



## The imperial conference, 1937: Summary of proceedings

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## APPENDIX

### THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE, 1937: SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

*Certain passages have been omitted from the official text, which is contained in Cmd. 5482. These omissions are clearly indicated. Apart from this, at no point has the text been altered in any way.—*  
EDITOR.

#### I. PRELIMINARY NOTE

[Omitted]

#### II. THE CORONATION

THE Conference met on the morrow of the Coronation of a new Sovereign. In the speeches at the opening Plenary Meeting of the Conference on May 14 reference was made to the lasting character of the foundations of the British Commonwealth of Nations as laid down at the Imperial Conference of 1926, and the Delegates declared their faith in the principles of liberty and co-operation under the Crown as the inspiration of the Commonwealth relationship and as the guiding principles of all their deliberations. There was general recognition of the significance of the Coronation ceremony and it was noted that, as a result of communication between the Governments concerned, the forms of the Coronation Service had been adapted to accord with the new constitutional relationships. Reference was made in particular to the significance of the changes in the Coronation Oath, the first paragraph of which as taken by King George VI reads:—

Will you solemnly promise and swear to govern the peoples of Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa, of your Possessions and the other Territories to any of them belonging or pertaining, and of your Empire of India, according to their respective laws and customs ?

The position may be summed up in the words of Mr. Mackenzie King:—

. . . Particularly significant was the new form of the Oath by which the King solemnly declared the sense in which he has accepted the Crown. For the first time

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South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Canada are expressly named. His Majesty thus records that sovereignty is to be exercised in the interest of the peoples of Canada, and the other countries set forth, according to their own laws and customs. For the first time in this great ceremony it was recognised that the relationship between the King and his people of Canada is direct and immediate. The Oath has long embodied the principles upon which our system of democratic governance is built. It now recognises that the relationships of the several peoples under the Crown, one with another, as well as with foreign states, have become interpenetrated by the ancient principles of freedom and the rule of law. Thus it may be said that the new Oath, preserving the old and finding place for the new, embodies in simple fashion our political faith, and mirrors the structure of this group of free, equal and autonomous states known as the British Commonwealth of Nations.

### III to VIII

*[These sections refer to the Loyal Message and His Majesty's reply, the opening statements, the arrangement of the work of the Conference, publicity arrangements, His Majesty's birthday, and the death of Sir Robert Borden.]*

### IX. FOREIGN AFFAIRS

At the Plenary Meeting of the Imperial Conference on May 14, the Chairman made the following statement in the course of his opening speech :—

Though we shall discuss other important subjects, we are agreed that questions of foreign affairs and defence shall be our main subjects. It is fitting that they should be. For we are met at a time when the international situation is difficult and even threatening, and the responsibility rests upon us to see that our deliberations not only are of service to ourselves but also may help in some measure towards the solution of those international problems which are now perplexing the world.

Similar views were expressed by other speakers. . . . A series of meetings, of which the first took place on May 19, was devoted to the consideration of various aspects of foreign affairs under the heads of the general international situation including the League of Nations, the European situation, and the Pacific and the Far East.

On behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs made comprehensive statements under all these heads. He also kept the Conference informed of the current international situation. Statements as to the views of their respective Governments were made

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by the Prime Ministers of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand, and the Union of South Africa, and by the Marquess of Zetland on behalf of the Indian Delegation. General appreciation of all these reviews was expressed. The statements on behalf of the Delegations were followed by full and frank discussion, and it was agreed that the exchange of views, especially at the present juncture of international affairs, was of great value to the representatives gathered at the Conference. During the discussions emphasis was laid on the importance of developing the practice of communication and consultation between the respective Governments as a help to the co-ordination of policies.

The Conference recorded the results of its deliberations on the subject of foreign affairs in the following statement :—

The representatives of the Governments of the British Commonwealth of Nations gathered in the Conference, have in the course of their proceedings had an opportunity of exchanging views upon foreign affairs and the international situation as it affects their respective interests and responsibilities.

While no attempt was made to formulate commitments, which in any event could not be made effective until approved and confirmed by the respective Parliaments, the representatives of the Governments concerned found themselves in close agreement upon a number of general propositions which they thought it desirable to set out in the present statement.\*

Thus they agreed that for each member of the Commonwealth the first objective is the preservation of peace. In their view the settlement of differences that may arise between nations and the adjustment of national needs should be sought by methods of co-operation, joint enquiry and conciliation. It is in such methods, and not in recourse to the use of force between nation and nation, that the surest guarantee will be found for the improvement of international relations and respect for mutual engagements.

Holding these views and desiring to base their policies upon the aims and ideals of the League of Nations, they found themselves unanimous in declaring that their respective armaments will never be used for purposes of aggression or for any purpose inconsistent with the Covenant of the League of Nations or the Pact of Paris. At the same time, being impressed with the desirability of strengthening the influence of the League by the enlargement of its membership, they united in expressing the

\* It was understood and agreed that nothing in this statement should be held to diminish the right of His Majesty's Governments in the United Kingdom, Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa, and the Government of India to advocate and support their statements of policy as submitted to the Assembly of the League of Nations in September 1936.

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view that this object would be facilitated by the separation of the Covenant from the Treaties of Peace. Observing that in respect of certain regions in which a number of States have special interests, regional agreements of friendship and collaboration between individual members of the British Commonwealth and the other States so interested have been entered upon or may be contemplated, they welcomed all such agreements insofar as they can be made to contribute to the cause of peace, and do not conflict with the Covenant of the League of Nations.

They noted with interest the statement made on behalf of the Australian Delegation at the opening Plenary Meeting that Australia would greatly welcome a regional understanding and pact of non-aggression by the countries of the Pacific, and would be prepared to collaborate to that end with all the peoples of the Pacific region in a spirit of understanding and sympathy. They agreed that if such an arrangement could be made it would be a desirable contribution to the cause of peace and to the continued maintenance of friendly relations in the Pacific, and that it should be the subject of further consultation between Governments.

They all desired earnestly to see as wide a measure of disarmament as could be obtained. At the same time they were agreed that the several Governments of which they are the representatives are bound to adopt such measures of defence as they may deem essential for their security, as well as for the fulfilment of such international obligations as they may respectively have assumed.

Being convinced that the influence of each of them in the cause of peace was likely to be greatly enhanced by their common agreement to use that influence in the same direction, they declared their intention of continuing to consult and co-operate with one another in this vital interest and all other matters of common concern.

The representatives of the several Governments concerned further had under review the possibility of reviving confidence and increasing the stability of economic and financial conditions in the world, a process which they considered essential to the prosperity of individual countries as well as to international peace. In order to assist in furthering this end, they declared themselves ready to co-operate with other nations in examining current difficulties, including trade barriers and other obstacles to the increase of international trade and the improvement of the general standard of living.

Finally the Members of the Conference, while themselves firmly attached to the principles of democracy and to parliamentary forms of government, decided to register their view that differences of political creed should be no obstacle to friendly relations between Governments and countries, and that nothing

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would be more damaging to the hopes of international appeasement than the division, real or apparent, of the world into opposing groups.

### X. DEFENCE

The Conference gave close attention to the subject of defence, and considered ways in which it would be possible for the Governments concerned to co-operate in measures for their own security. The occasion was taken for a detailed review of the state of defence in each of the countries represented at the Conference and this opportunity was generally welcomed.

The discussions began with a review of the events which led up to the adoption by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of their rearmament programme, and of defence problems generally. The Members of the Conference noted with deep concern that since the session of 1930, international tension had increased in a marked degree, and that there had been a large and rapid increase in the armaments of all the principal Powers. They were impressed by the world-wide effect of these increased armaments on the international situation and on the financial and economic position of the nations concerned, and while their respective Parliaments had already recognised the necessity for taking measures to put their defences in order, they thought it of the highest importance that negotiations for the limitation of armaments should be reopened whenever there was a reasonable prospect of success. They recognised with regret that notwithstanding the measure of success in the limitation of armaments attained by the countries concerned in the London Treaty for the Limitation of Naval Armaments of March 25, 1936, and in the Anglo-German Agreement of June 18, 1935, international conditions were not at the moment favourable to further progress in the direction of disarmament. At the same time, however, they acclaimed the efforts now being made to extend naval limitation to other countries.

The statements made to the Conference by the Delegation of the United Kingdom concerning the rearmament programme of the United Kingdom reported the further developments in the organisation of the Committee of Imperial Defence, notably in improving the arrangements for joint planning between the three Defence Services and for the mobilisation of industry. Facilities are always given to Dominion representatives to attend Meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence, if they so desire, when questions of defence affecting their respective countries are under consideration. Attention was also drawn to the important progress made in recent years in the standardisation by the Governments concerned of the training and equipment of the defence forces in different parts of the Empire, as

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well as in uniformity of administrative practice in defence matters. Reference was made to the increasing importance of the industrial side of defence owing to the progress of technical development in armaments, and emphasis was placed on the advantages attending co-operation in the production and supply of munitions and raw materials as well as of food and feeding stuffs to meet the several requirements of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India, and the Colonial Empire.

The discussion was continued by the Delegations representing the Dominions and India. The Conference was informed of the developments in the Canadian defence forces from 1926 to the present time. After considerable reductions in 1931 increased appropriations had recently been made for the Defence services of the Dominion. The strength of the Canadian naval and air forces had been increased, the militia had been completely reorganised and a policy of modernisation and mechanisation of equipment had been adopted. The industrial aspect of defence preparations had received close attention and a Committee of the Cabinet had been appointed to maintain active supervision of defence problems.

The defence organisation of the Commonwealth of Australia next received consideration. The basis of Australian defence policy was described as participation in Empire naval defence for the protection of sea-borne trade, as a deterrent to invasion and as a general measure of defence against raids, combined with local defence to provide a further deterrent to and a defence against invasion and raids. The great importance from the Australian point of view of the Singapore base was noticed. The Conference was informed of the large increases in the defence votes in Australia under a Three Years' Programme commenced in 1934 and that a new Four Years' Programme overlapping the last year of the other Programme had been put in hand. It was stated that the guiding principles of the Imperial Conferences of 1923 and 1926 had been adopted by His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia as the basis of its policy and the main features of the programmes that sought to implement them were as follows :—

(i) *Naval Principles. . . .*

The construction of a new cruiser and two new sloops.

The re-armament of the fixed defences and provision of air co-operation.

Facilities for naval repairs and oil storage.

(ii) *Responsibility for Local Defence.*

In addition to strengthening the fixed defences of the important ports, the Australian Government had recently provided a special increase in the Army vote to bring the Field Army of seven divisions up to its minimum nucleus establishment. The

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strength of the permanent forces was also being increased and improvements were being effected in the efficiency, armament and equipment of the Army.

The Air Force would complete this year Part I of the scheme laid down by Sir John Salmond, and have a first line strength of eight squadrons and 96 aircraft.

The building up of the Munitions Supply organisation had reached the stage that the Government Factories had developed the capacity for the production of the various types of the ordinary requirements of the Army, Navy and Air Force, and these resources were being further expanded. A survey of civil industry was also being carried out to determine the possibilities of capacity for production, and to prepare plans for mobilising its resources in an emergency.

The Government had recently arranged for the establishment of the aircraft industry on a sound basis and this would be an important adjunct to defence.

As affecting the whole field of defence, great importance was attached by the Australian Delegation to the development of co-operation in defence matters between the several parts of the British Commonwealth.

The Conference was informed that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand also attached the greatest importance to close co-operation in defence matters. The Government were anxious to make sure that expenditure on the three Services was properly balanced and laid out so as best to enable the New Zealand forces to act in the most efficient way possible not only in the local defence of their country but also in Commonwealth defence in co-operation with the forces of other countries of the Commonwealth. In this connection great importance was attached to the Singapore base.

With regard to the Union of South Africa, it was recalled that matters of principle had been discussed and agreed between the Union Minister for Defence, Mr. Pirow, and United Kingdom Ministers during the visit of Mr. Pirow to London in 1936. South African expenditure on defence had recently been greatly increased, being in the last year nearly three times as much as in 1932-33. An important feature of South African defence organisation was the preparation in peace-time of the industrial resources of the Union to meet possible military requirements in the event of war.

The Conference was informed that the Defence Forces of India are designed primarily to meet a possible attack on the North West Frontier and to cope with the ever-present problem of dealing with the tribesmen in that region, in addition to maintaining internal law and order. It was recognised that the Army in India is fully equipped for these purposes and constitutes a force which is as well prepared as any other to take the field if the occasion arises.



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The Conference took note of the measures, recently adopted by the various countries represented at the Conference, often at a heavy cost, and recognised that the increased programmes of armaments were no more than sufficient for the defence of their territories and trade and the fulfilment of such obligations as each might have assumed.

The Conference recognised the vital importance of measures to safeguard maritime communications, including routes and water-ways essential to defence and trade, and to provide naval bases and facilities for repairs and fuelling of ships.

The Conference accordingly was glad to be informed that steps have been taken with these ends in view and in particular that substantial progress has been made towards the completion of the naval base at Singapore and its defences, with the aid of the generous financial assistance received from various parts of the Empire.

With regard to land forces, the Conference observed the various duties which the Regular Forces of the United Kingdom and India have performed in protecting British interests and the frequency of the occasions on which it has been necessary to despatch reinforcements to several parts of the world.

The Conference heard with satisfaction of the important steps taken by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for the maintenance of a Home Defence Air Force of sufficient strength to afford adequate protection against attack by the strongest air force which may be at any time within striking distance of the shores of the United Kingdom. In this connection the Conference took note of the extensive preparations that are being made by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in the spheres of both active and passive defence against air invasion.

The Conference also recorded the progress made by the several Governments in creating and maintaining an adequate chain of air bases and refuelling stations along the lines of communications between the different parts of the Empire.

The Conference noted with satisfaction that in accordance with recommendations of previous Conferences a common system of organisation and training and the use of uniform manuals, patterns of arms, equipment, and stores had been adopted, as far as practicable, for the naval, military and air forces of their several countries. Each of them would thus be enabled to ensure more effectively its own security and, if it so desired, to co-operate with other countries of the Commonwealth with the least possible delay. The interchange of individual officers of the naval, military and air forces of the countries was recognised as conducing to the dissemination of the experience acquired by the officers concerned under the widely different conditions existing in various parts of the Empire.

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Defence Councils or Committees have been established in the Dominions. Considerable advantage has been taken by the Governments represented at the Conference of the facilities afforded by the Imperial Defence College in London for the education of officers in the broader aspects of strategy.

The Conference gave careful attention to the question of munitions and supplies required for defence both by the United Kingdom and other parts of the Commonwealth, and also to the question of the supply of food and feeding stuffs in time of emergency. The Conference was impressed with the value of the free interchange of detailed technical information and recommended that it should be continued between the technical officers of the Governments concerned, it being understood that any questions of policy arising in connection with any such technical exchange and discussion would be submitted to the respective Governments for decision and that each Government reserved to itself complete freedom of decision and action.

In the course of the discussions, the Conference found general agreement among its members that the security of each of their countries can be increased by co-operation in such matters as the free interchange of information concerning the state of their naval, military and air forces, the continuance of the arrangements already initiated by some of them for concerting the scale of the defences of ports, and measures for co-operation in the defence of communications and other common interests. At the same time the Conference recognised that it is the sole responsibility of the several Parliaments of the British Commonwealth to decide the nature and scope of their own defence policy.

### XI. GENERAL REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS OF EMPIRE TRADE AND ALLIED QUESTIONS

. . . It had been agreed that questions arising out of the Ottawa Agreements could best be dealt with as occasion offered in separate discussions between the individual Governments concerned and apart from the Conference, and there was accordingly no discussion on matters of detail affecting trade between the different parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations. The meeting, however, afforded a valuable opportunity for an interchange of views between the representatives of His Majesty's Governments on economic questions of general concern.

. . . In the course of the proceedings suggestions were made by the New Zealand Delegation as to possible means of ensuring the regulated expansion of production and marketing in necessary foodstuffs and other commodities.

Note was taken of a number of recent encouraging developments in the economic sphere; the Declaration of September

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1936, which the Governments of the United Kingdom, France and the United States of America made in connection with the devaluation of the franc and in particular the statement of these Governments that they "attached the greatest importance to action being taken without delay to relax progressively the present system of quotas and exchange controls with a view to their abolition"; the informal investigation which the Belgian Prime Minister had been invited by the United Kingdom and French Governments to undertake as to the possibility of securing relaxations of quotas and other obstacles to international trade; and the steps taken by the United States Government in this connection. It was hoped that every effort that would tend towards the promotion of international trade would be maintained and encouraged.

The outstanding feature of the discussion was the emphatic desire expressed by the representatives of every part of the British Commonwealth represented at the Conference that all practicable steps should be taken to secure the stimulation of international trade. It was recognised that in the last resort the prosperity of the countries of the Commonwealth depends on that of the world as a whole and that a healthy growth of international trade, accompanied by an improvement in the general standard of living, is an essential step to political appeasement.

### XII. COLONIAL AFFAIRS

[Omitted]

### XIII. WORK OF THE IMPERIAL WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

[Omitted]

### XIV. CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS

Certain constitutional questions which had been raised by His Majesty's Government in the Union of South Africa were considered by a Committee on Constitutional Questions under the Chairmanship of the Right Hon. E. LaPointe, K.C., M.P., Minister of Justice, Canada. Questions as to the Nationality of Married Women, which had been raised by His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia, were referred to the same Committee.

The Committee presented the following Report, which was adopted by the Conference :—

#### (i) *Nationality.*

The Committee considered certain questions which had been raised in regard to the relationship between the common status possessed by subjects of His Majesty and the particular status of membership of any one of the individual communities forming the British Commonwealth of Nations. . . .

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It was in no way suggested that any change should be made in the existing position regarding the common status based on the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act of the United Kingdom and the corresponding enactments in other parts of the British Commonwealth. This common status is described by the term "British subject". The term does not, of course, mean a "subject of Great Britain". It is one of long standing as denoting generally all subjects of His Majesty, to whatever part of the British Commonwealth they belong.

Attention was drawn to the fact . . . that British subjects not only have this common status but also, generally speaking, have a particular connection with one or other Member of the British Commonwealth. It was pointed out that in the absence of rules for determining the part of the Commonwealth with which any particular person has the connection just referred to, practical difficulties arise, or might arise, with regard to such matters as immigration, deportation, diplomatic action, extra-territorial legislation and treaty rights and obligations.

The suggestion was made that these difficulties could be overcome if each of the Members of the Commonwealth were to undertake to introduce legislation, as some Members have already done, defining its nationals or citizens. It was however found that some Members of the Commonwealth were not disposed to introduce such legislation. In the case of the United Kingdom in particular, it was pointed out that the wide differences existing between the large number of separate territories, legal jurisdictions and races for which the United Kingdom was responsible would render impracticable the adoption of any single classification which would be in any real sense analogous to that expressed by the terms "national" or "citizen" or "member of the community" in the case of other Members of the Commonwealth. Moreover it is the practice of the United Kingdom to make no distinction between different classes of British subjects as regards the grant of civil and political rights or the right of entry into and residence in the United Kingdom, and the paragraphs which follow must be read in the light of this position so far as the United Kingdom is concerned.

It should also be mentioned that in foreign countries where there is no separate diplomatic or consular representation of a particular Member of the Commonwealth, the diplomatic and consular representatives of His Majesty, appointed on the advice of the United Kingdom Government, are prepared to afford protection and assistance also to British subjects belonging to that Member. No change in this practice is contemplated or desired; and it may well be that the diplomatic and consular representatives appointed on the advice of the Governments of other parts of the British Commonwealth would be prepared, should occasion arise, to undertake similar duties.

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It was thought that a closer examination of the particular difficulties to which attention has been called might be of service with a view to removing points of obscurity, inconvenience or possible misunderstanding.

The questions that arise are seen most clearly in the case of a part of the Commonwealth which has defined membership of its community in terms of distinct nationality, and that was the case first considered. But it was recognised that to a greater or less extent Members of the Commonwealth, whether or not they have given legislative definition to such a concept, do distinguish for some practical purposes between British subjects in general and those British subjects whom they regard as being members of their own respective communities. . . . When, therefore, persons are described in the following paragraphs as "members of the community" of a particular Member of the Commonwealth, the phrase is intended to have a rather technical meaning, as denoting a person whom that Member of the Commonwealth has, either by legislative definition of its nationals or citizens or otherwise, decided to regard as "belonging" to it, for the purposes of civil and political rights and duties, immigration, deportation, diplomatic representation, or the exercise of extra-territorial jurisdiction.

In the light of these considerations the following are the conclusions which have been reached :—

1. It is for each Member of the British Commonwealth to decide which persons have with it that definite connection, envisaged by paragraph 73 of the Report on the Operation of Dominion Legislation, 1929, which would enable it to recognise them as members of its community. It is desirable, however, to secure as far as possible uniformity in principle in the determination by each Member of the Commonwealth, of the persons, being British subjects, to be regarded as members of its community, and to avoid, as far as possible, the inconveniences which might arise if a particular person were to belong, at the same time, to two or more Members of the British Commonwealth. These objectives could be secured upon the following basis :—

(1) Each Member of the Commonwealth would in the normal course include as members of its community :—

(a) persons who were born in, or became British subjects by naturalisation in, or as a result of the annexation of, its territory and still reside there, and

(b) persons who, coming as British subjects from other parts of the Commonwealth, have identified themselves with the community to which they have come.

As regards those mentioned under (b) it is for each Member to prescribe the conditions under which any British subject coming from

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another part of the Commonwealth will be considered to have so identified himself with the new community to which he has resorted as to become a member thereof.

(2) . . . It is recommended that any Member contemplating passing a law on the membership of its community, should submit its proposals to the other Members of the Commonwealth, so as to enable them to offer observations thereon, if they feel so inclined.

The object of this consultation would be to ensure agreement, so that other Members would not thereafter raise any objection to the consequences which would follow from the proposed action. . . .

(3) In the event of a Member desiring to pass new or amending legislation dealing with Nationality or Citizenship, it might be faced with the problem of how to deal with those British subjects not born in, but at the moment residing in, its territory. One solution of this problem would be to provide for the inclusion of all such persons, coupled with the right of those not wishing to become nationals or citizens to opt out. If our recommendation as to consultation is adopted, each Member would have an opportunity of commenting, if it so desired, on the actual proposals so far as they might affect members of its community.

2. Those Members of the Commonwealth which do not desire to proceed to a definition by legislation of the requirements for membership of their communities will consider giving effect administratively, in accepting responsibility for particular persons, to the principles contained in the foregoing paragraphs, subject, of course, to the provisions of any law which may, from time to time, be in force. They may also find it expedient to give effect to some of the implications thereof by legislation without the necessity of resorting to a definition of the members of their communities.

### (ii) *Treaty Procedure.*

As regards the nature and effect of the participation of Members of the British Commonwealth in a multilateral treaty, it was recognised :—

- (1) That each Member takes part in a multilateral treaty as an individual entity, and, in the absence of express provision in the treaty to the contrary, is in no way responsible for the obligations undertaken by any other Member; and
- (2) That the form agreed upon for such treaties at the Imperial Conference of 1926 accords with this position.

### (iii) *Nationality of Married Women.*

The Committee took note of the reference to the subject of the Nationality of Married Women contained in paragraph VI (c) of the Summary of Proceedings of the Imperial Conference of 1930. In that paragraph it was stated that all the Members of the British Commonwealth represented at the Hague Conference of 1930 signed the Nationality Convention there

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concluded. Since 1930 legislation on the lines recommended in the Hague Convention has been passed in the United Kingdom, Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, and New Zealand, and the introduction of similar legislation in the Union of South Africa is contemplated.

The Australian and New Zealand Delegations in opening the discussion called attention to the further legislation recently passed in the Commonwealth of Australia and New Zealand which does not affect the common status of British subjects but under which a woman who prior to her marriage was a British subject but ceased to be a British subject by reason of her marriage to an alien may retain within the Commonwealth of Australia or New Zealand respectively the political and other rights and liabilities of a British subject.

A full discussion took place on the various aspects of the whole question. . . .

It was not found possible to arrive at an agreement in favour of any change in the existing law. While therefore the Committee was unable to put forward any recommendations, it was assumed that the matter would be the subject of further consideration by and consultation between the respective Governments.

### XV. CIVIL AVIATION

Questions concerning civil air communications were referred to a Committee under the Chairmanship of the Hon. Sir Archdale Parkhill, K.C.M.G., M.P., Minister for Defence, Commonwealth of Australia.

The Committee discussed the prospect of establishing a British Commonwealth chain of air communications inter-connecting all parts of the Empire, and the methods of co-operation which might be adopted by Members of the British Commonwealth with this aim in view.

The Committee arranged that the proposed air services across the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean should be discussed by representatives of the Delegations concerned.

On the recommendation of the Committee, the Conference adopted the following Resolution :—

(i) Appreciating the many benefits, direct and indirect, immediate and potential, to be secured by nations possessing substantial and extensive civil aviation enterprises, the Conference is unanimous in its approval of the Members of the British Commonwealth of Nations pursuing a vigorous policy in regard to their air services, embracing expansion within each of their territories and interconnection between Members.

(ii) In order to promote arrangements whereby air lines

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of the Members of the British Commonwealth of Nations will link them together, the Conference affirms the willingness of the countries represented to co-operate with each other to the greatest possible extent.

(iii) In emphasising the importance of continued co-operation in the development of air services connecting the territories of the various Members, the Conference recognises that the most effective method of co-operation and efficient organisation can best be settled by the Governments concerned in each particular case as it arises, but any method should recognise, where desired by a Government, local control not only over services operating within its own territory but also, by agreement with the other Governments concerned, in adjacent areas in which it is particularly interested.

(iv) It is agreed that, whenever an application received by one Member for facilities for foreign air services is likely to affect another Member, there should be consultation between the respective Governments concerned before facilities are granted; and if an agreement has been reached between the Commonwealth Governments concerned as to the service to be required in return for such facilities, the Commonwealth Government to whom the foreign application has been made will use its best endeavours to secure the reciprocal facilities agreed upon.

(v) The Conference notes with approval the practice followed by Nations of the Commonwealth whereby, when operational rights are granted to a foreign air line, the concession expressly provides for reciprocal rights as and when desired; and suggests for consideration the desirability of including in such concessions a general safeguard of the right of the Government, at its option, to take over the ground organisation within its territory on suitable terms.

### XVI. SHIPPING

General questions arising in connection with shipping policy, including the work of the Imperial Shipping Committee, were referred to a Committee on Shipping Questions under the chairmanship of the Hon. Walter Nash, M.P., Minister of Finance, New Zealand.

The Committee reviewed the position regarding British shipping (by which is meant all shipping registered as British wherever the registration be effected) in relation to the needs of the several parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and realised that the maintenance of adequate British shipping is a matter of common concern to the countries of the Commonwealth.

The Committee also noted that certain forms and methods of



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discrimination have latterly been adopted by Governments outside the Commonwealth, whereby British shipping in certain areas is seriously prejudiced if not threatened with entire elimination.

The Committee recommended accordingly that the Conference should reaffirm the Declaration relative to overseas shipping of the Imperial Economic Conference of 1923,\* and that in any case in which it may be considered by the Government of one part of the British Commonwealth that undue assistance, to the serious prejudice and danger of British shipping, is being given by any Government outside the British Commonwealth, there should be an opportunity for consultation between the Government of that part of the Commonwealth whose shipping is endangered and the Government of any other part of the Commonwealth concerned, in order to determine the validity of the complaint and the best means of meeting the situation, due regard being had to the interests of the Government of that other part of the Commonwealth.

One case of difficulty, arising out of the competition of subsidised ships running across the Pacific between the United States and New Zealand and Australia is under consideration by the Governments concerned (United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) with a view to maintaining British shipping on this route. This question was referred by the Committee to a Sub-Committee representing the four Governments, which reported that its discussions had not reached finality. The matter will continue to be dealt with by the four Governments in consultation.

The Committee also noted that the Imperial Shipping Committee is at present engaged upon an investigation into the position of British shipping in Middle and Far Eastern waters, having regard to the increased competition of foreign flags.

The Committee was informed that additional statistics relating

\* The Declaration reads as follows :—

“ In view of the vital importance to the British Empire of safeguarding its overseas carrying trade against all forms of discrimination by foreign countries, whether open or disguised, the representatives of the Governments of the Empire declare—

“ (1) That it is their established practice to make no discrimination between the flags of shipping using their ports, and that they have no intention of departing from this practice as regards countries which treat ocean-going shipping, under the British flag on a footing of equality with their own national shipping.

“ (2) That in the event of danger arising in future to the overseas shipping of the Empire through an attempt by a foreign country to discriminate against the British flag, the Governments of the Empire will consult together as to the best means of meeting the situation.”

## THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE

to shipping are now being compiled in the United Kingdom, and each of the Governments represented on the Committee expressed willingness in principle to arrange for the provision of similar statistics in respect of their import and export trade.

The Conference approved the Report of the Committee, and, on the recommendation of the Committee, adopted the following resolution with regard to the work of the Imperial Shipping Committee :—

(3) The Conference is of opinion—

(a) that it is desirable that the Committee should be continued on the present basis, following the general lines proposed by the Imperial Committee on Economic Consultation and Co-operation in 1933, and deriving authority from, and being responsible to, the Governments represented at the Imperial Conference. The Conference would welcome the addition of a representative of Burma to the Committee;

(b) that a sum of £2,000 per annum should continue to be provided for the work of the Committee. . . .

### XVII. COMMITTEE ON CERTAIN ECONOMIC QUESTIONS

Questions relating to the work of the Imperial Economic Committee and a proposal for the establishment of an Empire Agricultural Council were referred to a Committee on Economic Questions under the Chairmanship of the Hon. N. C. Havenga, M.P., Minister of Finance, Union of South Africa.

#### (i) *Questions Relating to the Work of the Imperial Economic Committee.*

On the Committee's recommendation, the Conference adopted the following resolution :—

. . . The Conference approves the continuance of the Imperial Economic Committee as at present constituted and would welcome a representative of Burma on the Committee.

The Conference approves . . . that the annual fund of the Committee . . . to which the several Governments subscribe, should be £22,000 [*in place of* £20,000]. . . .

#### (ii) *Proposal for the Establishment of an Empire Agricultural Council.*

The proposal by His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia for the establishment of an Empire Agricultural Council was considered and fully discussed. . . .

It was agreed that the Governments of the Empire should aim at the greatest possible measure of co-operation in the examination of problems of common concern. Doubt was expressed, however, by certain representatives whether many of the problems were of a kind which could be best dealt with

## APPENDIX

by an organisation such as that proposed. Furthermore, before deciding to set up any new advisory or consultative body, it should be clear that it would not duplicate work which is within the scope of the already existing Inter-Imperial agencies. The constitution of the Imperial Economic Committee, whose terms of reference have been revised by the resolutions of successive Imperial Conferences, seemed, it was considered, to be well qualified to meet most of the functions proposed for the Agricultural Council. Moreover, co-operation in the interchange of information concerning agricultural research is provided by the Imperial Agricultural Bureaux.

The opinion was also expressed that where the need arose for a common consideration of subjects of importance to different Empire countries, which could not be met by existing agencies, the best course would be to appoint *ad hoc* bodies for the purpose.

For these reasons, the Committee, while appreciating the motives which inspired the Australian proposal, considered that the establishment of an Empire Agricultural Council is not called for, and recommended accordingly.

The Conference took note of this conclusion.

### XVIII to XXI

*[These sections refer to the New Hebrides, Polar questions, the concluding resolutions, and the final Address to His Majesty the King-Emperor.]*