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MR. MEIGHEN'S ADDRESS

It is refreshing to find a Canadian public man laying emphasis on Canada's duties and obligations in Empire partnership, rather than on Canada's rights and privileges. Rt. Hon. Arthur Meighen did in his address to the Commonwealth Club last evening, and in so doing added greatly to the general excellence of a dispassionate, logical and informative discussion of the subject.

The address can be briefly summarized under five headings:

- 1—Canada's position in the Empire is entirely a matter under her own control. British statesmen do not restrict or hamper her constitutional development.
- 2—Canada has great privileges and rights as a member state of the Empire. Partnership in the Empire is in itself a "place in the sun."
- 3—Canada has important duties and assumes real obligations by her partnership in the Empire, the principal being:
 - (a)—To work for world peace by expressing the Canadian point of view in the Empire councils;
 - (b)—To co-operate with the other parts of the Empire in the necessary measures of fortification and defense, bearing a fair part of the burden of expense, since the defense of every part of the Empire is vital to the whole.
- 4—Canada should regard her separate representation at the Peace Conference and in the League of Nations not as precedents but as a special method of meeting extraordinary conditions; and should take part in future international conferences on the panel system which Great Britain is quite ready to adopt.
- 5—The Empire must hold together, and to maintain and uphold it is a first task of Canadian citizenship. There is no hope of world peace through the League of Nations—two score nations of many tongues and creeds and with many natural hostilities—if the League of British Nations cannot hold together and act as a unit.

Mr. Meighen did not break wholly new ground in his address. It was simply a statement of the present condition in regard to Empire relations, accurate in all respects and as already noted refreshing in its emphasis on the obligations that Canada should assume co-equal with her rights and privileges. On this point he declared that, whereas Canadians feel consciously or otherwise a sort of security in the shadow, so to speak, of the great republic to the south, it is a false security. No part of the Empire can suffer attack without the whole Empire suffering. The security of Australia or South Africa or Great Britain is as vital to Canada as her own safety. He did not urge that Canada's expenditures for defense need be as great as those of the United Kingdom, but he emphasized that Canada has a proportion of the burden of Empire defense to carry and cannot in honor escape it.

It is more difficult to follow Mr. Meighen in his division of the people of Canada into three classes, extremists who seek out every opportunity to advance Canadian autonomy even to the point of complete separation from Great Britain, "raging, rampant Imperialists," and the great mass of the people who occupy middle grounds. The division is wholly arbitrary. That there are extremists who contemplate complete withdrawal of Canada from the Empire is true enough. But where are the raging, rampant Imperialists? The great majority of the people, on Mr. Meighen's own statement, desire to maintain the British connection and consider no sacrifice too great to that end. They look, he said, upon membership in the Empire as in itself a "place in the sun," and desire to maintain it at all costs. No raging, rampant Imperialist could voice his views more vigorously. In other words, the strongest Imperialist in the Dominion occupies common ground with the great mass of the people.

If Mr. Meighen meant by Imperialists the centralists, who desired to establish in London a government for the whole Empire, where in Canada can he find a spokesman of this idea? Decades ago there probably were some centralists in Canada, and certainly there were some in Great Britain. Today they are extinct in Britain as in Canada.

However, this arbitrary division marred but little what was on the whole an admirable address.

46

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