

STATEMENT BY SIR MUHAMMAD ZAFRULLAH KHAN ON BEHALF OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION.

Mr. Prime Minister: We have now been associated together for just over a month in the discussion of matters of vital importance to the peace and prosperity of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It is, perhaps, too early to attempt an accurate estimate of the value of these discussions, but no one will be disposed to question that the results likely to flow therefrom must prove highly beneficial in securing the ends and promoting the objects which all of us have in view and which have been clearly and emphatically set forth in the reports of our proceedings. Apart from the direct results achieved at the Conference, the association together of the Prime Ministers and other representatives of the Empire in inter-changes of views on topics which affect so vitally the welfare of the Empire must influence many important decisions that may subsequently have to be taken in different parts of the Empire. I would venture to go further and state that certainly on this occasion the benefits of the Conference are not likely to be confined to the nations of the Commonwealth. I am sure that a profound impression must have been created outside the Empire by the solidarity of the Empire in support of its common ideals which has been so forcibly illustrated during the last five weeks. A Conference of this nature is unique in the sense that it is rendered possible only by the peculiar composition of the Commonwealth. To a troubled and harassed world nothing could furnish a more hopeful or reassuring augury for the maintenance and preservation of international peace than the spectacle of a united Empire co-operating towards securing this end. If there is one thing which has been made clear beyond doubt as the result of these deliberations it is that the dominant purpose of the Commonwealth is peace and that all our energies are bent towards securing and ensuring its permanence. That purpose animates every part of the Commonwealth; every Government represented here is willing and determined to co-operate with you, Prime Minister, in labouring to achieve it. One feels that even to-day the international situation is somewhat easier than it was before this Conference met. Is it too much to claim that the impression created abroad by the Conference has made some contribution towards that improvement?

Prime Minister, may I venture to digress here for one moment and refer more particularly to the position of India in the Conference? The two outstanding topics which have mainly occupied the attention of the Conference are defence and foreign affairs. Both these are subjects respecting which the Government of India is responsible, and even under the Federal Constitution will continue to be responsible, not to the people of India but to the United Kingdom Parliament; nevertheless Indian representatives have been glad to participate in the discussion of these subjects and to make their contribution with respect to them, as it is realized that the Conference affords valuable opportunities for arriving at a true appreciation of the problems within these spheres with which the Commonwealth is confronted and the efforts that are being made to solve them. There is also the knowledge that India's ultimate political goal is equality of status with the Dominions and that therefore it is meet that during the period of transition her representatives should be associated with the representatives of the rest of the Empire in the discussion of these all-important matters. India is anxious to participate in these deliberations on the same footing as the Dominions, and I have no doubt that she is now within measurable distance of the realization of that desire. She is confident that as she progresses towards this ideal some of the anomalies affecting the treatment of her nationals in other parts of the Empire will be gradually eliminated. In this connection, Prime Minister, I may be permitted to express my gratitude to the Prime Ministers of the Dominions and the Secretary of State for the Colonies for the courtesy and sympathy with which they have received suggestions made to them by me on behalf of the Government of India concerning some of these matters.

I am sure, Sir, you will permit me to associate myself with the Prime Ministers of the Dominions in giving expression to our admiration of the great ability, skill, and tact with which you have conducted the proceedings of this Conference and of the unfailing courtesy which every one of us has received at your hands during our association with you. May I also add how greatly we value our association during the earlier sittings of the Conference with that great English statesman, Earl Baldwin of Bewdley, and how deeply we appreciate his great work for and service to the Empire.

Prime Minister, we are deeply grateful to your Government and to many of your countrymen and countrywomen for the generous and cordial hospitality that they have extended to us during our visit here on this historic occasion which has furnished us with so many pleasant memories which each one of us will, I am sure, love to cherish. We are also extremely grateful to Sir Maurice Hankey and his staff and those who have been associated with him from the Dominions and other offices for their great patience, courtesy, and helpfulness which have so greatly facilitated the work of the Conference and so largely contributed towards the quick disposal of its business.

May I be permitted to conclude with a renewed expression of our homage and deep loyalty to Their Majesties the King and Queen, whose solemn dedication to the service of the Empire we were privileged to witness just before the sittings of this Conference began and who have so rapidly endeared themselves to their subjects in all parts of the Empire.