

which seems to haunt the minds of hon. gentlemen opposite. They seem to think there is going to be some mysterious attack upon Canada's autonomy. I would not have mentioned it but there was a certain ambiguous phrase in the speech of the Prime Minister that might have seemed to warrant the suspicion. Why, Sir, as long as men have lived there has been a certain school of thought which has believed in the principle of centralization. They have thought it was possible for empires to be ruled from a common centre—some legislative body whose laws would regulate the whole empire.

There are in Great Britain and throughout the Empire a great many men of that way of thinking. I do not disparage them; they are entitled to their views. They meet over there in England, those British and Dominion statesmen, and they have their good dinners; and if you happen to have any experience in this respect, Mr. Speaker, you will know that there is nothing more inspiring and exhilarating than good English dinners with all their wonderful ramifications. Then they worry very much about increasing the bonds of Empire and say that we are drifting, and generally speaking the old ship is going on the rocks. Now, Sir, I want to say that so far as I am concerned I do not worry at all about the bonds of Empire. The bonds of Empire are strong enough to suit me. They were strong enough in 1914 to make this young nation rise in her strength and chivalry and go forth and challenge the finest troops of Europe upon the great battlefields of Flanders. The bonds of Empire were strong enough on that fateful morning when the great assault was made upon the left of the Ypres salient, and when the enemy made use of that unknown and mysterious weapon of war, gas. The bonds of Empire made our valiant men face that onslaught with nothing to save them, not even the little strip of cloth we used to have a short time afterwards to shield the mouth. The bonds of Empire through this whole war were strong enough, Sir, to make our troops go through all those great actions, a young and untried army meeting—whom? They were meeting the finest troops in Europe under the greatest generals of the age, and the bonds of Empire, I repeat, were strong enough to make them go through and in every case defeat the enemy, driving them as chaff before the wind. The bonds of Empire were strong enough to make the people at home unite to the utmost of their resources in this great

[Mr. Peck.]

war. Therefore, so far as those bonds are concerned, I am very well satisfied with them, as is the hon. gentleman opposite. And if this mysterious attack should be made to deprive us of our autonomy, I should be very proud to fight side by side with the hon. gentleman. But, Sir, the real bonds of Empire are those bonds that exist in the hearts of free men; they are the bonds that bind a free people together. They are the bonds that bind us to that Mother Country as a great free democracy; and so we are bound to fight for and with her in all the great struggles of liberty. There is no statute that can increase these bonds of Empires, and there is no law that can diminish them.

I shall say this in closing—I mean to eliminate certain parts of what I intended to say: I cannot conceive the spirit of a man who can enter into this holy enterprise without a feeling of joyous enthusiasm. I cannot understand how party prejudice can blind a man to the fact that in taking part in this great business he is involved, no matter in how humble a way, in the greatest and most significant event that has occurred in the world since Christ was born. Why, Sir? What does it mean this signing of this Treaty of Peace, and the approval of the League of Nations? It signifies a stupendous degree of goodness that almost staggers the imagination. It means that our own young country seals its great sacrifice on the field by consecrating its future to the preservation of those ideals for which it went forth to war. It means that our great and prosperous and beloved Empire regains its prestige and influence in the affairs of the world and can pursue its destiny as a leader of democracy and of commercial expansion. It means that the freedom and independence of the people of Belgium have been restored and guaranteed. It means that great France, lying for half a century in hourly dread of the iron heel of a ruthless invader, is now free to develop her great national wealth and power and to pursue the destiny which is hers in the arts and sciences by the nature of her country and the temperament of her people. It means that the lost provinces of Italy have been restored and the purposes of Garibaldi have been accomplished. It means that the Balkan nations will be a great independent influence in European affairs. It means that the century-old struggle of the Serbians, Croats and Slovaks and Hungarians for nationhood has reached its goal. It means that Poland, which much longer than a century ago was cruelly cut