

(October 9th, 1911.)

The Program of the Home Government.

By MR. HAMAR GREENWOOD, M.P.*

AT a special meeting of the Canadian Club held on October 9th, 1911, Mr. Greenwood said:

I appreciate whole-heartedly the great compliment you have paid me in assembling here to-day at a special meeting to hear me address you, a compliment all the greater by comparison with the fact that the only other special meeting of the Canadian Club of Toronto this year was to welcome the very distinguished ambassador, the great scholar and the great Scotchman, Mr. Bryce of Washington. I am not an ambassador of Washington, but I would like to feel that in the career I have attempted and I hope not yet finished in England, I could carry with me from this city and this Dominion not any party—not any separate feeling, but the united respect of those who admire a man fighting in a difficult field, and because he is fighting hard for what he thinks is right.

To-day, though a Canadian, I am a member of the Imperial House, and I decline, as I have always done since I have been honored to be a member of that House, to take a party stand in colonial politics. And I lack the audacity many visitors have to advise you how to conduct your own local affairs. I am a member for Africa, and New Zealand, and Australia, and India, and all the Crown colonies, as well as a member for the great borough of Sunderland. I am told that it hurts and does not help Imperial politics for a member of a local House in the Dominion to lay down the law in England. We listen to that in patience, for the English are a most patient people. And when Englishmen come to Canada, and lay down the law here, they are not always listened to with patience, for Canadians are not the most patient people. (Laughter.)

On the problems of the Home Government I may claim to speak with knowledge, though, as I am not a member of Mr.

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Asquith's Government, not with that authority which honestly I would like to possess. (Laughter.) Let me speak just two short words as preface in reference to its Imperial position. First, at the last Conference, for the first time in history, the Foreign Secretary of the Crown, Sir Edward Grey, took into his confidence and explained the situation to the representatives of the Dominions Overseas. That was the longest stride forward towards Imperial Federation in your time or mine. The navy and army of the United Kingdom to-day are stronger, better equipped, and more expensive than ever before. It costs £72,000,000, taken annually from the taxpayers of the Mother Country, to pay for its defence and yours. Up to the present you have not done your full share, and there is no other English M.P. who could come to this country, and this city of all cities, and have the pluck to tell you so. (Applause.) But 'he serves his country best who tells the truth most often,' and I put it to you: the great, prosperous Dominions Overseas have not yet done their full share in the defence of the Empire as a whole. (Applause.) The trend is towards larger, heartier support from the Overseas Dominions towards the English navy, which is as much to you as to your kin in Yorkshire. Don't carp at the Mother Country: she is doing more than her fair share, and without complaint.

Now for the program of the Home Government! I can't speak with the authority of a Minister; I speak with the knowledge of a back bencher of the Home Government. The essential program of this Government in that period before its time runs out, I will outline by mentioning five points: first, land reform; secondly, electoral reform; thirdly, the national insurance bill; fourthly, the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales; fifthly, home rule for Ireland. (Cheers.) The first four subjects have some academic interest for you; the fifth, unhappily, like all those which run the chance of raising a protest, is more popular.

I think I should explain what the Government at home is trying to do for its domestic policy: for what makes England better is for the betterment of the Empire, just as what makes Canada better is for the betterment of the Empire. First, as to land reform. The land system drove you and your mothers and your fathers out of England:—you are all descended from the kings of Ireland or Scotland or the dukes of England! Most of your fathers were driven out by the semi-feudal system. To-day they are leaving scores of thousands of small farms to people this new Dominion. It is the greatest possible blessing to you, but it bleeds the home

land to death. The Government intends, and I will back it up, to make access to the land in the mother country as easy as access to the land of Canada now is. (Applause.) Eighty per cent. of our emigrants come to Canada. This is the finest thing about the emigration from the Old Country. But if I had my way, they would be enabled to go on the land there: the Scotch crofter, the Irish peasant, the Welsh hillsman, the English laborer, would find it as easy to get land and make a home, as it is in Canada. I am bound to admit that he and his children, having regard to the social conditions in the old world, will probably have better opportunities in this new world than in the land of our fathers.

As to electoral reform. Do you know that an election in England lasts three weeks? Fancy three weeks of September the twenty-first in this country! (Laughter.) Nobody would be on speaking terms but the policemen! No home would be happy! Well, we have it for three weeks. And we have a system of permitting a man to vote in as many places as he has property. So that some gentlemen who are lucky in this world's goods may vote in five, ten, or sometimes fifteen different constituencies, and these modern political Arabs wander up and down the country, voting in different constituencies as the election works on, and in the House of Commons to-day there are over fifty members elected not by residential voters at all, but by these nomadic out-voters. We intend to have the election not only on the same day all over, but to allow to one man only one vote, in order to get a fuller and freer opinion of the democracy of England, as you do in Canada.

The National Insurance Bill. This bill is statutory Christianity writ large. It is a bill for the insurance of fifteen million people, without adding a farthing to the taxation of the country. It is a bill based on the best actuarial reports in the whole world. The employer, the employee, and the State, all three contribute towards a common fund, and this fund is to be distributed through our splendid post office system. The Old Country is going to wipe out preventible poverty by the application of the most benevolent of all modern systems, the science of mutual insurance. I know that in this country those who do not travel in the Old World perhaps do not see the necessity for a bill of this kind, but the Old Countries, with their accumulated centuries of difficulties as well as excellences, cannot grapple with these problems as you can with the easier problems that confront you without a history or traditions to speak of, or prejudices. That bill is going to make a new England in the Old Land, without taking from the self-respect of a single man or woman who is insured,

because each has to contribute his share or he does not get the benefit. If you have an opportunity to study this bill, I advise you to do it; it may be the pioneer measure which may be adopted in other countries.

Disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales. While there is the Anglican Church in the principality of Wales, the vast majority of Welshmen are Methodists or Baptists or anything at all, and all the Welsh members ask for is to have that equality in religion every self-respecting man or woman now demands for his particular creed. This has raised intense opposition, and I myself have been called a godless statesman; yet in my day I taught as fine a Sunday School class as ever studied the catechism of the mother church of which I am a humble member. This is one of the things that harass and worry the Government in the Old World. But Welsh disestablishment will come next year or the year after. It will be better for the mother church and will remove a grievance that undoubtedly presses upon the people.

Home Rule for Ireland. (Cheers.) This is the predominant topic in the Old Country, a topic on which by-elections have been fought, a topic which has raised more bitterness during the last two generations perchance than any other issue in the English-speaking world.

There are 103 Irish members of Parliament. Of these 103 there are 86 Home Rulers, and 17 anti-Home Rulers. With reference to these, 17, many of whom are friends of my own, they represent Ulster constituencies, and I can say frankly they are militant Protestants, to put it mildly, and they hold with sincerity that to grant Home Rule means that they, their families, and their possessions will suffer. These seventeen are the Old Guard of the opposition to Home Rule as Mr. Asquith understands it.

By Home Rule I mean a constitution almost word for word similar to the constitution under which you live here in Ontario. The Irish people want nothing to do with the army and navy, except to furnish still a large proportion of our best soldiers and some of our best sailors; they don't want to have to do either with the Imperial policy any more than the people in Ontario, acting through their local Legislature that sits here in Toronto.

I put it to you: is it not a reasonable request, when you consider that Ireland has lost four million of her population in the last fifty years, when her income is assessable for income taxes, though England has her three hundred millions sterling per annum. They will continue to pay their share of Imperial taxes, but surely Ireland is shamefully treated. And

when south of the line there are ten million people, Irish and of Irish descent, who never speak well of the English, surely there is a grave danger. Yet that fine old Tory, the Duke of Wellington, won his campaigns with Roman Catholic Irish soldiers, and Roman Catholic legislators occupy high and honored positions in this Dominion and throughout the English-speaking world. No Government dare, no citizen would deny to other people the right to govern themselves in local affairs merely because they don't agree with you in religion. Thank God, the old prejudices and gross ignorance are disappearing, and now in the United Kingdom, and I hope throughout the Empire, the predominant feeling is that the Irish people are justly entitled to local self-government.

I think one weak link in the chain of Imperial development is this refusal to grant Home Rule to Ireland, but it will come next year. The Bill is in print; it will go through the House of Commons, with a great majority I believe. And in my opinion the House of Lords, which is slow to learn—but still it learns, though slowly,—will not reject the measure. In England it has the cordial support of the people, and the Overseas Dominions will not deny to Old Ireland a constitution such as you enjoy in Ontario. The Asquith Government stands or falls on Home Rule, and I will support it on that measure. And when the measure is passed, we shall feel that we have done a great act of long-delayed justice to a splendid race of people. The constitution will be such that no minority will be persecuted. It will be one great step towards that day when, as I trust, in due course the principle of local self-government will be extended to England, Scotland, and Wales. Elected representatives from Canada will sit there too in that Imperial Council. And I would ask this Club to bear me in mind on that great day when the Imperial Federal Parliament arises, and if I cannot find a seat in the land of my fathers, I hope that the land of my birth will send me as an adequate and fit representative.

What makes for the democratizing of the Home Government makes for the weal of the whole Empire, and I submit to you, that these items of the program of the Imperial Government should command your respect, and I should hope your unanimous support. Until such democratic measures become law, and especially until we have solved the difficulty of Irish Government, we cannot expect very rapid development of Imperial federation. In my opinion this program makes for the betterment and the strengthening of the centre of the Empire, which you and I look forward to as the great ideal of the English-speaking race.