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May 27, 1936.

THE CORONATION OATH - SOUTH AFRICAN PROPOSAL

B-102-2

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1. In his despatch of April 8, 1936, the Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs of South Africa proposes a new Coronation Oath and ceremonial for the Coronation of King Edward VIII, and gives the terms of a Bill to be passed by the South African Parliament.
2. Mr. Hertzog points out that the King's Oath to govern according to law reveals, in a few simple words, the foundation of our structure of democratic government. In law and in fact the Coronation Oath and ceremonial heretofore used take account merely of the realm of the United Kingdom. This is the only autonomous community expressly mentioned in the Oath; the Parliament mentioned in the Oath is the Parliament of the United Kingdom; if the Dominions were affected at all it would be as "dominions" of the United Kingdom, i.e., territories subordinate to the realm of that Kingdom. At this date the other "fully autonomous communities which are now the equals of the community of the United Kingdom" could not reasonably be expected to take part in a ceremony in which they could do so only as subordinates and not as equals of the United Kingdom. The South African Government, considering that the time has arrived to give the coronation ceremony a form and character comprehending all these communities and not merely one of them, so that all could attend and participate without loss of dignity or status, contemplate passing an Act to establish a Coronation Oath for South Africa.

Existing Form of Oath

3. The existing statutory form of the Oath is prescribed by the Act of 1688, 1 Will. & Mar. c.6, s.3, a copy of which is appended hereto. Certain alterations

W.L.M. King Papers, Memoranda and Notes, 1933-1939  
(M.G. 26, J 4, volume 169, pages C120194-C120809)

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