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Unity Vital

OF CONNAUGHT ON THE EMPIRE.

WORK OF THE CONFERENCE.

The Duke of Connaught presided at dinner given at the Hotel Victoria, Chamberland Avenue, last night by the Royal Colonial Institute to the Ministers of the Overseas Dominions and the Representatives of the attending the Imperial Conference. These Prime Ministers were present—Mr. Warren (Newfoundland), Mr. McKensie King (Canada), Mr. Massey (New Zealand) and General Smuts, whose place was taken by Mr. H. Burton (Minister of the Union of South Africa). The object of the following wireless message from Mr. Bruce, Premier of Australia, who was on his way to the conference, was announced.

"These Prime Ministers were present—Mr. Warren (Newfoundland), Mr. McKensie King (Canada), Mr. Massey (New Zealand) and General Smuts, whose place was taken by Mr. H. Burton (Minister of the Union of South Africa). The object of the following wireless message from Mr. Bruce, Premier of Australia, who was on his way to the conference, was announced. The Duke of Connaught, proposing that 'United Empire' be the motto of the conference, said:—The motto is a most comprehensive one, it includes countries in almost every part of the world. Nothing resembles our Empire has ever existed before. It represents the union of the Commonwealth, united together in the bond of sympathy and affection to the Mother Country, and of which one Sovereign, who stands for the stability of our free Monarchy."

With this toast I couple the names of the Prime Ministers of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Most warmly do I welcome them in our midst in the name of all present. (Cheers.) They have travelled long distances to attend the important conference of the Empire that opened yesterday. It is for them, by their knowledge and devotion to their great Dominions, to promote the common good of the Empire. Its unity is vital, not only to the British Empire itself, but even more so to a distracted Europe. Only the force of Unity within ourselves can oppose the forces of disintegration, now alas, so prominent. I venture to think that the resources of the Empire, if properly developed, can keep us independent of outsiders. The problems of various portions of the Empire must naturally differ, but we confidently expect that the joint efforts of all our statesmen will provide a solution leading to the greater happiness of its people and the assured strength of the whole.

No reference to our Empire would be complete without recalling to our memory the glorious efforts made by all during the Great War. England never can and never will forget the great services that were rendered by every portion of the Empire to support the Mother Country at the hour of her greatest need. We now all of us want peace, and nothing to my mind can do more to promote this crying necessity than the unity of the Empire. May God's blessings attend the work of this Conference, on which so much depends, and may we be able to look back with pleasure and gratitude to the results of its labors. I couple with this toast the names of Mr. McKensie King, the Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada, whom we most cordially welcome on his first visit here as Prime Minister of that great Dominion; of Mr. Bruce, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, who also is with us for the first time in his present high position; Mr. Massey, the veteran Prime Minister of the Dominion of New Zealand, whose splendid loyalty to the Empire is well known to us all; and of General Smuts, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, though we

all regret he is not with us to-night. General Smuts' military and political services to the Empire during the subsequent to the Great War are gratefully remembered by all in England. (Cheers.)

Mind And Heart of Britain.

Mr. McKensie King (Prime Minister of Canada), in reply, said that in the men who had been associated with the Government of Canada as a part of the British Empire the British Isles had given of their best, and that was not less true of the other self-governing Dominions and India—of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland, and the Irish Free State. That took him to the question that was meant by a united Empire, now that unity had been brought about, and how it was to be maintained. He would leave to others to describe what had been affected by discovery, by trade, by wars and conquests, and by numbers. Those might make for expansion; they did not necessarily make for unity. Geography and arithmetic were concerned with material things. Unity of the mind and of the heart. (Cheers.) It was the unity and the heart of Britain which had made the Empire what it was to-day. The mind and heart of Britain had been carried to the outlying Dominions by the multitude of men and women who had left the old land for the new, and had carried with them the remembrance of bygone struggles and achievements, and the unrealized ambition of their fathers, and the hope of a wider freedom still to be obtained. It had not been agreements, or charters, or treaties, or Constitutions, that had made for the unity of the Empire. It had been the vision of the mind and the dream of the heart. (Cheers.) The Dominions Prime Ministers came here in a spirit of co-operation and good will to carry on the mission of the British Empire, which had been at all times to further the peace of the world, as well as the good of all those of its privileged members. (Cheers.) Mr. King paid tribute to the services rendered to the Empire by the Duke of Connaught, who, he said, as Governor-General of Canada, was "the model of a constitutional ruler."

British Sea Power.

Mr. Massey, Prime Minister of New Zealand, referring to the Imperial Conference, said it was quite certain that there was plenty of work to do, and work which should result in benefit to the countries of the Empire and their citizens. But just at present it was impossible to predict how much of that work would be done. The Empire emerged at the end of the war stronger and more highly enthroned in the hearts of its citizens than ever before, and he felt, after coming in contact with almost every part of the Empire, that it could stand any test which could be applied. It was their essential duty to preserve it safe, and to maintain a sufficient naval defence to ensure communications between the different parts of the world Empire. The Empire was built up on sea power, and could not be held together without it. When British citizens asked that the Navy should be maintained at adequate strength, it was for defence, and certainly not for offence. As a matter of fact, at a time like this, with wars threatening and rumours of war in various parts of the world, the strongest factor for peace which we had to-day was Britain's Navy. (Cheers.)

He was quite willing to encourage every organization that made for peace, but we could not allow ourselves to be led into any false sense of security which might some day end in disaster. Without adequate sea power the Empire could not last. There were some people who thought the world could get on as well without the British Empire as with it. He was not one of them. He believed that, if anything happened to break up the Empire, world chaos would ensue.

Speaking of the native races, he mentioned that only a few weeks ago, while crossing the Pacific, at Rarotonga, where the vessel stopped for a few hours, he was requested by the Chiefs of the native races to convey a message of affection and fervent loyalty to the King. During the course of the voyage, also, he received by wireless a message from the population of Samoa, both European and native, requesting him to convey to the Sovereign their loyalty and satisfaction with British rule. He was convinced that the British Empire and the British people had a special mission—the promotion of peace and goodwill upon earth. The world was looking for peace, and he knew of nothing which would help in that direction so much as the coming together of the English-speaking races, Britain and America. (Cheers.) He did not suggest that America should come under the British system of government or vice versa, but he was a believer in the object of the English-speaking Union. For the maintenance of the world's peace there should be a clear and definite understanding between these two peoples. There must be no interference one with the other in matters of government, but the two should stand together for peace and goodwill to all men.

Isolation Impossible.

Mr. Burton, Minister of Finance, Union of South Africa, said that he spoke on behalf of a country only

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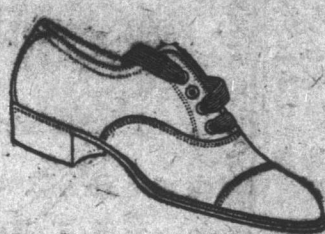
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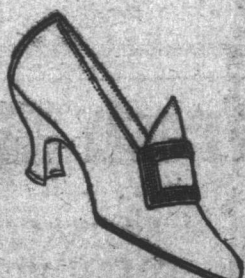
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half of the population of which was English-speaking, but if there was one thing clearer than another to thinking people it was that most of the difficulties which confronted us in the world to-day could only be successfully surmounted by a united British Empire. This was really the pivot upon which the whole of their discussions in the Imperial Conference must turn. It was the main reason for their assembling. The Dominions felt that it was true to-day more than ever that a united British Empire was the only sheet anchor that the civilized world had got. Without that the prospects of real peace and economy and rehabilitation in the world would be poor indeed. In the Assembly of the League of Nations one would learn, if he never understood it before, how important, how predominant, were the power and influence of our Empire in the world to-day.

In his own country they had had to battle a long time against a sort of propaganda of isolation. It was a dreary and barren issue. It was impossible either for individuals or nations now to live isolated. South Africa, like every other part of the world, must necessarily have an association with others. Even the Nationalists, who he regretted to say, were still coquetting with the idea of separation from the British Commonwealth, were bound to admit that if they should by any chance—which God forbid—obtain that separation, they would still have to seek association with some other Power, and that in all probability that Power would be the British Empire. (Laughter and cheers.) The outlook in Europe and the world to-day was gloomy and difficult, but he would bid them cherish hope that we should weather the storm. The past history of this country, and of this Institute, should encourage them in that hope.

The genesis of the Institute was, he believed, some time in the sixties, when British statesmen were supposed to treat the possession by Great Britain of outlying Colonies and possessions as rather a nuisance. The Institute encouraged the sentiment of British Imperialism, and much progress had been made since then. The first Imperial Conference met in 1887 at Ottawa, and the discussion there was confined to what were called Colonial questions, though even at that conference a South African Dutchman was the first to put forward the

idea of substantial practical action in the way of realizing Imperial unity. Mr. John Hofmeyer made a proposal for reciprocity in trade. How far we had now advanced! Now the Conference was called to discuss with the British Government the world crisis, that was their main theme. They realized that it was their duty and their interest to take the keenest possible interest in assisting the British Government to frame some common Imperial policy in the face of this crisis. It was of the greatest importance from a Dominion point of view, it was their business as well as the business of these islands to see that this world crisis should be settled. They realized more, and more the genuineness and sincerity of the good feeling and friendliness in this country towards the people beyond the seas, and he thought that not only the English-speaking but also the Dutch-speaking population of South Africa reciprocated that feeling.

The Oldest Dominion.

Mr. Warren, Prime Minister of Newfoundland, also responded. He said it might seem that Newfoundland played a small part in the Imperial

Conference of the present day, but he recollected that if there had been a Colonial Institute four hundred years ago, he would have been the only guest. (Laughter.) So it was that he felt it largely to his younger brothers whose territories were larger than his, but whose ambitions were not half as large—(laughter)—to speak for him. Mr. Massey had talked of the sea power that had made the Empire, but it was because of Newfoundland that they became a sea Power. There was an old law about three hundred years ago that if people want to do good, for peace, and for the promotion of all that was best in the different countries of the Empire, they hoped that a real move might be made to bring those different parts still closer together, and he felt they might be able to look back to the results of the present Conference as being of the greatest advantage not only to themselves but to the world in general. (Cheers.)

Sir Joseph Cook proposed the toast of the Chairman, and said it was appropriate that the Duke of Connaught should be the President of the first gathering of the clans of Empire, as they come from north, south,

east, and west to the Imperial Mecca to confer as to the future of the Empire to which they were all proud to belong.

The toast was received with musical honours. The Duke of Connaught, in acknowledgment, said that as one who had had the good fortune to serve in many parts of the Empire, he felt that the outlook was bright; the Empire outlook was the one bright thing at present. With the strong determination they felt to make the unity of the Empire a reality for good, for peace, and for the promotion of all that was best in the different countries of the Empire, they hoped that a real move might be made to bring those different parts still closer together, and he felt they might be able to look back to the results of the present Conference as being of the greatest advantage not only to themselves but to the world in general. (Cheers.)

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