

suggested in the press—I do not know whether the Prime Minister himself would suggest it—that the result of the deliberations of the latest Imperial conference is to proclaim a new Magna Charta for the British Empire, but I think the circumstances under which the original Magna Charta was granted were so entirely different that the use of the term tends to a complete misunderstanding of the atmosphere of the recent conference. The Magna Charta of King John was a demand for the head of the sovereign, unless the concessions demanded should be made. There has been no strife between these dominions and the British Crown or the British government; they have ungrudgingly and graciously acceded from year to year to almost every suggestion made by the representatives of the dominions. For several years, however, two divergent tendencies have been manifest in the direction and control of our relations with foreign states, that is, the direction and control of the relations of this dominion in reference to foreign states. Gradually in commercial negotiations, beginning as far back as when Sir John A. Macdonald represented Canada at the Washington treaty; later when Sir Charles Tupper represented Canada at Washington in the negotiation of the Fisheries treaty, and more recently when Mr. Fielding represented Canada in the negotiation of the commercial treaty with France, we have requested and have been granted the authority to deal in commercial matters and with respect to commercial treaties with all foreign states. But in respect of foreign policy there is still a marked divergence. Claims hitherto made to consultation in matters of common interest have asserted for the Dominion a measure of equality, but only a measure of equality with respect to Great Britain; and such consultation, which is largely dependent upon continued good will can certainly be promoted, to a very large extent, by careful and timely extension or development of the existing machinery of what I may call well-lubricated intercourse and communication. As to this there have been really no wide differences of opinion between the successive governments of Canada and the government of Great Britain. But dominion claims to independent action in foreign affairs imply a demand for equality of status with independent foreign states. That concession is not one for Great Britain to make, and it is one which up to this time no foreign state has ever made. I do not need to go into the particulars but even France, and more recently the United States, have shown very great reluctance indeed to concede to us, as

a dominion, equality of status in dealing with them as independent foreign states. The implications of this tendency of the dominions to assert independent political action were recognized in Lord Ripon's despatch of 1895, when he was Secretary of State for the Colonies. He then stated the implications which I think continue down to this day. He said:

A foreign power, can only be approached through Her Majesty's representative, and any agreement entered into with it, affecting any part of Her Majesty's dominions, is an agreement between Her Majesty and the sovereign of the foreign state, and it is through Her Majesty's government that the foreign state would apply, in case of any question arising under it.

To give to the colonies the power of negotiating treaties for themselves without reference to Her Majesty's government would be to give them an international status as separate and sovereign states, and would be equivalent to breaking up the empire into a number of independent states.

I am reading from the Parliamentary Papers of 1895, C. 7824. And again, particularly in the London conferences of 1907 and 1911, the view has been emphatically expressed by many representatives of the dominions, as well as by representatives of the British government, that the empire must be one from the point of view of its political treaty relations with all foreign states. We all remember Mr. Balfour's dictum, I think it was at the conference in 1911, that Great Britain could not share with the dominions the direction and control of foreign policy; and even to-day Great Britain, with her far-flung empire—dealing if you will and restricting the application of your words to her possessions, her colonies, outside of the dominions—touches a foreign state at every point of the seven seas, and she must have and exercise a large power of direction and control in dealing with all foreign countries whose interests are adverse to hers or to the empire of which she forms a part.

The imperial resolutions of 1923, which were submitted by the Prime Minister to this House for confirmation, contemplated two types of international agreement in some of which only one part and in others more than one part of the empire is concerned, and the procedure in detail was prescribed for the negotiation of these two types of treaties. That procedure was formally ratified by this House. But it is significant, I think, of the incompleteness of the work of successive Imperial conferences that the conference of 1926 has, in my opinion, apparently modified