the smooth progress of those great political developments which were so distinguished a feature of his reign. Many of us round this table knew the value of his wise counsel and quiet courage in times of difficulty and of stress. Devotion to duty and the service of all his subjects was the keynote of his life. As head of this great family of peoples he has left to all who follow a great and enduring example. (Hear, hear.)

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSULTATION SINCE THE 1930 IMPERIAL CONFERENCE.

The last meeting of the Imperial Conference in London took place in 1930 and led to the passage of the Statute of Westminster. In the intervening years there have been many opportunities for consultation. We met at the Imperial Economic Conference at Ottawa in 1932. There were negotiated a whole series of trade agreements which played a great part in enabling our countries to emerge from the economic depression, and have proved of value in the development of inter-Imperial trade. We met again, as I reminded you, at the time of King George's Silver Jubilee two years ago, when we had the opportunity for a number of most valuable, though informal, discussions.

Apart from special meetings, there are other opportunities for consultation. Our representatives meet periodically at International Conferences. Moreover, during the last year or two we in the United Kingdom have had welcome visits from many individual Dominion Ministers for discussion on particular questions of concern between us, whilst similar visits from representatives of the United Kingdom have been paid to some of the Dominions, and I am sure that these frequent personal contacts with each other will be fruitful in maintaining understanding and co-operation between us.

Meanwhile the work of discussion and consultation on all sorts of subjects of common concern by means of correspondence between His Majesty's various Governments has proceeded continuously and to an ever increasing extent.

CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS.

The present Conference meets on the morrow of the Coronation of the new King and Queen. In the solemn service which we attended two days ago in Westminster Abbey there was the ancient ceremonial which has accompanied the King's crowning for centuries; but there were also innovations marking the constitutional developments which have occurred since the last Coronation twenty-six years ago. No other quarter century of our history has witnessed constitutional changes so profound, so far-reaching, and so naturally achieved. The British Empire has never been a static organism. Bearing within itself seeds of development of which its founders were unaware, it has been moulded by, and itself has moulded, a political philosophy. Since the last Coronation there have been far-reaching changes in status and mutual relationships; in particular, I would refer to the declaration of the Imperial Conference of 1926, and to the passage into law in 1931 of the Statute of Westminster, and in 1935 of the Government of India Act. The self-governing communities of the British Commonwealth have become an association of peoples, each with sovereign freedom of its own but accustomed to co-operate closely with each other in matters of common concern and all associated under the Crown.