

1926.
NEW ZEALAND.

IMPERIAL CONFERENCE.

STATEMENT MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE 17TH AUGUST IN REFERENCE TO THE BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED AT THE FORTHCOMING IMPERIAL CONFERENCE.

Ordered to lie upon the Table, and to be printed.

STATEMENT.

WITH regard to the Imperial Conference, I desire to say that the opening of the Imperial Conference has now been definitely fixed for the 19th October, and I desire to take the opportunity of placing before the House the information at present available as to the matters that will probably be the subject of discussion at the Conference.

In addition to various questions of defence and of foreign and inter-Imperial relations, the subjects at present listed are as follows :—

1. *Oversea settlement* :—

- (a.) The establishment of closer relations with Dominion Governments, and the adoption of further measures for the encouragement of oversea settlement.
- (b.) The standardization of schemes of social insurance, including the effect of such schemes on migration.
- (c.) Workmen's compensation in so far as it affects migration, including the question of reciprocal arrangements for the administration of awards.

2. *Inter-Imperial trade* :—

- (a.) A general review of inter-Imperial trade, present and future.
- (b.) Discussion of the work of the Imperial Economic Committee and the position of the Empire Marketing Board.
- (c.) The valuation for Customs-duty purposes of goods which have received a drawback of Customs or excise duties on exportation from another part of the Empire.
- (d.) The area of taxation in the case of non-resident traders.
- (e.) Industrial standardization and its bearing on trade development.
- (f.) The General Economic Conference called by the League of Nations.

3. *Communications* :—

- (a.) The progress report of the Imperial Shipping Committee.
- (b.) Economic defence in matters of flag discrimination.
- (c.) The question of adherence to the Brussels Maritime Conventions providing for a uniform law relating to—(1) Bills of lading ; (2) the liability of shipowners ; (3) the immunity of State-owned vessels from legal proceedings ; and (4) maritime mortgages and liens.
- (d.) Commercial air services.
- (e.) Inter-Empire passports.
- (f.) Wireless telegraphy and telephony.

4. *Research and development* :—

- (a.) Co-operation in research generally.
- (b.) Co-operation in agricultural research.
- (c.) The Imperial Institute.
- (d.) Forestry.
- (e.) Cotton-growing.

5. *Measures to increase the exhibition within the Empire of British films.*

6. *The liability of State enterprises to taxation.*

7. *Certain questions as to the law of nationality*, relating to—

(a.) The naturalization of persons resident in mandated territories and in protectorates.

(b.) The general question of the nationality of married women, and in particular—

(1.) The readmission to British nationality of British women married to aliens in cases where the married state, though subsisting in law, has to all practical purposes come to an end.

(2.) The principle that a British-born woman should not on marriage to an alien lose her British nationality if and so long as she does not acquire the nationality of her husband under the law of his country.

(c.) The acquisition of British nationality by children of the third generation born abroad of British parents during the war.

(d.) Certain questions relating to the revocation of certificates of naturalization.

It is proposed at a later date to afford the House an opportunity of discussing these subjects. Honourable members will understand, however, that the Conference is purely a consultative body—a medium for the frank and free discussion of important matters affecting the well-being of the British Empire as a whole and of its constituent Dominions and dependencies—and that its decisions can have no practical effect unless and until they are adopted by the Governments concerned. It is essential in these circumstances that the representatives of the Dominions should be to a considerable extent free from any commitments, in order that the fullest opportunity may be taken of obtaining agreement on each matter involved. Honourable members will understand, therefore, that, while in any future discussion that may take place in connection with the Conference I shall be glad to hear and to take a careful note of the views that may be expressed, it is essential that I should have complete liberty of action to exercise my judgment as to the best course to adopt, having regard to circumstances as they arise. This, of course, has been the procedure adopted in the past, and honourable members will, I am sure, appreciate the necessity for its continuance in the future.

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