

and to enhance the sense of unity founded on a great history and a common tradition.

No doubt there is an undercurrent of change in the air. It is not our interest to oppose it, nor in our temperament to unduly hasten it. And it would be a pity if this association should be misinterpreted or misjudged by any individual expression, however legitimate and however Canadian they may be.

NOT REVOLUTION BUT EVOLUTION

It is no wonder that there should be discussion and difference of opinion in regard to our status. Because that constitutional situation is unparalleled in history. History and historians have to leave specious theories and rhetorical phrases to one side and look at facts as they are. The preamble of the British North America Act is that "Canada is a Dominion under the Crown of the United Kingdom." But the peace, order and good government of Canada is left and confided to ourselves. It is our affair.

Our evolution may be divided from that time into two or three parts; First, let us say, from 1867 till 1896, when Canadian legislation was really liable to imperial disallowance. But these many curtailments on self-government were gradually growing less. At the advent of the Laurier regime the shackles on the management of our domestic affairs, whatever they were intended to be, had been removed. We began to speak with more assurance. Imperial officers, who were still in command of the armed forces, were now called down boldly by Federal Ministers, and even displaced.

The next period of our evolution, I would say, was that from 1914 till today. The Governor General had been given at Confederation a long list of enumerated subjects which he might reserve for Home advice, although these were of purely Canadian interest. That was irksome and dangerous.

Today he has no such initiative. Like the King whom he represents, he must act on the advice of his responsible Cabinet Ministers. And such are his instructions.

Gradually we claimed, and have obtained, the right to negotiate our own commercial treaties. The plan was also adopted of inserting a clause in British treaties giving Canada the right to adhere to them or to refuse adhesion.

So to avoid confusion, Imperial and Dominion representatives in treaties affecting Canada, now negotiate these treaties together and so sign.

The recent Treaty made by Mr. Lapointe without the British Ambassador is the first of its kind. It raised some controversy. And in the Imperial House the attitude of some members seemed to be that since we had preferred to make it alone we might be left alone in the case of its infractions or in the matter of its enforcement.

A GREAT ADVANCE

The position now is contrary to what obtained in the Victorian era. It is that Canada is not bound by any commercial treaty to which its consent has not been given. It is also provided that the interests of the Empire at large must not be sacrificed, and that Canada must extend to the rest of the Empire any favours or concessions granted to any Foreign Power. In practice, as we all know, Canada by the preference does more than that, and does it of her own free will.

Although all the secrets of imperial defence are said to be disclosed to our ministers, there is no demand ever made on us for men or money. Our autonomy is carefully respected. True, we are at war when Britain is at war. But only because we are then open to attack by the enemy. We are at war for our own defence.

A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: THE "EMPIRE"

It was the Imperial War Conference of 1917 that first laid it down clearly that the great Dominions were self-governing nations entitled to continuous consultation in foreign affairs. The English premier was only to be *primus inter pares*; and

we are declared to be Britain's constitutional equal, with full autonomy and complete self-government. We are no longer to carry on our diplomatic correspondence through the Colonial Office, but to deal directly on equal terms, with the Prime Minister of Britain, as another nation might. That was so decided. But that is merely a decision that regards ourselves, and has only the force of an inter-Empire precedent. Foreign powers would be free to recognize us or not, as they might see fit.

In fact it was at the Peace Conference that the "British Empire" appeared for the first time under that name. The Imperial Government consulted with Canada in its proposals there though probably not in all conclusions. We had no separate vote from the Empire there at that conference.

It is true, however, that we are a full member of that vague and expensive thing called the League of Nations, to which each of us may attribute whatever insignificance we wish without any liability to a charge of high treason.

Its usefulness is exaggerated. Its uselessness will only be apparent, like that of some other Wilsonian vagaries, the moment it attempts to intervene in the world's affairs or to enforce one of its own decisions.

BONDS OF EMPIRE—SOVEREIGNTY

Now what are really the bonds of an Empire like ours? Moral values, emotion and sentiments play as large a part as hard legal and constitutional bonds in our union with the Empire. But our own national status or distinct national life is now undoubtedly recognized.

Canadian opinion is valued and considered. If our voice is not yet very effective in foreign affairs or in the life of the Empire, that abstention is not altogether the fault of the Mother Country. The coming conference may develop methods by which the responsibility for that abstention may hereafter be our own. However, there is no use disguising the fact:—at present there is only one Sovereign State. There is only one Empire.

There is no use, by specious phraseology, trying to escape the implication of fact. As the law of nations now stands, Canada is not a Sovereign State. We have no recognized international status. No matter how very slight the tie that limits her freedom within the Empire, the tie, or the limit, is there.

Canada has governmental autonomy. But the Imperial tie limits her power to certain boundaries, so far as third parties or powers are concerned. But the gates are not closed to further developments. And our aspirations for greater powers, the discussion of which arouses so much resentment among some Canadians, gives no shock, no surprise, no offence whatever to public men or public opinion in Britain itself. They are broader minds there, and better "sports" in that respect, than some native sons of our own—of course, outside of this society.

THE REMEDY:—OUR DESTINY AND OUR DUTY

Now what should be done to equalise and regularise the situation? I have not time here to submit my theory, even if that was important or useful. For the present, I reserve my rights, and leave every man to his opinion.

In the steady evolution of Imperial and Canadian relations, we may rest assured that a way will be found, a *modus vivendi*, by which joint interests shall always be conserved by joint action, and joint signatures required always hereafter to bind the whole; where the whole is concerned, unless in cases where the Dominions delegate their powers.

What have we to do? We do not look nor wish for Canada nor the Empire any greater extension of this vast Dominion. The time has passed for that. The problem of the future is development and organisation—not violent or radical changes in constitutional forms, which are fairly satisfactory, and are not the causes of our present discontent. What