

- (b.) The necessity for the maintenance of safe passage along the great route to the East through the Mediterranean and the Red Seas.
- (c.) The necessity for the maintenance by Great Britain of a home-defence Air Force of sufficient strength to give adequate protection against air attack by the strongest Air Force within striking distance of her shores.

(5.) The Conference, while deeply concerned for the paramount importance of providing for the safety and integrity of all parts of the Empire, earnestly desires, so far as is consistent with this consideration, the further limitation of armaments, and trusts that no opportunity may be lost to promote this object.

#### XIII. STATUS OF HIGH COMMISSIONERS.

Certain questions were discussed relating to the status of the High Commissioners in Great Britain, particularly in connection with precedence and with exemption from taxation, Customs duties, &c.

The representatives of the British Government undertook to examine the points raised, while explaining that any alteration of the existing rules of precedence would require the approval of His Majesty the King.

#### XIV. POSITION OF INDIANS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE EMPIRE.

The position of Indians in other parts of the Empire was reviewed by the Conference in the light of the developments which have taken place since the resolution which formed part of the proceedings at the 1921 Conference. The subject was opened by a general statement from the Secretary of State for India as head of the Indian delegation. He explained that the intensity of feeling aroused in India by this question was due to the opinion widely held there (which, however, he did not himself share) that the disabilities of Indians were based on distinction of colour and were badges of racial inferiority. This statement was followed by a full presentation of the case on behalf of India by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and His Highness the Maharajah of Alwar.

It was found possible to publish these speeches, and those made in the course of the discussions by the Prime Minister of Great Britain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Dominion Prime Ministers, and the Minister of External Affairs of the Irish Free State, shortly after the speeches had been delivered.\* In this respect the procedure differed from that at the Conference of 1921, when only the resolution adopted was made public. It is unnecessary in the present report to do more than refer to the main proposal made on behalf of the Indian delegation and the views expressed and conclusions reached with regard to it. The Indian proposal was to the effect that the Dominion Governments concerned, and the British Government for the colonies and protectorates, should agree to the appointment of committees to confer with a committee appointed by the Indian Government as to the best and quickest means of giving effect to the resolution of the 1921 Conference.

In the case of the Union of South Africa, which was not a party to the 1921 resolution, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru expressed the hope that the Union Government would agree to the Government of India sending an agent to South Africa who would protect Indian nationals there, who would serve as an intermediary between them and the Union Government, and who would place the Indian Government in full possession of the facts regarding Indian nationals in South Africa.

The Conference expressed its high appreciation of the able and moderate manner in which Lord Peel and his colleagues had presented the Indian case. The opinions expressed and the conclusions reached with regard to the above suggestions were, in brief, as follows :—

The Prime Minister of Canada observed that, so far as he knew, Indians now domiciled in Canada did not suffer any legal or political disability in eight out of the nine provinces of Canada ; as regards the ninth province—British Columbia—

\* See Appendix V.