

also my congratulations to the mover and seconder of the address now in your hands for the manner in which they have discharged an always important though rather trying duty. The House will agree with me that the addresses of the hon. member for Peterborough (Mr. Hall) and the hon. member for Richelieu (Mr. Lanctot) were of more than usual excellence. The observations of my hon. friend from Peterborough, while they were most acceptable from the first to the last sentence, were, in so far as I am concerned, altogether too kind. He spoke in terms altogether too flattering of the part which it was my privilege to take in the imperial conference which took place in the months of April and May of this year in London. I am bound to say that the sentiments which were expressed were not by any means unanimous, and that in a certain school it was rather a question whether the conference had done any good or whether it had accomplished anything. I have to confess, as a member of this conference, that in so far as its spectacular features were concerned, it did not come up to the expectations of the jingo or superficial observer, but I think I can claim that it has accomplished some lasting work which will mark a new era in the history of the British empire. The conferences which had taken place up to this year were irregular, without any status and without any definite object. These conferences have been arranged to take place under a well understood and well defined plan. Their period of meeting has been fixed, their composition has been determined, their object has been clearly defined and, more important still, it has been accepted, declared and adopted on all sides that there are to be conferences, not of individuals, not of superior and subordinate, but conferences of government and governments, conferences between the United Kingdom and the young daughter nations of the empire. Unless I am greatly mistaken, I think it can be said that this is a most important step in the history of the British Empire, and certainly something which is absolutely unprecedented in the annals of the world. When the conference opened on the 15th April, 1907, the main question before it, was what were to be the relations of the present state and the young daughter nations. The problem was what was the principle which was to regulate these nations. Was it to be a centralization, or was it to be autonomy? There were many who believed that these relations should be based upon the principle that the young daughter communities should be simply satellites revolving around the parent state, but others there were who held—and in my estimation rightly held—that the proper basis of the British Empire was that it was to be composed of a galaxy of nations under the British Crown.

Mr. FOSTER. I do not want to interrupt my right hon. friend, but is my hon. friend speaking now of the views held by the members of the conference itself?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I am speaking of views held inside and outside the conference.

Mr. FOSTER. Then will my right hon. friend please mention the names of those who wished to make the daughter colonies subordinates or satellites?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I think I shall not gratify the curiosity of my hon. friend.

Mr. FOSTER. I do not think my hon. friend can.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I do not want to be personal, but it seems to me that if my hon. friend wants to pursue this inquiry he can find for himself in the pages of the record of the conference that I speak within the mark.

Mr. FOSTER. I have read every page of it, and it cannot be found there.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Well, sir, it is a question of appreciation. I have read every page of it, and moreover, I was there. With all due deference to my hon. friend, and without being hypercritical, I think my judgment is as good as his own. But it matters not whether I am right or whether I am wrong in this matter; this is nothing but a question of appreciation after all. But my hon. friend, I suppose, will not question that the solution which was come to was the right one on the question of the secretariat. As a result of the labours of the conference it is not improbable that when a new conference takes place four years hence it shall have sitting at its board another member representing another dominion, representing the South African confederation, in which the Cape, Natal, Orange, Transvaal and Rhodesia shall be united. The members of this House who sat in the parliament elected in 1896 perhaps have not forgotten some of the debates which took place during the session 1900, when our policy in regard to the sending of the contingents to South Africa came up for review. Some of these debates took place at the most critical and darkest period of the war, and the gloom of this uncertainty was still weighing heavily upon us. Who could have believed or could have supposed that in the space of seven short years only the country which at that time was engaged in mortal combat with the Britain would have become a loyal British colony, and that it would be represented at the Imperial Conference which took place this year by the very man who was the soul of the armed resistance against England, and who, at the conference, modestly, but firmly, declar-