

The Empire and its Future

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ASIDE from reasons of sentiment or pure patriotism, Imperial unity should certainly continue. For we have in the main community of race, community of defence, community of religion, of laws, political institutions, a common literature, and by our commerce, a gigantic community of interests, which by proper means can be made even greater.

Now, the greatest question for the British race to decide is whether they will continue to form an empire, or to follow the example of their predecessors, Spain, France, Holland and Portugal. It has been strenuously urged that we keep intact this great heritage for reasons of sentiment and patriotism, even though our material interests toward one another may not demand it. A great deal, on the other hand, has been urged that sentiment should not enter into the question. What should be considered is whether it would not be better for us again to become the United Kingdom, an entity in the Northern sea; for it is believed by many that a small State is preferable to a large one. It is shown that the large States in the past have been of a lower organisation than those of smaller magnitude.

The United States is our greatest competitor in trade and wealth. The population of the United States by immigration alone is increasing at the rate of a million a year. It is appalling, then, to think of the development which that great country will have reached in another thirty or forty years. On the other hand we have practically reached the zenith of our development, so far as regards the United Kingdom, though the development of the British Empire has scarcely begun. Is it then to be a rivalry between the British Empire and the United States, or the United Kingdom and the United States? If the latter, the contest will become fearfully unequal, and the result a foregone conclusion. Let us then endeavour to reach the highest and noblest state of our national existence, that of the federation of the British race.

Imperial Federation is not to be desired then for the senti-

mental reason alone, but for the more selfish though more practical reason of the great community of interests that we have, the interests of trade and commerce and the advantage of mutual protection in war. Imperial Federation is founded upon both sentimental and practical reasons. But it is a question, great and noble as it is, in spite of its many logical facts to uphold it, most difficult to bring within the full comprehension of the masses of the people both at home and in the colonies. For it is at once so large, so broad and seemingly so full of intricate problems.

It is a question also that has to contend with other difficulties. There is a class of people even to-day, both in the United Kingdom and in the colonies, who openly advocate the dismemberment of the Empire. There is also another class, who though, for political reasons, they do not dare openly to advocate such views, yet secretly cherish the idea, and dream of the ultimate independence of Canada and Australia. Then there are many, probably at present they are in the majority, who do not look into the future, but dwell exclusively in the present, and consider that the present system of the British Empire works well, and who are thoroughly in favour of its maintenance, but who would at any time strenuously oppose any change whereby the Empire could become more consolidated politically. Those who believe in *laissez-faire*, whose views about any federation whereby the exclusive control of financial affairs might of necessity be modified, would oppose any change, although they would behold the approach of ultimate separation with regret, yet on account of their narrow-minded views it would be a certainty, and, therefore, not to be helped. Then there are many of us in the United Kingdom who seem incapable of grasping Imperial affairs, whose range is limited to "thinking in islands" when we should "think in continents," or even in "empires."

Cecil Rhodes, referring to his hope for the consolidation of the British race and ultimately the union of all the English-speaking peoples, thus wrote :

It is a fearful thought to feel that you possess a patent, and to doubt whether your life will last you through the circumlocution of the forms of the Patent Office. I have thought out something that is worthy of being registered at the Patent Office; the fear is, shall I have the time and the opportunity? And I believe with all the enthusiasm bred in the soul of an inventor, it is not self-glorification that I desire, but the wish to live to register my patent for the benefit of those who, I think, are the greatest people the world has ever seen, but whose fault is that they do not know their destiny, and who are wasting their time on their minor local matters, but being asleep do not know that through the invention of steam and electricity, and in view of their enormous increase, they must now be trained to view the world as a whole, and not only to consider the social questions of the British Isles. Even a Labouchere, who possesses no sentiment, should be taught that the labour of

England is dependent upon the outside world, and that as far as I can see, the outside world, if it does not look out, will boycott the results of English labour.

These few sentences show the "insularity" of a great portion of our people, and this may be equally well applied to the "provincialism" of some of our kin in the colonies. We are both still apt to concern ourselves too much with the particular piece of territory in which we are domiciled, ignoring those in other parts of this vast Empire. Though local questions are important and cannot be neglected, they should be properly provided for in a legislature for that purpose. In other words, even to-day the business of the Imperial Parliament should be decentralised. This question of Imperial Federation, in view of these considerations, must take a great length of time to gain a hold on the affections and minds of the people both at home and in the colonies. And it is to be feared that owing to our party system of government it will be rendered even more difficult; for whatever party proposed it the other party would probably oppose it. It may be regretted that such a question should not be above party politics, but should in every sense become a national concern. Even so, there are forces at work which may precipitate an inquiry of the whole question, and then it must stand or fall on its own merit.

It has been heretofore said that the States of the Empire at present have hardly arrived at a stage in their development when they can be considered ripe for it, but it is known that some communities are undoubtedly more able to consider it than others, and it would, therefore, be unnecessary to delay federation until such time as one and all of the communities shall be prepared for it.

The federation of the Empire might, therefore, take place gradually, embracing to begin with probably only one or two countries, and gradually expanding by admitting the other communities, who might consider it after having seen the advantages brought to others. The present British Constitution is the result of growth, so that the federation of the Empire, if not entered into by all the communities together, might also become, like the British Constitution, the result of growth.

It is a question, then, that all patriotic parents and heads of schools should endeavour to teach the youth of the Empire, to get the idea firmly fixed in the minds of those in process of formation and maturation. It should be taken up in the national schools of the Empire which teach the masses, and by the great English public schools which contain many of England's future statesmen. It is a question which over and over again should be taken up by the debating societies of the universities of the

Empire and working-men's clubs. Above all it is incumbent upon those in authority to do nothing that will tend to dissipate this idea.

The centrifugal tendencies are seen by proposals of treaty-making powers for the colonies, proposals that have been popular in some quarters for years, but which have been given renewed vigour by the dissatisfaction of many at home and in Canada over the Alaskan Boundary award. These centrifugal tendencies are plainly visible when certain people in Canada hold, or cherish, the notion that "Canada is a nation," and speak of the Canadian nation. True, Canada is a nation, or rather part of a nation; for Canada is but an extension of the English State, having the British constitution in principle for her people. The people of Canada, therefore, form and are a part of the British nation, which is not only found in the United Kingdom, but in different parts of the British Empire. It is absurd, then, to speak of Canada as being a nation, depending as she does upon the Parliament of her Motherland.

Again, these tendencies are seen by the friction which sometimes exists between officers in the Imperial and colonial service. Mr. George R. Parkin most aptly said, "that a danger to the Empire was the supercilious Englishman and the bumptious colonial." All these differences are caused by a want of tact and diplomacy on both sides. It is then the alternative of disintegration or federation which faces us in this twentieth century. Soon we may come to the parting of the ways.

"Are we to be an Empire?" said Mr. Chamberlain, "or are we to be only a kingdom? The great Napoleon said that 'Providence was always on the side of the big battalions.' Do you suppose that is not the same with countries as with armies? The struggle for life, the struggle for existence in future, will not be between cities, or even kingdoms. It will be between mighty empires; and the minor States will come off badly if they are left to be crushed between the gigantic bulk of these higher organisations."

Again he adds:

"Are not we also an Empire? Are we not as great in area and as great in population, greater in the variety of our products and opportunities than any Empire that exists or that the world has ever seen? Yes; but our union is incomplete, and the question which to me is everything, is, 'will it attain to a higher organisation?' It is impossible that it can remain the same; it must either shrink or it must develop."

Let us then endeavour to follow Mr. Chamberlain's earnest admonition to "learn to think Imperially." Let us endeavour to consider the cities of Toronto, Cape Town and Melbourne as we consider London, Dublin and Glasgow—the manufactures of Toronto as much our own as those of Sheffield. There may be sacrifices to be made. It may be hard to consider favourably

such a great reconstruction of the British Empire such as federalization will entail. Probably this will fall hardest upon the United Kingdom, which will have to give up its sole control of foreign policy and other Imperial matters. But for the attainment of our ideal this should not be difficult.

It is perhaps mere academic speculation to view "what might have been," but the fact remains that the policy of the little Englanders (men who looked forward to the dismemberment of the Empire, a sentiment which was dominant for many years) has had an influence on this Empire, which influence has made the consummation of the idea of Imperial federation more difficult. It is true that had the old colonial system been maintained, the Empire could not have survived. It is equally true in a sense that our new colonial system has done much to delay the day when dismemberment will come. But that it will for ever hold the Empire together is not to be thought of. With the adoption of the new colonial system we went from one extreme to another. Under the old system the legislative autonomy of the colonies was restricted, often crippled; but in spite of these disadvantages there were also some advantages, whereby the trade of the mother-country and the colonies was stimulated by a policy of preferential treatment. Much has been said and written derogatory of the navigation laws, but that there were compensations for the restrictions imposed is undoubted. The repeal of all these Acts; on the introduction of Free Trade in England, caused great dissatisfaction and loss in the colonies. The granting of such unlimited powers of self-government to the colonies was achieved by Governments at home, who considered that the day for separation was near, and that the sooner it came the better; thus they prepared those "rising nations" for that independence which seemed so near at hand, in order that when it came they would have the benefits of free government.

No enlightened individual will now contend that the granting of self-government to the great colonies was a mistake. For the charter of self-government was undoubtedly the means of preventing separation, and, as such, is always to be regarded in a class with Magna Carta. But there is a limit to all things. That the Home Government should have granted the colonies exclusive control over the tariff, whereby they were enabled to lay duties against the products of British labour at home equally with foreign products, does not seem to have been either equitable or good policy. In fact, the colonial tariffs were devised in such a way that their chief effect was aimed against British products. Now when one takes into consideration that the people at home were enduring the burden of a great national debt, largely increased in the foundation and defence of these very same colonies,

and also supported the Army and Navy for the defence of all, it would certainly seem that the people who with their blood and treasure founded these countries should have, if not an open market, at least a preferential one for the access of the fruits of their labours. The wealth of the colonies was not in their manufactures but essentially in agriculture. The imposition of a high tariff forced premature manufactures and created populous cities to the detriment of agriculture. It should have been the primary aim of those in authority to have fostered the agricultural products of the colonies and to have started the growth of cotton, thereby looking forward to the day when the British Empire would become a self-sustaining community. Had, therefore, the Home Government denied, or at least endeavoured, to restrict the right of taxation against British goods to mere revenue duties, or at the most to moderate protective duties, the fiscal union of the Empire would either exist as a fact to-day, or would be much easier to encompass. In other words, instead of doing away entirely with the Navigation Acts, if they had developed and improved the advantages, the Empire to-day would be self-sustaining and, therefore, materially much richer and more powerful. Furthermore, commercial union would have paved the way and eventually led to closer political union.

Lord Beaconsfield, who has been called the prophet of the "Imperial idea," in discussing this question of colonial autonomy said :

"But self-government, in my opinion, when it was conceded, ought to have been conceded as part of a great policy of Imperial consolidation. It ought to have been accompanied with an Imperial tariff, by securities for the people of England for the enjoyment of the unappropriated lands which belonged to the sovereign as their trustee, and by a military code which should have precisely defined the means and the responsibility by which the colonies should be defended, and by which, if necessary, this country should call for aid from the colonies themselves. It ought, further, to have been accompanied by some representative council in the metropolis which would have brought the colonies into constant and continuous relations with the Home Government."

The wholesale transfer of unoccupied lands to the colonial governments, which should properly have been the inheritance of the nation collectively, seems to have been a very radical and short-sighted policy. That a great part of them should have been handed over to the local authorities is not denied, but that whole continents as large as the United States, containing millions of acres of valuable land rich in all mineral resources, should, without reservation, have been handed over to what was then a handful of colonists, was certainly neither equity nor wisdom. The reservation by the Imperial Government of only a portion would have produced a great source of wealth to it. The revenue therefrom could have gone towards defraying that part of

the national debt which the acquisition of these same lands entailed. The Federal Government of the United States holds large sections of territory, known as Government reservations, and the wisdom and right of so doing is manifest to all. It may well be hoped that in Africa a portion, at least, of the Crown lands will be retained by the Imperial Government.

Perhaps, however, the most foolish and short-sighted idea of all of the "Separatists" was that of forcing upon our people in Australia and Canada a difference in the grand old flag. "It is certainly most derogatory to the Imperial idea," said Mr. Froude, "to hear of the Canadian flag, slight as the difference may be. The British people should most emphatically only be represented by one flag and, according to the poet, have 'One life, one flag, one fleet, one throne.'"

However, we have all advanced since then, and the Imperial idea is, in spite of all these set-backs, steadily gaining every year a strong hold upon the people throughout the Empire. Much can now be done to forward the idea by free and frequent discussion in the press and in literature generally, and further by the Imperial conferences which are to be a regular occurrence every four years.

There is one thing more to advocate, and that most important in its way. The sovereign will probably be unable to visit the more remote parts of the Empire owing to pressure of State business. But there is no reason why a great portion of his subjects should scarcely ever be brought into active contact with his Majesty, or the royal family. The influence of the Crown is already a great factor in cementing the Empire. Why not even make greater use of it? Could not a splendid custom be adopted—for the heir-apparent to be made Viceroy of India. It would be a great compliment to our Indian fellow-subjects, touch their hearts and appeal very strongly to their imagination. They would then become familiar with their future Emperor. There is no reason why the Prince of Wales could not reside in India a part of the time for a few years. During his temporary absence at home some one else could occupy that office. Likewise, some of the royal dukes and princes could be made Viceroys of Canada, Australia and South Africa. This would bring our fellow-subjects in those dominions in closer contact with the throne and royal family. This is to be greatly desired for sentimental, political and social reasons.

The general view now held by statesmen at home is that any scheme or suggestions in favour of closer unity must now come from the colonies themselves. For Canada three roads lie open. One is annexation to the United States, such as the great majority of our fellow-subjects are against, for upon annexation Canada

would have to give up many of her institutions and accept a form of government which she fought against, and which, in the opinion of many great minds, is less superior to her own. In fact it has been openly acknowledged by some American publicists and statesmen that the American system and form of government is excelled by that existing in the Dominion of Canada. And, with all due respect to the United States, it must be admitted by impartial observers that in the liberty and freedom of the subject and in political morality the United States must without doubt give place to the British Empire.

Independence, secondly, would depose Canada from her position as a part of the first nation of the world, and for many years she would rank as a third-rate power, existing on the sufferance of the nation to the south, having to maintain a navy and army on a scale not much better than a South American republic. Let us, therefore, realise the postulate that the whole is greater than its part.

The last and noblest destiny of Canada is to form an important unit in a British Federal Union, having the great markets of the Empire open to her commerce. An able Canadian journalist, writing a few years ago on this question to the *Halifax Evening Mail*, said:

It means a pooling of the offensive and defensive resources of the Empire, the gaining of strength by cohesion, the binding of the bundle of sticks by firm cords, the hooping of the staves of the barrel, of which operations Judge Haliburton and Joseph Howe long ago clearly foresaw the need. It involves the representation of the self-governing colonies in some Imperial legislative body, and their participation in the Imperial Government and Imperial expenses. It means paying our shot, and shouldering our reciprocal responsibility, like Britons. The consummation of this scheme will make us part owners in every Imperial establishment in every part of the world, peers with our fellow-Britons, instead of colonists or dependents. It is like going into partnership with one's mother, instead of staying tied to her apron-strings. Our recent troubles with the United States certainly argue that we cannot prudently wait as we are until we are rich enough and populous enough for independence. Federation would force the thoughts of our public men to expand. It would oblige our voters to consider their Imperial as well as their provincial interests. It would breed statesmen, instead of parochial politicians. It would not be as costly as independence, and certainly not more costly than union with the United States.

As for Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, their first alternative is to be independent States of doubtful independence, on a scale similar to Canada, constantly menaced by the Powers of Europe and Asia; for the isolation of Australasia is a thing of the past. The rise of Japan and the expansion of Russia, and in fact the whole evolution of affairs in the East have done away with this. Again, British South Africa is faced by France in Madagascar and Germany and Portugal in the Cameroons and

Delagoa Bay. The true destiny and the safest is, therefore, for Australia, New Zealand and South Africa to remain in the Empire and to become partners in the Britannic Federal Union. In other words they would raise themselves from the position of mere dependencies, from their colonial status, with its attendant inferiority, to the level and magnitude of States on a par with their motherland; and thus, by having reached their legal majority share in the great partnership.

"All suggestions for closer unity must come from the colonies themselves" is the general opinion of our statesmen at home. The day must come then, when these great British communities must realize the inferiority and disadvantage of their colonial status and will demand to become partners with their motherland and thus---in a British federation, sharing as Sir Henry Parkes said. "In the glory of the Empire". May that day be near! But whether or not we or only our children shall live to see it, it is to be hoped that the people in the motherland - in England, Ireland and Scotland- will rise to the occasion and grant those requests which, for the future of the British Empire we trust will eventually be made.

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