

periods were respectively 576 and 491. The present Prime Minister of the Commonwealth has supplemented this system by the appointment in London of a personal liaison officer in close touch with the responsible authorities in this country. I need not say that we have been only too glad to help him in every way within our power.

Resolution of 1923 Conference on Negotiation, &c., of Treaties.

A beginning has also been made, on the more formal side, in indicating the principles which govern our national and international relationships. I am thinking particularly of the resolution on the negotiation, signature, and ratification of treaties which was agreed to at the Imperial Conference of 1923, and has since been accepted by all the Governments represented here. It may well be that this resolution, in the light of experience, now needs clarification and amplification in certain ways. But I can say with confidence that its usefulness has been amply demonstrated in the course of the last three years.

Developments as affecting Defence.

In the field of Imperial defence there has been steady, if unobtrusive, progress towards improving the facilities for co-operation, if the necessity should unhappily arise. The long-drawn-out controversy of the early part of this century between the advocates of Dominion Navies and Dominion contributions to a single Imperial Navy has long since died away in the natural and inevitable course of constitutional development. The principle of Dominion Navies is established, and is not merely accepted, but is whole-heartedly endorsed, by the Admiralty. I take this opportunity of warmly welcoming the step recently taken by India in establishing the Royal Indian Navy. At the end of this year, in accordance with the provisions of the Articles of Agreement of 1921, we shall be entering upon a conference with representatives of the Irish Free State with a view to the undertaking by the Free State of a share in her own coastal defence. A regular system for the interchange of British and Australian cruisers is now in operation. Our Navies, on which we depend in the last resort for our corporate existence, remain—and I venture to say will continue—one of the strongest possible bonds that unite us.

In the land forces also much has been done to facilitate co-operation. At the present time units and formations throughout the Empire are organized in general on similar lines. Broadly speaking, similar patterns of weapons are in use and a human bond is created by a system of interchange of officers, and by personal visits of officers to and from the Dominions.

In the Air arm, whose actual and potential importance is a link between us not only from the point of view of Imperial defence, but also from that of Imperial communications, has been strikingly demonstrated by recent long-distance flights; contact and co-operation are being secured by corresponding methods.

In all these services common doctrine in matters of defence is provided for by special facilities for the attachment of officers to colleges and other technical establishments, and we hope to see this process extended.

I will not now detain you by referring to the resolutions of successive Imperial Conferences on these matters, but I can assure you that study of them affords ample proof of the value of the part which these Conferences have played.

I cannot leave the subject of Imperial defence without a brief reference to the generous, patriotic, and far-sighted action of Their Highnesses the Rulers of the four Federated Malay States and other members of the Federated Malay States Council in offering, on the motion of the Sultan of Selangor, a contribution of £2,000,000 to the Imperial Government, payable in five annual instalments, towards the cost of the Singapore Naval Base. This contribution is of the greatest assistance in enabling this important development to be proceeded with. I shall return to this subject when we discuss Imperial defence.

Developments as affecting Trade and Oversea Settlement.

The third, and not the least important, head under which the work of the Imperial Conference may be classified is that of Empire trade and Empire settlement. One of the most striking of the definite results of recent Conferences has been the institution of a number of joint Imperial bodies, each surveying some particular aspect of the Empire's economic, as opposed to its political, relations. Thus, at this Conference we shall be called upon to consider the valuable work done by the Imperial Shipping Committee and the Imperial Economic Committee. I would refer also to the Imperial Institute, which has recently been reorganized as a result of the work of the Imperial Economic Conference of 1923, with which is now amalgamated the Imperial Mineral Resources Bureau—the latter itself the product of resolutions of the Imperial War Conferences of 1917 and 1918; also to the advances which have been made since the last Conference in co-operation in research within the Empire; and to the work of successive Conferences on forestry, one result of which has been the establishment at Oxford University of an Imperial Forestry Institute.

In the sphere of direct trade relations between the different parts of the Empire, the most striking developments of recent years have been the greater realization of the importance to the Empire of fostering inter-Imperial trade. We in this country may fairly claim to have played our part, from a very early date, by the facilities given in London, both in the raising of loans, and in giving such loans the privileged position of trustee securities. From no other source could such large sums have been provided on such favourable terms. I find, for instance, that down to the end of 1925 London had lent to Governments and municipalities in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa more