

business of small groups of men who often plotted even against each other without the knowledge of the citizens of those countries and, aye, sometimes without even the members of the Parliaments of the countries which they represented knowing anything about the matter. Let me give just one striking example. We learn after this war is over—indeed I think we learned while the war was on—that the action of Great Britain which made it inevitably necessary for her to join France—and I do not say for one moment that Great Britain should not have joined France—was the result of a decision taken by three or four members of the British Cabinet without the other members of the Cabinet knowing anything about it. I think that is wrong and it is one of the things that have led to this awful war.

I am pleased again that this Treaty is submitted to this Parliament because it constitutes an evidence of our nationhood and I for one want my country to be a nation. There have been those who have been at pains to show that we are not a nation. May I be allowed to crave the indulgence of the House even at this late hour to bring some evidence before it as to our status of nationhood? Let me say this, because it should be first said: There are those who say that we have a written constitution, that a written constitution is not capable of being developed by growth and that, being a written document, it can only be changed by another written document I cannot agree. I appeal to the history of my country for confirmation of what I say. As late as 1905 the Canadian Government asked the British Government for permission to negotiate certain treaties either about trade matters or copyright—I forget which. That permission was refused, but a very few years after permission to treat on such subjects was granted. There was a distinct advance along the path of nationhood without any written change in our constitution. As evidence of my pretension, let me first call as a witness Lord Milner who is not renowned as being an autonomist and may be, is rather regarded as belonging to those gentlemen mentioned by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Peck) who after fine dinners, lament the fact that the bonds of Empire are not closer than they are. Lord Milner says:

The only possibility of a continuance of the British Empire is on a basis of absolute out-and-out equal partnership between the United Kingdom and the Dominions. I say that without any kind of reservation whatsoever.

[Mr. McMaster.]

I next call Colonel Amery, a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies:

We have got to decentralize our conception of Empire—

Oh, how true it was what the hon. member for Skeena said that in all the history of mankind there have been men who liked the idea of power being centralized in one place and then radiating out, I think we might say, like the spokes of a wheel, to different parts of the world. Every Empire founded on that principle has gone down, because it is opposed to the instincts of freemen who, although living far removed perhaps from the original home of their race, wish to enjoy in the outlying marches of the world the same rights, the same privileges, the same powers, the same liberties as their cousins who stayed at home. Colonel Amery says:

We have got to decentralize our conception of Empire and realize that every member of the British Commonwealth is equal in status to every other, and, from its own point of view, the centre of the whole.

Mr. Lloyd George addressing a South African deputation said:

Finally, I would point to the status which South Africa now occupies in the world. It is surely no mean one. The South African people control their own national destiny in the fullest sense.

Sir Robert Borden, our own Prime Minister, speaking at Cardiff, on the 25th of July, 1918, said:

Upon the basis of equality of nationhood the future of the Empire must be worked out. A common spirit, a consciousness of nationhood in the true spirit, had arisen since the war, which would not be satisfied with any status within the Empire except the status of equal nationhood.

Hon. C. J. Doherty, Minister of Justice, said:

Canada's admission to the League constitutes the most formal recognition of her national status. Through it she takes her place in the international family as one of the group of independent nations which make up that League of Nations which the British Empire has grown to be.

I could quote similar statements from the late General Botha, from General Smuts and from Mr. Hughes, the Prime Minister of Australia, but it is not necessary. All these men claim for their respective parts of what is called—improperly, I think—"the British Empire", the full rights of nations. Why do I say improperly called the British Empire? Because the word "Empire" connotes one head State surrounded by a group of subordinate States,