

ence chamber, to which relatively insignificant nations belonged as of right (hear, hear). The war had shown that we were nations not in name, but in fact, because no country which was not a nation animated by a determination to maintain its institutions intact could have achieved what we achieved in Canada, and what Australia achieved and what New Zealand achieved (hear, hear). Our entrance into the peace conference was not the result of the deliberations of statesmen, but was the recognition of a state of affairs which had been brought about by the great war.

As a result of these decisions and changes a general principle has emerged which governs all imperial relations between the self-governing British nations. That is the principle that the British countries are nations of equal status, joined in a partnership of consent (applause). Equality does not permit of qualification. You are equal or you are not. The next step which I presume will be taken by the constitutional conference when it meets shortly will be to make that equality a matter of formal affirmation. I believe—and if I had time I think that I could give very powerful reasons for that belief—that it is desirable that that definition should be made with the least possible delay. I read a speech recently by General Smuts, who, in difficult circumstances, is fighting the battle for empire in the hottest corner of the British empire at present, in which he said that the need for this formal change was vital and pressing, and I imagine he knew what he was speaking about. I could, I think, demonstrate that we can not go forward with any large schemes of co-operation until the present somewhat indefinite status is cleared up and replaced by an understanding which will make clear not only to ourselves but to the outside world that the British empire is a partnership of nations of equal status united in a partnership of consent (applause).

It might be said that these decisions which have been made meant the victory of one school of imperial thought over the other,