

associates have in mind in the foreign policy they are now pursuing. This is what Mr. Chamberlain said:

However much one may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful nation, we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British empire in a war simply on that account.

That was a specific statement; when Mr. Chamberlain made it I was again confident that there would not be a world war. He went on to say:

If we have to fight it must be on larger issues than that.

I am myself a man of peace to the depths of my soul. Armed conflict between nations is a nightmare to me.

But if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force, I should feel that it must be resisted.

Then he concluded with this statement.

I believe that life without liberty would not be worth living, but war is a fearful thing and we must be very clear, before we embark on it, that it is really very great issues that are at stake and that we should risk everything in their defence.

I should like to paraphrase that statement in this manner: In my opinion the most sacred responsibility that any leader owes to his people is the maintenance of peace and the safeguarding of his people from the appalling consequences of war. That is a supreme duty, a supreme responsibility, the greatest duty that a leader can owe to his people. Freedom from war and the maintenance of peace should be the course to follow as long as such a course is possible. That principle must not be departed from unless some principle greater than peace itself is involved. In my opinion, that is the fundamental principle which has actuated the government of Great Britain and the government of France. War can bring nothing to these countries but disaster. They have no territorial desires, no dreams of conquest. War can only destroy, particularly the kind of war that there would be if the forces of the world ranged themselves in the manner that I have indicated.

We must keep our heads cool in this country, as Mr. Chamberlain must keep his head cool in Great Britain; at the same time we must keep our hearts warm, as I think he is keeping his heart warm, for the cause of peace and preservation of his people from the awful consequences of war.

International hatred is not a policy of foreign relationships on which we should rely. It is easy to fan international hatred into a burning flame. Indeed, it is hard to resist that feeling when we see what is happening in Europe. But we must steel our hearts

[Mr. Thomson.]

against international hatred. I for one do not intend to condemn or hate a whole people because I disapprove the actions of that people's leaders. I am convinced that the bulk of the German people are as keenly anxious for peace as we in Canada are.

Nor is dislike of dictatorships a proper cause for war, much as we may dislike dictatorship and prefer our own system of democratic government. Those who believe in democracy know that democracy will prevail. It cannot fail. We also know that the inevitable end of dictatorship is chaos and revolution. Why, then, not let the march of events run their course to their final conclusion?

Nor would we be justified in resorting to war for economic advantage or national prestige. Economic advantage and national prestige are not worth risking the civilization of the world. It is, I think, the fixed policy of Great Britain and France to keep their people out of war.

It has been suggested that steps should be taken to stop the totalitarian states before it is too late. It is folly to fight a preventive war to prevent something that may not happen. Earl Baldwin of Bewdley made a striking statement to which the hon. leader of the opposition (Mr. Manion) referred yesterday. He stated that as long as the chances for peace were only five per cent and the chances for war ninety-five per cent, the chances for peace should be taken, for the alternative course meant war, with all the destruction that it would bring.

I approve the principles that I have enunciated. I approve them for Great Britain and I approve them for Canada. As it is the supreme duty of Mr. Chamberlain to preserve his people from the terrible consequences of war, so it is the supreme responsibility and the supreme duty of the Prime Minister of Canada to keep the people of Canada out of war as long as such a course is possible. I am convinced that the Prime Minister of Canada has a keen appreciation and a true realization of the great responsibility that rests upon his shoulders. He has stated again and again and again that the guiding principle in the formulation of Canada's foreign policy should be the maintenance of the unity of Canada as a nation. With that statement of principle I entirely agree. Canada should, therefore, if the principle that I have enunciated is sound, not take part in war unless some principle greater than peace itself, is involved—such as the civilization of the world, or Canada's national existence, or the liberty of her people. If these are involved, they are issues greater than peace; but no issues

other than these are greater than peace. These fundamental principles should be clearly stated and rigidly observed. We should keep liberty of choice of action in Canada. It belongs to Canada. In the light of these fundamental principles I now proceed to a consideration of the bill which I have the honour to introduce in this house.

It has been argued that if Great Britain declares war, we in Canada are automatically at war. I deny the correctness of that statement as a constitutional fact. Those who take this view do not face the facts of the constitutional development which has taken place. Their view is based upon the contention that Canada is not a sovereign nation. They state that if his majesty on the advice of his majesty's ministers at Westminster declares war, we are automatically at war. Their contention is that since the king is one person, the crown is also indivisible. That may have been a correct statement of the constitutional position many years ago. In 1914 when war was declared, its application to Canada was automatic. Since then, the status of the self-governing dominions has changed. The British constitution has grown, as it is always growing. The declaration made by the imperial conference of 1926 is to the effect that the members of the British commonwealth are:

autonomous communities within the British empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the crown, and freely associated as members of the British commonwealth of nations.

It is inconsistent with this status that Great Britain should have the power to determine for Canada whether Canada is at war. The person of the king is one and undivided, but the crown is divisible. That is now a recognized development. It may be a strange development; it may be an illogical one, but the British constitution is a flexible instrument; it adapts itself to changing conditions and to changing needs. It is recognized that His Majesty the King, when he performs executive acts of government, does so only upon the advice of his ministers, and that when he performs an executive act of government for one of his dominions he does so only upon the advice of his ministers in that dominion, in that British nation. None of the associated nations that form the commonwealth of nations has the slightest control or authority over any other of the British nations. They are all equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs.

The Balfour declaration made in 1926 is merely a statement of the status that had been already achieved. The position of the British nations has been recognized by outstanding authorities. Long before the Statute of Westminster, Sir Frederick Pollock made this statement, drawing a distinction between legal theory and actual fact. He said this:

Leave conventions alone and look at the facts and we find that the colonies are in fact separate kingdoms. . . . The sovereignty is a figment, the states of the empire stand on an equal footing.

There is a distinction, so it is said, between sovereignty and autonomy, but that distinction is, in my opinion, purely a legalistic one; for we have gone so far in our autonomy that it is complete and has become sovereignty in fact. This was recognized last fall by an outstanding British statesman. Lord Stanley, Secretary of State for the Dominions, whose untimely death has been regretted by all who knew the great work he was doing, stated in Toronto on August 25, 1938, in reply to a question as to whether the dictum that Canada is at war when Great Britain is at war was sound:

"Certainly not. Canada has entire responsibility of her own. She is a sovereign state and decides for herself."

It is an essential feature of the British constitution that all the peoples who live under it should have the full power and the complete right to determine in every respect the policies which they shall follow, whether those policies be internal or external ones. The constitution is one of great flexibility, great adaptability. It is always changing, always growing, but it is always based upon the essential principle of the right of the people who live under it to full control over their affairs. It is also based upon their responsibility to exercise their rights.

Since the Statute of Westminster was passed, our legal right, apart from our constitutional one, to determine all matters whether internal or external is beyond dispute. We have complete legislative power to decide all questions affecting Canada. It is true that the British North America Act itself is maintained intact, but the question of amendments to that act is a matter for the Canadian people to determine. We have, therefore, complete power to regulate the manner in which his majesty shall perform executive acts of government for us. There is no longer an indivisible royal prerogative. We may determine how that prerogative shall be exercised by his majesty in respect of Canada. I reject the view, therefore, that when Great Britain is at war, we are automatically at war.