

of the State, in regard to any course of action which we thought desirable and which required his assent. I may be wrong in the view I take, but I feel so strongly about it, and I have discussed it with my colleagues in New Zealand, though I have not mentioned it in Parliament except by way of a brief hint. I went no further with my own Parliament, but I would not be justified in allowing this Conference to pass without bringing it up. I may say that I believe thoroughly and strongly in the partnership of nations. It does not matter what you call it—a family of nations, a Commonwealth of Nations, or anything else—so long as the partnership is applied. I believe thoroughly and firmly in that; but even a partnership of nations, any more than a nation, cannot stand still. We must either progress or decay—there is no question about that; and I hope those who are entrusted with the management of the public affairs of the Empire itself, and of the countries of the Empire, will see that no decay takes place. There is one point I must acknowledge in this connection, and it is this: While I have called attention to the anomaly, I admit, and am thoroughly of opinion, that there is a far stronger power in the British Empire to-day than any words that may be placed upon paper, either printed or written—that is, the sentiments of the British people, the patriotic sentiments of the British people. I am not merely speaking of Anglo-Saxons or Europeans, or any one race: I am speaking of the British people right through the Empire, including the native races. You cannot go beyond sentiment. And I am quite sure that as soon as they understand what is taking place, or its possibility, if only its possibility, they will see that these matters, which may appear small at the time, are rectified without waiting too long.

#### THE PACIFIC THE FUTURE STORM-CENTRE.

I want to say something about naval defence. It has been referred to by Mr. Hughes, and I may say that there is no difference of opinion between Mr. Hughes and myself in regard to the necessity for naval defence. The storm-centre has changed undoubtedly during the last few years, so far as it is possible to judge by appearances, and many of us fear that the next war—and I wish I were optimistic enough to believe we had seen the last of wars, but I am not—we fear that the next naval war will be fought in the Pacific. Human nature has not changed very much in the last five thousand years, and although we have profited by the lessons of the war, and I would like to think that the lessons of the war would prevent war—that the suffering that the people of Europe endured, the tremendous loss of life, the misery they endured—I would like to think that these taken together, or any one of them, would prevent war in the future. I am not looking forward to war in the immediate future. There are clouds on the horizon it is true, some of them perhaps no bigger than the proverbial man's hand, but they are there, and they may bring war sooner than we expect. The wish, however, is not father to the thought.

#### NAVAL DEFENCE MUST PROTECT EMPIRE'S COMMUNICATIONS.

I hope the indications may come to nothing, and no one will be better pleased than myself if they come to naught; but so far as naval defence is concerned—I am speaking of the Empire now, a chain of countries right round the globe, Dominions, Dependencies, and the Empire within an Empire, India, as well as the United Kingdom—whatever may happen in the future, I do hope that there will be a sufficient naval force kept in order to maintain the connections between the different parts of the Empire; and that was where there was a danger of our losing the last war. In connection with submarine warfare in its worst days, about 1917, before the hydrophone and depth-charge had been perfected, when the ships were being sunk faster than we were able to turn them out, there was a danger then of the connections being cut between the different Dominions and the heart of the Empire particularly, or even between the different countries of the Empire outside the United Kingdom itself; and if the connections had been cut we should certainly have lost the war—nothing could have saved us. Fortunately, things turned out as some of us were optimistic enough to expect; but again we have to think of the future, and we have to remember the lessons of the last war. I know, of course, there are great changes—great improvements, if you can call them improvements—in the instruments of war—probably different methods—but we can only go as far as our knowledge allows