

Secretary of State for the Colonies. So there were assembled in that conference the representatives of over four hundred millions people—practically one-fourth of the whole human race.

The conference was unique in this further respect, namely, the time at which it was held. It was held at the darkest period of the history of the war since the first battle of the Marne. The months of April, May and June of the past year were among the most critical and difficult months in the whole war, and it was interesting and significant that at that very time, when the outlook was dark and in many respects discouraging, representatives of all portions of the Empire, including India, should gather together as indicating the firm resolve of the British Empire in all its component parts to stand together to see the war through to a victorious conclusion, no matter how difficult the course might be, nor how dark the present horizon.

The Conference was also unique in this respect: that notwithstanding all Germany's efforts to drive the British ships from the high seas by submarine warfare, His Majesty's navy had so successfully controlled that menace that representatives from every continent of the world—Asia, Africa, Europe, America and Australasia—were able to travel in safety to London, there to meet in common counsel to formulate plans to defeat and overthrow the power that was committing this inhuman piracy upon the high seas. The whole situation—the composition of the Conference, the conditions under which it met, and the mastery of the seas which was indicated by the fact that the representatives of the whole British Empire were able to meet, led Mr. Balfour, who was speaking at the opening of the Conference to suggest that it was one of the most significant gatherings in all recorded history. He pointed out, as has so frequently been pointed out in this House and elsewhere, how completely the Germans misunderstood the spirit of the people who composed the British Empire when they thought that Empire would fall to pieces when the pressure came in the stress of a great war.

Mr. CAHILL: What colonies are represented at this Conference?

Mr. ROWELL: There are no colonies represented directly at the Conference. The self-governing dominions, India, and the Mother Country, are represented. The other colonial possessions are not represented, except so far as they are represented by the Colonial secretary. He is a member of the

[Mr. Rowell.]

Conference under the Constitution of the Conference, which expressly provides that the Prime Minister and the Colonial Secretary of Great Britain shall be members of the Conference. The Conference was therefore primarily a gathering of the self-governing Dominions of the Empire.

Now, the House will be interested in knowing what subjects were taken up and discussed at this Imperial Conference. I shall draw the attention of the House to some of the more important questions, and those members of the House who are interested in pursuing the matter further will find the questions discussed in the report of the Conference which has been laid on the Table.

One of the most important questions related to the naturalization law. The members of the House will recall that at the Imperial Conference of 1911 the Conference unanimously agreed that thereafter there should be created what was described, as an Imperial citizenship; that is, a citizenship which would be valid throughout the whole Empire. Prior to the conference of 1911 and, indeed, at the very time that conference was meeting, our naturalization was limited to our own territory.

In other words, a man naturalized in Canada became a British subject as long as he was within the Dominion of Canada. If he returned to his own country and had not previously been de-naturalized there by some act of his own, he became a citizen of his own country again. Nor was he a British citizen if he went to Great Britain or any other portion of the British Empire. As I pointed out, the conference of 1911 decided in favour of Imperial nationality and recommended that an Act be brought in, which might be adopted by all of the self-governing dominions, and which would confer what was described as Imperial nationality. That Act was adopted by the Imperial House of Commons in 1914.

Mr. LEMIEUX: We adopted it, too.

Hon. Mr. ROWELL: It was adopted by the Canadian House of Commons in 1914. It was also adopted by Newfoundland. It was not adopted by South Africa, Australia or New Zealand, the principal reason being that before they had taken action the war broke out and the matter stood over, as they intimated, pending the end of the war. Owing to war conditions, however, the British Government came to the conclusion that some important changes should be made in this law, and in 1917 they sent to the Governments of the dominions a communication suggesting certain amend-