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No British Party Would Withhold Dominion's Liberty

Right Hon. Arthur Meighen Scores Those Who Would Continually Battle with Downing Street to Preserve Autonomy — "That Is Bursting Through an Open Door," Declares Former Canadian Premier, in an Address to Calgary Kiwanis Club on Tuesday—The Attitude of British People Leaves Canada's Destiny Untrammelled.

"I resent the attitude of a small section of the press and others that we must be continually battling with Downing Street to preserve our autonomy intact; that eternal vigilance is the price of our liberty—that is bursting through an open door, for the hand of no British party—Liberal or Conservative—would withhold it from us."

"The attitude of the British people is that the destiny of the Dominion is to be declared and directed by the Dominion alone."

These sentences by Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen, addressing the noon luncheon Tuesday of the Kiwanis Club when the attendance taxed the capacity of the Palliser dining room, epitomized a scholarly address given by the former premier on the subject of "Canada's Relationship to Great Britain and Her Position in the Commonwealth of Nations Known as the British Empire."

Given Ovation

Mr. Meighen received an ovation from the big audience. President E. T. Christchley, of the Kiwanis Club, acted as chairman, and Hon. R. B. Bennett, K.C., introduced the leader of the Conservative opposition in remarks highly laudatory of the former premier's intellectual capacity.

Some other points made by Mr. Meighen in his remarks covered the following ground:

Has Equal Freedom

That while Australia may apparently have more direct autonomy in the power of amending its constitution, Canada has equal freedom since maintenance of the British privy council as Canada's last court of appeal is for the Canadian people themselves to decide.

That along with the doctrine of human rights so freely preached by demagogues goes the doctrine of human duty never heard from their mouths; and that Canada's privileges in the British commonwealth should be coincident with Canada's duties.

Empire Defense

That Canada's duties in the matter of Empire defense are not necessarily co-equal with all other parts of the Empire for "every nation is entitled to the security of its geographical position."

That, whereas, the per capita tax for Empire defense in Great Britain is \$20 on 43 millions of population, we in Canada are called on to pay only \$1.50 per capita for our 3,500,000 population; but Canada's special geographical position is the same as that of the United States which taxes its people \$14 per capita on a population of 114,000,000.

"I merely give these figures," said Mr. Meighen, "to show what Canada's position would be were she not a member of the British Empire."

"Those who talk about pressure being put upon us to drag us into the Moloch of war," added the former premier amid salvos of applause, "know in the back of their own minds that their security, that the very freedom with which they can say these things, are because of the ring of the British navy right around us."

The concluding portion of Mr. Meighen's address was devoted to the argument that Canada must take her share in directing the policy of the Empire toward world peace and away from error. There was one school of thought which urged that Canada had not had the experience of Britain in world politics and would

illustration of what Canada's voice could accomplish, he cited the Canadian arguments which won British statesmanship to the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese pact. This had been done because Canada, recognizing that the cornerstones of world peace were friendship between Great Britain and France and Great Britain and the United States, realized what British opinion could not—that the Anglo-Japanese pact was a source of irritation to United States public opinion.

The last salient point made by Mr. Meighen was a warning against any conference intended to set down in black and white, in pen and ink, definite constitutional relations between Britain and Canada. In this stand, he said, he had been opposed even by Sir Robert Borden, to whose statesmanship he paid a tribute. But, personally, Mr. Meighen was against such constitutional conferences for he felt that no good would come from them; that in the matter of future growth of relations, Canada should adopt the same methods as the past, those of gradual devolution without the writing down of definite relations as had been done by our American cousins. Any attempt to reduce them to writing would be a great mistake.

His peroration was a tribute to Great Britain as the nation which stood for law in the after-war chaos. "Her example called the world back to the old standards," declared Mr. Meighen. "The debtor always pays, the creditor who always waits, generous to a conquered foe yet loyal to her allies and the first to realize that a permanent structure of world commerce could only rest on a world of solvent nations, the first to see that the hundred million of her enemies must be rescued from the slough of despond to lead Europe to the dawn of better days."

Relations Within Empire

"I want to deal with a question," said Mr. Meighen, "which is at present agitating the public press in relation to the history of and the present relations of Great Britain to its commonwealth of nations known as the British Empire. I have no new doctrine to present, for I know that the great mass of the people stand on common ground as to our rights and duties, and there are only a relatively few who occupy any extreme ground, either to the right or the left. Only a few long for separation, and only a few can be classed

as aggressive imperialists. Because of that great mass on the common ground, I want to explore it, the ground of the duties which appertain to empire duties and relations. There was much to be achieved for Canadian rights and much to be fought for before we got from the motherland rights which could not be denied.

"It is true there was some reluctance in granting these rights, but this was so readily overcome, and full autonomy so readily obtained, for Great Britain has built herself on the basis of autonomous government. The business unit has been the same, and so in the world of nations there is much to be gained by the ever increasing greatness of the unit power."

Rights of Autonomy

"Our Empire has been to the fore in granting and conceding the rights of autonomy to those within her fold, the right to define the part to be played in Empire effort. So it is not unnatural that its granting should be consistent with the peace of the world, and we admire the wisdom of Great Britain in conceding this."

"I have oftentimes resented the attitude by some sections of the press," continued Mr. Meighen, "that we must be continually battling with Downing Street for autonomy, and that we must be reading into every message something of antagonism. This is bursting through an open door. That hand across the seas withholds nothing. The hand of force has never been raised, for the destiny of the Dominion is directed by the people alone."

"The substance of this autonomous power goes back over a quarter of a century, and is now a matter of fully developed maturity. Canada decides what she does and what she takes part in, Canada's honor and Canada's interests are all in the light of the one great fundamental idea, the safety of the British Empire. I know of no party which disputes that, and we should not be looking for any cause for friction with Great Britain."

"We have no power to change our constitution, for that is done through the British parliament. But the process of change is merely indicative of the unity of the British Empire. The court of the last resort is not imposed on us, but it has been decided by Canada that these links had better be preserved, and the ultimate ends of justice better preserved in this way. Canada can do as it likes, but the responsibility will rest with us."

Two Principles

Mr. Meighen said that there are two principles on which the common interests of the Empire are preserved, each to perform its duties and each to preserve its rights. Any partnership is and must be based on those two principles. The demagogue talks about his rights, but he generally forgets his duties. There is a danger in the neglect of right that there is denial of responsibility. We are all entitled to the privileges of our geographical rights, but we still stand pledged to the British Empire, and when the barrier breaks down we have a part to play.

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