

(January 3, 1930)

Address

BY GENERAL JAN CHRISTIAN SMUTS, LL.D.*

VICE-PRESIDENT G. M. SMITH:—Your Honor and gentlemen, the presence of this vast audience expresses the genuine good-will of the City of Toronto to General Smuts. We have long wanted to meet the great South African, who is at once the man of thought and the man of action; the philosopher and the constructive thinker in politics. He has shaped the destinies of South Africa and of the British Empire and he now commands our imagination, commands our attention, as the realistic advocate of unity among the nations of the British Commonwealth and as the champion of world peace. Already, at the close of the war, he was the architect of the most practical design for the League of Nations and he comes to us now from Oxford, after discussing in the Rhodes Memorial lectures the problems of South Africa and the Empire and the potentialities of the League of Nations which he helped to create. It seems to me his career illustrates the political progress of our time and his outlook the wider loyalty which the British Dominion can foster. The Empire and the Canadian Clubs of Toronto are honored by his presence here today, during his first visit to Toronto which we hope will not be the last visit.

GENERAL SMUTS:—Mr. Chairman, Your Honor, Mr. Prime Minister, and gentlemen, I appreciate very much the great honor you are doing me today. I had been told before I came to Toronto that I would receive a great reception in this great province and its capital. But what I see before me today surpasses my most sanguine expecta-

* General Smuts spoke to a joint meeting of the Empire Club of Canada and the Canadian Club of Toronto.

tions. In fact it is almost a terrifying meeting. I have never learned in a long political life to shake off a certain nervous trepidation when I have to face my fellow men in mass formation. And I am not sure that the political mass formation is not more terrifying than the military formation. However, I see before me today and I feel it in my bones that this a friendly meeting, and that in speaking to you today unprepared and with no fixed thoughts to lay before you, I am among friends and I can develop my theme as my mind moves me along.

I regret exceedingly, gentlemen, that my stay in Canada is so short. It is only a few days and this will be my last day here on this trip, but I thought it would be a great mistake from every viewpoint and certainly a mistake from my own point of view if ever I set foot on this continent, which is fast becoming the dominant continent of the world, without paying Canada a visit first and foremost. I should like to stay here much longer and I should like to learn to know you not in a mass but individually. I should like to travel up and down this enormous country which I am persuaded and most firmly believe is going to be one of the great countries of the world. I should like to see what foundations are being laid here, what vision people have of their future, of the preparation they are making for the heritage of their children. But I have no time and I have only these few opportunities, which I have made the best use of at Montreal, at Ottawa and today here, to come in touch with the Canadian mind and my Canadian friends. Perhaps later on I shall come again. Who knows? Look upon this as a return visit of an old Boer for the visit of many Canadians to my country. Look upon this as a case of heaping coals of fire.

I was reminded very strongly this morning of this past incident in our history when I was passing through one of your streets and I saw a distinguished monument, one of the most conspicuous in your city, devoted to the memory of those great doings of your men in South Africa a generation ago. Well, I am here to return the visit. And as I say, things have changed so much. The atmosphere in the Empire has altered so entirely that coming here today from the far south to the far north I find myself among

friends. Gentlemen, that, to my mind, is the dominant note in our great Empire. You may go to distant Africa; you may go to America, to Europe or to Asia; you may cover the continents of the earth, but wherever the British flag flies, the dominant note is friendship. You find yourself among friends. In fact you find yourself in a family circle. It is a curious thing. I am not a Free Mason, but I am told that there is among Free Masons that friendly feeling which makes them understand each other to whatever race they belong and from whatever surroundings they are taken. Well, this is the great Free Masonry of Empire. Here you have the understanding of deep sympathies. We may speak different languages; we may have a different past; we may even long years ago have been at each other's throats, but we are friends and we feel ourselves in a great family circle. And this is what makes me feel happy here today, coming from near the south pole to near the north pole, I feel myself still in the great circle of friends, in the great family circle; and, gentlemen, to my mind that is one of the most precious achievements to the credit of the human race. We do not realize these things. We never sit down quietly to think what it means in terms of human advance, of human peace and security, that you should have this group spread over the earth, dominated by similar ideals, united together by sentiments of friendship and co-operation and forming this close circle both for themselves and for the good of the world. I am sure we never sit down quietly to think out what it means, but to me this is in many ways the greatest political achievement of time.

People sometimes blame me—in my own country I may say—they say, "But we do not understand General Smuts. Here is a man with that past, a man who fought to the uttermost against the British Empire, and look at his language now. He talks like a Britisher." (Applause.) Well, gentlemen, if I talk the language which I have talked here in Canada and which I habitually talk in my own country, it is not because I am an Imperialist in the political sense at all; it is not because I am what was called in the Victorian Age a Jingo. God forbid. I am not an Imperialist and I am not a Jingo. But I am human. I understand human feelings. I realize and I believe that in our great

commonwealth, in that great group which we call the British Empire, we have achieved something of the greatest political and spiritual value for the human race.

I with you have lived through the most testing times of history. We have seen the earth shaken to its very foundations. We have seen the great Kingdoms and the great Empires of the world go down one after the other. One structure has survived, the most complex of all, the most far-reaching, most wide-spread, the least coherent, the one least bound, least tied up by external ties—we have seen that as the only survivor in that great holocaust. And why has it survived? It has survived because it was bound—not by political ties, not by ties of force, not by the bonds which the other Empires utilized, but this was bound together by human feeling, by ideals, by friendships and by those things which touched us deepest in our human nature. And that is why I talk Empire—not because I am an Imperialist, not because I believe that in our group we have solved problems, we have solved a problem which humanity has been after for thousands of years, but which is beginning to be realized in our group, and which from our group and by the example of our group, will gradually spread and permeate until it dominates mankind. That is my faith. I believe in the British Empire we have really something of the greatest human value, of the greatest value not only for ourselves but for the human race, and therefore, gentlemen, I am for conserving it. I talk Empire. I am a missionary of Empire in spite of my past. I see here the great ideals are being realized which mankind is after, and which will mean a better earth, a new era, if they are realized, for the rest of mankind. We have our troubles. No group, no Empire, has been more thoroughly tested during the last decade or two than the British Empire. We have not had all peace and fair weather. There is no group in the world today which has had such rough times and been so roughly tested as we. And the test continues all the time. This is not a fair-weather Empire of ours. We have our troubles. They have their troubles at the heart of Empire in Great Britain, and you can take it from me that that old mother country of yours is putting up one of the most gallant and heroic fights for her position in the world.

You here far away in Canada perhaps often hear the word "decadence." You may be inducted to have a pessimistic feeling about prospects at the heart of the Empire. Let me tell you this. I have been there in the last couple of months. It has been my privilege and my opportunity to come into touch with leaders of all sorts, political leaders, the leaders of labor, every sort of leadership I have come in touch with. It is my business as a public man, and you can take it from me, there is no sign of decadence. There are only signs of new life. The people of Great Britain realize that they are up against one of the most difficult times in their whole history. It is possible to win the war and yet to lose the peace. That they realize. They realize that the great struggle of fifteen years ago is going on still and it is still a question who shall pull through, and whether victory ultimately will be achieved, and you may take it from me that in Great Britain, whatever you may hear, whatever pessimistic accounts may reach you, the people of the old country are determined to pull through, to put their house in order, to maintain that unique position which they have occupied hitherto in the world.

I take off my hat to the British people. I have seen them in the grimmest of times and I can see that once more they are beginning to realize that they are up against it, and that toughness of fibre, that strength of soul, which has seen them through all the crises, the great crises of their history, will once more be seen in this economic, industrial struggle for the maintenance of their position which is going on today. I have this feeling, that it is very likely that in Great Britain they may have to revert to the methods of the war time. You remember in 1916 when things went very bad, when the war seemed to be going against us the British people made up their minds to change their government, to say, we are not going to continue with a policy of wait and see, a policy of Empire waiting on events, and we are not going to continue mere party Government. We have a national task before us, the grimmest in our history, and we want a national Government which will pool all the resources of the nation and which will concentrate all the political force of the nation in the struggle before us. And I am not sure that in the end that may not have to be done

in England. But there is no reason to despair or be despondent; and when these prophets of evil come to you here in far distant Toronto, just smile at them. Think of what that people has done in history, and you smile at them. We have troubles elsewhere. There are enormous troubles in front of the British Empire. Look at the situation in India today. An appalling problem. No reason to despair. We have been up against these things before. We shall be up against them again in future. With patience, with this feeling which we have in the Empire that we have to do not with enemies but with friends, we shall pull through. You deal in one way and on one footing with your enemy. You deal in quite a different spirit with your friends. He may differ from you. He may appear a most unpleasant and objectionable fellow. But if he is really a friend of yours, if he is a member of the family you treat him in quite a different spirit. And that is the spirit in which India will be dealt with. We shall apply patience to all that impatience. We shall apply wisdom to all that un wisdom. We shall bring to bear the experience of the ages on all that wild talk which goes on and in the end we shall pull through. India remains today, gentlemen, one of the glories of the British Empire. I am not sure that in ages to come, when the history of our time and our age is written and the achievements of Great Britain are recorded, that it will not be said that the greatest achievement of all was this, how that far-off Island in Europe, on the confines of Europe, brought peace and prosperity and justice and development to over three hundred million people of a distant continent.

No, I do not despair of these problems before us. You take the case of Ireland. What greater problem have we had in our day than Ireland? I remember the days when I went there and the Black and Tan business was at its very worst. Ireland today, I will not say is happy and contented—who ever is, in these times? I think you are about the most happy and contented people I have come across recently, and Canada has every reason to be happy and contented, looking forward down the great vista of history that lies before you. But Ireland is off the slate. You have no longer British Parliament and British statesmen

wrestling by day and night and occupying all their time with the problems of Ireland. Ireland is off the slate and she is working out her own destiny. That was because those rebel leaders in Ireland were members of the family. Out against the British Empire to the uttermost, they could be brought to sit around the table as friends and could talk as friends. Dominion status. That is the way, gentlemen, that the Irish question was solved, and I mention this because in my opinion that is the way and that is the spirit in which all the great problems that confront us will be solved. We have lived through difficult times, very troubled times. All over the world and in all parts of the Empire you have sanctioned new thoughts and the fermentation of new ideas, and unless you read signs correctly you may be entirely misled as to what is really going on. I fear that you here in Canada may have got an impression during recent years that everything was wrong with South Africa. South Africa did not want a Smuts Government. It must be wrong. South Africa didn't want the Union Jack but she wanted a flag of her own. She wanted to go in for all sorts of experiments and all this world experimentation, all these reachings out in new directions, deceive the unwary. They did not understand and appreciate what is really going on. Gentlemen, it is all right. It is all right. We shall make our experiments and we shall pay for our mistakes. But you may be certain of this, that neither in South Africa nor in other parts of the Empire, without specifying, because I should not mention any nation beyond my own country, but I believe there is the suggestion that South Africa desires to secede from this Empire, to break it up, or sever the connection which means so much to us. I do not believe that there is any danger in that sense, but what I do want is this, that we should realize what this Empire means to us, how much it does mean to us, its value to us, how it gives protection to us, how it gives security to us, how it brings peace, and this friendly intimate feeling which would never exist in the world if this Empire were not there to bind us together; and I want us to realize more and more in the future that this is something supremely valuable to us, which we must in our poli-

tical life, in our political thought, foster and promote and develop in every way possible.

In this changing world in which we are living today you look for points of support for law and order and stability. It is a fluid world where things are changing very rapidly, as we have seen after the war, and you look about for elements of stability. Here you have something stable. Let us keep it. Here we have a rock fortress from which you can sally forth to attack other problems of mankind. Let us value our base. The British Empire is our base. Keep your base secure. This fortress should ever remain our great security, our shield, our defence, the rallying point to which we will return and from which we will sally forth as time requires. You look abroad, around the world and you see what else there is. What else besides the British Empire, for the good of humanity, for stable progress? Well, to my mind the next thing is this. First I see the British Empire. That is Number 1. In the second place I say, for progress, for good prospects in the future, we have co-operation with the United States. To my mind that is the second great hope which exists in the world today for world peace and for stability and for progress. The people of the United States have very much the same mentality as ourselves. There are bonds of the deepest value, bonds which are far stronger than one would think, if one judged merely by surface indications. I believe that the inner ties which bind together the peoples in the British Empire with the people of the United States are far stronger than are commonly appreciated. And there you have a people very much of the same mentality as ourselves. You have Canada as the great link between them and the British Empire and I feel sure that in the co-operation between these two great groups you have the greatest power, greatest drive, the greatest engine power, for the future progress of mankind. I advocate no combinations against the rest of the world or balances of power and things of that kind, which we have learned of to our bitter experience. I am not advocating that for a moment, but I do say this, that in our co-operation with the United States and in her co-operation with us, we have one of the most valuable forms of security and support for the progress of mankind. That

is profoundly appreciated by the British people. You will remember years ago when we were in alliance with Japan it was felt that that alliance might in the end mean some drifting apart between the British Empire and the United States. That was certainly felt very strongly by certain British Dominions, and in deference to that feeling and to that fear that we might drift apart from the United States, the foreign policy of the British Empire was put on a new foundation, and today there is no difficulty whatever and there is no obstacle of any kind against the fullest and freest co-operation between us and that great nation beyond your borders. Well, that is to my mind the second great line we can take for the future. And beyond that we have the League of Nations. Our whole effort in the world today with our experience in the great world war is to see how we can bind humanity together. How we can give security to the nations of the world and prevent calamities such as we have seen in our day from recurring. And the League of Nations is the third line. I put it Number 3. Because in the British Empire you have solid facts, something tested by time, something tested by the greatest events of history and which has stood the shock of the severest strain. In the co-operation of the United States I believe we have something which is quite possible and probable and will lead to the development of new and great support for the defence of mankind, and, thirdly, I place our world-wide co-operation in the League of Nations. That League, which is covering mankind almost today, is largely founded on the model of our great Empire; and whatever may happen to our Empire in the future, it will be one of its main glories that it proved the precedent and the exemplar for that larger combination which in the end may mean the peace of mankind. It is all still very experimental. No one can say with certainty and definiteness what the prospects are for the future. It is still a great experiment. The experiment has been worked now for some ten years with ever greater success, and I am firmly persuaded just as the British Empire has succeeded in bringing and maintaining eternal peace among one fourth of the human race, so the League in time will develop sufficient cohesion and power

to maintain peace among the four-fourths of the human race.

Gentlemen, I have travelled far afield today. I cannot touch on questions of your internal development. It would be a waste of your time and I am not competent to do so. But I have certain great questions at heart. I have been one of those men who have taken part in the events of my time to the fullest extent, as politician, as a fighter. I think from every conceivable angle I have approached the great problems which are agitating the world today; and to my mind the great task which lies before us today is to see how we can bring together the world on some such basis as already exists in the British Empire, and it is on that ground and with that mentality that I have approached the question of the League of Nations, which I am sure may yet, in the fullness of time, perhaps after generations, prove to be as great a shield to the world as the British Empire proves to be to one quarter of the human race living under the British flag.

I was walking through the Government building here today and my attention was drawn in the Prime Minister's room to a shield which bore the motto of the Province. And the keynote of that motto was *fidelis*—loyalty—the greatest word in the world today. The word which you have chosen for your motto which gives us a glorious reminder of your past and which will remain as the great treasure of your future is the word loyalty. To my mind one of the great tasks before us in our great commonwealth is altogether related to that sentiment, more than ever to develop loyalty to the fullest, loyalty within the Empire and beyond it, loyalty to the ideals we stand for, and loyalty to the human race. The word which you have chosen as the motto for this province is the key word for mankind; and I can wish you no better luck, I can express no better wish for you for the future than that you may make your contribution, as you have made it in the most abundant nature in the past, to the realization of the fullest meaning of that word. In that way, Canada, and this great province, this bed rock province of Canada, will make its greatest contribution to the welfare of the Empire and the world.

THE PRESIDENT of the Canadian Club:—I shall ask Mr. Eayrs, President of the Empire Club, to express our thanks to General Smuts.

MR. EAYRS:—Your Honor, Mr. Prime Minister, and General Smuts, in the message just delivered General Smuts said his hat was off to the British people. Well, the hats of this section of the British people are off to General Smuts. It is my happiness on behalf of the membership of the two clubs to say "thank you" to the General for his speech and at the same time to thank him for what he has done as well as for what he is doing. When the Empire needed a great soldier it got a great soldier in General Smuts; when it needed a man of statesmanlike quality, it found that quality in General Smuts; and when a world turned towards the premier necessity of mankind, peace, it looked for General Smuts. It found him there striving for the peace of mankind, when nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall nations urge war any more. For what he has done and what he is doing we thank him and we honor him.