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EMPIRE BASIS IS AUTONOMY OF PARTS DECLARES MEIGHEN

Mutual Responsibility Second Pillar for Continuity, Quebec Audience Told

RELATIONS OF EMPIRE

Tendency Is Towards Greater Combinations, and Should Be Encouraged—Lt.-Governor Attended Lecture

(Special to The Gazette.)

Quebec, Oct. 18.—On two pillars does the basis of Empire rest, autonomy of the Dominions and mutual responsibility, said the Right Hon. Arthur Meighen in speaking today before the Canadian Club at the Chateau Frontenac. Mr. Meighen elaborated his theme at considerable length before an audience which may be described as the elite of Quebec City, absolutely non-partisan, since the Lieutenant-Governor, Hon. Narcisse Perodeau, judges of the Court of Appeal and of the Superior Court, Liberal members, all shades of opinion, gathered at what will pass down as a memorable meeting of the Canadian Club, under the presidency of Maurice Dupre, advocate, of this city. Among those present were Sir Charles Fitzpatrick, Hon. L. G. Belley, Justices Desy, Sevigny, D'Auteuil, Bernier, Belleau, Rivard, and Gibsone, Senators L'Esperance and Tessier, Sir Richard Turner, Hon. Frank Carrel, Hon. Philippe Paradis, Sir George Garneau, Mayor Samson, Arthur Cannon, K.C., Hon. Gerald Power, Hon. C. F. Delage, Brig.-General Landry, Allan Boswell, Col. Beckett, Armand Lavergne, Hector Laferte and a host of others, some 300 in all.

Preliminary to the lecture was an expression of regret at the untimely death of Sir William Price. Mr. Dupre referred to his work in brief and eloquent terms, and Mr. Meighen added a token of tribute and remembrance.

In the words of the Old Testament, Sir William Price well had merited the description of "a prince and a great man," said Mr. Meighen.

The Opposition leader said he had no new evangel to preach in the matter of Empire relations, no startling doctrine to announce, because it was his belief, though there was some misunderstanding, and that most unfortunate, that the great mass of the Canadian people take much the same view, both of the history of our position in the Empire and of our present relations to the Empire. The history of the world had been the development of the tribe to the nation, and of the small nation to the great, just as in business the unit seemed ever to enlarge, the larger unit gaining additional advantage or organization, so in the world of nations we had been witnesses of a great deal of growth of individual power, of the formation of larger entities. This tendency could not be resisted, tended for good and was for the betterment of business, and, in the world of politics, the larger unit was capable of rendering greater service to the parts.

"It seems to me to follow as a broad principle that we would do well to foster the growth, providing the means of growth are good," said Mr. Meighen. Any policy that worked towards disintegration was not a good one.

Before this Empire there had been the Roman Empire, which reached enormous dimensions, but it reached such dimensions without regard to the rights of those whom it included, or the rights of those whom it oppressed on the outside. His criticism of the Roman Empire was not in a disparaging sense, for the state of the world made such a path the only method.

The Roman Empire had not pretended to follow the principle of local autonomy.

LOCAL AUTONOMY.

The British Empire, said Mr. Meighen, was the first based on the principle of local autonomy, though in its original conception this principle had had little place, but, with the march of time, and the progress of ideas, and chastened by events, the principle of local autonomy had grown until it became the chief cornerstone of Empire structure. The new doctrine in the last 50 years, if not the last 100 years, had become firmly implanted in the minds and hearts of people, and become recognized as necessary to Empire development and security.

Pursuing this theme, and after pointing out that the resistance to autonomy had been due to the fact that the principle itself was in the nature of an experiment, and that there had been a feeling that autonomy would result in breaking away, Mr. Meighen went on to deal with his second point.

This principle of complete autonomy, carrying as it did complete control both of internal and external affairs—the latter recognized during the last 25 years in the matter of treaty making—carried with it as a logical consequence the fact that some other principle must be recognized as resting alongside that cornerstone, and occupying a corresponding position.

SHARE RESPONSIBILITY.

"If Empire partnership means anything, it means necessarily advantages to all members of the partnership. If it were not that we believe in this advantage, then I do not think there would be that general feeling of contentment and pride which now prevails among the people because we are members of the Empire. We believe that we can best serve ourselves and secure our own protection, we can best advance our own interests within the family of Empire."

For the purposes of defence alone, the unity of the component parts of the Empire was fundamental in order that we might with the least possible burden on the people—and consistent with individual honor—bear such share of defence. Mr. Meighen said he was not one of those raging, rampant Imperialists, if such exist, and he presumed there were some few, who felt that it was the mission of Britain to go into the highways and by-ways and bring others into the fold, to preach the doctrine of conversion throughout the universe, to become an aggressive power, nor did he want anything but friendly relations with other nations, but the events of the past quarter of a century, and especially of the past ten years, had been sufficient to show that the first need was to minimize peril of war. Events had shown that the world does not move by great steps, does not become converted or changed within a decade, so that a certain measure of protection was fundamental.

"My doctrine is then, that having established and having recognized without question or hesitation the full right of Canada to decide what Canadians should do, to decide whether Canada moves or does not move, there must nevertheless pervade the Canadian people the conviction that we cannot be members of the Empire without responsibilities. We cannot enjoy rights without the entailment of duties, and we must have some responsibility in the nature of defence."

DEGREES OF BURDEN.

Mr. Meighen said that in order not to be misunderstood he did not mean that we were not to enjoy the benefits of our geographical position. Britain had colonies for which she was responsible, and had an island position which made a certain kind of defence essential, and which we did not have, and consequently Britain fully recognized her share was vastly greater than that of Canada. Dominions in the southern seas, living in the shadows of other races further north, also recognized their particular need of defence, and had different ideas as to defence than our own. Only those at Imperial conferences who had heard their statesmen speak of the question could understand their feelings. Taking all these things into consideration, the great principle still remained that we as members of the family were vitally and selfishly interested in the integrity of the whole, and that weakness or disaster to anyone reacted all over. Surely this was a doctrine that appeared logical and self-respecting. Surely, such an idea of co-operation was essential to the Empire as was the cornerstone of autonomy itself.

Mr. Meighen dealt with the part of the Dominions in the matter of expressing themselves as regards Empire problems, each having its own viewpoint, and cited as an example the matter of the Angip-Japanese treaty, executed 20 years ago, and renewed later with the approval of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In 1921, when he had happened to be Premier, he had found the representatives of some of the Dominions, New Zealand and Australia, very strongly disposed towards the renewal of that alliance, and British statesmen also favorably disposed, in the latter case influenced to a certain extent by the representations of the representatives of the two Dominions. The latter were thinking of security from a foe that Canadians never think of at all, when considering the defence of Canada. The position of Canada was different. Here we were, said Mr. Meighen, on a continent with the United States as our neighbors, and with knowledge of the psychology of that country. Canada was necessarily in a better position at the conference to interpret the attitude of the republic.

PACIFIC PROBLEMS.

"We knew the feelings with which the United States looked at the spectacle of Britain walking with Japan, exercising as one diplomatic body, control of affairs in the Pacific. We felt in this Dominion that the co-operation of the United States was essential to the preservation of peace in the Pacific, and that peace could not be secured if there was any special alliance established. We understood why they should entertain those views, and, being interested more than any other people in the world in the maintenance of good relations with the United States, and the removal of all obstacles and shadows that might in days to come be the cause of quarrel, we naturally felt that this obstacle should be removed, and that the single alliance of Japan and Britain be abandoned, and that we make an effort to substitute an alliance on a wider basis, an agreement not only between Japan and Britain, but of all those countries having major interests contiguous to the Pacific."

Mr. Meighen traced the result of the Washington Conference, which had come about because of Canada's representations. From this point Mr. Meighen referred to the efforts in regard to having the relationships of the different parts of the Empire defined. A resolution at the 1917 conference had deplored the fact that the relationships were vague, and leaving it to another conference to deal with the constitutional position of the Dominions. As he was a member of the Borden Government at the time of the 1917 conference, he was constitutionally responsible. However, in 1921 he had seen fit to take another position, and in this was in disaccord with Sir Robert Borden. His feeling was against a definite definition of the relations of the Empire, but rather to deal with such matters from time to time as they arose.

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