

(January 30, 1922.)

Canada and Foreign Policy

BY PROF. O. D. SKELTON*

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Canadian Club,—I must thank your chairman for his very kindly words. I am glad that he took occasion, seeing it is the City of Toronto I am speaking in, to balance the fact that I have had some connection with Sir Wilfred Laurier by referring to the fact that I come from the city of Sir John A. Macdonald, and happen to fill the chair which is known as the John A. Macdonald chair of Political Science. One of my friends thinks that Sir John sometimes turns in his grave if he ever thinks of it.

I quite agree with your chairman that beyond questions of national policy there has been very much less difference between parties than one would imagine. Parties when in power have been much less different from the other parties when in power than one would have imagined from their talk when in opposition.

I must thank you for the honor you have done me in asking me to address a gathering such as this. It has been a great pleasure to see some old friends here and to meet some new friends.

As Mr. Macdonnell remarked, the subject of foreign policy seems perhaps a somewhat abstract and remote question. At least it would have been a few years ago, but it is very rapidly becoming of extreme importance, direct and impressing importance. I cannot to-day take up in the time at our disposal more than one or two angles of that question, and it is not so much a question of what we should do on any particular occasion as consideration of the machinery of control of foreign policy that I wish to discuss with you.

The subject was suggested to me in the reading of a statement by Lloyd George made in London last month. Before reading that I might quote a sentence from the official statement issued after the proceedings of the Imperial Conference of 1920. It was stated after that Imperial Confer-

*An added interest is given to this address by the fact that the speaker was selected to accompany Premier King to the London Imperial Conference.

ence "that the discussions revealed the unanimous opinion as to the main lines to be followed by British policy and the deep conviction that the whole weight of the Empire should be centred behind the understanding and common action in foreign affairs."

Now I quote Mr. Lloyd George's statement; "The Dominions since the war have been given equal rights with Great Britain in the control of the foreign policy of the Empire. The machinery is the machinery of the British Government, the Foreign Office, the ambassador. The machine must remain here. The instrument of the foreign policy of the Empire is the British Foreign Office. That has been accepted by all the Dominions as inevitable. But they claim a voice in determining the lines of our policy. The advantage to us in Britain is that joint control means joint responsibility, and when the burden of Empire has become so vast it is well that we should have the shoulders of the young giants under the burden to help us along."

Now that is the question which I wish to bring before you to-day. It is a big question on which there are many angles, and questions on which there will undoubtedly be differences of opinion, but it is a subject to which we must give attention. If that statement is true, if there is to be one foreign policy for the nation, a policy shaped in some measure by the Dominions, but executed through the British Foreign Office, a single policy for which every part of the Empire must accept joint and several responsibility, then I think there has been a complete reversal in these last few months of the line upon which the British Empire has been developed for the last 50 years. A revolution, silent, it may be, casual, but complete. Without any authority or ratification of Parliament, without any discussion we have apparently been committed to what I should consider is a very distinct reversal of the line on which the development of the British Empire and the development of Canadian self-government has progressed. Whether or not that statement is true or will be true is the particular point which I would like to bring before you.

It is significant that Lloyd George made this statement in his speech on the Irish treaty, in the discussion of the status of the Irish Free State. Dominion status has been a very vague thing. No two people would just agree on details, although the general lines may be fairly obvious. But if the status of Ireland is to be the status of a Dominion, with certain qualifications, English statesmen, when they are considering the claims of Canada or Australia to certain powers

will always, as Lloyd George has, have one eye on Ireland. The status of Canada, the status of Australia, will be considered hereafter as it was considered by Lloyd George in this statement, with a very direct consideration of the fact that similar concessions or relationships were expected in the case of Ireland.

Now take that phrase of Lloyd George's, "the foreign policy of the British Empire." What is meant by the foreign policy? What is meant by the British Empire? These are two pretty large subjects to take up in half an hour, but I would like to invite your attention to a brief consideration of both terms. What do we mean by "foreign policy?" The term is a very general one. It would be about as hard to define as it would be to define domestic policy. Foreign policy is simply the attitude which the government of a country takes on questions which come up between it and other states. To take a specific instance, the foreign policy of Argentina would consist of the attitude of the Argentine government upon, let us say, the question of Japanese immigration into Argentine; or a dispute with the republic of Brazil as to fishery rights and boundary waters; or tariff arrangements with Chile, or an attack made by a German submarine on an Argentine merchantman.

Now, not to go further into specific detail, I think a survey of what is covered by the term "foreign policy" in the case of every country would lead us to three or four conclusions. In the first place the foreign policy of every country consists commonly of affairs with its neighbors. The foreign affairs of Poland, the foreign affairs of Sweden, of Roumania, of Chile, are commonly affairs in which their nearest neighbors are concerned. That is inevitable because of the relative frequency of intercourse and possibility of friction in the case of nearby neighbors.

In the second place I think we would observe that foreign policy deals commonly with economic questions. It is largely questions of trade and commerce that are the subject matter of foreign policy. Questions of trade and tariff, questions of oil concessions, of control of coal areas, questions of payment of pecuniary claims, come up most frequently for discussion between governments. For example the foreign affairs of China are very much under discussion at the present time; down at Washington what they are discussing is primarily a question of, who are to have the right to develop certain timber areas, coal areas, who are to have certain fishery concessions, railway concessions, and so on.

Of course questions of this kind are frequently intensified by personal and racial friction, and the military arrangements that are considered necessary to carry them out. These may dominate and for a time obscure the economic interests at stake between the two countries, or the citizens of these countries.

Again we would observe, I think, the complexity, the intensity, the difficulty, of foreign policy varies according to the situation of the country. No two countries have the same neighbors and the same problems. To no two countries do foreign affairs present the same difficulty and the same importance. We perhaps are a little prone to take too much credit to ourselves because of the fact that we are not as others, Europeans, are, and that we do not get in as many foreign complications as our friends across the ocean. Well, that is true, but not wholly due to any moral superiority on our part. It is due to the fact that we on this side of the ocean are comparatively young peoples. We have not inherited century-long feuds and traditions. We have not any lost provinces in Italy. Then too, on this American continent there is lots of elbow-room, nationally and individually for the capacities of everybody. It is not as it is in Europe where nations and individuals are crowded and where tempers are naturally more ruffled. Therefore, we cannot, I think, take it as an instance of moral superiority on our part; that does not remove the consideration that as a matter of fact we are less likely to quarrel with our neighbors, and it would be foolish for us to throw away the natural advantages which the accidents of the Atlantic and Pacific and the comparatively pioneer position of our country have bestowed on us.

Again I think a survey of the foreign policy of different countries would show that it is very difficult to disassociate the control of foreign policy from the control of domestic policy. To a considerable extent foreign policy is simply a projection of domestic policy. You have certain views as to what particular industries should be protected. You carry that out in trade treaties and tariff arrangements. You have certain views as to the industrial organization of your people and that is reflected in your immigration laws, maybe in your decision to adopt a policy of exclusion towards certain peoples. And not only does foreign policy to a certain extent arise out of domestic policy, not only does it seem inseparable in the last analysis from domestic policy, but the reverse is equally true. The control of foreign policy involves the control of domestic policy.

Perhaps that can be most clearly illustrated by reference to the question of defence. Some years ago it was suggested that to deal with certain Imperial questions a council should be established in London on which all parts of the Empire would be represented to have control solely of foreign policy and defence, leaving the parliaments in control of domestic matters. Now if that proposal had found support on any other ground I think experience of the war would have shown how difficult it is to draw the dividing line, to disassociate the control of foreign policy from control of domestic policy. Wars in our time are not carried on by small bodies of mercenaries a long distance from their native country and in a way that disturbs very little the ordinary development of life. Modern wars are wars of whole states, whole peoples, one with another, and not only between fighting men, but by means of hunger blockades and aeroplanes and gas attacks, exposing even civilians to bodily harm. In modern warfare the most drastic actions are deemed necessary for controlling in the most minute fashion the habits of life of the people. Any one who controls the foreign policy, who controls the defence policy more particularly of a country must in the last resort control minutely its domestic policy, must affect the most intimate matters in the life of the people. We might, I think, even conclude that the foreign policy deals in the first place commonly with neighbors' affairs, lines of defence, disputes; in the second place it is concerned largely with economic questions; that it varies in importance and intensity with the situation in various cases, and that it is extremely difficult to disentangle the control of foreign policy from the control of domestic policy.

Passing on to the second phrase in Mr. Lloyd George's statement, the foreign policy of the British Empire. It is difficult to define foreign policy. It is impossible to define British Empire. There is nothing like the British Empire in the world's history. It is an extraordinary unparalleled achievement, a development without precedent in previous political relationships. While it is difficult to define the present status of the British Empire, one thing, I think, is clear, that there has been a steady development from centralized unity to local autonomy. One hundred years ago the British Empire was really a unit, a single state, ultimately controlled in every field, of home affairs, political affairs, by a single parliament, the British Parliament. But as the different parts of Empire grew in numbers, in wealth, in distinct interest, in a realization of these distinct interests, they came

to set up separate machinery to deal with their separate interests, came to develop separate policies reflecting the differences of situation and of interest that existed. There came to be a growth of new centres, a decentralization of control instead of a single controlling parliament. Instead of a single state we have gradually had the development of a group of states, until the British Empire is to-day more nearly than it is anything else a League of Free States, owing allegiance to a common King. That process has gone to a perfectly logical and even conclusion. There are many points in which the situation is contradictory, but broadly speaking I think it is generally agreed that that is the line along which we have been developing.

Now that growth of self-government has not been confined to domestic policy. There was a time when it was thought possible that self-government should be limited to domestic policy and that foreign policy should be wholly controlled by the British Government. That, however, was found to be impracticable and step by step the various local governments have been occupying the twilight zone between the colonial and Imperial authority, have been taking on powers and responsibilities in relation to various questions that come under the head of foreign affairs. We perhaps do not always realize how far we have gone in the Dominions and particularly in Canada in the control of foreign affairs. We are accustomed to interpret foreign affairs as meaning something they have over in Europe, something they deal with in London and Paris, but that we do not have on this continent at all. Our relations with other countries are too homely to be given that somewhat magnificent title. We do not realize that we have been dealing with foreign affairs in the relations we have had with other countries. Sometimes we are inclined to restrict our conception of foreign affairs to matters that are really no concern of ours at all. But if we look around and consider the matters that governments have been dealing with and consider what are denominated foreign affairs in other countries, I think we will be struck by the extent of the field which the Dominions and particularly Canada now occupy.

As for example, we negotiate for Reciprocity with the United States, that is a question of foreign affairs; when we set up a boundary commission to deal with power and navigation along our boundary, when we discuss the division of Niagara power, or the establishment of a St. Lawrence waterway, we are dealing with questions of foreign affairs. When

Hon. Mr. Lemieux went to Japan to take up the question of Japanese immigration in Canada, when Hon. Mr. Rowell goes to Geneva to take part in the deliberations of the League of Nations, we are, of course, dealing with foreign affairs. We are all familiar with the rapid expansion that has come in that direction since the war, and come particularly by the channel of distinct and responsible control of Canadian authorities of whatever participation we have in foreign affairs. I refer of course to the distinct representation of Canada at Paris in the Versailles Treaty, the distinct representation of the Dominions in the League of Nations, the provisions for the appointment of a Canadian minister at Washington, and other incidents of development of the last two or three years.

For example, I do not know of any more striking instance of that development than the clause of the League of Nations covenant which refers to the mandates question, when you find in one clause of the Peace of Versailles, in the League of Nations covenant, provision for a mandate for German South West Africa shall fall to the Union of South Africa, that the mandate for German New Guiana shall fall to Australia, that the mandate for Baku shall fall to the British Empire. When you see this distinct international recognition of severalty and distinctive national standing you perceive the advance to which we have already proceeded.

Now it would seem to me that the probable future is to lie in the continuance of this policy—recognition of the entity, that each part of the British Empire has its own problems and must make its own policy, that there are many questions of relationships with other countries which primarily concern each part of the British Empire, and that the British Foreign Office must deal with these affairs peculiarly through the Canadian parliament when these questions concern Canada.

Now what relationship to that development is there in the statement of Mr. Lloyd George. If Mr. Lloyd George's statement of the fact and of the future policy were to be taken fully and literally it would mean that all the relationships of the parts of the Empire would have to be dealt with through one agency. It would mean that every relationship between Canada and the United States, Canada and Japan, Canada and Italy, as well as other relationships between Great Britain and France and Russia and so on would have to come up for consideration and settlement before some joint parliament or cabinet or as Mr. Lloyd George proposes, for settlement by the British Foreign Office, with such consultation

as may be provided by the Imperial Conference or cabinet discussions.

No one, however strongly he might be inclined theoretically to a unified Empire, is going to propose that any central authority should take control of many of the questions which Canada for example has in the past been dealing with in her own right. No one is going to propose that it would be logical to conclude from Mr. Lloyd George's statement that Britain and Australia and South Africa should join in settling our problem of the St. Lawrence waterway, or other issues. That would be the logical outcome of an absolutely unified Empire and policy of Empire. What Mr. Lloyd George has in mind is something not quite so sweeping. It is simply that in what are problems of Britain's foreign affairs, the Dominions should assume a measure of control and a measure of responsibility; that in the commitments which Great Britain undertakes in Asia, Europe or Africa, there should be a policy which would bind the whole Empire and every part of the Empire, and every part of the Empire would be obliged to back an execution. It would mean, I think, a sham control and real responsibility. Mr. Mackenzie King goes over to London, sits in at Downing street in a meeting of Imperial Prime Ministers, listens to an hour's discussion by Lord Curzon on foreign affairs in which he surveys mankind from China to Peru, says yes, that sounds very nice, that is all right, and goes away. Six months later the British Foreign Office says, "You must remember, or perhaps you do not remember, that when we were discussing this question some six months ago you signed some blank checks which you left to fill out. Here is your check. Are you going to welch?" I do not think there is any possibility of the policy of Britain on certain questions being controlled or determined, particularly in the essential matters of detail by day to day negotiation by representatives of the Dominions, certainly not by so casual a method as an occasional meeting of Premiers at an Imperial Conference. So that is why I am inclined to say that the control would be a sham and the responsibility would be very real.

Well some people may say, granted that policy of separate control of foreign affairs has gone pretty far, we do not think it should go any further. They may say that we must make a dividing line between certain kinds of foreign problems that each part of the Empire could deal with separately, and other questions must be dealt with jointly, on which there must be absolutely a unified policy. That is a position which may

be taken and which has much more strength than the previous position. Well, is it possible to draw a line of that kind? Some people will say the questions that are likely to lead to war or which involve armed defence should be settled by a common body. Well, you cannot divide foreign affairs into two categories, one a kind that is likely to lead to war and another that is not. You never can tell what kind of a question is going to lead to serious friction and ultimate warfare. It is not merely the kind of question; it depends on who your antagonist is, the question of the intensity and importance of the issue, under which particular set of circumstances, that determines in a large measure whether peaceful methods and conciliation are possible.

The dividing line may be drawn another way. It may be said there are some questions of low policy and some of high policy. There are some matters that it is all right for the different parts of the Empire to deal with because unity of action is not essential in these particulars, but there are other matters of foreign policy in which unity is absolutely essential, and while we would not propose that any central authority should be set up as regards matters over which the Dominions have already asserted and secured control, matters of high international policy should be left to a single authority to carry out. Well, the trouble with drawing that line is that it is wholly a matter of accident where you draw it. It is not drawn according to any logical or systematic division, but according to the accident of when you are speaking. Twenty years ago any one considering that point would have drawn the line at the powers that Canada enjoyed up to that time. Now we have added considerably to our powers. We would draw the line at the point which we have reached to-day. But there cannot be any finality or clearness in that division of territory.

Perhaps to make that more specific, one frequently hears that it would be absolutely out of the question to have more than one policy in the Empire on certain questions of lines of political relationships with other states. Well, throw your minds back some years and you will find precisely the same attitude taken with regard to commercial affairs, with regard to those fields of foreign relations as to which there is practically no division of opinion to-day on the advisability of their being controlled by the separate parts of the Empire. When for example you hear Earl Grey, formerly colonial secretary, stating in substance that it was out of the question

for there to be more than one commercial policy for the British Empire, that that commercial policy must be determined by the British Government, that when the British Government was protectionist the whole Empire must be, and that when the British Government saw the error of its way and adopted free trade it would be unthinkable that any Dominion should be allowed to go on in its protectionist errors with Britain treading the free trade path, you realize that the same line was attempted to be drawn then. And yet to-day that whole field in which Earl Grey thought there must be absolute unity, has been assigned to the different parts of the Empire.

Well, I do not think it is possible to divide foreign affairs according to whether they will or will not lead to war or as to whether they are matters which inherently are high or low, or require unity or do not require unity. Yet I think most of us would agree that a line can be drawn between those matters that primarily concern only one part of the Empire and those matters that may be of common concern. It may be very difficult in actual practice to draw that line, but theoretically it exists. I think in many cases it will have to be applied.

The policy of separate responsibility and control of foreign policy for each part of the British Empire does not involve isolation. It does not mean we are to try to go our own way without regard to the interests and needs of other parts of the British Empire or other nations. We are a member of the British Empire. We are bound by common traditions, common sentiments, common sacrifices and many common interests to the other parts of the British Empire and we are not only a member in that great league but we are a member of the wider league of nations, and whether through that particular mechanism or otherwise we doubtless must continue to take our part, accept our responsibility, to recognize our interdependence, with all the nations of the world, a part that of course will not be very great after all. We are only a nation of eight millions, and it will not rest with us solely to determine the fate and fortune of the world. We have not been born to put these details that are out of joint wholly to rights. But a modest part, and an intelligent and informed part, we must take. I think then we might take the position that there are certain matters of foreign policy that primarily concern each part of the Empire and should be controlled by its people through parliament. There may be other questions of foreign policy which by their

magnitude, by the particular circumstances in which they arise, which mean that more than the interests of one part are involved, require a certain common consideration or common consultation. Now just how to determine what these instances are is a difficult problem, and what machinery to be employed is a matter that will require much discussion. It might be that these matters of common interest would be discussed beforehand with any Imperial conferences, the League of Nations discussions, the different parts of the Empire, different nations would try to learn each other's views and try to come together and adopt as far as possible a common policy.

There is another way, however, that is of special interest at the present; it may be that in the pursuit of what are primarily its own foreign affairs one part of the Empire may enter into certain agreements and the question of whether or not those issues are to be considered common interests of other parts of the Empire will have to be considered by the other parts. We have a situation of that kind in the French treaty. Here Lloyd George's practice has been somewhat different from his theory. Three weeks after stating that there must be only one foreign policy for all the Empire, that not only must the British Foreign Office conduct it but all parts be bound by it, he agrees to insert in the treaty a provision that this shall not be binding on any part of the Dominion unless expressly ratified by its parliament. That is a distinct variation from the doctrine laid down in the Irish speech of a few weeks before. Now of course the fact is that several Dominions are free technically to decide whether or not they will follow the path of British policy in such respects. Whether or not they will accept the arrangements that have been made, and recognize that the issues are matters of common interest on which there should be common policy is a matter to be decided in each specific case. I think it would take a good deal of argument to convince the majority of the people of Canada that their interests would be concerned in such a treaty as Lloyd George is endeavoring to arrange at the present time. The treaty binds the Dominions as well as Britain for ten, twenty years, to practically guard the bank of the Rhine, to guard Poland against Russia, to agree in advance as to what relative military provision shall be made by each party. A treaty of that kind would receive very little support in Canada, and even the more restricted treaty which Lloyd George negotiated with M. Briand seems to imply a great many of the same results, although not so definitely stated.

On the other hand there is a great deal to be said for recognizing that such a pact might not only curb German militarism but might permit France and Poland to settle down.

The point I want to emphasize is that it is for each Dominion to decide in each case whether or not its interests are so identical, its point of view so similar, that it will be bound by such a treaty.

In conclusion may I say that whether it is in common with those parts of the foreign policy primarily controlled by our own parliament or those in which we have to consult and confer with other parts of the British Empire and other members of the League of Civilization, there is a heavy duty laid upon parliament and upon individuals as citizens. Our parliament has not had much need or much training in the discussion of foreign affairs in that sense of foreign affairs in which the center of gravity lies across the ocean. Some may say it is out of the question that our parliament should discuss with intelligence matters of European politics. Well, that is true. We can never probably bring the same consideration to bear on matters affecting Poland for instance as we can on affairs relating to the United States. But the broader line should be stated that more interest should be exercised than before the war. If there is any question of foreign policy upon which our Canadian parliament is not or cannot be made competent to discuss that is a question, I think, on which no parliament should bind us. If parliament does not know enough about a problem to discuss it, it does not know enough about it to sign an agreement concerning it. It is a safe practise in politics as in business not to sign any notes the terms of which you cannot read. In some way then, possibly by the formation of foreign affairs committees, by discussions in the House on the results of conferences in which Canadians participated, whether at Geneva, Washington or London, our parliaments will have to take a more systematic, more responsible interest.

But it is not merely with parliament that that duty rests; it rests on every individual; if foreign policy is not to go the way in English-speaking countries that it is in many continental countries, if our interest is to be intelligent, if real responsibility is to develop, then private citizens must do more in the way of study, in the way of discussion of the broader issues. I am very glad to see on the paper which lies on our desk an admirable series of public lectures being prepared in the city of Toronto of which the first deals with the Washington conference and all of which are admirably suited to bring

to our minds the issues at stake in foreign affairs. I think every Canadian should consider himself an ambassador for Canada in his dealings with foreign peoples; every Canadian travelling abroad, every Canadian, whether motoring through Wisconsin or travelling through Switzerland, every Canadian carrying on business dealings with Italians, Japanese, must remember that it is by the habits and by the opinions formed through innumerable little incidents of personal contact that relationships between great peoples are determined. Every careless word may assist in building up a fund of prejudice. Every attempt to understand the different ways of life of other people may help build up good will, and it is that fund of prejudice or good will which in the long run determines the relationships between nations.

I must thank you, gentlemen, for your patient hearing of an address that has run over a good deal of this universe, and that certainly I do not expect all of you to agree with. It is impossible that we should have complete agreement on this subject, but I do think it is desirable, essential, under the conditions in which we are now living, that we should give systematic consideration to the problems and difficulties that lie before us.