

(October 5th, 1916.)

The Mother Country and the Great War

By SIR HAMAR GREENWOOD, BART., M.P.*

AT a special luncheon of the Club held on the 5th October, Sir Hamar Greenwood said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—I always thought I was a typical Canadian. At any rate in England I have always been, and will continue to be, a Canadian, nothing but a Canadian, believing that a man is always best when he is most honest to himself; and I'd rather be a first class Canadian than a third rate Englishman. And the people of the Old Country, quite, I think, among the finest people in the world, barring yourselves the finest, only respect the man who is true to himself; and if I could criticize Canadians, if they ever fail to get that respect which is their due, it is because they try to be feeble Englishmen rather than robust Canadians. If you have the opportunity to go to the Mother Country, don't allow your Canadianism to be submerged when eating strawberries and cream, even if served by a Countess or a Peeress or some other gentle person of that sort.

Now this afternoon allow me first of all to express my sincere pleasure in coming to speak in the city of Toronto, where I spent a happy part of my life at the University to which I owe my education; and at visiting my native town of Whitby, from which I see two friends, Dr. Embree, who taught me, and Col. A. G. Henderson, who started me on my political career by enlisting me in the 25th Battalion in 1886. I may thank you, Colonel, for the start you gave me, and I hope you are not disappointed in Private Hamar Greenwood.

This afternoon I intend to speak very seriously of the part which the Mother Country has played, is playing, and will continue to play in this war. I can't go on to that without expressing my profound and heartfelt sympathy with those who have lost their best and bravest in the war. We live secure because these men have died for us, died as much for

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the French-Canadian habitant as for the citizens of Toronto, and for the Australians, and the South Africans as for the inhabitants of the Mother Country. No words of mine can adequately console those who have lost those gallant lads. But I am bound to say that those lads have made the Canadian name honored. It is the loyalty of those Canadian boys, and the warm-hearted sympathy of the best elements in Canada, that have made the name of Canadian, in England, in France, and throughout the world, honored as it has never been honored before.

I am going to speak of the Mother Country in general this afternoon, because it is sadly obvious to me that there are still Canadians who do not realize the mighty and major part played by that country in this great war. I remember, as if it were but an hour ago, when that fateful decision was made by the British Government to enter this war in defence of Belgium, which defence meant, and they knew it meant, the defence of this Empire, and, I think, of the civilization of the world. That was the most momentous decision in the world's history! If they had faltered in that decision for one week, it would have been too late! A million Germans would have been massed before we could have stopped them on the coasts of France, twenty-two miles from England, and before Christmas, 1914, we should have been brought to our knees. And you would have become either a German colony or a German dependency, in spite of your love of liberty and of Britain. Two things stand up as having prevented that result from having come to pass: first, that decision of the British Government, and secondly, the preparedness and efficiency of the British fleet. That fleet's supremacy has never for a moment been lost, and is greater now than ever before in history. It has kept the race dominant, and the remotest corner of the world secure, and people continue their ordinary vocations and live safe through the war, because of the protection of that fleet.

Speaking as one of your best friends, it is a deplorable thing to me that this great and rich Dominion never has contributed either ships or money to add one ounce of force to help maintain the supremacy of the fleet which keeps her inviolate to-day. It is not for me to go into controversial questions; I never did and never will; but I wish to point out that the time is coming, and quickly, when eight million of British citizens living in Canada should do something to maintain the supremacy of the fleet without which you would have no future honorable and in my mind in keeping with your allegiance to the Home Country.

To-day that fleet is incomparably larger and stronger, in men, in armament, and in ships, than ever before in its history. Every neutral ship that plies the sea to-day owes its safety to the mine sweepers of the British fleet, that clear the harbors of the oceans of the world from the menace from mines and submarines, which menace not only British shipping but all shipping. Only the mine sweeper removes that threatening disaster, and as for the other menace, the submarine menace, it is a thing of no account. I dare not tell you of the catch of submarines, but I dare tell you that the submarine peril is no longer a serious problem to the British Navy.

The Mother Country has raised practically from her great sea-faring and shipping population not only the men to keep up her regular fleet but to build up also an auxiliary fleet which is larger at present than at any other time in the history of the war. Nothing is more inspiring than the way these men have contributed seamen to patrol the sea. There is not a creek or bay in the north of Europe or along the long littoral of the Mediterranean but is patrolled by the British fleet, nosing after submarines or some other part of the fleet of Germany.

The people of this country do not realize that when this war broke out the duty fell upon the British Government of doing certain things: first, to have her fleet ready—she had it ready; secondly, to have, if necessary, an expeditionary force of six Divisions,—she had them ready, to the last man, the last horse, and the last rifle! In due time they were transported to France, without the loss of a single man or mule. You know how they did their duty. The British Government fulfilled in spirit and in letter, and more than filled the arrangement made among the Allied Powers in the event of Germany moving. They thought she would never be threatened. Then the rapidity of the massing of German forces on Belgium, their rush into France, the retreat of the British and French armies, showed the Powers that all the Powers of the world had under-estimated the German menace. For forty years they had been preparing, under the guise of friendship, to carry out the invasion of Belgium, with the ultimate desire—and let this be vivid to everybody—of crushing the one Power they feared, the British Empire. They very nearly brought us to our knees. It was the Expeditionary Force and the fleet that alone saved England from being placed in a humiliating position from which she might never have recovered. Since those days of 1914 the Old Country has roused herself, and in two years has so organized her men, her money and her output, that we have surpassed the Germans as an empire in our production of munitions and of all the various things that go to make war, except one thing, the production of men.

May I remind you that Germany has one of the largest populations, and that the British Empire is the smallest in population of any of the great Empires of the world. That is a thing no man or woman should forget, because the future, with the only possible decision of this war, will be dark indeed for us if we cannot reach up to and overtake other Empires which may in the dim and distant future—though God forbid—be our enemies.

Since the 4th of August, 1914, there has been practical unanimity among all classes of the people of the Old Country. You will hear and read in the papers of this section or party doing this, or of that section or the Irish party doing that, but it is never more than a ripple on the strong, deep, even surface of British unanimity. Take one case: no doubt the papers were full of the reproaches of conscientious objectors; it has been established that the total number of these never exceeded one thousand, and the great majority of them were put up by certain interested persons, and as soon as they were clothed in khaki they became first class British soldiers. The unanimity of the Mother Country is the best guarantee of her determination to prosecute this war to a successful close, and she will do so.

Did the world ever see a finer thing than the fact that this small country, the British Isles, contributed five million men, a voluntarily enlisted army? That was probably the most colossal contribution ever made on the voluntary system. National service has come in. I am one of those who think the British Government could have had it six months before it did. But when it came in it was a colossal success: it remedies many grievances, establishes equal sacrifice, and it does more. We have got the best reserves in the country; some are fit to be in the infantry, many are used in munition works, many are best left where they are to carry on industries.

A word now about the splendid women of England, for you will wish to hear something about their work. When I left England many had gone into munitions and other works, and they had been wonderfully successful. I don't know how we ever would have produced the enormous output,—it is always growing,—necessary for ourselves and our Allies, if it had not been for the splendid response of the women of Great Britain. That is an interesting topic for you here, because I believe it is being considered in Canada. I have visited large numbers of these munition works where women are employed: they are better in health, they have got a cheerfulness of appearance because they are doing all they can to serve their country, they are most efficient work people,

and they are the best time keepers in the history of Labor!

Now these women you can see on busses, and trucks, as lorry drivers, they take the places of the postmen, indeed in every vocation in England, I don't care what it is, where a woman can be substituted for a man she is substituted, and the man is used where he can best be used, for the army, the navy, or the factory, so we can get the maximum efficiency.

They are a fine race of people! To me it is an inspiring thing to go through England now. There are no slackers, there are no idlers, there are no motor cars—except those used for military duty or for the wounded, of whom there are a large number. I venture to say there are more motor cars going about the streets of Toronto to-day than can be found in use in all England. I am not condemning it here, because probably you don't have to pay so much for petrol, and you couldn't send it to us if you wanted to, if only because of the question of the ships we have available for such purpose. But in a country like England it is different. With probably the largest percentage of leisured people of any country in the world, the cars are either stored up or they are sent to France where they are used on war service.

You still go on in Canada as if the war were not your first consideration. In the Mother Country every mind and heart is concentrated on this war. The boys of seventeen are volunteering by the scores of thousands, to be trained so they will be fit when they are eighteen and a half, the earliest we send them into the army in Britain. The schools and universities are empty. I have never in my life seen such an attitude of mind towards war as you see in your old Mother Country to-day, unless in the old Republic of France, which has suffered agonies of death and humiliation and wounding greater in other lines up to the present. France indeed has gone through some chastening by fire, which has made that old race of men and women work and act with an inspiration and thought and emotion that I would not have considered possible as I knew France years before the war. It must be that the Celtic strain that is in that great people, the French, has made the rejuvenation of soul, and I am certain of this, that when the history of this awful war is written, there will be no man who admires sacrifice who will not touch his hat to the infantry soldier of the great Republic!

Now let me deal just in a word with the finances of the Old Country. Do you know that the Mother Country is the only one of the Allies that has been able to levy extra taxation during the war? The others cannot levy extra taxation because they have no margin of taxation. We have levied

taxation unexampled in its severity, and unexampled in the cheerfulness with which it has been paid! And we have still a large margin for ourselves and our Allies. I am sure you all realize that the financial power of the Mother Country has enabled the war to be prosecuted. Without that power the war could not go on a single day. There is not an Ally but will admit that it is the power of English finance and the English organization that has enabled them to feed their armies, to clothe their armies, to munition their armies. And what is important, which people in an inland country like Ontario may forget, it is Britain and Britain alone, with her immense shipping, that has enabled troops to be transported from one part of the earth to another, a larger army than Britain ever had being transported from point to point constantly.

In the Mother Country the rich men will pay about 8s. 6d. on the sovereign income tax. And sixty per cent. is levied on the profits of industry, subject to charges, and paid to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. And it is paid loyally and honestly. What other country has the courage to levy, and the honesty to pay a tax like that? Sixty per cent.! It staggered the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the first returns came in. He had no idea of the enormous wealth of the Old Country until this tax was levied. What also pleased him and strengthened his hands was the splendid honesty and willingness of the men who sacrificed the major part of their income to help win the battle for the British Empire.

And the fact is, the burden of this great war is day by day becoming more and more laid on the shoulders of the Mother Country and the British Empire. We have still resources of money and of men that France, alas! no longer has, that Belgium has not got, that the Slav countries like Roumania and the gallant Serbs cannot have, nor has Italy. Russia is irresistible in men, but in men only; the Russian army is clothed in khaki, and the suits are paid for by the British Government! There are gallant men there. Without Russia, don't forget that, without Russia we could not bring this war to the desirable conclusion. I am one of those who look forward to friendship with that mighty people after the war, that will be of splendid benefit to them, to us, and to the world.

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I know Canada intimately, and I know the Old Country intimately; I hope you all know me as a loyal Canadian; but I tell you, with intimate knowledge of what the Mother Country does and general knowledge of what you have splendidly done, neither you nor those in any part of this old Empire have in proportion done anything com-

parable with the sacrifices and the efforts of your Mother Country! Therefore don't for a moment fault-find with that Old Country unless you are possessed of knowledge,—and if you are possessed of knowledge, you will not find fault!

The difficulties of the British Government are the difficulties of every war Government. It is impossible to disclose publicly the reasons for the courses they take or do not take, because such a disclosure would be of priceless worth to the enemy, and a war Government of all governments must be trusted. The war Government of the Old Country, though I criticize it in the House of Commons, I still think, loyally reinforced as it has been by the unanimous and patriotic people, has been one of the marvels of the history of this world!

May I add one word about Ireland? And I stand here very feelingly as a lifelong Home Ruler,—I am a descendant of one of those old men who shouldered his useless musket and marched up to Montgomery's Tavern and got a sound thrashing by the soldiers of the British Empire. When one looks at Ireland, one almost weeps at the tragedy of that great race, splendid as soldiers, loyal as friends, successful throughout the world. As far as the little Sinn Fein revolt was concerned, it was of no importance. The principles involved were trivial, but it already was over. The cause of unrest is due to much different trouble. But remember that with all the drawbacks she has contributed to the army in proportion to her population quite as many as you and Australia have. The same problems are facing her as face you, the various Irish battalions are being wasted by the casualties of the war, and as this waste goes on, as surely as this wastage is not made up by Irishmen and Canadians there is going to be humiliation in the future when these units must be reinforced by other races not their own.

I only say this for Ireland because there are some who try to make out that Ireland is still in the throes of rebellion and discontent. That is not so. Never in her history was she more prosperous. Never had any country financial privileges such as Ireland enjoys at this moment. And I am certain that the vast majority of Irishmen, irrespective of creed, are loyal and intend to remain loyal and fight for this same Empire for which you and I are proud to fight!

Now, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I have very briefly dealt with what the Mother Country has done. After the war mighty problems will confront you and will confront her. I am one of those that hope that all this mighty energy now seen, in the making of munitions, in factories, and in the various avenues that go to the prosecution of a successful war,—I

hope all this energy of men and machinery will be conserved and will be bent to the development of the commerce of the Old Country and the British Empire. There will be an attempt by Germany and her allies after the war to win back by unscrupulous commercial methods what she is bound to lose by being defeated in war. She never can win back her colonies. It is as certain as that we sit or stand here. The Australians will never give back what they have captured in the Southern Pacific. New Zealand will never surrender Samoa. From what I know of General Smuts and General Botha in Africa, they are not men to give back the territory they have taken from Germany there. So the German starts after the war without anything outside of the German Empire; but he will do his best, I am certain, to carry on in the name of peace the most unscrupulous possible campaign against this Empire's well being. Therefore I hope that our industrial activities will be conserved to serve useful purposes in times of peace as they have been developed to serve essential purposes in time of war.

I would like to see a great Imperial Conference assembled in London before the war is over, while hearts are warm, and people realize the meaning of the Empire. I have always urged that it is of no use having an Imperial Conference unless you bring into it not only the Prime Ministers of State of the Dominions and Colonies, but the leaders of the oppositions as well, so that you can get a general consent towards some advance in Imperial unity, and that you can be certain of continuity in such policy as you adopt.

I shall not delay you further to-day. But I want to express again my gratitude at your assembling here in such large numbers giving me an opportunity of speaking to you. I appreciate the warmth of your reception and your words. Would to God that all the British Empire did as well as this splendid city of Toronto. But while they and you have done much, much remains to be done. If you have read the words—I commend them to you—of General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the General Staff, you will appreciate the need of men and more men. General Robertson, whose career is the most remarkable in the history of the British Empire—he started as a poor boy, a trooper, and now he occupies the highest position in our military fabric!—is a quiet unassuming man of few words; so when he says "We want men, and more men," he speaks with intimate knowledge. Do what you can to impress this knowledge on others.

You have sent many of your finest lads to the front. I saw some of them in my battalion in the fire trenches on Hill 60,

when I was with the Gordon Highlanders, which lost seven hundred men in the Battle of Loos. When I went to the front, the Canadian was not differentiated from the American, the West Indian, or the Brazilian. The ordinary Englishman did not know the difference. But I tell you, they know the difference now! They know the difference in the Ypres salient. That convinced the Gordon Highlanders, and they appreciated them. And when you get a Scotch regiment like the Gordon Highlanders appreciating men, they must be fine lads! And they have been fine! But you have sent them there; now the question is, are you going to desert them? Or are you going to keep the battalions filled up with Canadians, each willing to do his share to uphold the honor of this great Dominion, and to maintain the integrity of this great Empire? I hope so! I hope so! You have got the men here, and I hope my few words going into your ears, and possibly read by many more, will do something to bring to a more effective condition your mighty resources. The Mother Country has set you a great example. There is no walk of life, either military or otherwise, in my mind, in which she does not set an example. Those who refer to her as stupid and slow don't know what they are talking about! She has set an example in the determination if necessary to resort to conscription; if necessary she will muster five million of her colored subjects throughout the Empire. She will never submit to the German menace! She will never give in so long as she has a gun or a shilling left! That is the spirit of the Mother Country! And in their fight they are fighting for you, quite as much as they are fighting for themselves, and for civilization itself.

I said that we ought to have a Conference, and that the Conference is essential before the war is over. My reason for saying that is that the war, as far as the Home Country is concerned, is being carried on by the soldiers and sailors under a National Service Board, which is unique in the kingdom as far as touches the distinctive raising of men, so that the Home Country Cabinet is in a position to discuss affairs and deal with questions that arise after the war. I am all for the Conference now. And at that Conference, Mr. Chairman, and in conclusion, I know the people of that Old Country will welcome you to attend with the warm emotion born of a common sacrifice and with a glowing hope for the glorious and united future of the great British Empire, which, in the words of Lord Rosebery, is, and remains, "the greatest secular instrument for good the world has ever seen."