

CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS.

New Zealand attaches no particular importance to the theoretical basis of our association as members of the British Commonwealth. We have found no difficulties, and expect to find no difficulties, in conducting the affairs of our Dominion with complete freedom and ability to carry out any policy we may decide upon. We realize, however, that our conditions are not necessarily those of other portions of the British Commonwealth and, while we would deprecate any attempt to lay down too rigidly the structure of our association together as members of the Commonwealth, we shall be happy to collaborate in any clarification of the position which may appear to be necessary and may be desired by any of our partner Governments. All that we as a Dominion ask is that our association, whatever its theoretical basis, should endure, that it should be made fruitful, effective, and ever closer, and that the influence of the British Commonwealth should be maintained undiminished.

FOREIGN POLICY.

We are met to-day in most difficult times. Both politically and economically the world is greatly disturbed. And I hope I may be pardoned for suggesting that we who are gathered in this room, representing as we do a very large proportion of the area and of the population of the world, and the greatest force for peace and justice that exists in this world to-day, can give a lead to our peoples and to other nations which might conceivably point the way to that alleviation of distress, that rectification of grievances, that mutual co-operation amongst nations, which the world so sorely needs to-day.

I fully realize that the Dominion which I have the honour to represent is both small and distant, and that we can hope to play only a modest part in the deliberations of this Conference, or, indeed, in the affairs of the world. Nevertheless, we hold definite views on many of the subjects that this Conference has been called to consider, and at the appropriate time it will be my function to express those views as cogently, indeed as forcibly, as I may. At the same time, I wish to affirm at this early stage of our deliberations that in all things, and on all subjects, the activities of the delegation that I have the honour to lead will be guided by the widest principles of co-operation. We realize that points of view must necessarily differ and that, perhaps, policies may differ, but we are convinced that, animated as we are by the single object of promoting the peace and the prosperity of our people and of all peoples, it will be possible for all of us to sink, to the extent that it is necessary, individual points of view to attain a common end. That will be the guiding principle of the New Zealand delegation.

I sincerely trust that on this occasion, when the peoples of the Commonwealth and, indeed, of the world, are so sorely in need of temperate guidance, it will be possible for us to arrive at definite decisions which can be applied without unnecessary delay. There is, I fear, a risk in all Conferences such as this that delegates may be content with an innocuous and unhelpful formula, and reluctant to attack and solve difficult problems merely because of their difficulty. Conditions are such at present that we must, I suggest, avoid temporizing. We must approach our problems earnestly, and we must endeavour with all our power to solve them for the common good of mankind. I, for one, shall be most disappointed if, after coming so many thousands of miles to attend this Conference, I should unhappily be forced to return without effective results. I know that my colleagues in this room will be animated by the same motives, and I am looking forward with interest and with a full appreciation of the privilege that is mine, to the discussions that are to follow and to the good that we may be able to do.

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

General the Hon. J. B. M. Hertzog: Mr. Prime Minister, I wish to be quite brief, and I am sorry to say that I shall not be so formal as my colleagues from the other Dominions have been this morning. I shall therefore at once begin, Sir, by saying how deeply I appreciate the words which you have spoken here this morning in such clear terms, and I wish to give you the assurance at once that, as far as the principles of co-operation which you have enunciated are concerned, I think we all heartily agree with them; at any rate, there is not a single one to which I felt I could take any exception.

TRIBUTE TO HIS LATE MAJESTY KING GEORGE V.

You, Sir, have referred to the late King George, and I wish to say here that I shall always look back upon him with affection. He has certainly not laid the foundations of the Commonwealth, but what I have felt and what I do feel is that he has given definiteness and certainty to those foundations upon which the Commonwealth ought to last for many years to come. I cannot help thinking, Sir, that the course of development which the Empire has taken during his reign is such a one that it will with time become a more effective and a more potent instrument for maintaining the peace of the world than the League of Nations. I think that we have already, in this Commonwealth idea, come to realize what is implicitly contained in the Kellogg Pact itself.