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Canada's New Place in British Thought

By MR. PERCY HURD, M.P.*

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—It is most kind of you to make me your guest here to-day. You have provided me with a delightful interlude in one of my periodical Canadian holidays. Your president has just read to you a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and on this occasion he speaks the voice of every leader of account that I know of in British life, whether Unionist, Liberal, Coalitionist, or Conservative. The same sort of conception is gradually spreading itself through English thought; the conception that we have here a new phenomenon in the world, a new and great experiment at work, an experiment in the expression of free democracy; and that is the thought embodied in what the Chancellor of the Exchequer says to you gentlemen, "We in England cordially welcome the new national dignity that has been accorded Canada. She stands before the world as a partner nation in the British Commonwealth of nations, and we in this country look forward to fruitful co-operation with her in many problems of common interest."

Now, it is very pertinent to ask how it comes about that Canada does occupy this new place in British thought. You gave England one of the great surprises of history in August, 1914. Canada, a community outside the range of European thought and European entanglement; Canada, living on her own continent, immersed in her own problems,—some of them continental, some of them national,—that community of different races assembled from different portions of the world; that community at that critical moment saw as in a flash that there was a right and there was a wrong, and that freedom was there and tyranny there; and, without a moment's hesita-

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tion, without counting the cost, she said, "Whatever happens, all our weight goes on the side of right and freedom as we see it."

Not many years ago, before the war, one of the greatest of British statesmen was discussing the world's problems with a distinguished Canadian. He said, "It is quite true that at any moment the clouds always gathering and re-gathering over Europe may burst, and England may be immersed in a great conflict. But, for God's sake, do not let us live in a fool's atmosphere. Do not let us imagine that Canada can or will send help to England. It is not to be expected." We know now how far wrong he was. I know Canadian statesmen, who, talking privately,—and, in a sense, publicly—four or five years before the war said much the same sort of thing. I remember one saying, "Well, at a pinch 10,000 men might cross the Atlantic." In Canada, in August 1914, I do not suppose there were many Canadians who thought that Canadian participation would exceed 50,000 men; but as the problems became more intense Canada put more and more into that struggle, with the result that you know.

Are you surprised that Canada to the Englishman should mean something it has never meant before? It has meant comradeship in common ideals, a new kinship. Take my native village, Gloucester, in England. Last September, walking down the village, I happened to overtake a farmer. I said, "Good morning, quite a touch of Canada in the air," which is that nip and tang you get on some Canadian September mornings. He wheeled around and said, "What do you know about Canada?" "Well," I said, "I have lived in Canadian atmosphere all my life in England. What do you know about Canada?" He said, "My boy is in Canada. His mother was opposed to his going, but he went, and he is doing all right. Oh, yes! We get letters from him pretty regularly." I said, "In this little village of Gloucester, how many letters come in from Canada in a month?" He replied, "Well, our John writes one; the widow's boy over there, he writes," and he went on and proved that there were six letters coming in from Canada every month. He said, "We push them around, and we talk about them." Now, that is happening in pretty well every British village, more or less; and has been happening for some years in increasing momentum in England and Scotland.

Take a little Sussex village where I was the other day. It is a beautiful little village, green sward and picturesque

church, etc. I went into that church with nothing farther from my thoughts than Canada. In the porch I saw a Roll of Honor—boys of that village all gone out to fight in the war. Do you know that of the thirty names on that list, six of them were Canadians who had gone over to Canada, joined Canadian regiments; and their careers were being followed with anxious care and loving thought because they said, "They belong to us. They belong to Canada, but also to us."

Just two or three days before I sailed I was in Oxford. I was going to a meeting in the center of Oxford culture; and I thought, "Well, if I were a resident I should be spending the morning on the river enjoying the beauties of nature rather than crowding into the lecture hall"—it was a summer lecture course to which teachers come from all parts of England to try to get an impression of the new intellectual stimulus centered there. I was expecting a scattered audience, but the place was packed, and the galleries, too; and all to hear a very ordinary, humble British M.P. talk on Canada. They were all as busy as bees, taking notes; and when this speaker finished speaking,—he spoke about fifty minutes,—they all crowded around and asked fresh questions. Those three snapshots give an impression of what is going on in knitting these home ties between the two countries.

There are 60,000 war brides coming to Canada. Some were crowded on the boat on which I came over. They are English girls, and many of them had English babies, and very fine little chaps they were. All that means new ties, new comradeship. And I say that this relationship, this comradeship, is one which no gold can buy and which no wise statesmanship will ignore.

Now, how are we to give it its fullest expression? My own feeling is, speaking as an individual Member of Parliament and a very close observer of Canadian happenings, that the time has come when Canada should realize her new place in the world by giving quite new and serious thought to her representation in the Old Country. What happens when the United States is choosing an ambassador to reside in London? The President and his immediate counsellors think once, twice, twenty times; until they are quite sure they have got the man who will typify in England the very best culture in the United States and the ripest experience in that country. Surely the time has come when Canada, seeking to choose representatives in the Old Country—I am making no aspersions—but Canada, entering upon a new plane, may well stop for a few moments

and ponder on the enormous importance of having representation in England which will make every one of us feel, "That is Canada at her best." I want to see a Canadian in London who will stand on the same plane as a Choate, a Reid.

I am visiting Canada. I have certain business to do when I am here, although I am here on a holiday. I said to myself it would be very useful if before arriving in Canada a certain matter I have to attend to with Canadians here, could be explained to them by letter. So, before I sailed I wrote that letter. It arrived in Montreal five days after I did, and I came on a slow boat. I am here as a visitor to Canada. So far as cables are concerned, I am absolutely cut off from my family. Why should I not, seeing the progress of cables and wireless, why should I not be able to communicate with my family with the same ease as if I were an American coming here from New York? War conditions imposed difficulties for the time being, but those difficulties are being removed. Surely the time has come when the men of Canada, I do not care whether politicians or business men, or both, shall sit down and tussle with these problems and see that generous communication shall be established between these two countries, as good as science can allow; and bring thoughts from home to home, from business men here to business men there, from politicians here and there; so that these thoughts, feelings of good fellowship, shall flow with perfect freedom between the two countries.

Sitting next to me on board the steamer was an American, and you know how friendly one gets with one's neighbors at the meal table on a fairly smooth trans-Atlantic voyage. I said, "You are an American?" He said, "Yes, born in Virginia. I have been a professor in the Alberta University." I said "What do you come to England for?" He said, "You will laugh." I said, "Let me guess, you went over to talk about the illimitable possibilities of the Canadian west, and the means by which that fruitfulness and productiveness might be blended to the buying needs of England." He said, "Oh no, far away from that. I went to England from Alberta University to give a course of lectures to the Oxford students on the Poets Laureate."

Well, gentlemen, we laugh at it. But there is something very fine in that, and there is in it a suggestion of what education here and education there may do in strengthening those ties which are an invaluable asset in the upbuilding of any community of peoples. You have this liberty of Empire in

partnership expressed for the first time by Austen Chamberlain; you have that liberty given statutory effect in British legislation,—permanent statutory effect, by which you do not interfere in the fiscal system of Britain and Britain does not interfere with yours; each is master of its own. But where there are British duties imposed, it has been the established practice of the British parliament to say, "Canada as a member of the Empire family shall receive a preference on these duties." But do not let us be impatient; do not let us forget that we in Canada and we in England, just as the rest of the world, are struggling to find our feet after one of the world's greatest catastrophes. It is no good being impatient, saying, why don't you do this in England, or that in Canada, to make this partnership far more effective immediately. The principle is there, the wish is there, the intention is there; and we must have a little patience so that it may find its fullest expression.

Now it is quite obvious to me, even though I have spent only a few days in Canada, that you in Canada, like ourselves in England, are up against very grave problems. I see Canada, almost whether she wishes it or not, by virtue of her expansion industrially, pushing her influence here and there over the face of the globe. In Hamilton, I see them making things for Roumania; in London I see the authorities helping to establish trade between Canada and Greece and Serbia; I see new associations with France and Belgium, and enormous association between yourselves and the United States; and, as I hope, a growing association between yourselves and the United Kingdom. Canada, by the conditions of her growth and industrial expansion, is being thrown out into a new sphere and on to a new plane; and out of those new trading conditions new thoughts will inevitably grow from London and other relationships. Now, looking at it all from London in a very sympathetic way, I say to myself, "Do not let us Canadians have any craven fear of being great."

I went to Ottawa to listen to the peace discussions, and very interesting they were. And what I have to say as an Englishman watching these Canadian problems, watching this new life bubbling up, is this, "Don't worry over-much about precise definitions. Don't stand on exact constitutional niceties." After all, we British people have always found that pays, even in government relations as in personal relations, even those which were defined in no text books, outside the scope of lawyers.

We have come to a new conception of Kingship; the old

has toppled off its throne. We in England, you in Canada, have got this new conception of Kingship,—a constitutional monarchy which will pour oil where oil is needed between the classes; move about like the Prince in Canada, with a spirit of good fellowship, even able to do what no man in politics can do; but able to bring to bear a sweetening influence. Nowhere in England will you find the King and Queen received with more warmth of heart than in the industrial centers, like my home in the north of England. We have found a new definition of Kingship. It meant flag-waving, after-dinner oratory, and all that kind of thing. All that has had its day, but we are entering upon another day in which Empire means something different. We mean, fashioning a new form of co-operation between nations of equal status under one King, and united by common traditions and aspirations with the outside world. The new conception is not yet in the dictionaries.

Now we are coming to a new conception of the word nations. In Ottawa they were asking, "What is a nation?" What silly nonsense to talk about a nation without Sovereign Rights. It is, if you go by text books; but if you go by common sense,—sagacity,—then it is not nonsense. It is the finest experiment of political evolution that, I think, the world has ever seen. Therefore, the idea which I, coming as a visitor to Canada, and your guest to-day, the idea I would like to leave with you as my idea, is the idea that Canada is to-day absolutely mistress of her own destinies. The future is in her own hands.

We are having next year an Imperial Conference which is to deal with those questions. All the statesmen of the Empire, Canadian, New Zealand, Australian, South African, and British, will participate. I hope that conference will be held in Ottawa. I would like that conference to be held here in the atmosphere of nationhood that is finding new expression in all manner of ways. It would very materially widen the horizon of all those statesmen; and I hope the Canadian government, although they are submerged in great problems, I hope they may find time to send a sincere message of invitation to have that conference held in Ottawa. I raised the question in the House the other day and Bonar Law said, "That is the first time I ever heard of the suggestion." I hope he will hear of it again. Then I read in one of the Toronto papers this morning, a correspondent no doubt as wise as myself has sent the message across, that a committee

is in session in London determining what the share shall be of each overseas Dominion in the naval defence of the future. I do not know of any such committee; but I know that Canada's naval policy will be exactly what Canada desires, as expressed through her parliament; and anybody that puts forth these ideas, that anybody of account in England is seeking in subterranean or other ways to impose upon Canada any political ideas, or any conditions or any other ideas, Canada does not desire, is a back number, an absolute back number.

But while there is a new Canada, there is also a new Britain. Do not let us forget to recognize that. And it is a Britain which is faced with some of the greatest problems any nation will face in the history of the world. Think of the position disclosed just before Parliament arose for holidays. The Chancellor of the Exchequer came down and said "I am sorry to inform the House that my budget estimates are not being realized. As a matter of fact we are spending ten million dollars more per day than our revenue, in clearing up the war." The Cabinet held four sittings on one day to face that new situation. It was brought about by the extreme difficulty of demobilizing the bureaucracy, the established bureaucracy, created by abnormal war conditions.

Largely owing to the valor of the soldiers of the British Empire, the war ends suddenly although you have made preparations for the possible extension of the war for two years. You cannot, here and there, at one moment cut off all that expenditure. And it comes about that, owing to extraordinary difficulties in the labor situation, output greatly decreased, especially the output of coal—and of course it is on that export of coal to foreign countries that England based her import trade. And this decrease in coal output means shortening of the output in the great cotton industry of Lancashire, and also shortening of the output in the great industrial centers of Yorkshire and on the Clyde.

England, in fact, is on the anvil, and is being hammered into shape. But I have never known a great period in history where the Englishman with his back to the wall does not come out a victor. There is in him that immovable character, slow but sure footed. It takes him a long time, sometimes an irritatingly long time, to move; but there is something tenacious about him, he never loses hold. Through the terrible experiences of the war period, as you in Canada, so in England, there was that tenacity: "Whatever happens, that is

our goal, and we will not rest until we get there." He did get there; and he will get to the goal in the industrial situation.

Already, new elements have come into play in the labor situation. They have very fine labor leaders in England. They are all a very fine type of men and men who have a conception of England which is not the Soviet conception or the Bolshevik conception, the latter being a conception that is perhaps held by ten per cent. of labor. Ten per cent.—but a very voluble ten per cent., and capable at times, if it were not for the steady influence of the great body of sane English labor people, of throwing England over the precipice. But give England time, as she shall get time in the spring, to think things over. Let the wives get to work on it. When the strike pay comes in, and gets less, and she says, "Well, John, this is a pretty poor showing. Don't you think you had better get back to work. They have given you more than double wages, shortened your hours, given you very fine new conditions, don't you think you had better get in and enjoy these conditions and get our home life going again?" That is the sort of feeling gradually finding expression. So, for my part, I have no fears for England or Scotland. I must be very careful and include Scotland, for my wife is Scotch.

What about the Irish? I have not the good fortune to be Irish, but the Irish people in the United Kingdom will be given their dues, of that I am certain. And when the men of good will are really less engrossed with these war problems, they will realize what we realize now, that until Ireland is made to participate in a spirit of good will and good fellowship with the rest of the United Kingdom,—England, and Scotland, and Ireland, and Wales, will not realize their full possibilities. But I won't branch out into the Irish question. I see that a worthy Canadian senator now in England has been good enough to tell Mr. Lloyd George and the British parliament exactly how to settle it. I have no doubt that, if you wish information on the Irish question, when he returns to Canada you will find him primed full to the neck.

On Armistice Day, I was in the Strand in London with an American friend. He said, "Well, you English people are the queerest people on God's earth." I said, "That is probably true." He said, "It is Armistice Day, do you know it?" I said, "I heard of it." He said, "This bloody conflict is at an end, do you know that?" I said, "Well, I ought to." He said, "Think what you have done. Think what you English

people have done. Here you were, not a fighting nation. You had a little, tiny army; the Kaiser was not wrong, if you think in numbers, in calling it a contemptible army, although it gave him a warm time; but it was a contemptible army. And you, a peaceful nation, the necessity arising, built up that army to the greatest military force the world has ever seen. Your system of Empire was such that armies came in from Canada, from Australia,—voluntarily, with no compact, no inducements offered; and you created a war machine out of nothing, of such high efficiency that even the great military machine of Germany has been crumbled in the dust. As occasion arose, your industries here were turned into arsenals; and poured out munitions for France and Russia and all the Allies; and even the United States when she came in. Your resources in money fed those fighting nations to keep going the battle for freedom. Your best resources, you put them all into the scale; and, above all, your navy kept clear all the lines of communication; and no American soldier, without the navy, could have crossed the Atlantic. Without the navy, no American or Canadian soldier could have found his way to the battle front. Without the navy, none of those vast armies could have crossed the channel."

He said further, "We, as Americans, helped you all we could when we finally got in. We helped you in the spring of 1917, and we are very proud of what we did. We helped you again in 1918, and we were very proud of that. We are not forgetting for a moment our troops' accomplishments, but the burden was yours, and the victory is yours; and here I am, and what do I see. Here is a flag, and there is a flag, and there is a flag! Bless my soul! If we were in my country and we had done one-tenth of what you have done, you could not even see the sky for flags. And where are your joy-bells? I am told this morning there was one peal from St. Martin's. Why, in my country you could not have heard yourself in the streets for joy-bells. President Wilson would have been at the head of a great procession going through the streets waving flags, and every boy and girl would have been out with a dinner-bell ringing it. Why, you are like mutes at a funeral."

"Yes," I said, "We are. But do not forget this: over every town, every village in this country; and also in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; over every center of population there still rests a cloud of anxiety and sorrow." He said, "I

forgot that. Let us shake hands over that. Well, my point is good just the same. You are the queerest people on earth; but, my heavens! you deliver the goods."

Now, gentlemen, all I say is that we delivered those goods together in every aspect of political life and public activity. We delivered those goods together, and we are not now going to forget that great lesson in comradeship and good fellowship. I know we are not. In conclusion, I thank you very sincerely for the patience with which you have listened to me, and I wish you every prosperity in that new life that has come to Canada.