

TIGHT BINDING.

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The opening and closing Plenary Meetings of the Conference were held in Queen Anne's Room, St. James's Palace. The general direction of the work of the Conference was conducted at meetings of Principal Delegates held at No. 10, Downing Street, and in the room of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom at the House of Commons. These meetings were normally attended by the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom, Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa, and the Secretary of State for India as Head of the Indian Delegation, accompanied by other Delegates and Advisers according to the nature of the subjects under discussion. Committees were set up both at the full Conference and at the meetings of Principal Delegates.

On the motion of the Prime Minister of Canada, seconded by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom was asked to take the Chair at the meetings of the Conference and of the Principal Delegates.

Mr. Baldwin, as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, accordingly presided at the opening Plenary Meeting of the Conference, and at meetings of the Principal Delegates up to the 27th May, the last occasion on which the Delegates met before Mr. Baldwin retired from office. On the conclusion of the meeting on that day, the Dominion Prime Ministers and Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, on behalf of the Indian Delegation, expressed their great regret that that was the last occasion on which Mr. Baldwin would preside over the Imperial Conference. References were made to the great part which he had played in the Imperial Conferences of 1923 and 1926, and the Prime Ministers of the Dominions and Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan conveyed to him the good wishes of the Delegations. Regret was also expressed at the retirement of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald who had presided over the 1930 Conference.

Subsequent meetings of the Principal Delegates and the final Plenary Session of the Conference were presided over by Mr. Neville Chamberlain. At the meeting of the Principal Delegates on the 31st May, Mr. Chamberlain was congratulated on his assumption of office as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and welcomed, as Chairman of the Imperial Conference during its remaining stages, by the Dominion Prime Ministers and Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan.

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II.—THE CORONATION.

The Conference met on the morrow of the Coronation of a new Sovereign. In the speeches at the opening Plenary Meeting of the Conference on the 14th May reference was made to the lasting character of the foundations of the British Commonwealth of Nations as laid down at the Imperial Conference of 1926, and the Delegates declared their faith in the principles of liberty and co-operation under the Crown as the inspiration of all their deliberations. There was general recognition of the significance of the Coronation ceremony and it was noted that, as a result of communication between the Governments concerned, the forms of the Coronation Service had been adapted to accord with the new constitutional relationships. Reference was made in particular to the significance of the changes in the Coronation Oath, the first paragraph of which as taken by King George VI reads:—

"Will you solemnly promise and swear to govern the peoples of Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa, of your Possessions and the other Territories to any of them belonging or pertaining, and of your Empire of India, according to their respective laws and customs?"

The position may be summed up in the words of Mr. Mackenzie King—

"... Continuity through change; progress through development of proved courses and innate tendencies; permanence and flexibility, are the distinctive mark of the political institutions which are our common heritage.

The great occasion which has given this week its colour and its imperishable place in our memories has appropriately illustrated this quality of British institutions. Those who participated in the Coronation of the King and Queen—and thanks to the inventions of the years that have passed since the last Coronation, it may truly be said that all the King's peoples everywhere took part—must have been impressed by the blending of tradition and adaptability to new needs and new occasions which characterised that impressive service. It was marked by the continuing use of ritual and words and symbols which were ancient when the New World lands represented here were undiscovered and unknown, but it was marked also by the recognition of new political facts and constitutional relationships brought into being by the change and growth of the past generation and recorded in the Imperial Conferences of recent years.

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