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IMPERIAL RELATIONS.

There should be wide acceptance of the ideas set out before a non-party audience at Quebec on Saturday by Mr. Meighen, when he spoke of the relations towards each other of the different parts of the British Empire. There has been much that was not well-considered said on the subject in this country. Some have spoken as if there were a continuous struggle going on between the mother country and the colony, the one to impose its wishes on the other, and the other ever watchful lest it should lose some of its powers of self-control. There is no such state of affairs. The British Government, no matter what the politics of its members, is careful in all that it does concerning Canada to be informed beforehand of this country's views as these are understood by the Cabinet at Ottawa. There is no occasion for a Canadian minister going about, like a bellicose schoolboy with a chip on his shoulder, proclaiming his championship of Canada's rights, and forgetting that with rights there go, as a matter of course, equivalent duties. And there is no need for changing the medium of communication between the British and colonial governments from the Colonial to the Foreign Office, an action that, if taken, if it had any meaning, would imply that Canada was a foreign and not a British country. The Opposition leader put it that the principle of local autonomy had grown until it became the chief cornerstone of the Empire structure. It is recognized as necessary to the Empire's development and security. The cornerstone, important as it may be, is only a part of the structure in which it has its place. The structure as a whole must be protected, and consistent with individual honor and with the least burden on the people, each part must bear a share of the defence. The countries may all desire peace, and certainly this country does; but the world may not be altered in a day or a decade by a general desire; and certain measures for defence are fundamental conditions of existence. This brings the natural conclusion that "having established and having recognized, without question or hesitation, the full right of Canada to decide what Canadians should do, to decide whether Canada moves or does not move, there must nevertheless pervade the Canadian people the conviction that we cannot be members of the Empire without responsibilities, we cannot enjoy rights without the entailment of duties, and we must have some responsibility in the nature of defence." This does not mean that, as in some European countries is yet thought to be the case, the army must be considered before any other public service and provided for. Canada does not need defensive works along her frontiers now any more than it has done for a hundred years. It does mean that members of one family or commonwealth are vitally concerned in the integrity of the whole and that weakness in or disaster to any one reacts on all.

The relations to each other of the different sections of the Empire were also reviewed. At the Imperial Conference in London in 1917 a resolution was adopted which deplored the fact that these relationships were vague, and leaving to another conference the task of dealing with the constitutional position of the Dominions. This conference has not been held

and is not likely to be held for some time. If it is never held, nothing need be lost. Mr. Meighen intimated that his feeling was against any hard and fast definition of the relations of the Empire parts to each other. He would deal with matters from time to time as they arose. This policy has been tried. In the war, without any definition of relations, or responsibilities, or duties, all sections of the Empire acted with one accord. Each did what it could for the common welfare. What was the case when the great issue called for decision and action may be relied upon to settle minor questions when they come up. It is well that this should be remembered when over-zealous partizans suggest changes, the result of which, if resolved upon, no one could foresee.

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