

It will be noted from the report that the experts recommend for the consideration of the Imperial Conference the establishment of a tribunal for the determination of any dispute that may arise between members of the British Commonwealth. In international relations, disputes on matters of right in which we are concerned will now be settled by reference to the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague; but in accepting the compulsory jurisdiction of this Court a special reservation was made of inter-Imperial disputes, and it is for the consideration of such disputes that this tribunal is now proposed. We feel it very unlikely that we ourselves would be involved in any dispute with another member of the British Commonwealth that might call for the intervention of such a tribunal, but, at the same time, it is our intention to fall in with any reasonable proposal for the setting-up of such a tribunal in order to avoid any possibility of friction between His Majesty's several Governments.

One of the special subjects referred to in the report as calling for an agreed policy throughout the Commonwealth is that of nationality, including the very vexed question of the nationality of married women. Under the auspices of the League of Nations a Conference on the Codification of International Law has recently been considering this subject, and its report, which is only just to hand, is now receiving the consideration of the Government. It is our view that a uniform law of nationality throughout the British Commonwealth is desirable, but we do not feel that uniformity will be easy to attain, or, indeed, that it can be attained without a considerable compromise, especially with reference to the case of married women. The House will recognize that this subject is by no means free from difficulties, and that perhaps the outstanding necessity of the situation in the interests of the woman herself and of the children of such a marriage is that the nationality of the whole family should be the same. The possibilities of complications — and, indeed, of hardship — where, say, the husband is of one nationality, the wife of another, and the children perhaps of a third, are by no means negligible, and the utmost that I can say at the moment is that if I am to represent New Zealand at the Imperial Conference I shall use my best efforts towards a solution that will meet with general acceptance throughout the Commonwealth, and that I will do all that is proper to protect the interests of women. I might add that the Codification Conference was unable to arrive at any really effective decision on this subject, and the utmost they were able to decide upon was that to avoid certain cases of "statelessness" a woman, on marriage, should not lose her existing nationality unless she received the nationality of her husband. They added a recommendation, however, that States should continue to study the possibility of introducing equality of the sexes in matters of nationality.

I do not propose to enter into any lengthy disquisition on the delicate questions of foreign policy. We welcome, of course, the growing strength of the movement towards international peace and disarmament, and we shall do all that properly lies in our power to further this movement, having due regard to the safety and protection of this Dominion and of the British Commonwealth. Honourable members are referred to the increasing activities of the League of Nations in the direction of security, as evidenced by the proposed amendments to the Covenant of the League, the General Act and Model Treaties for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, the Model Treaty to strengthen the Means of preventing War, the Model Treaties of Mutual Guarantee and Non-aggression, and the Draft Convention on Financial Assistance. Some account of the proceedings of the League in this connection will be found in parliamentary paper A.—5, and it is the view of the League that the encouragement of a feeling of security will stimulate the rather disappointing progress of disarmament. The New Zealand Government are giving careful study to these instruments and to the recent activities of League Committees on the subject, the reports of which have just been received, and we hope that an opportunity will be afforded for further discussion at the Imperial Conference. However encouraging the continued improvement in international relations may be—and there is no doubt that it is encouraging—he would, I think, be a rash man who concluded that the possibility no longer exists of international complications and their attendant conflicts and miseries. We in New Zealand are in a happy position in our geographical isolation from the problems of the Old