

The war settled one thing at the very outset. The Germans knew all about the British empire. They were a practical people, a hard-headed people who believed nothing that they could not measure and handle, and they regarded the British empire as a political anachronism, a hoary imposture. Here was a supposed empire yet there was no Emperor hailing at the colonies and no colonies goose-stepping in awe before the All-Highest (applause). It was quite obvious to them that at the slightest touch of the mailed fist, the whole empire would dissolve. So they applied the mailed fist. We are here from all parts of the empire, and we all tell the same story of what happened on August 4th, 1914 (applause). We saw all these invisible and intangible ties become bonds of steel and adamant, that held us one and indivisible through the unimaginable strain of the great war. There was never any flinching throughout the great struggle. The war is over not quite two years; and already the lessons of Gallipoli and Flanders are growing dim to some. Because the bonds that bind can no longer be visualized as marching armies there are those who are actually worrying lest the peoples of the empire may drift apart.

As the war proceeded statesmen of the empire met from time to time and made decisions that were regarded as decisions of great moment, affecting the imperial policy and the future of the British Commonwealth. But what they did was to meet and take cognizance of decisions that had already been made by events. In this class we might put the resolution of the imperial war cabinet in April, 1917, which will always be regarded as a great landmark in the constitutional development of the British empire. The meaning of the resolution is perfectly plain. But if there was any doubt about it, General Smuts who, I imagine, was the joint drafter of the resolution, though it was moved at the conference by Sir Robert Borden, made its meaning clear; yet it was accepted with complete unanimity. In the following year