(October 4, 1913.)

Imperial Relations.

By the Right Hon. Herbert Samuel, M.P.,*
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At a special luncheon of the Canadian Club held on Saturday, 4th Oct., the Right Hon. Mr. Samuel said:

Mr. President and *gentlemen*,—Let me thank you in the first instance very cordially for the warmth and heartiness of the reception with which you have honored me. I am now approaching the end of an interesting tour through Canada. I have visited all the chief cities of the West; I have motored for some hundreds of miles over the prairies; I have seen the processes of your agriculture, from the breaking up of the virgin soil of the prairie to the handling of the grain in the elevators; I have seen some of the development of your manufactures. And wherever I have met Canadians, they all say to me: "Well, sir, what do you think of our country?" (Laughter.) And I will tell you one thing that has impressed me very greatly. The vast expanse of prairies—that I knew I should see. And the remarkable inflow of population into the West and into cities such as this—that I knew I should see evidences of. But I found to my surprise the great development which has taken place, within the last three or four years in some instances, in the cities of the West. I found that such places as, not only Winnipeg, but Regina and Calgary, Edmonton and Saskatoon, Vancouver and Victoria had developed, and had reached a higher stage of civic life than I think any of us in the Mother Land knew was the case. And most satisfactory of all, this development has been not only in material things but one finds there a fine and vigorous civic spirit; one finds there that men who are at the head of things are zealously interested in their schools and in building up great new universities; they are looking to the beauty of their cities, the dignity of their public buildings, the charm of

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their parks. Here also, as far as one can gather in a visit which has necessarily been brief, here also the same spirit animates Canadians in the older Provinces. All this is a cheering thing to find, to one who comes from the Old Country. There we thought there was danger in these new lands, where men face vast and urgent practical problems, that there would be developed too much attention to material things, that men would be wholly given up to materialism. In some aspects our civilization is too materialistic. There is a fine saying of Emerson's, which is pregnant and truthful: "Things are in the saddle, and ride mankind." And whenever one finds the effort on the part of communities to put things in their proper place, subordinated to and dominated by the higher human interests, that, I say, is an encouraging and hopeful sign. (Hear, hear, and applause.) That is what has struck me in the cities of the West.

I have heard it said here that Canadian civilization is on the whole, less commercialized than American civilization, south of the boundary line. I know not enough of either Canadian or American life to make it other than an impertinence on my part to make any such generalization. But if it be true, or largely true, that your life here is less commercialized, then I say, that is a precious distinction; cherish it always! (Applause.)

But naturally the circumstance that strikes an observer first, is the great material development of Canada. We are very conscious of that growth in England. The social and economic links that bind together the Mother Country and this Dominion are growing stouter every year. Our population in the Mother Country is not stagnant. Our own increase of population is about half a million of people every year, and we can afford to send you many of our best; and gladly do we send you a large outflow of immigrants from us, to be an inflow for you. All our towns and cities, almost all our villages, have some connection in Canada with immigrants who have left us, I remember, not long ago, in the North of England where my constituency is situated, I was changing trains at Darlington station, in Durham, at midnight, when I saw gathered on the platform a crowd of people; I heard singing, and walking down I saw a group of twenty or thirty young people, with their baggage, starting as emigrants to become settlers here; and with them was a group of friends, the choir of their church, singing hymns to bid them farewell as the train was coming in and as it went out. What was touching, and impressed me, was the spirit in which these people

went out to face what to them was a great adventure, a great change. But they come to a country where on the whole life is easier than in the Mother Land, where the prospects are better, where still they find themselves speaking the British language, under the British flag, among British institutions. These young people are links, they are channels which carry the knowledge of Canada to the Old World.

Things are very different from what they were thirty or forty years ago, when the Dominions, or colonies as they were called then, seemed very far away, their affairs were almost unnoticed, their statesmen were unknown, their views and opinions ignored. Now, their opinions, their actions, their people are very constantly in the thoughts of the people of the Mother Land. And all this must have its effect upon the organization of our Imperial system. It is upon that I propose to address you briefly to-day.

Ten years ago there was started in England a great political campaign. I do not propose to enter upon matters of controversy, either Canadian or British, but I may be permitted to remind you of the fact that ten years ago there was started by a great statesman, whom we all respect, even if we don't agree with him, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, (applause) a campaign which I believe was inspired mainly by the sincere desire to promote the permanent unity of the British Empire. His proposals became the subject of acute party controversy. I would ask your leave to-day to tell you, not in a controversial spirit, and very briefly, what our reasons are, in the Liberal party to which I belong, the British Liberal party, for opposing the proposals of Mr. Chamberlain; although we claim to be as eager as he to maintain and strengthen the bonds of union between the various portions of the British Empire. We were told that unless we agreed to change our fiscal system, and impose taxes which do not now exist, upon wheat and other articles from foreign countries, while giving a preference on grain brought from the British Dominions the result would be disaster to the Empire. We, on our part, held that without that the British Empire could be maintained, and did not fear that without that the British Empire might crumble. That became a great party issue at the elections.

That reminds me of an incident, which may be unimportant, but which is interesting, because it happens to be true. (Laughter.) In our country there are many music halls, as you have them here, with such names as "Empire," "Hippodrome," "Coliseum," and so forth. At Stockton, near my constituency, in North Yorkshire, during a recent election, a lady

canvasser was going about, and was visiting a home where the voter chanced to be out but the wife was in—we still hear in these days of woman not having the vote, (laughter) and I think in view of the militant suffrage agitation going on it is likely to be a very long time before Parliament will grant woman suffrage—this canvasser, who was working in the interests of the Unionist candidate, was trying to induce the woman to urge her husband to vote for food taxation, "because if we don't have it," she said, "the Empire will fall to pieces." The wife replied, "Really, ma'am, it would make no difference to me, because I always go to the Hippodrome." (Laughter.)

Well, I tell you that, not only because I am assured by people in my constituency that the incident actually occurred, but also because it illustrates a spirit which exists among our people generally, a profound scepticism as to whether the Empire would fall to pieces if we don't adopt any particular policy. But we who opposed the policy of Imperial preference, and oppose it still, do so in the interests of the Empire itself, because, whether right or wrong, we are ourselves profoundly and quite sincerely convinced that it would be deleterious to the British Empire in the long run.

So far as foodstuffs are concerned, the Dominion and the Mother Land stand in the relation of seller and buyer. In one sense their interests are the same. A seller would be very sorry if there were no buyer, and a buyer would be sorry if there were no willing seller. Each has a common interest in that which concerns the prosperity of the other. But also, in the commercial world, the interests of seller and buyer are contrary to one another. The seller wants the highest price for his commodity, and the buyer wants to purchase as cheap as possible. So, in a sense, their interests are opposed, and this is a fact which must be faced when we are dealing with the commercial aspect of the question, which is not the most important aspect, but this aspect is the one which is at issue when we are discussing matters of tariff reform.

The interests of the Dominion and of the Mother Country, when dealing with food materials, are not the same, but contrary to one another, because Canada, for example, wants to get the highest price she can for her grain in the markets of the world, while the Mother Country wishes to get her grain as cheap as possible.

Secondly, in regard to manufactures: We in the Mother Country want the Dominions, as far as possible, to be a market for our manufactures, and to a great extent they are. But you want, and quite properly, to see your manufacturers able to

meet the needs of your own consumers here within your own boundaries. Both these desires are perfectly right and proper, but to a certain extent they are contrary. If you have a system of bargaining of any kind, you will sooner or later come up against that divergence of interest. You cannot make political arrangements which will be satisfactory, on the one hand to the grain growers, who want higher prices, and on the other hand to the grain consumers, who want lower prices; on the one hand to our manufacturers, who want to supply their products to your people, and on the other hand to your manufacturers, who want to keep the market for the products of your own country. We should each of us be putting great and vital economic interests in the hands of the other party, our own interests into your hands, and your interests into our hands.

Our view,—we may be wrong,—is that we should each find local interest conflicting with Imperial ties. Whenever the Chancellor of the Exchequer at Westminster, or whenever the Finance Minister at Ottawa, wanted to modify any detail of these arrangements, the Chancellor would have to get the consent of Australia and New Zealand, of South Africa and of Canada, and the Finance Minister would have to get the consent of the Governments and the Parliaments at Westminster and the other capitals. So you, and the others, and we, should feel that our own interests were not in our own hands; we believe that closer contact might mean, in the long run, nothing more than greater friction. (Applause.)

There is another consideration which has weighed with us very greatly; we have, as you know, in the Mother Land, a great mass of poverty,—we have millions of people who live always only just on the safe side of destitution and sometimes crossing that line. Sickness, or a brief period of unemployment, may plunge them into penury. We are dealing with many of these social problems in a vigorous, practical and successful manner. (Applause.) But still the fact remains, that we have this great mass of poverty. I suppose it is true to say that man for man, the English people are not so well off in pounds, shillings and pence,—in dollars, in actual income—as the people of Canada, for example. Now, we hold the view, rightly or wrongly, that a tax upon foreign grain supplies would mean an inevitable increase in the price of all grain to the consumers. This is not the occasion to argue that economic proposition. But we believe that that result would follow the imposing of such a tax. If the price were not raised, we do not see where the encouragement to the Canadian farmer would arise,

which is one object of the proposal, for if the prices were not raised he would not have any more inducement to grow grain. And if the price were raised, then it would be imposing a fresh burden upon our poor, and to that we are unalterably opposed. (Applause.) Not only because we think that it is wrong to make life harder for those whose lives are already too heavily burdened. That in itself is sufficient, it is sufficient for most of us. But we do not want our people to feel that the Empire imposes this fresh burden. We do not want this position to arise, that if bad times come in the Old Country, if people in days of distress find it more difficult to live, that anyone should be able to go to the mass of the people of the Old Country, and say to them, "Yes, you are suffering partly because prices are higher, partly because there is a tax upon imported food. If you are suffering economic stress, you are suffering for the sake of the Empire and the Dominions." That would be bad for the Dominions, bad for our people, and bad for the Empire as a whole.

Perhaps I have been led further than I intended to go. It is not my intention to argue these propositions but to state them. I am anxious only to make this plain, that so far as the party is concerned to which I have the honor to belong, and to which I have belonged all my life, so far as the Liberal party goes in England,—and this is not necessarily the same thing as the Liberal party in Canada (laughter), and as I pointed out to the Canadian Club in Winnipeg it is not necessarily a different thing (laughter), so far as the English Liberal party is concerned, if we have opposed Mr. Chamberlain's program, and stood resolutely against it, it is not from indifference to the Empire as a whole. Still less is it from hostility to the Empire. But it is because we believe it would be counter to the fundamental principles of Imperial statesmanship, contrary to the interests of our people at home, at the heart of the Empire, and contrary to a sound policy of Imperialism, to run the risk of placing in antagonism to one another local interests and Imperial ties. (Hear, hear, and applause.) We do not feel that a policy which is liable to create an antagonism between Imperial patriotism and the economic advantage of the masses of our people can ever be made a stable basis for Imperial unity.

It is not on the economic, but on the political side that progress may be made. I for one think our Imperial constitution has certainly not reached its final form. The constitutional links which make for Imperial unity, apart from sentiment, and public opinion, which after all are the most powerful of

all, are four. There is, first, the Monachy, which is common to the whole Empire. Happily preserved through a thousand years of history, it forms a bond uniting all portions of the King's dominions, both the white portions of the Empire and those great parts which lie in tropical and sub-tropical latitudes. And owing to the devotion to the constitution, and the splendid sense of duty, of the occupants of the throne, especially during the last three generations, the Monarchy now, I believe, stands more firmly based than at any time in the whole history of our Empire. (Applause.)

Secondly, there is the supreme legal tribunal, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, on which representatives of the Dominions sit, which I believe is regarded as a perfectly impartial and highly competent court. I have, indeed, heard in Canada severe criticism of the Privy Council by one legal gentleman; I found that he had quite recently lost two cases, which may account for his views. (Laughter.)

Thirdly, there is the Imperial Conference, which meets once in four years, composed of the Prime Ministers of the Mother Country and the Dominions, and other Ministers, and which debates subjects of vital importance to the whole Empire. It arrives at conclusions which are by no means ignored, but are mostly carried into effect; but it has no executive authority.

Lastly, there is the Committee of Imperial Defence, which is mainly composed of representatives of the Home Land, but which is developing more and more into an organ of the Imperial body politic. Dominion Ministers attend its meetings from time to time, and keep in close contact with its proceedings, and while there they have an opportunity of keeping in touch with those who are directing the foreign policy of the Empire. But the Committee itself deals not with policy but with methods.

These are the four constitutional links of Empire, these four and no others. The Dominions have great influence in directing the policy of the Empire as a whole, but they have no formal and direct share in its constitutional working. There is no central Legislature, no central Executive formally representative of all portions of the Empire. But when you attempt to solve this vast problem you find yourself faced with the greatest of difficulties. It is the difficulty of reconciling local autonomy with any form of central government. This the Mother Land recognizes quite as fully as the Dominions—I say, with all sincerity—that the local freedom of the Dominions to manage their own affairs is absolutely essential to the well-being of the Empire. (Applause.)

You, Mr. Chairman, spoke of me as a representative in the flesh of Downing Street. Well, of Downing Street in a sense, but let me assure you, not of the old spirit that prevailed in Downing Street two or three generations ago. (Hear, hear.). That is gone; that is dead. We realize, not only in the interests of the Dominions themselves, but also of the Empire as a whole, that Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, must manage, free from all interference of any kind, their own local affairs. The freedom of the Dominions is the strength of the Empire. (Hear, hear.) The Roman Empire died largely because its government was too much concentrated at the centre. The British Empire lives, and will endure, because of these living, autonomous institutions in the parts. (Applause.)

We are faced, I say, by problems of formidable difficulty whenever we attempt to reconcile, however tentatively, the freedom of the parts of the Empire with central government. I believe the problem is not insoluble. But I express, not only my own opinions, but I am sure, those of the Govenment to which I belong, when I say that we recognize that no error could be greater than the error of pressing these problems to a conclusion before they are ripe. No folly could be greater than that of a statesman who, eager for glory, should sit down and attempt to pen a complete and logical constitution for the Empire as a whole. If a really Imperial constitutional organization comes, it will come as our British institutions usually come, not by manufacture, but by growth. (Applause.) And any steps that are taken must be tentative and cautious, so that if they are found to be in a wrong direction they can be changed before harm is done.

But so far as the spirit is concerned, I can give you the assurance that whenever Canada is ready to take a step forward, and whenever the sister States, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, are ready to draw together in some form of central union, you will find, I believe, in the Mother Country on all hands the most sympathetic desire to meet the wishes of the Dominions.

Then, lastly, our system of Imperial relations must touch the question of defence. There must be a system of defence. (Applause.) And if there is a system of defence, it must be adequate for its purpose. The very reason that makes us maintain defences at all must make us maintain them on a scale commensurate with the object they have in view, to maintain the security of our dominions.

But our defences should not be exaggerated. We do not hold in England the view, that the bigger our navy is, the better it is. We regard armaments as in themselves not a good thing, but a bad thing; a necessary evil, but an evil; an evil, but still necessary. We have no desire that our armaments should be swollen beyond the actual need, that we should call upon any of our people to bear burdens heavier than the case requires. But we have to consider questions in council week by week of international relations. We, members of the Imperial Government, would feel we should be doing less than our duty if we failed to provide against possible risks. In these questions we have to consider not only the international situation of the moment; friendships are not always enduring; try as we will, our efforts may be defeated. The Imperial Government of Great Britain harbors no aggressive design of any sort against any people on the habitable globe. (Applause.) Our only object is to maintain the peace of the world. Our Empire, Heaven knows, is vast enough to content the most ambitious, and to satisfy any one with the vastness of its area. But pacific as we may be, and desirous to be on good terms with all the world, we are never quite sure that quarrels will not arise. History shows through all its pages that they may come, swift as a storm out of a summer sky. It is too late then to provide your defences. And surely though we may desire to secure permanent peace throughout the world, it is folly in this stage of the world's development to act in practice as though the permanent reign of peace had already been securely obtained. Therefore it is with us in the Mother Land a first principle of national policy to make secure the command of the sea. (Applause.) For that we hold to be vital. This is the policy which I think is equally held by both the great political parties in our State. We are burdened with a heavy National Debt, created mostly by wars in the past, wars out of which our Empire took its rise. But great as is that debt, and heavy as are other demands upon us, needing vast expenditures to meet them,—and of late years the taxation in the United Kingdom has been very greatly increased,—yet in spite of this, the people of the Old Land you may be quite sure, the British people, would spend their last penny rather than lose or even risk losing the command of the sea. (Applause.)

I do not intend to express any opinion upon the matter which is in controversy here in Canada, but only to express my belief, which I think is widely shared among members of both parties here, that the present provision for the defence of the Empire, and the present organization for the defence of the Empire, cannot be regarded as their final form. It cannot be right that a burden which is borne for the common advantage

should press upon one pair of shoulders alone. (Applause.) But what action the Dominions should take, or whether they should take any action, this as we fully realize is a matter for them, and for them alone. It is a subject vitally important, indeed, in the interest of the Empire as a whole. But the principle of Dominion self-government, in which, as I have said, we believe as firmly as you, leads us to be reticent, and to wait patiently till the various parts of the Empire shall decide for themselves what they will do.

I have spoken to you today of Imperial Relations, economic, constitutional, strategic,—all these are manifestations in practice of an underlying will; the will to be one. (Applause.) And I have in my own mind a confident belief that not only is the unity of the Empire to the interest of its parts; and not only is it a matter of sentimental attachment of the Mother Country to the Dominions, and of the Dominions to the Mother Country; but also that the maintenance of that unity, taking the matter at its broadest,—I believe that the maintenance of that unity is to the advantage of the world as a whole. (Applause.) Nearly one-fourth of the land area of the world is comprised within the British Empire. Within this Empire, within these vast dominions the nations and tribes and peoples that compose it are living at peace with one another. So long as there exists this vast political unity, that peace will continue, and history shows that its influence on the world beyond tends to ensure the peace and to promote the abiding prosperity of the rest of mankind. (Long applause.)