

constitutional status of the different nations of the Empire. It is not a question of conflict of opinion or authority. All are agreed that the status is one of equality, that we are nations all equal in status, though not of equal power, under a common sovereign, and bound together by interest and sentiment, by ties which, though light as air, are strong as iron in binding together this League of Nations which we call the British Empire or the Britannic Commonwealth.

It goes without saying that there must be some constitutional readjustments in order to put into more practical and workable form the new situation that has developed, and it was in order that that might be done that provision was made in the year 1917 for the calling of a special Imperial Conference. When that conference is held—we do not know yet when it will be called—these questions must come up for consideration, and the representatives of Canada and the other dominions will attend, not as representatives of inferior or dependent nations, but as representatives of nations which by unanimous agreement are equal in status with the Mother Country. Canada's representatives will attend the conference, not for the purpose of creating any new Imperial organization, but for the purpose of developing a system of consultation and co-operation which will absolutely preserve the autonomy of the dominions, and at the same time enable matters in which the dominions are vitally concerned to receive that attention and consideration by the dominions which, under the existing system, it is not possible to give them. I am sure all citizens of Canada desire to see this result secured.

What are the alternatives we must face if our position in the League could be successfully challenged? We may go back into the old colonial position where the Mother Country would deal with all matters of foreign policy and settle for us the issues of peace and war, matters in which we are vitally interested. That, to my mind, is unthinkable. It is incredible that a young nation like Canada, with the achievements of this war to her credit and with the future opening before her, will ever consent to occupy a dependent position with reference to any country.

Then, Mr. Speaker, what is the other alternative? If we cannot stand on an equality within the Empire, the other alternative is Canadian independence. I say—and in this I voice the sentiment of the Government—that we stand unhesitatingly and un-

equivocally for the maintenance of the British connection.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Why does my hon. friend limit that position to the Government? Why not say this Parliament?

Mr. ROWELL: I believe that is the position of this Parliament; I did not wish to convey any inference that any one differed. If we do not proceed along the line of equality of status and co-operation under a common sovereign, I submit that there are just two alternatives: Either dependency, with Great Britain controlling our foreign policy and the issues of peace or war, or independence, and we will not accept either alternative. If the reservation I have read, or anything similar in character, should be adopted finally by the Senate and approved by the President, and if it is stipulated as a condition of the ratification going into effect, that all the Allied Powers, parties to the Treaty, shall give their consent, and Canada gives her consent, she is relegated back into a colonial position and has not a voice and a vote among the nations of the world. That position is unthinkable; and we must, if we are to preserve our position and status and the unity of the British Empire, maintain our place in the family of nations.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Does the hon. member say that any action of the United States could alter the status of this country in the League of Nations?

Mr. ROWELL: Not unless we consent. If they submit as a condition of their ratification going into effect that we must consent, then the Government will not consent. In the exercise of our sovereign right to control our own affairs, we will not give our consent; hence the importance of Parliament standing behind the Government of Canada on this issue. Desiring, as we do, that there should be no misunderstanding, we thought the best way to avoid misunderstanding was to make our position clear, and this we have done to the proper authorities.

Mr. CANNON: Suppose Great Britain should accept these reservations, what would be our position?

Mr. ROWELL: I do not believe Great Britain would accept these reservations as against Canada's protest.

Mr. CANNON: But supposing she did?

Mr. ROWELL: If Great Britain did and Canada dissented, as she would do, by filing her dissent, the ratification could not go into effect, because it would not be assented to by all the Allied and Associated Powers.