

of Nations, but I say emphatically that analogy may hold good up to a certain point, but after that breaks down. The League of Nations has no common Sovereign. The British Commonwealth has a common Sovereign, and we are united to him by our allegiance to him. But if the British Commonwealth is to be compared with the League of Nations, you cannot stop short of the full extent to which that analogy must be applied. What is it that the League of Nations has been created for? It has been created, as I understand it, to settle disputes between the various Governments by conference, by consultation, and will do so unless they refuse to come to that conference and that consultation. But it is just this consultation and conference which General Smuts, as I understand, is refusing. What is it that a resolution like his comes to? It asks the Dominion Prime Ministers, who took part in the Conference of 1921 and agreed to that resolution, now to treat it as a "scrap of paper," and to join him in passing an absolutely new resolution which, on the face of it, has for its object the reservation of the fullest freedom of each Dominion to pass its own laws regarding franchise.

Practical Limits to Constitutional Rights of Dominions.

Nobody has doubted that constitutional right, but there are limits to that constitutional right, limits which are prescribed by prudence. Let me illustrate that. The British Parliament here is a sovereign Parliament, and the Free State Parliament in Ireland is also an independent Parliament. Suppose the Irish Free State Parliament passed, or intended to pass, legislation to the effect that it would not recognize the right of any Protestant or Englishman to the franchise in Ireland; and suppose, on the other hand, the British Parliament intended to pass legislation to disenfranchise all Irishmen settled in Scotland: well, if you looked at it strictly from the legal point of view you might say that these Parliaments would be within their right, but prudence would at once prescribe limits to the exercise of that power, that constitutional right. The first impulse of the two Parliaments would be to confer, to devise methods of avoiding a conflict. Will they not do it? Yes, I recognize the constitutional liberty and the constitutional rights of the Dominion Governments, but let me tell you this: that constitutional rights can only be exercised with prudence and discretion up to a certain point, and beyond that point you have to allow those constitutional rights to be subordinated to statesmanship, to prudence, and to discretion. Well, I do not wish to raise a legal argument. I hope no legal argument will be raised, because this is not a legal body. There is only one thing I will say. General Smuts has said that the one binding tie between the Dominions and other parts of the Empire and India is our common allegiance to the common Sovereign; but he has coupled that statement with a further proposition—viz., that from that allegiance political rights do not flow.

Constitutional Issue not to be raised here.

Well, I will not have a duel with General Smuts on a point of constitutional law, but I will venture to tell him one thing. Allegiance to the Sovereign is a very living thing. It is not a mere figure of speech; and whenever you pass any law which affects the allegiance of the subject to the Sovereign, and the corresponding duty of protection of the Sovereign to the subject, you tread on very dangerous ground. If a constitutional position like that is to be argued, let it be argued before a legal body, and, speaking for myself, with all humility, I have no fear of facing that constitutional issue on legal grounds, but I do not wish to raise that legal argument at this Conference.

Appeal to the Conference: India's Position in Empire.

I have practically reviewed the whole position and I will now make an appeal to the Conference itself. I will appeal to the Conference to realize to the full the implications of the Indian problem. I have placed before my colleagues from the Dominions and His Majesty's Government here certain specific proposals. I believe, and honestly believe, that the British Empire stands for justice and equality in the eyes of the world. Will you make a place within it for India? Think for a moment of the present position. Ancient and modern history provides no parallel to it. Three hundred and twenty millions of my countrymen, whose religion is different from yours, whose colour is different from yours, whose race is different from yours, whose history is different from yours, are united by the common tie of allegiance to the common Sovereign. They are members of a commonwealth the like of which has never existed before. And let me tell you that, while I do not wish to interfere with your absolute independence inside your own borders, I am one of those men who say that the British Empire can never be described as an exclusively white Empire. Within its borders it comprises a large number of populations of coloured races. Now, how are you going to keep Indians, or, for that matter, all the other coloured races, within that Empire? By force? Never: because, apart from the obvious limitations of force, you cannot be untrue to your own traditions of liberty, justice, and equality; you cannot afford to ignore and neglect the world opinion on this question. By preserving and safeguarding our sentiments? Certainly. That will be the strongest tie you can have, and it remains for you to make use of it. Fulfil our aspirations within our own country for self-government, fulfil our aspirations for a position of equality inside the Dominions and inside the colonies, and India will stand shoulder to shoulder with you through thick and thin. It is by preserving that sentiment that you can keep India; and I pray, with all the sincerity I am capable of, that this Conference may come to some decisions which may strengthen the bonds between the Empire and India, for I do believe in that connection. Make no mistake, it is by sentiment and by the preservation of that sentiment that you will retain us and enable us to achieve self-government and to satisfy our other national ambitions outside our own country.

What India means.

Think for a moment what India means to you. More than three hundred million men are closely allied to other Asiatics, constituting almost the entire half of humanity. They are placed within the