

than 850 millions sterling. In spite of the reduction in the wealth of this country, and the diminution of its accumulated savings resulting from the World War, and in spite of the heavy consequential drain on our savings for capital expenditure in this country, we have been able, even in the years since the war, to maintain the flow of investments which is so important for oversea development. In addition, we took a further step, as the direct result of the special Conference held in the early part of 1921 and of suggestions made by the Dominions' representatives at the subsequent Imperial Conference, in passing the Empire Settlement Act of 1922. The problem of settlement, which transcends all others in importance, so far as many of us represented here are concerned, is not so much one of relieving congestion of labour in this country and supplementing its shortage elsewhere as of building up the prosperity and strength of the national life of each part of the Empire, and of giving its citizens the widest opportunity for healthy individual development. This problem is essentially a problem of co-operation not only in actual measures directly concerned with migration and settlement, but also in finance and in the marketing of Empire products.

The principle of Imperial preference, which, I gladly admit, was initiated and pressed in the Dominions before the Government of this country recognized its advantages, was first unanimously accepted in its widest sense by the Imperial War Conference, 1917, and the resolution then passed was reaffirmed in 1923. Substantial results have followed from the preference accorded in the Dominions to Empire goods, and I am confident that the measure of preference which we in this country have been able to afford, even under our very limited tariff system, supplemented as it will be in the future by the operations of the newly established Empire Marketing Board, has increased and will increase the flow of inter-Imperial trade.

British Empire Exhibition at Wembley.

In this connection I cannot pass on without a reference to a great Imperial organization which held the field of public attention during the two years which have intervened between our meetings—I mean the Empire Exhibition at Wembley. That exhibition, to which all parties and all Governments in the Empire gave their hearty support, brought home to the people of this country, and in some measure also to every part of the Empire, as nothing else could have done, a conception not only of the present development of the Empire, but of its immense future possibilities. A whole generation of children are growing up in this country to-day whose imaginations have been kindled by the wonderful panorama of Empire, and whose outlook has been broadened by the thought of the field of opportunity before them.

Imperial War Graves Commission

Lest any one should think that the practical results which have sprung from past Conferences have been wholly material, I would mention one other inter-Imperial body, created by the Conferences of 1917 and 1918, which has in addition a spiritual side—I refer to that unique Imperial organization, the Imperial War Graves Commission, an abiding memorial of the spirit of co-operation which inspired us in the Great War. I rejoice to think that the future continuance of its work has now been ensured by provisions for the establishment of a permanent endowment fund.

Establishment of Dominions Office.

I should like to add here a brief reference to a recent development which, though it does not directly arise out of the work of recent Imperial Conferences, has, nevertheless, a very close relation to that work. I refer to the establishment last year of a separate Dominions Office under the supervision of a Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs. I will leave it to my colleague who holds that office to set forth in greater detail the reasons for that change, and the advantages which we hope to see resulting from it. But I should like to say that I believe that this development, whilst not interfering in any way with the personal communications between Prime Ministers on matters of Cabinet importance, which both I and they feel to be of the greatest value, will do much to facilitate the conduct of our relations with the Governments of the Dominions.

Unofficial Relations.

I have spoken hitherto of the part which successive Imperial Conferences have played in the development of the official relations between the Governments represented at them. But to complete the picture I should add a reference to their value on the human side in promoting a personal and unofficial relation between our peoples. Such relations exist in every sphere of our life as a Commonwealth. I need only instance the Empire Parliamentary Association with its reciprocal visits of parliamentary delegations—whose object, as Lord Salisbury recently put it in New Zealand, “is to bring about not political union, but a union of hearts and sympathies”; the extent to which advantage is being taken of the facilities provided by our universities, where during the past year, in round numbers, twelve hundred students from the Dominions and over a thousand from India have pursued their education, without counting large numbers of law students and students in technical schools and research institutes; the Rhodes Trust, which since its inception has enabled 565 students from the Dominions, in addition to sixty-nine from the colonies, to pursue their education at Oxford University; the close connection maintained by the Churches; the reciprocal visits of scientific bodies, of Press representatives, of farmers, students, Scouts, and Guides—indeed, of societies of all kinds; the mutual recognition of professional diplomas in medicine and other branches of science—to say nothing of a thousand other social ties too numerous to mention, partly material, partly sentimental, sometimes invisible, which, in the aggregate, constitute an inseparable bond.