

What was the whole theory of sanctions? The whole theory of sanctions as expressed in the covenant of the League of Nations was that an offender should have the world massed against him. And he could not withstand it; certainly he could not withstand it. With all the might and power of Great Britain, the United States, France and Italy—Germany was not then in, but came in later—with all the power of these nations massed against the wrong-doer, who could stand against it? It was an application of something that is the basis of all our law. We talk about our liberties. They are grounded, our freedom is grounded, in respect for law and order and the orderly administration of the law of the country; and the law of the country depends upon an enlightened public opinion providing sanctions for violation of provisions made by the people themselves. Whether they make them in parliament or whether they are the growth of common law matters not. There you have on the one hand the great body of common law, which includes part of the criminal law of England, and on the other hand you have statute law as embodied in criminal codes; and behind it we have an enlightened and powerful public opinion. That public opinion provides the sanction that enforces the penalties for breaches of the law.

When this covenant of the League of Nations was prepared, when the nations of the world met together and agreed unanimously what action should be taken against nations who violated the provisions, then the sanctions provided by the covenant of the league were all-powerful—the massed power of the world, the massed public opinion of the world. The power of a world demanding peace, a world weary of war, shocked beyond expression at the results of war, the destruction of millions of men and of billions of treasure—all this found expression in that enlightened and ennobled public opinion that was embodied in the covenant of the League of Nations. I think therefore, without going into the matter in detail, that one might say that the likelihood of Canada being involved in warlike activities by reason of our relationship with the League of Nations is very remote. In fact, it is so remote as to be almost improbable. But we come to what is after all the vital point in the foreign policy of this country. We are part of the British Empire, and that relationship involves responsibilities. I wonder whether we have clearly appreciated what the responsibilities are that we have accepted. They were not imposed upon us. They were of our own seeking. We settled them in 1926. The long

[Mr. Bennett.]

process of evolution, the long years of effort, the resentment against what we regarded as subordination, the desire for equality of status, the desire for self-expression; all these, coupled with our magnificent achievements during the great war—the achievements not of Canadians alone but also of the thousands of Australians who crossed leagues of sea; of the New Zealanders; of the great Botha and Smuts, in crushing not only a rebellion at home but the German power in southwest Africa, the first victorious campaign of all the war—all these united to induce the representatives of the dominions in conference to suggest that the time had come when we should endeavour by some form of words to define our relations one to another. You will recall, sir, it was suggested that after the war there should be a great empire constitutional conference. But conditions in South Africa hastened the search for a solution. I have no doubt that the Prime Minister has been told by General Hertzog, as I have, that but for the settlement of 1926 he believed that civil war would have been inevitable in South Africa. I think that view was also held by General Smuts.

When the imperial conference was held in 1926, attended on behalf of this dominion by the right hon. the present Prime Minister and others, an effort was made to formulate an expression of the position and mutual relations of the various parts of the British Empire. If, sir, you ask me what the foreign policy of this country is, I say that is found in the declaration of 1926. I listened this afternoon to the Prime Minister reading a portion—and a portion only—of that declaration. I now propose to read it in its entirety. In the report which was made by the committee presided over by the late Earl of Balfour, the second section deals with the status of Great Britain and the dominions. It proceeds:

The committee are of opinion that nothing would be gained by attempting to lay down a constitution for the British empire. Its widely scattered parts have very different characteristics, very different histories, and are at very different stages of evolution; while, considered as a whole, it defies classification and bears no real resemblance to any other political organization which now exists or has ever yet been tried.

There is, however, one most important element in it which, from a strictly constitutional point of view, has now, as regards all vital matters, reached its full development—we refer to the group of self-governing communities composed of Great Britain and the dominions.

I interpose there to point out that the words are “composed of Great Britain and the dominions,” placing Great Britain and the dominions upon a parity.