

times has been criticised from different sources as being an advanced position in some regards, has come at last to be looked upon as the position best calculated to maintain not only national autonomy, but imperial unity as well.

It would take too long a time to attempt during this debate to go at any length into the matters dealt with in the conference report. Indeed, as I have already indicated, the government intends to set apart a day for the discussion of matters relating to the Imperial conference and I shall reserve until that time what I have to say with regard to the work of the conference as a whole. All I wish to do at the moment is to set at rest any fears or alarms that may be in the minds of my hon. friends opposite and to make it clear that so far as Canada is concerned parliament has it entirely in its power, if it so desires, to reverse in any particular any statement of position which may appear in the report of the conference.

While the conference took up matters relating to trade, defence, migration, communication, research, forestry, and other economic questions, the most important work of the conference concerned inter-imperial relations and in a special way the negotiation, signature and ratification of treaties. The committee that dealt with the question of inter-imperial relations was presided over by the Right Hon. the Earl of Balfour. The committee that dealt with the negotiation, signature and ratification of treaties was presided over by the Minister of Justice of Canada (Mr. Lapointe), and in that position my hon. colleague commanded not only the admiration but, I believe, the gratitude as well of all members on that committee. As regards inter-imperial relations hon. members will find in the italicized portion of the report which deals with the status of Great Britain and the dominions, the central feature of the entire report. I will read that particular clause because I think it is important to bring it concretely to the attention of the House.

There is however a most important element in it—

That is to say the British Empire.

—which from a strictly constitutional point of view, has now, as regards all vital matters, reached its full development—we refer to the group of self-governing communities composed of Great Britain and the dominions. Their position and mutual relation may be readily defined.

Then the italicized portion follows:

They are autonomous communities within the British Empire equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of

their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

That represents in as concrete a form as it can be given the view held in common by all the representatives of the British Empire with respect to the relative position of the dominions and Great Britain in regard to their domestic and external affairs. If there is any criticism to be offered of that particular formula, I think it should take the form of suggesting wherein the formula is misleading or what should be said of an opposite character. Let me take the formula clause by clause:

They are autonomous communities within the British Empire.

Will any member in this House differ with that statement?

Equal in status.

I have already made mention of the meaning of that.

In no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs.

Is there a member of this House who desires that this dominion shall be subordinate either to Great Britain or to any other part of the British Empire with respect to its own domestic or external affairs?

Though united by a common allegiance to the crown.

That position is a link and bond which all of us wish to see maintained.

And freely associated as members of the British commonwealth of nations.

Is not that an exact statement of the truth?

The work of the conference, after stating the root principle governing relations within the British Empire, was directed towards removing any forms or practices that seemed to be at variance with that particular formula.

The conference took up one by one the different matters which were brought to its attention from each and every source, and which seemed to be in conflict with the statement of the true position as outlined. Many of these questions were brought up by other dominions. I have already intimated that Canada did not put forward at the conference any grievance, or application for alteration of any particular matter. Many things that were of concern to us had already been raised by other of the dominions. We entered the conference ready to take our part to the best of our respective abilities in each and every question as it came up.

I will leave until a subsequent time a further discussion of the work of the conference in detail. May I say here what I