

Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

Sir Robert Borden and Canada's External Policy, 1911-1920

F. H. Soward

Volume 20, numéro 1, 1941

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300220ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/300220ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0317-0594 (imprimé)

1712-9095 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Soward, F. H. (1941). Sir Robert Borden and Canada's External Policy, 1911-1920. *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada*, 20(1), 65-82. <https://doi.org/10.7202/300220ar>

SIR ROBERT BORDEN AND CANADA'S EXTERNAL POLICY
1911-1920

By F. H. SOWARD
The University of British Columbia

IN the century following Lord Durham's *Report* three great Nova Scotians have left their mark upon the evolution of Canadian self-government. Of these three, Joseph Howe, Sir Charles Tupper, and Sir Robert Borden, the latter must be regarded as the most truly Canadian. All of them had a deep and abiding love for the beauties and traditions of their native province. Thus in his *Memoirs*, in one of the rare flashes of fine writing, Sir Robert recalls his boyhood days and tells us that after seventy years "there is still fresh and vivid in my memory the outlook, the orchards, the upland fields, the distant meadows and the quiet village streets with their fine Lombardy poplars and old willows." "I can still hear," he writes, "the surf on the shores of Long Island which lay north of the Grand Pré meadow and the souging of the south wind in the evening often lulling me to sleep."¹ It is clear that Howe was first, last, and all the time a Nova Scotian whose later days were darkened by his unwilling acceptance of Confederation. Tupper was powerfully attracted by the Imperial Federation League for which he helped to draft a scheme of federation, chose to spend his declining years in England, and, at ninety-five when Sir Robert Borden visited him, was "as keenly interested as ever in the affairs of the Empire."² In contrast it was Ottawa that Borden chose for his permanent home upon retirement as Prime Minister, and it was upon the growth of Canadian autonomy that the elder statesman chose to read and write, as we historians know to our profit.

All through Sir Robert Borden's career may be noted this emphasis upon things Canadian. He came of a Liberal family which contributed one member, Sir Frederick Borden, to the Laurier government. But he severed his connection with that party when it raised the cry of Repeal of Confederation in the provincial election of 1886.³ Fifteen years later in his first important speech as leader of the Opposition in Ottawa, Sir Robert dismissed the argument that the Canadian Parliament should not express an opinion upon a proposed modification of the Act of Settlement before King Edward VII was formally crowned. In his opinion "The compact which the King makes with his people when he ascends the throne is a compact which he makes with us as well as with the people of the Mother Country."⁴ In the debates upon the Alaska boundary controversy he criticized the Laurier administration for not having safeguarded the right of Parliament to approve or reject the settlement and for not having appointed three Canadians to the panel of arbitrators.⁵ Speaking at a great demonstration in

¹Henry Borden (ed.), *Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs* (Toronto, 1938), I, 4. Hereafter cited as *Memoirs*.

²*Ibid.*, I, 507; E. M. Saunders (ed.), *The Life and Letters of the Right Honourable Sir Charles Tupper* (London, 1916), II, chap. x1; W. A. Harkin (ed.), *Political Reminiscences of the Right Honourable Sir Charles Tupper* (London, 1914), chap. x.

³*Memoirs*, I, 42.

⁴*Ibid.*, I, 78.

⁵*Canada, House of Commons Debates*, 1903, I, 34, VI, col. 14806. Hereafter cited as *Commons Debates*. Sir Robert similarly stressed the role of the Canadian Parliament in discussing the Waterways Treaty of 1909 (*Memoirs*, I, 234).

Montreal after the announcement of the award, the Conservative leader declared, "I am as loyal a British subject as is to be found in Canada, but I stand first of all in matters of this kind for the rights of Canada which must be maintained."⁶ During the preliminary discussion on naval policy in 1909-10, Sir Robert Borden agreed with Sir Wilfrid Laurier in preferring the policy of building a Canadian navy to one of regular contributions to the imperial treasury for naval purposes, but did not rule out the possibility of emergency contributions in a crisis. As a consequence each statesman was soon under fire from his own party. Sir Wilfrid was sharply criticized in Quebec for proposing to divert Canadian funds to what was not Canada's concern, while Sir Robert was censured by Conservative politicians in Manitoba, British Columbia, and the Maritimes for supporting such piffling schemes for a "tin pot" navy. As the debates proceeded on the Naval Service Bill of 1910, the Conservative leader foreshadowed his future policy as Prime Minister. He still upheld the policy of creating a Canadian navy, though more closely integrated with the British than Sir Wilfrid appeared to contemplate, but stressed the value of temporary cash contributions to meet an emergency created by the growing Anglo-German naval rivalry, if the naval experts demonstrated that conditions justified it. But whether the policy be a long-term one of a local navy or an emergency financial contribution, it should involve on the part of Great Britain a recognition of the right of the Dominions who contributed to imperial defence to a voice in the councils of empire on the issues of peace and war.⁷ It was in making this last suggestion that the Conservative leader differed most sharply with the veteran Liberal Prime Minister. The two men were agreed in rejecting any scheme of imperial federation, but in his anxiety to avoid being drawn "into the vortex of European militarism" as he termed it, Sir Wilfrid leaned over backwards in evading any discussion of imperial foreign policy. This was demonstrated most clearly at the Imperial Conference of 1911. There Sir Wilfrid had the satisfaction of seeing every statesman present agree with him in rejecting the scheme of imperial federation propounded by Sir Joseph Ward of New Zealand. But when Australians and New Zealanders reproached the British government for having failed to take them into their confidence on the Declaration of London drafted as a result of the Hague Conference of 1907, Sir Wilfrid declined to share their indignation. "We have taken the position in Canada," he said, "that we do not think we are bound to take part in every war, and that our fleet may not be bound in all cases, and, therefore, for my part I think it is better under such circumstances to leave the negotiations of these regulations as to the way in which the war is to be carried on to the chief partner of the family, the one who has to bear the burden in part on some occasions, and the whole burden perhaps on other occasions."⁸

The Conservative triumph in the election of 1911 gave Sir Robert Borden the chance to test his theories. It was not until June, 1912, that he was able to proceed to England and learn for himself the extent of the danger which British statesmen felt arose from European conditions. By that time the Agadir crisis had strained for the third time

⁶*Memoirs*, I, 101.

⁷*Ibid.*, I, 269-70, 296-7.

⁸Quoted in A. Gordon Dewey, *The Dominions and Diplomacy: The Canadian Contribution* (London, 1929), I, 290.

the relations of Triple Alliance and Triple Entente, the Haldane Mission had failed to find a formula of peaceful co-operation to satisfy both Germany and Britain, and Mr. Churchill had gone to the Admiralty to put the navy on a more efficient footing. The latter was disturbed by the tenor of the new German navy law of 1912, characterized, as he told the Cabinet, by "the extraordinary increase in the striking force of ships of all classes immediately available throughout the year."⁹ Naturally both Mr. Churchill and his advisers were keen to secure any immediate assistance possible from the Dominions. They readily gave the Canadian Premier assurances, both verbal and written, that aid was indispensable and that an emergency offer of \$35 million to build three battleships would be most welcome. While Mr. Churchill was more enthusiastic than discreet in the published statements he prepared for the Canadian government, there can be no doubt of his sincerity in stressing the gravity of the situation. Proof of that fact may be seen in his threat to resign from the Cabinet in December, 1913, unless it supported his request for the acceleration in construction of three battleships to replace those made unavailable by the Canadian Senate's rejection of the Borden naval bill.¹⁰

From the outset of his visit Sir Robert made it clear that the corollary of his offer of assistance was a share in the direction of foreign policy. In his first major speech at the Royal Colonial Institute, July 10, he told his audience: "I would like you to remember that those who are or who become responsible for Empire defence must in the very nature of things have some share in that policy which shapes the issues of peace and war. I would like you to understand that Canada does not propose to be an 'adjunct' even of the British Empire but as has been well and eloquently expressed to be a greater part in a greater whole."¹¹ The word soon went round London that the Canadian meant what he said and by August 5 the German Ambassador, Baron von Marschall, was writing his government that "He wishes that the Dominions shall possess a decisive vote in the deliberations upon which peace and war depend. . . . The British government will hardly consent to such conditions."¹² The German Ambassador was only partially correct. In 1911 the British Prime Minister had said emphatically that authority in foreign policy could not be shared. On July 22, 1912, Mr. Asquith told the House of Commons that "Side by side with this growing participation in the active burdens of the Empire on the part of the Dominions there rests with us undoubtedly the duty of making such response as we can to their obviously reasonable appeal that they should be entitled to be heard in the determination of the policy and the direction of Imperial affairs."¹³ From the gallery the Canadian Prime Minister looked down in approval. The solution which was worked out during the visit was that the Dominions who had been

⁹Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis, 1911-1914* (London, 1923), I, 102.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, I, 173. Mr. Churchill asked and secured Sir Robert Borden's aid in pleading his case, the Prime Minister sending him a "masterly telegram" (*ibid.*, I, 177).

¹¹Quoted in Dewey, *Dominions and Diplomacy*, I, 293. In August a parallel statement was made to the "1900, Conservative Club" which was informed that "if there is to be imperial co-operation the people of Canada propose to have a reasonable and fair share of that co-operation" (*Memoirs*, I, 364).

¹²E. T. S. Dugdale (selector and translator), *German Diplomatic Documents, 1871-1914* (London, 1931), IV, 141.

¹³Quoted in *Memoirs*, I, 361.

granted temporary membership in 1911 should have permanent membership in the Committee on Imperial Defence and should through it receive more accurate information about questions of foreign policy and defence. They should be represented by a member of the Cabinet who might be in London at the time of Committee meetings or might even reside there permanently. The scheme was submitted in a Circular Despatch to all the Dominions by the Secretary of State for the Colonies who was careful to explain that the Committee on Imperial Defence was purely an advisory body and ". . . is not, and cannot under any circumstances become a body deciding on policy which is and must remain the sole prerogative of the Cabinet subject to the support of the House of Commons."¹⁴ In spite of this tepid description of the powers of the Committee of Imperial Defence the Canadian Prime Minister felt that at least the principle of consultation has been established. In his very able speech introducing the naval bill, Sir Robert Borden described the problem of constitutional development in the Empire as one of combining co-operation with autonomy and argued "When Great Britain no longer assumes sole responsibility for defence upon the high seas she can no longer undertake to assume sole responsibility for and sole control of foreign policy, which is closely, vitally and constantly associated in that defence in which the Dominions participate."¹⁵ Later he declared confidently that the reorganization of the Committee of Imperial Defence seemed "a very marked advance" and that as a consequence "No important step in foreign policy would be undertaken without consultation with such a representative of Canada."¹⁶

In view of the obvious lack of consultation with the Dominions before war came in 1914,¹⁷ this statement was highly optimistic. There is no evidence in Sir Robert's memoirs or elsewhere that the Prime Minister made an effort to secure effective consultation on foreign policy in the two years following his return to Canada. It is possible that the rejection of his naval bill by the Senate made him a little chary of asserting himself. However, the hearty co-operation given to Great Britain from August 1, 1914, when the Duke of Connaught cabled on behalf of his advisers the firm assurance that in the event of war, "the Canadian people will be united in a common resolve to put forth every effort and to make every sacrifice necessary to ensure the integrity and to maintain the honour of our Empire,"¹⁸ placed the Canadian Prime Minister in a far more advantageous position to secure the "adequate voice in the moulding and control of foreign policy" of which he had spoken during the debates on the naval bill. During his first visit in war-time in the summer of 1915 the Canadian Prime Minister had the honour of being invited to attend a meeting of the British Cabinet. There in true Canadian fashion he opposed a course of action which might adversely affect Anglo-American relations, as did Sir Edward Grey.¹⁹

As in 1912 Sir Robert lost no opportunity for expounding his thesis

¹⁴The despatch is reprinted in Robert MacGregor Dawson (ed.), *The Development of Dominion Status, 1900-1936* (London, 1937), 159-61.

¹⁵*Commons Debates*, 1912, I, 676-7. In the *Memoirs*, this passage is printed in italics.

¹⁶*Commons Debates*, 1912, I, 692.

¹⁷Cf. A. B. Keith, *The Sovereignty of the British Dominions* (London, 1929), 311; W. M. Hughes, *The Splendid Adventure* (Toronto, 1929), 35; *Memoirs*, I, 451-2.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, I, 452.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, I, 500.

that the Dominions should have a voice in the conduct of high policy. In private he expressed his opinions to Lord Bryce and King George V who concurred. To Lord Bryce Sir Robert said prophetically that either the Dominions would have such a voice or each of them would have a foreign policy of its own.²⁰ When, with Mr. Balfour, he addressed a great meeting in the London Opera House on the first anniversary of the war he told his audience, "Once and for all it has been borne upon the minds and souls of all of us that the great policies which touch and control the issues of peace and war concern more than the people of these islands."²¹ During this first war-time visit the Canadian Prime Minister formed a definitely unsatisfactory impression of the conduct and prosecution of the war and returned home with the gloomy conclusions that it would be eighteen months at least before the full weight of the British Empire could make itself felt. He became weary of going from pillar to post in the British Cabinet to get essential information about various phases of war organization and expressed rather forcibly to Bonar Law, the Colonial Secretary, his dissatisfaction with the situation.²²

Unfortunately Mr. Law did not realize the degree of the Canadian's dissatisfaction. In the four months after his return from England Sir Robert received no information about war policy from the British government and had to rely upon the cables of the Resident Canadian Minister, and Acting High Commissioner, Sir George Perley, and such information as Sir Max Aiken, the future Lord Beaverbrook, relayed to him.²³ In this neglect Sir Robert was not unique. During the same period the Prime Minister of Australia was equally starved of information. Mr. Hughes has recorded in his memoirs that two things struck him about the war cables that he received, "First that they were usually belated; and secondly, that they left a good deal unsaid."²⁴ When Sir George Perley told Bonar Law that the Canadian government felt itself entitled to fuller information and some opportunity for consultation, the Colonial Secretary vaguely replied that it was more difficult to keep Sir Robert informed of events when he was in Canada but that "... if there is any way which occurs to him or to yourself in which this can be done I shall be delighted to carry it out." As regards consultation Bonar Law saw no way in which this could be practically done and therefore concluded, "... if no scheme is practicable then it is very undesirable that the question should be raised." This was a little too much, and, to use one of Sir Robert Borden's expressions, he "exploded" in a vigorous letter to Perley.

It can hardly be expected that we shall put 400,000 or 500,000 men in the field and willingly accept the position of having no more voice and receiving no more consideration than if we were toy automata. Any person cherishing such a delusion harbours an unfortunate and even dangerous delusion. Is this war being waged

²⁰*Ibid.*, I, 500, 506.

²¹Quoted in Sir Charles Lucas, *The Empire at War* (Oxford, 1921), II, 24. Much the same argument appears in speeches made to the Canadian Clubs of Winnipeg and Montreal in December, 1914, and in speeches delivered after Sir Robert's return, all of which were published in pamphlet form. Thus in Winnipeg Sir Robert said, "it is impossible to believe that the existing status so far as it affects the control of foreign policy and extra-imperial relations can remain as it is today."

²²*Memoirs*, I, 508.

²³*Ibid.*, II, 622.

²⁴Hughes, *Splendid Adventure*, 38.

by the United Kingdom alone or is it a war waged by the whole Empire. If I am correct in supposing that the second hypothesis must be accepted then why do the statesmen of the British Isles arrogate to themselves solely the methods by which it shall be carried on in the various spheres of warlike activity and the steps which shall be taken to assure victory and a lasting peace.

It is for them to suggest the method and not for us. If there is no available method and if we are expected to continue in the role of automata the whole situation must be reconsidered.

This vigorous despatch had surprisingly little effect upon Bonar Law. After five weeks the Prime Minister received a letter which began "It has been difficult to find anything especially interesting to communicate to you as no special changes have taken place." The Prime Minister was promised, after reiterated warnings about secrecy, a number of documents that had been circulated in the War Cabinet which were forwarded to him by special courier. The question of consultation was entirely ignored.²⁵

Shortly after this correspondence the Australian Prime Minister arrived in England. He had pressed vainly for the regular meeting of the Imperial Conference to take place in 1915 and was the only Dominion Prime Minister available the following year. Like Sir Robert he was admitted to a session of the British Cabinet where he spoke his mind freely and, like him, he was disturbed by the lack of leadership and drive. After some pressing, Mr. Hughes was made with Sir George Foster a member of the British delegation to the Allied Economic Conference in Paris in July, 1916, with the right to cast an individual vote.²⁶

With the accession of Mr. Lloyd George as Prime Minister, the attitude toward the Dominions changed almost over night. For some time the *Round Table*, the new quarterly started to discuss imperial problems, had been stressing the importance of recognizing more effectively the role of the Dominions,²⁷ and its editor, Philip Kerr, later Lord Lothian, became Mr. Lloyd George's private secretary. He had been a member in South Africa of the famous "kindergarten" of Lord Milner, who had told Mr. Lloyd George in the spring of 1916 that in his opinion all the principal colonies should be represented in the War Cabinet.²⁸ The new Colonial Secretary, a right-wing Tory, Walter Long, held more old-fashioned views. He was still thinking in terms of a weekly letter from himself to the Dominions on the progress of the war, and hinting that perhaps he should represent them in the new War Cabinet of five but was quickly brushed aside. To Mr. Lloyd George it was a matter of common sense policy. The Dominions had made "enormous sacrifices" and "hardly feel they have been consulted." "As we must receive even more substantial support from them," the new Prime Minister told Long, "it is important that they should feel that they have a share in our councils as well as in our burdens. We

²⁵*Memoirs*, II, 621-4.

²⁶Hughes, *Splendid Adventure*, 40-4; *Lord Riddell's War Diary* (London, 1933), 165.

²⁷In 1915 it discussed the role of the Dominions at the Peace Conference. See "The Dominions and the Settlement" (*Round Table*, V, March, 1915, 325-44). Mr. Dewey has collected the comments of this period on Dominion participation in the Peace (*Dewey, Dominions and Diplomacy*, II, 2-6).

²⁸Riddell, *War Diary*, 165-6.

want more men from them. We can hardly ask them to make another great recruiting effort unless it is accompanied by an invitation to come over to discuss the situation with us."²⁹ So on Christmas Day, 1916, the Dominion Prime Ministers were invited to attend a special War Conference and also "to attend a series of special and continuous meetings of the War Cabinet in order to consider urgent questions affecting prosecution of War, the possible conditions on which in agreement with our Allies we could assent on its termination and the problems which will then immediately arise."³⁰ Accordingly it was to that conference that Sir Robert Borden set out in February, 1917, with ". . . a fixed purpose to set forth in terms that could not be misunderstood and by authority that must be respected a new conception of the status of the Dominions in their relation to their governance of the Empire."³¹ There he was to meet for the first time General Smuts, with whom he quickly felt on intimate terms, and who encouraged him in the task which he had set himself. The result of their discussions and informal talks with the other Dominion representatives was the famous Resolution Nine of the Imperial War Conference of 1917, the basis for almost all subsequent development of Dominion status.

This famous resolution reserved for a special Constitutional Conference after the war, which, Sir Robert hoped, would be attended by leaders of all political parties, the readjustment of the constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire. It did lay down three general principles upon which such a readjustment be based: "a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of the Imperial Commonwealth,³² and of India as an important part of the same," the recognition of "the right of the Dominions and of India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations," and "effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern, and for such necessary concerted action, founded on consultation, as the several governments may determine."³³ It seems certain that the chief reason for the general approval with which all the Dominion statesmen present greeted this resolution was the fact that it left to the future the task of working out the general principles enunciated. Otherwise it is hard to explain why men as different in outlook as General Smuts and Sir Joseph Ward could accept it with the same willingness. To General Smuts it negated by implication the idea of a future imperial parliament and imperial executive and meant still greater freedom and equality for the Dominions. In contrast Sir Joseph Ward used the resolution as a platform for presenting his arguments of 1911 and talked spacioisly of "overriding vital imperial matters" which must be decided by a central body.³⁴ In his speech sponsoring the resolution the Canadian Prime Minister did not explicitly

²⁹David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (London, 1934), IV, 1732-3. It was particularly with Lord Milner, Philip Kerr, and Sir Maurice Hankey that the British Prime Minister discussed the agenda of the projected conference (*ibid.*, IV, 1742).

³⁰*Memoirs*, II, 625-6.

³¹*Ibid.*, II, 667.

³²Professor W. K. Hancock has established the fact that Mr. Lionel Curtis is responsible for the new use of the word "Commonwealth." See his *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs* (London, 1937), I, 53-4.

³³Professor Dawson suggests that the last clause may have been intended to leave open the possibility for separate foreign policies in matters not of common imperial concern (Dawson, *Development of Dominion Status*, 26).

³⁴The various speeches are published in *Sessional Paper, 42A* of the *Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada*, 1917.

support either view, possibly by design. But his stress on the fact that complete control of domestic policy had strengthened rather than weakened imperial unity, his belief that the nations of the Empire were really bound together "by the tie of a common allegiance, by like institutions and ideals of democracy and by like purposes," and his closing sentence expressing the hope that the future structure of the Empire might be erected "on the sure and firm foundations of freedom and co-operation, autonomy and unity" undoubtedly place him in the same camp as the South African. It is significant that in his *Memoirs* General Smuts's speech was published in full and that he quoted in a foot-note the South African's remark to him, "You and I have transformed the structure of the British Empire."³⁵

In commenting on Resolution Nine, Mr. Dafoe has written approvingly. "It excluded the idea of formal federation. . . . Equally it excluded the idea of separation. And it repudiated, at the same time, the idea of the continued subordination of the Dominions in external affairs, thus attempting, from the viewpoint of Mr. Curtis and the Round Tablers, the unattainable."³⁶ Moreover, by deed as well as by word Sir Robert repeatedly gave proof of his vigilance in safeguarding Canadian autonomy against imperial centralization. The appointment of a Minister of Overseas Forces in October, 1916, who built up what was really a Canadian war office overseas, and who was to interpose promptly and successfully with the vigorous backing of the Prime Minister when the War Office proposed to merge the Canadian Corps into the British Army;³⁷ the quick protest in January, 1917, against the direct requisitioning by the British Admiralty of a ship on the Canadian registry,³⁸ are only two illustrations of this policy. A third action of even greater significance in view of the projected naval policy of 1912 was the lead which Sir Robert gave the Dominion Prime Ministers when they rejected the Admiralty memorandum of May, 1918, recommending a single navy under the control of the imperial authorities in both peace and war.³⁹ In his own words, ". . . I reached the unhesitating conclusion that it could not be accepted as it did not sufficiently recognize the status of the Dominions."

While the Imperial War Conference erected a signpost pointing to the future of the Commonwealth, the Imperial War Cabinet was giving the Dominion Prime Ministers full opportunity for consultation and advice on directing the war effort of the Empire. In its fourteen meetings between March 20 and May 2, 1917, this new administrative organ worked so well as to secure ready approval from all that it should function for part at least of each year.⁴⁰ The term Cabinet was, of course, a misnomer even when qualified in Sir Robert Borden's phrase as a "Cabinet of Governments."⁴¹ A Cabinet which does not proceed by majority vote, act through one executive, or report to a single

³⁵*Memoirs*, II, 677.

³⁶Quoted in Dawson, *Development of Dominion Status*, 25.

³⁷*Memoirs*, II, 773-6.

³⁸The Minute of the Canadian Privy Council is republished in Dawson, *Development of Dominion Status*, 168-70.

³⁹*Memoirs*, II, 841-3.

⁴⁰Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, IV, 1762.

⁴¹Sir Robert's speech to the United Kingdom branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association on April 3 was widely praised. General Smuts described it as "one of the finest and one of the wisest I have ever listened to."

legislature is a Cabinet by courtesy only.⁴² Mr. Hughes has given the best description of the procedure of this imperial improvisation.

The decision having been arrived at, the Prime Minister of the Dominion affected and his colleagues assenting, the position was telegraphed to the Acting Prime Minister of the Dominion, who summoned his fellow Ministers, laid the matter before them, and communicated the result of their deliberations to his Prime Minister. He, in turn, informed the Imperial Cabinet. If the Government of the Dominion—which, it is very necessary to note, always remained in the Dominion—authorized the proposed step, action was taken by virtue of that authority. Always the decision of the Imperial Cabinet, qua Imperial Cabinet, was only a recommendation requiring the Assent of the Government or Governments which had authority over the subject-matter covered by the decision before it could be translated into action.⁴³

In the House of Commons, immediately after his return, the Premier rendered an account of his stewardship at the Imperial War Cabinet meetings. His description of its procedure closely paralleled that given in his speech to the Empire Parliamentary Association, but contained an announcement of the British Cabinet's readiness to make the War Cabinet develop into a constitutional usage or convention and a statement on foreign policy that "The principle has been finally and definitely laid down that in these matters the Dominions shall be consulted before the Empire is committed to any important policy which might involve the issues of peace or war."⁴⁴ At the same time Sir Robert was careful to express his view that the proposal to create an imperial parliament with certain taxation powers applicable to both the Dominions and the United Kingdom was "neither feasible nor wise" and to indicate his disapproval of the *Round Table* projects of imperial federation.⁴⁵ The only M.P. to comment on the Premier's description of the new imperial organism was Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who had already privately expressed his doubts of the trend of policy in a letter to the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*.⁴⁶ He made some shrewd comments upon the accuracy of the phrase "War Cabinet" for what must be essentially a consultative body. The chief reason for the lack of discussion was the fact that the Prime

⁴²Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, I, 51; Keith, *The Sovereignty of the British Dominions*, 313-14; Dawson, *Development of Dominion Status*, 23-4. Cf. also Sir Wilfrid Laurier's view, quoted in Oscar Douglas Skelton, *The Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier* (Toronto, 1921), II, 505.

⁴³Hughes, *Splendid Adventure*, 50-1.

⁴⁴*Commons Debates*, 1917, II, 1530, 1528; Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, IV, 1762.

⁴⁵*Commons Debates*, 1917, II, 1531. But Borden praised the *Round Table* groups for their "earnest, unselfish and devoted work." In line with his rejection of an imperial parliament with taxing powers he was always careful to avoid any appearance of encroaching upon the domestic autonomy of the United Kingdom. Thus he argued that imperial preference so far as Britain was concerned was a policy for the British people to decide (*Memoirs*, II, 839-41).

Sir Alfred Zimmern quotes an interesting remark made during the war in his presence by Sir Robert in commenting on the suggestion that the war might pave the way for imperial federation. "I am not so sure," he said, "the result may be exactly the opposite of what you are imagining. It may be that the spirit of national pride which the war is evolving will create psychological conditions unanticipated by you in Great Britain and favour processes of decentralization rather than of centralization" (quoted in Alfred Zimmern, *The Third British Empire*, London, 1926, 12).

⁴⁶Skelton, *Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, II, 503-4.

Minister ended his speech about the War Cabinet with a statement that he had come to the conclusion some form of compulsory military service was essential.⁴⁷ With that announcement, for the balance of 1917 conscription, the attendant formation of a union government, and elections were to dominate the political scene.

When the Imperial War Cabinet held its second session in June, 1918, the Australian Prime Minister was present for the first time. He has recorded his dismay at the gloomy picture of the war which was presented to the Cabinet by the military experts. What especially disturbed Mr. Hughes was the fact that despite cables and despatches he and his colleagues "were profoundly ignorant of all that had passed during their relatively brief absence."⁴⁸ Presumably that may explain why he was the leader at the second Imperial War Conference in securing the right of direct communication, at their discretion, of the overseas Prime Ministers with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Mr. Hughes had also come to the conclusion that the generalship of the Allied armies was also seriously at fault. That was also Sir Robert Borden's opinion and it led him to perform one of the bravest acts of his political career. After a long discussion with General Currie and consultation with his colleagues, Messrs. Calder, Meighen, and Rowell, the Prime Minister made a blunt speech on the conduct of the war to the War Cabinet, June 13, of which he records in his *Memoirs*, "The intensity of my emotion enables me to speak without hesitation and more rapidly than usual."⁴⁹ His frontal attack upon "incompetency, disorganization and confusion" at the Front brought the Chief of the General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, back to the meeting, at the order of Mr. Lloyd George, and led to the appointment of a special sub-committee which, in the next two months, scrutinized very closely the methods of prosecuting the war, so far as the imperial forces were concerned. In his *Diaries* Sir Henry Wilson described the Borden criticism as "some very open remarks on our strategy and tactics, on our Corps commanders, staff, etc." and gives the impression that he was "much congratulated" on his reply, a claim which is hard to substantiate.⁵⁰ In Mr. Lloyd George's *War Memoirs*, surprisingly enough, in view of his quarrels with the "Brass Hats" there is no record at all.

When the Canadian Prime Minister sailed for Canada on August 17, the Allied counter-offensive had just got under way on the Western Front. None realized that the end of the war was actually in sight. Early in September there was a hint from Mr. Lloyd George that it might be advisable for Sir Robert to return to Britain⁵¹ but it was not until October 27 that the request became imperative. In the interval

⁴⁷In 1918 the Canadian correspondents of the *Round Table* reported that the Canadian public had shown no particular enthusiasm for the War Cabinet (*Round Table*, 1918, IX, 171).

⁴⁸Hughes, *Splendid Adventure*, 62.

⁴⁹*Memoirs*, II, 813. Sir Robert expected General Smuts, whom he had consulted, to support him, but the latter failed to do so, and it was the New Zealand Prime Minister who endorsed his criticisms.

⁵⁰Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell (ed.), *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries* (London, 1927), II, 108-9. Cf. Sir Robert's comments upon the accuracy of these diaries (*Canada in the Commonwealth*, Oxford, 1929, 93 ff.; *Memoirs*, II, 814-17). Lord Haig shared the Dominion Prime Minister's disappointment with Sir Henry Wilson's views on the prosecution of the war. See Duff Cooper (ed.), *Haig* (Toronto, 1936), II, 326-8.

⁵¹*Memoirs*, II, 855.

before Borden left again for England the Supreme War Council accepted on November 4 the Armistice terms based upon the Wilson Fourteen Points. The British government did so without securing approval of the Dominions. This was an especially sore point with Mr. Hughes, who was in London at the time, and it is curious that Sir Robert passes over it completely.⁵² It is likewise significant that, although he was in the United States chiefly on vacation from September 21 until October 18, there is no evidence that he either sought or was offered any information as to the progress of the war of notes between Wilson and the German government. An index to the American attitude at that time to Dominion status can be found in the House memoirs which contain in their index no such heading as "Borden," "Canada," or "Dominions."

Perhaps one reason why Sir Robert did not join Mr. Hughes in criticizing what Keith calls the "technical irregularity"⁵³ of failing to consult the Dominions on the Armistice terms may be found in his preoccupation with status. Like another steadfast champion of self-government of the same first name and initials, Robert Baldwin, the Prime Minister was seized with one idea which he was determined to bring to fruition. For Baldwin responsible government had been an intra-imperial matter; for Borden Dominion status had become an international one. Resolution Nine of the Imperial War Conference and the procedure of the Imperial War Cabinet had clarified imperial relations so far as Great Britain and the Dominions were concerned, but it was still necessary to educate the wider world to realize that the Dominions had become distinct entities with wills and policies of their own. As Borden told the Imperial War Cabinet, "The status of the Dominions was not well understood by foreign Powers and it would be not only proper, but necessary, for the British Government to set it forth fully." They had entered the war with no more control over policy than the borough of West Ham, they should enter the Peace Conference as participating nations even if it involved the creation of a new type of semi-sovereign unit that might shock the susceptibilities of international jurists. At all events on October 29 Borden answered the Lloyd George cable by one which opened with the sentence, "There is need for serious consideration as to representation of the Dominions in the peace negotiations," admitted the possible difficulties of such representation, and warned that ". . . certainly a very unfortunate impression would be created and possibly a dangerous feeling might be roused if these difficulties are not overcome by some solution which will meet the national spirit of the Canadian people." "In a word," said

⁵²Mr. Hughes claims (*Splendid Adventure*, 90-3) that the Imperial War Cabinet, despite the absence of the Canadian and New Zealand Prime Ministers, met three times in October and early November and that he had been given to understand it would approve the preliminary Armistice terms before they were finally approved by the Supreme War Council. Although in Paris the claims of Belgium and Japan to representation at the Peace Conference were raised, there is no evidence that the British Prime Minister advocated Dominion representation. Cf. Charles Seymour (ed.), *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* (New York, 1928), IV, 97-101, 113-38; Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, VI, chap. xxxv. Mr. Keith suggests that the British government deliberately avoided discussing the terms with Mr. Hughes lest his objections might delay a favourable reply to Wilson (Keith, *Sovereignty of the British Dominions*, 315).

⁵³H. V. Temperley (ed.), *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris* (London, 1924), VI, 343.

the Premier, "new conditions must be met by new precedents."⁵⁴ As, in the opinion of Mr. Hughes, who was on the spot, "The Government did not contemplate at this moment the direct, full and equal representation at the Peace Conference which the Dominions later achieved,"⁵⁵ the British Prime Minister made an evasive reply declaring that he fully understood the importance of the issue but suggesting that it made all the more urgent the need of Borden sailing at once for England.

Immediately upon his arrival in London Sir Robert went to Downing Street and was met with the suggestion, which had been discussed in the Supreme War Council, that the British Empire delegation should be a unit of five. These five Mr. Lloyd George thought should be himself, Balfour, Bonar Law, Barnes, and Borden who should represent all the Dominions.⁵⁶ Sir Robert was not prepared to accept such an offer which would differentiate him from the leaders of the other Dominions and the question was postponed. At a meeting of British, French, and Italian leaders in London on December 2, it was agreed that "Representatives of the British Dominions and India should attend as additional members of the British delegation when questions directly affecting them are under discussion."⁵⁷ This did not meet the Canadian request and two days later the Prime Minister told the Secretary of the War Cabinet that "he had not come to take part in light comedy" and, in an interview with Mr. Lloyd George, put the case for Dominion representation "very firmly." He was able to fortify his argument by a cable from Sir Thomas White, the acting Canadian Prime Minister, which stated that the Cabinet ". . . is even more strongly of opinion than when you left that Canada should be represented" and that ". . . in view of war efforts of Dominion other nations entitled to representation at the Conference should recognize unique character of British Commonwealth composed of group of free nations under one sovereign and that provision should be made for special representation of these nations at Conference, even though it may be necessary that in any final decisions reached they should speak with one voice." If this was not possible Ottawa thought Borden should at least be one of the British Commonwealth delegation.⁵⁸ I strongly suspect that Sir Robert himself inspired this cable, from the entry in his diary for the day on which the cable arrived, and from the fact that less than three weeks later Ottawa was cabling him urging him to come home for the opening of Parliament which they felt should be at the end of January or early in February. This disconcerting suggestion based on the complications of domestic politics Borden rejected with the reminder, "It is purely a question of service here or in Canada but I am confident that Canada cannot have the place or the influence which her people expect at the Peace Con-

⁵⁴Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties* (London, 1938), I, 206. The correspondence is published in the *Sessional Papers of Canada*, 1919, 41J, 1-10. Mr. Dawson has published an excellent collection of documents upon the Dominions and the Peace Conference (Dawson, *Development of Dominion Status*, 178-94).

⁵⁵Hughes, *Splendid Adventure*, 93.

⁵⁶*Memoirs*, II, 866. Hughes was opposed (872), Massey and Ward of New Zealand felt they should both be invited to attend (868).

⁵⁷Lloyd George, *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, I, 205. The illness of Colonel House prevented any American representation at this meeting.

⁵⁸*Memoirs*, II, 884-5. According to Sir Alfred Zimmern, members of the British Foreign Office were quite excited by the Canadian attitude which was thought "very inconvenient" (Zimmern, *Third British Empire*, 30).

ference unless her Prime Minister is present."⁵⁹ On the last day of 1918 the Imperial War Cabinet debated the question of representatives with a telegram before them from Paris containing a proposal that omitted the Dominions as separate states but proposed to offer small belligerent states like Portugal three delegates, and neutrals like Sweden one. For the third time the Canadian Prime Minister took up the cudgels for the Dominions and vigorously denounced a scheme which would have given Portugal, a state which had put fewer men in the field than Canada had lost in battle, a recognition denied his country. Each Dominion, he insisted, should have as ample representation as Belgium or Portugal while "to provide that Canada should be called in only when her special interests were in question would be regarded as little better than a mockery." His views were endorsed by General Smuts and Mr. Hughes and his final proposals for representation were adopted by the War Cabinet. They not only provided for full equality with Belgium and other smaller Allied states but also for a panel of British Empire delegates to include the Dominion Prime Ministers as well as United Kingdom representatives "from which part of the personnel of the British delegation could be filled, according to the subject for discussion."⁶⁰ When his colleagues in Ottawa were informed of this decision they cabled approval, obligingly offering arguments to further the next step. "Canada," they said, "has had as many casualties as the United States and probably more deaths. Canadian people would not appreciate five American delegates throughout the whole conference and no Canadians entitled to sit throughout Conference. . . ."

The task of securing the approval of the French, American, and Italian delegates in the preliminary meetings in Paris before the Peace Conference opened its formal sessions was entrusted to Mr. Lloyd George. He encountered stiff opposition. President Wilson was only mildly critical but his Secretary of State, Mr. Lansing, was "somewhat arrogant not to say offensive."⁶¹ Clemenceau, hesitant at first, was won over by a reminder that the Dominions had placed a million men in the field. When it was proposed that each Dominion should have one representative while small Allied Powers had two, Sir Robert, after consulting Botha, Smuts, Hughes, and Cook, refused to give way at a meeting of the British Empire delegates. The final decision modified only slightly the Borden proposals. New Zealand was given one delegate in place of two while Newfoundland received none at all, a precedent which later led to her being excluded from membership in the League of Nations. The arrangements within the British Empire delegation, which was really the Imperial War Cabinet transferred to more peaceful pursuits, were of course unaffected. In view of the fact that the Peace Conference seldom if ever met, they proved of more immediate practical value in framing policy. As Professor Hancock has neatly put it, "'Are you one or are you many?' foreigners asked; and the British answered

⁵⁹ *Memoirs*, II, 890.

⁶⁰ Hughes, *Splendid Adventure*, 100-2; Lloyd George, *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, 206-8; Temperley, *History of the Peace Conference*, 344.

⁶¹ *Memoirs*, II, 892-5, 899; Lloyd George, *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, 16-17. Dr. Lionel H. Laing has published a memorandum from the Borden papers, which does not appear in the *Memoirs*, upon this subject (L. H. Laing, "The Struggle for the Recognition of Dominion Autonomy," *American Journal of International Law*, XXXIII, 1938, 749). When the Supreme Council later increased the number of delegates for Belgium and Serbia, Sir Robert vainly protested (*Memoirs*, II, 902-3).

innocently—or were they so very innocent? 'We are one and we are many.'"⁶² Even this position was made still more confusing when in Paris on January 25, the mystifying spectacle was seen of Borden in his capacity as a spokesman for a small power associating himself with the protests of the Belgian foreign minister in objecting to the inadequate representation assigned to the small powers on the various special Commissions.⁶³ What Borden in his capacity as a member of the British Empire delegation thought of these protests will never be known.

Separate representation at the Peace Conference was but the first victory in a series of engagements that Borden contested. The ink was scarcely dry on the agreement recognizing Dominion representation before he was proposing to what he vaguely described in his *Memoirs* as the "Committee on the League of Nations," changes to make the representation of the British Empire in accord with constitutional development.⁶⁴ The first American draft of the League Covenant had made no provisions for Dominion membership and neither Australia nor New Zealand was particularly interested. Here General Smuts proved the most valuable ally, and President Wilson, whom Sir Robert interviewed on the question, was well disposed. As Colonel House wrote philosophically in his diary, "if Great Britain can stand giving her Dominions [separate] representation in the League no one should object."⁶⁵ During the progress of the Covenant through the Conference Sir Robert maintained a vigilant eye on proceedings, in addition to drafting a memorandum upon the implication of its various articles which as good a judge as David Hunter Miller has warmly praised.⁶⁶ Just before the Treaty of Versailles was submitted to the German government, Sir Robert induced the "Big Three" to issue a formal declaration, drafted by himself, which made clear the eligibility of the Dominions for election into the League Council. This precaution was taken because the British Empire, not the United Kingdom or Great Britain, was designated as a permanent member in the Council and the ambiguity of double representation of the Dominions gave rise to difficulty.⁶⁷

The sternest struggle came over the right of the Dominions to membership in the International Labour Organization and election to its Governing Body. The difficulties arose partly from the failure of the British delegate to the Labour Commission, Mr. G. N. Barnes, to consult adequately or to present the wishes of the British Empire delegation, and partly from the opposition of the American delegates on the same commission, Messrs. Henry Robinson, and Gompers.⁶⁸ Sir

⁶²Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, I, 67. Cf. Hughes, *Splendid Adventure*, 105-7; Keith, *Sovereignty of the British Dominions*, 316-17; Dawson, *Development of Dominion Status*, 32-3; Borden, *Canadian Constitutional Studies* (Toronto, 1921), 118.

⁶³Temperley, *History of the Peace Conference*, VI, 346; *Memoirs*, II, 904-5.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, II, 900, 904.

⁶⁵House, *Intimate Papers*, IV, 323; Temperley, *History of the Peace Conference*, VI, 346-7; Felix Morley, *The Society of Nations* (London, 1932), 56-7.

⁶⁶The memorandum is published in full in David Hunter Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant* (New York, 1928), I, 354-67; E. M. House (ed.), *What Really Happened at Paris* (New York, 1921), 411.

⁶⁷*Memoirs*, II, 947-8, 961; Temperley, *History of the Peace Conference*, VI, 347; Morley, *Society of Nations*, 344-5.

⁶⁸Lord Cecil expressed this view in a discussion with Colonel House (quoted in Frederic H. Soward, "Canada and the League of Nations," *International Conciliation*, Oct., 1932, 362).

Robert was obliged to submit an amendment in the plenary session which authorized the Drafting Committee "to make such amendments as may be necessary to have the Convention conform to the Covenant of the League of Nations in the character of its membership and in the method of adherence." He had previously warned Mr. Lloyd George that if the rights of the Dominions were not thus protected the Canadian Parliament, after ratifying the Peace Treaty, would immediately give notice of withdrawal from the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization, and "thus avoid the continuance of a condition which her people will naturally regard as humiliating."⁶⁹ The amendment carried without difficulty and it was left to a Canadian-born expert in the American delegation, Dr. J. T. Shotwell, to draft a telegram "to head off anti-Canadian feeling in the American labour leaders."⁷⁰

One final problem of status was tackled by the persistent Canadian before he returned to Canada in May. Sir Robert was eager for the Dominions to sign the Treaty of Versailles separately, and to ratify it individually, as outward and visible signs of the new status they had achieved. After discussion with the other Dominion leaders, who were in full agreement, he circulated a memorandum on March 12 advocating such a policy and proposing that the names of the Plenipotentiaries signing for their respective states should include those of the Dominion delegates, directly after the names of those from the United Kingdom.⁷¹ He also suggested that in listing the signatures under the general heading of the British Empire there should be the sub-headings of the United Kingdom, the Dominion of Canada, etc. In line with this procedure the Canadian Privy Council in April passed an Order-in-Council issuing full powers to the Canadian Plenipotentiaries. A certified copy of this order was transmitted to the British Foreign Office and Mr. Lloyd George was asked to take appropriate steps to link up this act with the grant of full powers by the King, ". . . in order that it may formally appear in the records that these Full Powers were issued on the responsibility of the Canadian Government."⁷² In one important respect Borden's memorandum was not carried out, an omission for which the Premier's return to Canada before the signing of the Treaty of Versailles may have been responsible. The delegates from the United Kingdom signed without specification while the others signed specifically for their respective Dominions. By so doing the Dominions were really doubly bound, an anomaly which drew comment in subsequent Parliament debates. In 1926 the Imperial Conference of that year adopted the Borden method of signature thereby vindicating his good judgment in Paris.

While this paper has purposely stressed Sir Robert's efforts to advance Dominion status in Paris, it must not be thought that these were the Prime Minister's sole preoccupation. On the contrary, his moderation and good judgment during the weary weeks of peace-making do him great credit, and serve to explain why he was once asked to head a proposed conference with the various Russian governments at Prinkipo Island, and was invited by the British Prime Minister to consider

⁶⁹*Memoirs*, II, 944-60; Temperley, *History of the Peace Conference*, VI, 358.

⁷⁰J. T. Shotwell, *At the Paris Peace Conference* (New York, 1937), 326. Dr. Shotwell gives the text of his cable in a foot-note.

⁷¹*Memoirs*, II, 920-1; *Canada in the Commonwealth*, 102-3, 110-11.

⁷²The documents are included in Dawson, *Development of Dominion Status*, 183-6.

becoming the British Ambassador to Washington.⁷³ Mr. Lloyd George has described Borden in retrospect as "the very quintessence of common sense"⁷⁴ and that praise was well deserved. Like King George V he had no patience with the fantastic scheme for trying the Kaiser.⁷⁵ He indulged in no such casuistry as General Smuts on Reparations, the size of which disturbed him,⁷⁶ and avoided the flamboyant nationalism of Mr. Hughes which antagonized nearly everyone. He almost secured a formula for racial equality in the League of Nations that would have met the Japanese wishes if the same Australian Prime Minister had not objected.⁷⁷ Whether as vice-chairman of the Greek Committee, or as acting chairman of the British Empire delegation in the absence of the British Prime Minister, Borden won golden opinions. On matters affecting this continent he took what we call today a North American attitude. This was revealed, for instance, in his attitude towards the proposed Aerial Convention where his views coincided with those of Lansing.⁷⁸ Always, like a sensible Canadian, he reminded his colleagues of the importance of the United States. Thus, before the War Cabinet moved to Paris, and some of his colleagues were indulging in roseate dreams of territorial expansion, Sir Robert was more cautious and warned of the dubious effect upon American opinion. He told them that "one of the most important assets we could get out of the war would be assured goodwill and a clear understanding between Great Britain and the United States."⁷⁹ On another occasion, when the War Cabinet was discussing Mr. Lloyd George's report of his first interview with President Wilson, and some of the speeches had been sharply critical of the United States, Sir Robert intervened ". . . to make clear that if the future policy of the British Empire meant working in co-operation with some European nation as against the United States, that policy could not reckon on the approval or the support of Canada." In a sentence which explains his subsequent attitude toward Article x of the Covenant, the Prime Minister stated that "Canada's view was that as an Empire we should keep clear, as far as possible, of European complications and alliances."⁸⁰

Six weeks after his return to Canada the Prime Minister was obliged to resume his course of instruction for British Cabinet Ministers upon the changed status of the Dominions. In a telegram of July 4 the new Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, expressed the hope that the Treaty with Germany might be ratified by three of the Great Powers before the end of the month. The implication that Britain proposed to act for the whole Empire irritated Sir Robert who felt that it had made the role of the Dominions in the peace negotiations "an utterly idle formality." He cabled rather curtly that he was under pledge to submit the Treaty to Parliament before its ratification, that Parliament had just prorogued, and that no copy of the Treaty had arrived in Canada. The cable closed with the pointed question, "Kindly advise how you expect to accomplish ratification on behalf of whole Empire before end

⁷³*Memoirs*, II, 911-12. See Lloyd George, *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, I, 348-51.

⁷⁴Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, IV, 1743.

⁷⁵*Memoirs*, II, 869.

⁷⁶Lloyd George, *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, I, 479.

⁷⁷*Memoirs*, II, 926-8.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, II, 934-5.

⁷⁹Lloyd George, *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, I, 116-17.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, I, 199.

July?" In his reply Lord Milner "backed water," after offering a little lecture upon the power of the King to ratify the Treaty on the advice of his Ministers and without the consent of Parliament. He asked for the earliest date that the Canadian Parliament could meet and admitted that he was urging the other Dominions to submit the Treaty to their parliaments without delay. Sir Robert countered with another homily on modern constitutional practice and the promise to have Parliament meet in early September.⁸¹

In his speech presenting a resolution approving of the Treaty of Versailles, the Premier devoted almost a quarter of it to a careful sketch of how the Dominions had acquired "a new and definite status" at the Peace Conference. In closing he again referred to the constitutional conference that had been agreed upon in 1917 and said that its basic principle would undoubtedly be equality of nationhood. "Each nation," he declared, "must preserve unimpaired its absolute autonomy, but it likewise must have its voice as to those external relations which involve the issue of peace and war."⁸² There as always was the kernel of his position. In the debate which followed, few members seemed to realize the significance of what had been laid before them. The Liberals could not agree on whether the new status was, as Mr. Fielding called it, "a colossal humbug designed to impose upon an innocent parliament and too credulous people" or whether it implied, in Dr. Beland's phrase, "a fever of imperialism, the main symptom of which is a blind desire to centralize in London the administration of Canadian affairs."⁸³ As Mr. Dewey has summarized it, "the Liberal Party in part was still Autonomist Isolationist with perhaps greater emphasis now upon isolation than autonomy."⁸⁴

One final achievement was to Sir Robert Borden's credit before he retired from office through illness and overstrain. In October, 1919, he wrote the British government concerning separate representation of Canada in Washington. The need for such a step had been shown during the war when a Canadian Mission had been established and the question had been discussed during his stay in London and Paris. It was the Prime Minister's intention to have the Canadian Minister function in closest possible co-operation with the British Ambassador, even to the point of having his establishment constitute a part of the establishment of the British Embassy. In short, there was to be something approaching a panel system in Washington such as had worked in Paris. His plans were approved in Britain and an announcement of the new departure made in May, 1920. Circumstances prevented any appointment until a much later date when Mr. King, to Sir Robert's regret, dropped the panel idea completely.⁸⁵

Of the many tributes that were paid to Sir Robert during his lifetime and after his death the one, I think, that would have most pleased him came from one of his successors as Conservative leader and Canadian

⁸¹ *Memoirs*, II, 992-5; Dawson, *Development of Dominion Status*, 186-90.

⁸² *Commons Debates*, 1919, second series, I, 22.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, I, 180, 189.

⁸⁴ Dewey, *Dominions and Diplomacy*, II, 46. Cf. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, I, 72-4.

⁸⁵ *Memoirs*, II, 1002-7.

Prime Minister, "We have not produced a stronger Canadian."⁸⁶ Let that be his epitaph.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Trotter said that when Borden talked about Canada accepting a share in the direction of the War, he based this claim on the principle that Canada was an active belligerent in the War and was therefore accepting her share of responsibility. After the War Sir Robert made it clear that what was needed was the development in the Canadian people of a sense of responsibility in external relations and he coupled this with his demand for Canada's share in decisions. Events in recent months have shown that autonomy, a share in imperial decisions, and the acceptance of responsibility are a trio that cannot well be separated.

Mr. Underhill said that he thought Borden had tended to exaggerate the importance of what he accomplished. Sir Robert was always insisting on status. What he did not insist on was administration. His staff in London was very small, and for information on which action might be based he was necessarily dependent on British officials.

Mr. Underhill also pointed out how, in the planning for the League of Nations, all the preliminary work was done by the British and the Americans, and the Canadians came into the picture only at a very late stage.

He also suggested that in the memoirs of Mr. Lloyd George there was to be found a hint which corrected the impression that the Dominions had pushed their way into the imperial war councils. It appears that Lloyd George welcomed the participation of the Dominions because they strengthened his hand against certain elements in England which were opposed to a vigorous continuation of the war.

⁸⁶*Commons Debates*, 1938, I, 14. On May 24, 1938, Mr. Bennett quoted in the House of Commons a letter from Sir Austen Chamberlain to Sir Robert in 1931 which the latter had shown him. It concluded, "As regards the liberties and status of the Dominion of Canada you have achieved all that you set out to secure. But your policy had two sides—while insisting on the one side on the rights of Canada, you consistently coupled with them the duties and responsibilities which were inseparable from the exercise of those rights."