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CANADA AND THE IMPERIAL WAR CABINET

BY

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I. BRITISH PROTECTION OF CANADA

THE defence of the British Empire is a perplexing problem. Attempts to solve it provoked the great revolution from which came the republic of the United States. This revolution was even more momentous than the French Revolution. Not only did it determine the form of the political institutions of the greater part of the two continents of America, but it was itself also in large measure the cause of the French Revolution. Royalist France was aflame with eagerness for republican principles, as applied in America, to the hurt of a hated rival in Europe. These principles, however, would not remain on the other side of the ocean from France. They crossed to Europe and in the end helped to make France herself a republic. Thus a problem of the internal government of the British Empire expanded into a world problem, the struggle between democracy and aristocracy, between local liberty and centralized control. Ever since, in 1607, English colonists settled in Virginia it has haunted the politics of the British Empire. After a stormy history of three hundred years it has taken on a new character because of the great war which broke out in 1914.

The British Empire, as now we all see, has become a world-wide Commonwealth of Nations. When once the British over the seas attained to importance as states they could not be controlled and directed by the people of Great Britain and the consequent problem of continued union became one of the most searching which statesmanship could face. At the time of the American Revolution most British statesmen would have denied the equality of colonial leaders with themselves. A great landowner, with a vast palace as his home, living in state hardly short of regal, naming to Parliament some of its members, would have smiled at the thought of equality with a plain John Adams or even with the Virginian landowner, George Washington. Compared with an English magnate, these colonists would have had a social and with it a

political standing not greater than that of a simple squire in England. Even a Whig like Horace Walpole would not have included Washington, the colonist, in that charmed high circle, political and social, which to Walpole meant all in the world of interest and moment. Washington, on the other hand, had the stern, the scrupulous pride, which demanded unhesitating recognition of equality.

The ministers of George III told the American colonies that they must provide certain monies for their own defence. The colonies failed to give the required response and then the British Parliament itself undertook to tax them. Any one who knew the colonies could have foreseen the result. At once flamed up the spirit of liberty and independence. They would not be taxed from England; this task only their own legislature should perform; they would perish rather than yield. Perish many of them did; for seven long years they fought to assert their independence; and in the end they broke up in ruin the old British Empire. The lesson was clear enough to him who could read; no branch of the British peoples would be content with anything short of political equality with the others and of complete and direct sovereignty in its own affairs.

Failure, far-reaching and tragic, was the result of the first attempt to lead two widely separated sections of the British peoples to share common responsibilities and burdens. The defect was chiefly in tact and in method. The English colonies were not wanting in the manly spirit which assumes readily the tasks of manhood. It was because they were so manly in outlook that they resented with enduring bitterness the attempt to treat them as wayward and, in the end, as malignant children. In defying George III they assumed burdens and endured losses much heavier than any which would have been involved in obedience. After the American Revolution Britain was left with dependent states for the most part alien from her in blood and tradition and, in the ultimate analysis, held by the power of the sword. There was the germ of the present Indian Empire; there were a few weak and scattered colonies. The British Empire as to-day we know it was still to create and it was to be created in the light of the colossal failure which had led to the republic of the United States.

For a long time after this first disaster no urgent problem existed in regard to the sharing of common burdens. Outside of the United Kingdom there were not, for some scores of years, any British peoples who really mattered. Shattered was that earlier

ideal of overseas states peopled by Britons who treasured as their own the glories of an Imperial England, who were at home in lands widely scattered, but who never renounced the proud British citizenship with memories reaching back into a remote past. Probably when the American colonies broke away there were not a quarter of a million people of British origin living outside of the British Isles. There was no hope that these few people could share the burdens of an imperial state. They were themselves the burden. For a hundred years after the American Revolution, Canada was protected almost wholly at the expense of the British government. The colonies which remained to Britain were in truth what George III had desired the lost colonies to be, children to be protected by the parent and to give in return affection, trust, and obedience. Their political education could begin only when they were populous enough to take care of themselves.

For half a century after the American Revolution a majority of the people of Canada were of French origin with no tradition of British self-government. The British element, however, multiplied. Perhaps fifty or sixty thousand people, chiefly of English, rather than of Irish or Scottish, origin, driven out from the young republics, because of their loyalty to their king, took refuge in Canada. They were reinforced later by Irish and Scottish elements. While Canada was poor, weak in numbers, without importance compared with the wealth and power of the British Isles, it was easy to adhere to the view of parent and child. What the parent chiefly owed to the daughter state was protection, the protection of the strong for the weak. It was, of course, desirable that the people of the colony should, as far as possible, control their own local affairs. Final authority rested, however, with the mother country. It sent out a governor who was intended really to govern. Each colony had its little legislature, but this ought not to take itself too seriously. It could make laws and vote money. Over its doings, even in respect to these things, the governor kept a watchful eye and could at any time block action by refusing his consent to measures proposed. The legislature must do nothing that touched upon more than the internal interests of the colony and the judge of the import of its actions was to be the governor. It was for him to appoint to office and to dismiss from office. He had no ministers in any true sense of the word. There was no colonial cabinet which he must consult. He took advice from whom he would. Why should he not, since

Great Britain was responsible for the well-being of the colony and pledged to protect it from all danger? Of partnership on the part of the colony with Great Britain there was no thought. The strong parent protected a weak child.

By 1850, however, Canada had between three and four million people, a larger population than that of the American colonies at the time of the Revolution. By 1850, too, it had been established, and not without strife and bloodshed, that the legislature of Canada should control completely its internal affairs. For the first time, Canada had a real cabinet. On all purely domestic matters the Governor acted on the advice of his ministers. Outside affairs, however, he attended to himself. When, in 1854, a treaty for reciprocity in trade was to be made with the United States, it was not the Prime Minister of Canada, or any other Canadian minister, who went to Washington to negotiate, but the Governor himself, less as a delegate from the Canadian Cabinet than from that at London, whose nominee he was. In foreign affairs Canada was not supposed to have any voice, though, of course, the British Cabinet would not have imposed on Canada a treaty respecting Canadian trade which Canada did not desire.

The Civil War in the United States, lasting from 1861 to 1865, produced a great effect in Canada. In 1861 when an American ship of war removed from the British mail steamer *Trent* two envoys of the Southern Confederacy on their way to France and Britain and held them prisoners, the horizon was dark with clouds of war. The British government denounced as an outrage the seizure on the high seas of diplomatists who were under the protection of the British flag and demanded peremptorily that they should be released. It looked for a time as if war must follow. Should this happen Canada would inevitably be attacked. It was mid-winter. No ships could ascend the frozen St. Lawrence to Quebec and no railways as yet connected Halifax or St. John, ports open throughout the winter, with the menaced frontier of Canada on the upper St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes. It was difficult in such circumstances to send British troops to the point of danger, but from the task the British government did not shrink. British regiments were sent across the sea to Halifax and they went overland in bitter cold in order to reach quickly the points of chief danger near and beyond Montreal. There was no shrinking from Britain's responsibility to defend Canada, and Canada accepted this defence in the spirit that a child shows to a guardian parent.

II. THE GROWTH OF NATIONAL SELF-RELIANCE IN CANADA

War was happily averted, but the menace helped to make the British colonies in North America realize a weakness which was due largely to lack of union. The small provinces on the Atlantic sea-board, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, had each a separate government wholly independent of what was then Canada and is now the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. The great West was still a wilderness ruled by the Hudson's Bay Company and outside the pale of Canadian politics. The Civil War made the United States a great military nation. The North was irritated with Great Britain because of the widely extended sympathy of the English ruling class with the aspiration of the South for separation. It was not impossible that one of the aims of the restored Union, with a great army and a consciousness now of strength, would be to insist on a policy which should break any remaining political tie of American States with Europe. As a matter of fact when the Civil War ended, France, planning an empire in Mexico, was given prompt notice to withdraw her forces from that country. It might soon be the turn of Britain to receive warning that the tie with Canada must end and that either a separate Canadian republic must be set up or that the British colonies must enter as states into the American union.

Fear of dictation from the great republic was not, of course, the only motive which led the scattered colonies to think of union. They needed union to save them from obscurity and isolation. Thus it came about that just at the time in 1864 when the North was planning the supreme effort to end the civil war, when Sherman was making his desolating march from Atlanta to the sea, and Grant was nerving himself for the last heavy blows which brought in the end the unconditional surrender of Lee, delegates from the British provinces were in conference at Quebec on the problem of union. Their conference was fruitful, and out of it came, in 1867, the federation since known as the Dominion of Canada. Within a few years it included the West as well as the East. By 1873 Canada was a vast country stretching across the American continent and covering an area as great as the United States.

For a time no change was apparent in the relations with Great Britain of this state so potent in promise. The Canadian people had still the colonial mind. They thought it incumbent on Great Britain to protect them. They liked to see the British red coats

in Canada; and to the petty type of Canadian politician it was an added source of satisfaction that, for the support of these regiments, not a penny came from the Canadian tax-payer. One thing, however, had been settled. The great federation was completely self-governing. The Governor-General, who represented the dignity of the British Crown, no longer made any claim really to govern. He was at Ottawa what the King was at London, the official head of the state with duties chiefly formal and ceremonial. He could act only on the advice of his responsible ministers. The Prime Minister ruled in Canada, as he ruled in England. It soon happened that when a governor undertook of his own motion to pardon a man who was under sentence of death for what was in reality a political crime, due to unsettled conditions in the West, there was a great outcry in Canada against even this vestige of the right on the part of the Governor to act independently of his Canadian advisers and the claim of the right so to act was soon abandoned. Then Canada was governed as Great Britain was governed, by a Parliament to which the Prime Minister was responsible and which might at will dismiss him from office and install his successor.

So far so good; but the most difficult problem remained still unsolved. What should be the relation of Canada to Great Britain? In this problem was wrapped up the larger one of the relations of all other British self-governing states, of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, to Great Britain. Could the relation remain one of subordination? Could a great state, continental in area, continue to be in a dependent position, its defence paid for by the heavily burdened tax-payer of Great Britain? India paid for its own defence, since the cost of the Indian army came from the exchequer of India. Canada, however, paid nothing for the British fleet and the British army which made her secure from attack. During many years there was slight interest in the question. Canada was creating the great railway systems which should bind together the East and the West and her financial power was so strained to meet the vast cost that, for a time, collapse was feared. In such conditions it would have been impossible, except in a time of dire peril, to persuade the Canadian voter to carry any tangible share of the burden of fleet and army. He had, moreover, no sense of impending danger. Down to 1914 war seemed to the average man in Canada an almost impossible thing. When war had actually touched him there had been a partial awakening. This had happened in 1899 when Canadian

regiments were sent to fight in South Africa. The scene of war was, however, remote, and, compared with what we now know, the effort was insignificant. Only in 1914 did the scales fall from the eyes of Canada and she saw the colossal figure of war, naked and menacing, rise up to imperil her own liberty and that of every free people.

In the face of this real peril, there was not a moment's hesitation in Canada as to her duty. It is true to say that in the tense days when the scope of the war was still undecided there was, so far from hesitation, a real fear in Canada that Britain might hold aloof and permit France and Russia alone to face Germany. It is sometimes said that Canada went into the war to help England. To stand by England, Canada was, indeed, resolved, but many Canadians resented the idea that she was merely helping England. Canadian soldiers thanked by English hosts for the help they had brought to the old land were annoyed rather than pleased. They had gone to fight for England no more than Scots or Irishmen had gone to fight for England. Partners with England in a great crusade? Yes. But fighting for England? No—except in the sense that England and Canada were fighting for each other.

What, we may again ask, was to be the relation of a self-reliant and proud nation in America to a self-reliant and proud nation in Europe, both of them owing allegiance to the same sovereign? It could not remain that of colony and mother country. The Canadian soldier in Flanders or France had no feeling that he was protected by a powerful mother land, the feeling which would have expressed the truth in regard to the Canada of an earlier period. Even so recently as in the South African war, though Canadian regiments had served in the British army, they had been paid not by Canada but by Great Britain. Now, in the Great War, Canada, for the first time, paid her own way as Britain and France paid their own way. For the first time the Canadian people subscribed for great loans to their own government to carry on the war. Hitherto a debtor nation, Canada became in part a creditor nation. She made vast quantities of munitions of war. Hitherto her manufacturers had not ventured upon some of the more delicate work in, for instance, steel, but now they made complex and difficult products. The young nation was showing itself competent. Its soldiers proved equal to the best. The officers, most of them civilians before the war, quickly acquired skill and enterprise in making war. What was to be the political expression of this national vitality?

III. CHANGES IN THE BRITISH CABINET SYSTEM

The Great War tested the machinery of all governments. In no very long time Russia broke down completely and fell into anarchy. So also, in measure which we hardly yet understand, collapsed in succession Bulgaria, Turkey, Austria-Hungary, and finally Germany. These countries were not merely defeated. In earlier wars nations have been defeated with no striking changes in the fabric of their governments. The strain, however, of this war, on a scale unique in human history, involved the break-up of many states, the fall of dynasties, the total collapse of political institutions. That the states which proved so stable as to win unexampled victory should yet change was to be expected, and in none of the victorious states have the changes been more remarkable than in Great Britain and the British Empire.

Long before the war broke out there had been plans for co-operation among the different states of the Empire both in time of peace and in time of war. In 1887 sat for the first time what came to be known as the Imperial Conference. Here representatives of all the self-governing states discussed matters of common interest, chiefly relating to communications and to trade. The great achievement of the Conference on Imperial Defence in 1909 was that it confronted this acute problem and later led to the creation of the Imperial Defence Committee. This Committee provided a means for counsel and coöperation among the various states of the Empire to meet the emergency of war. But in Canada, at least, it was never taken very seriously. The conviction of the unreflecting and uninformed that civilized states had outgrown war and that no great conflict was likely proved particularly strong in Canada as it did among similar classes in the United States. Between 1909 and 1914 there had been hot debates in Canada as to the creation of a Canadian navy or, failing this, a sharing of the burdens of the British navy. Little was done, and when the dark clouds broke in 1914 Canada was unprepared to meet the crisis.

Great Britain herself was not prepared and equipped for war upon the land. Even for war upon the sea, as now we know, her equipment was, in some respects, inferior to that of Germany. In learning the art of war she passed through profound modification in her government. She began the war under party government, with a Liberal ministry headed by Mr. Asquith. Within less than a year party government proved impossible. On May

25, 1915, a coalition ministry was announced in which sat Liberal, Conservative, and Labour members. Mr. Lloyd George, as Minister of Munitions, inspired fiery energy in production. Beyond the British Isles, too, every possible stimulus was applied. When in July, 1915, the Prime Minister of Canada went to London, evidence of the urgent need of unity in work throughout the whole Empire was found in the taking of a new step. He was invited by Mr. Asquith to attend the meetings of the British Cabinet. There was no precedent for this sitting in the Cabinet of Great Britain of a Prime Minister who was at the head of a separate ministry overseas.

At the same time other precedents were going by the board. In 1915 the existing British Parliament prolonged its own life beyond the statutory term of five years and, in fact, continued to sit for eight years, until the election of December, 1918. A little later Canada took similar action. Meanwhile even coalition government was proving ineffective since it laboured under the cumbrous methods of the days of peace. The coalition Cabinet formed in Great Britain in May, 1915, contained twenty-two members. It was too large and met too infrequently to direct from day to day the vast energies engaged in the war. It tried the plan of giving to a small War Council of five members the direction of the war. This council was a committee of the larger Cabinet and reported to that body. The members of the smaller body with the Prime Minister as its head were most of them heads of departments. Their burden was too heavy. The summer of 1916, which saw the great offensive on the Somme, brought to Britain depression and disillusion, for it showed that not yet were the allies able to strike effectively at the military power of Germany.

It thus happened that the end of 1916 saw a startling change in British politics. On December 1, Mr. Lloyd George wrote to the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, urging that the conduct of the war should be placed in the hands of a small body consisting of four members. So far as the carrying on of the war was concerned this body was really to be the government. It was a bold innovation when Mr. Lloyd George insisted that the Prime Minister, with his many other duties, should not be a member of this committee. This action brought the fall of Mr. Asquith's government. On December 7, Mr. Lloyd George himself became Prime Minister, and Mr. Asquith and many Liberal members retired from the coalition government. On December 9 met for the first time the small War Cabinet now created to direct Britain's effort in the war.

The four active members were to be free from the care of departments of government. They were Mr. Lloyd George, Lord Curzon, Lord Milner, with Mr. Henderson as the representative of Labour. Mr. Bonar Law, the Conservative leader, was also to be a member, but he was chiefly to concern himself with the task of leader of the House of Commons.

Mr. Lloyd George, in insisting that a small body of men should direct the war, aimed to ensure undivided energy in reaching the needed decisions of a momentous crisis. He did not call it a committee of the old Cabinet. This would mean that it should report to the larger body and be subject to its authority, while, in fact, the opposite was the case, that the smaller body itself had final authority and gave instructions to the ministers who composed the former Cabinet. The name War Cabinet expressed with exactitude the fact that this Cabinet existed to meet the crisis of war and thus controlled all branches of government. It was to direct war policy. The ministers most immediately concerned with waging war were not members. It is indeed a paradox that the Secretary of State for War and the First Lord of the Admiralty were not in the War Cabinet. Because they had charge of great departments they were fully occupied with their duties. It was the function of the War Cabinet to determine what they should do.

There were some who urged that the War Cabinet should not absorb all the powers of government, but that side by side with it there should be a second cabinet to deal with domestic affairs. The idea of two cabinets dividing between them the authority of government was assuredly an innovation as great as that of a small cabinet in which sat none of the heads of great departments. Two cabinets were, however, impossible for, as Lord Curzon said in a debate on the cabinet in the House of Lords on June 19, 1918, "it is simply out of the question to draw a line of division, of demarcation, as between what are domestic questions and what are war questions. Nine-tenths of the questions which are commonly called domestic, which would be domestic in peace times, are war questions now." Such matters as food production, shipping, labour, taxation, were vitally connected with war. The War Cabinet was in consequence supreme. The heads of great departments, themselves of cabinet rank, became its servants. At such innovations champions of the old order were staggered. The whole world of the Empire, said Lord Midleton, in the debate, has fallen on the shoulders of half a dozen oligarchs." The heads of the great ministries, unchecked by

sitting with their colleagues in a cabinet, had become, he said, autocrats in their departments. The War Cabinet created at will new government departments. Real cabinet government, said Lord Lansdowne, "had disappeared altogether and with it the good sound doctrine of the collective responsibility of the government of the day."

The War Cabinet involved changes of method which were equally startling. The old cabinet was a gathering, informal and confidential, of ministers to discuss public affairs with the Prime Minister and with each other. We do not formally record decisions, even the most momentous, arising from a casual meeting of friends. Every one present understands the topics discussed. All that is said is confidential and, among gentlemen, what is agreed upon in such a way will be binding. The cabinet had been a gathering of this kind. There was no secretary, no minutes were kept of the business transacted, no notice was given to the members of the business for which a meeting was called. A score or so of gentlemen came together, each of them occupied with important matters, each of them probably anxious to have on his business the counsel and decisions of the Cabinet, no one of them, except possibly the Prime Minister, knowing what business must be settled. The meetings were secret. No one might divulge anything that happened. Except on very rare occasions no one not a member sat with the Cabinet to give counsel based upon expert knowledge. The Prime Minister was supposed to remember all the decisions reached, with no written record to confirm or correct his impressions. It was, indeed, the custom that he should send a private letter to the King informing him of the business done. But this letter was for the King's eye alone and was not available for proof of what the Cabinet had decided. The inevitable result was that at times few really knew what the Cabinet had done. Members had often a completely wrong impression of the result of their deliberations. Such defects, bad enough in time of peace, were likely to prove ruinous in time of war. The need of change was urgent.

A cabinet of five may be as inefficient as a cabinet of a score if the right men are not found to serve. Granted the insight and driving power of genius, a cabinet of one might be better than a cabinet of six. Napoleon Bonaparte was his own cabinet. There was no magic in a small cabinet. Everything depended upon the members. Not only was it important that they should be able; it was also necessary that they should be free from other cares.

The War Cabinet was in practically continuous session. The members remained in London. They denied themselves pleasant, leisurely week-ends in the country. Sometimes meetings were held twice daily; always they were held once, except on Sunday. Lord Curzon said on June 19, 1918, that in four hundred and seventy-four days there had been five hundred and fifty-five meetings; that two rules were steadily kept in view, one to summon to the Cabinet the ministers, the generals, admirals and other experts who could give desired information and advice, the other to postpone nothing until to-morrow which could be decided to-day. The old Cabinet, pressed for time, divided by various views, unable to bring collected and prolonged attention to a problem, was likely to find refuge in delay. The War Cabinet, knowing the mischief of delay, was true to the policy of prompt decision. So fully had they carried it out, Lord Curzon added, that sometimes on Saturday there was no need to meet. All the business of the week had been despatched. He added, with perhaps a touch of humour, that the Irish question could not be settled in this summary way. But what could be settled was settled promptly by the War Cabinet. If departments differed the Cabinet at once decided the issue.

IV. THE SUMMONING OF THE IMPERIAL WAR CABINET

Britain's part in the war was not, however, the affair only of Great Britain. On this vast problem the whole British Empire was united. The Empire justly prides itself on the diversity of its interests and the variety of its governments. There are few questions in relation to which a common policy for the whole is even desirable. In war, however, unity of direction is the condition of success. Four great nations, Britain, the United States, France and Italy found, in the end, that to defeat Germany they must be united under a single lead. The armed forces of the British Empire were, from the first, under one supreme command and a War Cabinet which directed the efforts of Great Britain alone would not meet the realities of the war. On assuming office, Mr. Lloyd George had this in mind. He became Prime Minister on December 7, 1916. A week later, on December 14, he issued a call to the whole British Empire, including India, to send representatives to London for a conference on the war.

He did more, however, than summon this Imperial War Conference. War brings prompt and sometimes high-handed decisions. The War Cabinet had just been formed in England. Mr. Lloyd George did not ask the other Prime Ministers whether they would sit in a War Cabinet. He simply cabled to the Governments concerned: "Your Prime Minister will be a member of the War Cabinet." The war had reached perhaps its most critical point. The year 1917 brought a terrible crisis and its early days were full of thronging hopes, anxieties and fears. The United States had not yet entered the war. Russia was on the verge of collapse. The allies were preparing for the mighty effort which resulted in the stupendous sacrifices and the apparently meagre gains of that year. In such circumstances for Canada to have disregarded the call to united counsel and action would have been criminal. Sir Robert Borden and the Prime Ministers of other Dominions, with the exception of Mr. Hughes, detained in Australia by an election, hastened to London and there on March 20, 1917, was brought into actual being the Imperial War Cabinet.

On March 21, the day after the first meeting, *The Times* had a glowing article: "Imperial Rome, or Modern Germany for the matter of that, would have stage-managed such an event very differently. There would have been triumphant processions and elaborate banquets to mark it . . . The new world is to redress the balance of the old. . . . The great European problems which fall to be settled by the verdict of war . . . are henceforth problems for Canada and New Zealand and the other Dominions as well as Great Britain. . . . The War Cabinet which is now meeting is an executive cabinet for the Empire [*sic*]. It is invested with full responsibility for the prosecution of the war, including questions of Foreign Policy, of the provisioning of troops and munitions and of war finance. It will settle Imperial policy as to the time of peace." Mr. Lloyd George declared that the meeting of this "Imperial War Cabinet" marked "the beginning of a new epoch in the history of the Empire." On one thing every one concerned laid special emphasis. The old colonial relation between Great Britain and the other free states of the Empire was definitely ended. The Prime Minister of the parent state, of course, took precedence of all others. He was, however, only *primus inter pares*. Next to him ranked the Prime Minister of Canada, the most populous self-governing state in the Empire after Great Britain. When the Prime Minister of Great Britain was absent the Prime Minister of Canada was to preside. Mr.

Lloyd George was careful to declare in the House of Commons on March 17, 1917, that the status of the Dominion ministers was one "of absolute equality with that of the members of the British War Cabinet." The whole situation respecting the war was laid bare to the members of the Imperial War Cabinet,—all secret treaties and other commitments, the plans for conducting the war, the possible conditions of peace.

There were, no doubt, anomalous features in the Imperial War Cabinet. It was, in reality, the Cabinet of Great Britain, said adverse critics; a few Dominion ministers were present, by courtesy, but the really directing force was in the members who represented only Great Britain. This statement was fortified by the fact that later when the Imperial War Cabinet was in session it took the place of the small War Cabinet created by Mr. Lloyd George and might decide respecting the internal and domestic affairs of Great Britain. It was surely an anomaly that Sir Robert Borden from Canada and General Botha from South Africa should be present at deliberations respecting possibly the control of food or the supply of coal in the British Isles. The word Cabinet, objectors added, could properly be applied only to a body responsible to a single electorate. Here were a number of Prime Ministers, named each of them by a separate electorate. In the past a cabinet could be turned out of office by the adverse vote of the legislative body representing the electorate. How could the Imperial War Cabinet be reached in a similar way?

Sir Robert Borden, speaking in London on June 21, 1918, endeavoured to answer these criticisms:

"It has been said that the term 'Imperial War Cabinet' is a misnomer." But, he added, "the word 'Cabinet' is unknown to the law. The meaning of 'Cabinet' has developed from time to time. For my part I see no incongruity whatever in applying the term 'Cabinet' to the association of Prime Ministers and other Ministers who meet around a common council board to debate and to determine the various needs of the Empire. If I should attempt to describe it I should say it is a Cabinet of Governments. Every Prime Minister who sits round that board is responsible to his own Parliament and to his own people; the conclusions of the War Cabinet can only be carried out by the Parliaments of the different nations of our Imperial Commonwealth". "New conditions", said Sir Robert Borden at another time, "must be met by new precedents." The modern British Empire, he pointed out, was a new type of organization. Canada had had self-

government for only three-quarters of a century, and it was only fifty years since the first experiment of federal government had been made within the Empire. Only since 1878 had Canada negotiated her own commercial treaties.

In 1917 the Imperial War Cabinet had fourteen sittings. During the same period was in session the Imperial War Conference, for the exchange of views on Imperial problems. The visiting Prime Ministers divided their time between the two bodies. When the sessions ended, Mr. Lloyd George announced in the House of Commons that the experiment had proved successful and that at least annual meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet would be held. "I ought to add", he said, "that the institution in its present form is extremely elastic. It grew, not by design, but out of the necessities of the war. . . . To what constitutional developments this may lead we do not attempt to settle."

Had the war ended in 1917 this first meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet might well also have been the last, for, at any rate, the word "war" would have been eliminated from the title. A world safe from the menace of a great military power like Germany would require less close coöperation between states of the British Empire than would the old dangerous world out of which had come the Great War. Circumstances, however, gave greater permanence to the Imperial War Cabinet. After the meeting in 1917 there was no hope of an early peace. Russia passed into deeper anarchy. Its Bolshevik government made peace with Germany and drifted in time into actual war with the Allies. Germany crushed Roumania and forced her to make a humiliating peace. The entry of the United States into the war in April, 1917, was a cheering contrast to these disastrous events in Europe. It was, however, soon evident that a year or more must elapse before the military help of the United States should become effective. The British Commonwealth was still in deadly peril, and the need was imperative for further united effort.

In 1917, when Sir Robert Borden returned to Canada from the Imperial War Conference, he announced his conviction that to meet the urgent need of men for the Canadian army compulsory military service must be adopted. By this time party government in Canada was seen to be as difficult as much earlier it had proved in England. In October, 1917, Conservatives and Liberals united to form a Union Government. Compulsory military service had already been adopted by the Canadian Parliament and an election, in December, 1917, gave a mandate to the government to go on

with the war to the utmost of the resources of the people of Canada. The months following were months of difficulty. The province of Quebec was intensely hostile to conscription, and the obstacles to the enforcement there of the Military Service Act were formidable. March, 1918, was a black month for the British Empire. On the 21st of that month the Germans made their great offensive at St. Quentin. They took about one hundred thousand prisoners and captured, it was said, one-fifth and, by some reports, one-third, of the total war equipment of the British armies in France and Flanders. It was the worst disaster which has ever befallen British arms. Yet in this grim hour of defeat the British peoples looked out undismayed, with no thought other than that of fighting on in the great cause.

It thus happened that the outlook was troubled when the second meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet began in London in June, 1918. There was a notable gathering in the Royal Gallery of the House of Lords on Friday, June 21, to welcome the visiting Prime Ministers. Thirteen present and past Prime Ministers of British states were present. Mr. Lloyd George spoke of his privilege at presiding over the Imperial War Cabinet. "Sitting around that table," he said, "you find representatives of over 400,000,000 of human beings, most of the great races of the world represented, most of the great faiths of the world, an aggregation of many nations and their representatives brought together at this Council to concert the best methods for establishing right and justice on the earth." By this time the organization of the Cabinet had assumed more definite form. India and the Dominions had each two members with the exception of Newfoundland, which, because of its small population, had only one. The principle had been adopted that, when in session, the Imperial War Cabinet should take the place of the British War Cabinet, a much smaller body. In the Imperial War Cabinet sat the British Ministers connected with Foreign Affairs, with Defence, on land and sea and in the air, and with India. The Secretary of State for the Colonies sat there to represent the smaller states of the Empire not self-governing. The Imperial War Cabinet was thus a large body. It was, however, concerned only with policy, not with details of administration. Each day was printed a record of the business transacted on the previous day. Each day, too, the members found before them a carefully prepared statement of the business to come before their meeting.

Since the meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet were secret the public was not informed of its operations. It invited Canada to send a force to Siberia, a decision which involved what would have been thought incredible in the time of George III, that officers and men of the British army should serve under a Canadian command. In order that counsel on Imperial affairs might be continuous it was decided that each Dominion, at its discretion, might keep a minister of cabinet rank in London to sit in the Imperial War Cabinet. The reality of the sharing of responsibility was seen in the fact that ministers from Canada and other Dominions went to France for a session of the Supreme War Council at Versailles which directed all the military operations of the allies. The Imperial War Conference, meeting at the same time, decided a vexed problem concerning India. Some British countries, anxious to keep their population European in character, had refused to receive East Indians as immigrants. This had caused great irritation in India. The remedy was found by giving India similar powers of restriction. Each country might, if it liked, exclude settlers from the other and thus the pride of each was saved. The Conference decided that the Dominion Prime Ministers might carry on direct relations with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom without these passing through the Colonial Office. This carried farther the idea of nations freely communicating with each other, without any departmental control.

The armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, and by November 20 the Imperial War Cabinet in its third series of meetings was considering the terms of peace. It had been the practice of the Cabinet to receive at its deliberations persons likely to give wise counsel, and it was an impressive occasion when, on December 3, the Cabinet met Marshal Foch and M. Clémenceau, the Prime Minister of France. The days of greatest strain were, however, ended. The war had resulted in victory, astounding in its suddenness and completeness. There remained the intricate problems of peace. When the Peace Conference opened at Paris in January, 1919, not formally, but certainly in reality, the Imperial War Cabinet transferred its sessions to Paris under the name of the British Empire Delegation. In the frequent absence of Mr. Lloyd George, Sir Robert Borden presided. When the time came for signing the peace treaty the Dominion ministers with the full support of all the members of the Imperial War Cabinet insisted that as each Dominion was in reality a nation which could be bound only by the action of its own ministers the

peace must be signed by each unit separately. Observers were puzzled by the anomalous British Empire which at one time was a unit under a single sovereign, the King-Emperor, and at another time stood as half a dozen independent units. Not without the firm pressure of Canada's Prime Minister, was her status and that of the other Dominions recognized by other nations. A similar difficulty was met and overcome when Canada insisted upon a separate status in the International Labour Conference, a creation of the Treaty of Peace, and also in the League of Nations. That the British Empire had six votes in the League of Nations was seized upon by anti-British elements in the United States and was one of the chief reasons why the American Senate took objection to the Peace Treaty, without reservations which the President regarded as destructive.

VI. THE FUTURE

Such is the story of the Imperial War Cabinet. It is a far cry from the early years of the nineteenth century, when Canada was a small dependent colony, to those days in Paris in 1919 when the Prime Minister of Canada presided over the British Peace Delegation in its deliberations concerning a new settlement of the world. The title of the Imperial War Cabinet already belongs to the past, and we may hope that it need never be revived. The experiences of war have become, however, the endowment of all the peoples of the British Commonwealth. For a moment memory may be invoked to recall the strife of the American Revolution and to ask what might have been the story of modern civilization in Europe and America had an Imperial Council sat in 1775 and 1776 to understand and adjust the differences of that epoch. Regrets are vain, and sometimes it is well to forget. But if we forget the past, we shall be wise to remember the future. The states which make up the British Empire form, at last, a real league of nations, among whom war is impossible, who are united on terms of equality, who, while held together by common traditions and loyalties, are free to remain distinct nations with differences of national outlook and national temper. Those who have dreamed of younger Englands in all parts of the world will never see their dream realized. They will see something richer in promise—varied types of British nations within a single commonwealth.

The problem of union among these different types is not easy. There is in each a national spirit which grows stronger as the tradition of separate life lengthens. In the pride of its independence a young nation is apt to fear that attempts at close unity with the older Britain may involve in one direction limitations, in another the assuming of responsibilities not in harmony with its own interests. There is, too, in the younger states the sensitive dread of patronage from the older society, the fear that nominal union may only mean real subordination. There are elements in Canada which do not like the thought of a possible Imperial Cabinet in London, for they fear that a Canadian representative, in the atmosphere of an old capital, where rank and tradition count for much, may lose touch with the plain people of Canada. They fear the corroding effect of social ambitions and of imperial designs in the crowded centre of a great world commonwealth.

There is no doubt that during the last two years of the war British coöperation had been better than before, and credit for this must be given to the counsels of the Imperial War Cabinet. The Cabinet had been looking far ahead and had plans for a campaign in 1919 and even in 1920. It is clear also that Canada and the other Dominions often brought to these counsels a view more detached than was prevalent in war-worn Europe and that in this way British policy was greatly influenced. Each Prime Minister had to support a policy which he could justify to his own people; and what Australia and Canada were likely to think had a real weight in British policy. In this respect the directing body was appropriately named a Cabinet. It was not delegated agents, but men directly responsible each to his own electorate, who carried the weight of British policy in the later years of the war.

By some the Imperial War Cabinet was regarded as defective because it had not behind it the authority of an elected Parliament to represent the whole British Empire. The conclusion was deduced that to make an Imperial Cabinet real there must be created an Imperial electorate choosing a legislative body for a federated Empire. Then would there be a Cabinet in harmony with earlier ideas of the nature of a Cabinet. The Prime Minister of the British Empire would be surrounded by cabinet colleagues coming from the various units of the Empire who would be heads of Imperial administrative departments, Secretaries of State for war, Admiralty, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Commerce and Communications. This Cabinet would really govern through organs of its own and the whole British Empire, containing one quarter of mankind,

would speak through its Imperial legislature and its Imperial cabinet ministers.

We may leave the ideal of complete legislative and executive separation side by side with that of complete legislative and executive union. We are living in a real world, at perhaps the moment most intense and vital in the whole history of man, and we cannot measure the forces which control the future. The British peoples have made terrible sacrifices for common ideals. In these great days they have not been careful about theories of government, they have not been jealous in respect to the exercise of authority and control if such exercise promised to aid in achieving the great ends for which they were together battling. In a sense the British peoples are idealists. During this great struggle nothing more inspired them than the magic of the words freedom and justice. For what is meant by these words, millions of Britons have been stricken on the fields of battle, and hundreds of thousands have died. But these idealists are also experimental and practical. They care little for the theory so long as the needed thing is done. What they ask is not whether a method is exactly in line with precedent, but whether it will work.

One thing is certain. We are not going back to the old ways. No British Cabinet will ever again carry on its business as did the Cabinet before the war. This the recent Cabinet has definitely announced. Periods of great excitement and strain are always followed by reaction. Never, however, when a profound new experience has shaken society, does the old outlook in reality return. In such eras something new comes into the souls of nations. The Great War has helped to unfold to the British people the mystery of themselves. They have realized forces, of the existence of which they were hardly aware. There was mystery in that sudden coming together in thought when they stood on the brink of the Great War. Anyone who had prophesied that this common spirit of aspiration and sacrifice would have been so unhesitating, so complete, would hardly have been believed. It was known and realized only in the moment of actual experience.

Its meaning for the future is also still a mystery. To many the Great War, which has brought together British armies from all parts of the world, has really helped to make the peoples thus represented recognize their differences. It is said that the Australian and the Canadian soldier when in contact developed acute antagonism. Many a Canadian, who had in imagination idealized England and its people, returned to his home with a sense of dis-

illusion sometimes bitter. Yet in spite of this the British peoples were one. Probably we tend in smooth and easy days to underestimate the effect of the deep roots of unbroken tradition which nourish the life of a nation. The liberties of Canada have come, not without struggle, slowly from precedent to precedent based on parallel changes in Britain herself. It is the same in Australia. What these young states thus prize most in their own life is what Britain itself prizes most and it has involved no rupture with the long past or with the parent state. There is among all of them continued unity in tradition and political development. In the moment of crisis they could not, with such traditions, do other than think alike on the great question of human liberty.

Every part of the British Empire did well and bravely the work which fell to it. The supreme sacrifices fell, however, on Britain herself. She met them in a spirit which made the British peoples everywhere proud to be bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh. Her fleet guarded all the seas and kept them open for herself and every allied nation as well as for neutrals. Thousands even of her civilian sailors perished. On land she fought in Europe, in Asia, and in Africa. When almost all of her male population of fighting age and about one in six of her total population took up arms, her women occupied their places in work at home. She so kept up her production that she paid out of current revenues a greater portion of the cost of the war than any other nation but the United States. When herself well-nigh bankrupt by the strain of war she continued to lend to needy allies. In the last year of the war Germany, recognizing that Britain was her deadliest foe in Europe, threw against her two-thirds of the German fighting forces in the West. More than two million casualties and a million dead were the awful cost that the British paid. Yet from the British Isles which bore most of this sacrifice came no word of complaint of an undue share of burden, or of boasting over what Britain had achieved.

It is too early to assume that in the Imperial War Cabinet we have the lines of a solution of the method of coöperation. Probably both it and the War Cabinet of Great Britain during the last years of the war were as effective means as could have been devised at the time for attaining the ends in view. The report for 1918 of the small body which directed the war effort of Great Britain gives an amazing record of achievement. In that year 1,359 new tanks were delivered and a much larger number would have been ready in 1919. The tonnage of ships completed in the year amounted

to a million and a half, three times the amount of 1916. In the great German advance of March, 1918, the British lost a vast number of guns but, by the time the German offensive ended in July, the British had in France 700 more guns than they had when the offensive began. They had to reduce their transport at home by sending across the Channel 12,000 railway wagons with the needed locomotives. They were forced to take 54,000 men from the railways, and 80,000 from the mines for military purposes. Yet production increased, and during the year the British people paid in taxes the vast sum of about \$4,500,000,000.

All this shows that the War Cabinet directed British energies with effect. There were, however, special difficulties in ruling through this small body. Its members had to summon experts in every branch of effort and these consultations involved sometimes more advisers than those in the old Cabinet. The men wholly detached from executive duties could not always determine the lines of policy as well as could those actually at the head of departments and, since these were not deliberating together, coördination in effort was sometimes lost. The War Cabinet worked effectively during the strain of war and it ceased to exist soon after the war was over. The Imperial War Cabinet also did well in a great crisis. Its chief virtue was in its quality as a gathering of Prime Ministers who could speak with authority for their governments. No one as well as a Prime Minister could make a quick and authoritative decision. In time of peace, however, for Prime Ministers to meet even annually in London would involve possibly fatal neglect of their tasks at home. The Imperial War Conference of 1917 agreed that a Conference to deal specially with the whole question should meet after the war; and this body will probably assemble during the year 1920 or 1921.

The future will, without doubt, bring changes startling to minds bound by precedent. It has long been held in the official world that foreign affairs, at least, must be in the control of one central government. Yet the Canadian government has announced its intention of creating the germ of a diplomatic service, and the near future is likely to see in the American capital a representative of Canada negotiating with the government in regard to business with Canada as the British Ambassador negotiates in regard to business with Great Britain. The two envoys will act together in matters common to both and Canada will assuredly have an increased weight because of her ties with Britain. The world will only slowly understand the meaning

of the words of General Smuts that on August 4, 1914, the British Empire died. Out of the torture of war have come the free, equal, and united states of the British Commonwealth. This equality must involve in the end not only equality of privilege but also equality of responsibility and sacrifice; and it is along this road that Canada must travel.

GEORGE M. WRONG