CABINET.

STATUS OF THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

NOTE BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS.

I CIRCULATE to my colleagues "Cape Times" Reports of (1) a speech made by the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa at a public meeting at Stellenbosch on the 15th May, in which he dealt with the international status of the Union of South Africa as one of the self-governing Dominions, and (2) a debate on the subject in the House of Assembly on the 29th May.

It will be seen that in the Stellenbosch speech General Hertzog stated it as his view that "each Dominion, by virtue of the self-Government granted it, would be on the same footing with Great Britain as a sovereign free international State, and apart from the personal bond of their common sovereignty there would be no bonds between them other than those which may from time to time be agreed upon."

These words might appear to suggest a conception of the British Empire as constituting no more than what is known in international law as a "Personal Union,"* such as existed in the case of Great Britain and Hanover from 1714 to 1837. Such a conception would, of course, involve the view that the various parts of the Empire stand inter se in the same relationship as they do to foreign countries, and would have very far-reaching consequences. It is possible, however, that this is not General Hertzog's definite view, and that the wording of his speech merely represents a failure to differentiate precisely between the conception of a personal union and that of an organic unity resulting from the existence of a common Crown which, though advised in respect of the several parts of the Empire by different Ministers, each body of whom can claim complete responsibility for the advice tendered in its own sphere, is nevertheless the one centre and source of Executive authority in all parts.

Even if General Hertzog does, in fact, regard the British Empire as no more than a Personal Union, it is very doubtful whether he has realised all that would be involved in such a view, and it is to be hoped that, if the implications of that view are made clear, he will be prepared to accept the principle of the organic unity of the Empire as above explained.

The question of the relationship of the various parts of the Empire inter se and the implications of the conception of "equal status" on which stress has been laid, not only by Dominion Ministers but also by Ministers in this country, is bound to come up at the Imperial Conference, and, as the Cabinet is aware, papers on various aspects of the subject have been prepared. No action is necessary at the moment, but I thought that my colleagues should have an opportunity of studying in advance these expressions of General Hertzog's general trend of thought. I would call special attention to which he said in the House of Assembly Debate as to how far his views represented those of the Union Government, and also as to his own intended attitude at the Conference, viz., that if his opinions were not accepted he did not propose to issue an immediate "declaration" to the outside world on the part of the Union of South Africa.

L. S. A.

Dominions Office, July 27, 1926.

* A Personal Union, according to Oppenheim (Vol. 1, 3rd edition, page 154), "is in existence when two sovereign States and separate International Persons are linked together through the accidental fact that they have the same individual as monarch."
I.

Speech by General Hertzog at Stellenbosch.

THE speech of General Smuts, delivered at Johannesburg on the 11th November last, dealing with the Locarno Treaty, created a widespread impression, if not a sensation, both in official and unofficial circles. This is not surprising.

According to General Smuts, the signing of this treaty by the United Kingdom, leaving it optional to the Dominions to subscribe to it or not, is an epoch-making event for the continued existence of the British Empire. In his opinion, the future existence of the Empire can be assured only by an unswerving allegiance to the principle of formal unity in regard to foreign relations, at any rate those of a more important nature.

He complains that during the negotiations in connection with and at the conclusion of the Locarno Treaty this unity of action was not observed, and he sees therein the abandonment of the only principle whereby the unity of the Empire can be guaranteed, namely, the principal group unity of the Empire in international matters.

International Freedom.

The full significance of this principle, with all that it implies, will, I think, be better understood by looking back over the struggle for international freedom by the self-governing Dominions of Great Britain, more particularly the Union of South Africa.

With the grant of self-government from time to time to one or other of the Dominions, the question has repeatedly arisen as to its scope, i.e., as to what is implied under self-government. It is obvious that the Dominion concerned, continually striving for freedom and the satisfaction of its national aspirations, had to put the widest and, for itself, the most favourable construction on its powers and authority.

In almost every case, therefore, the grant of self-government has been regarded by influential leaders of public opinion in the Dominions as an emancipation from hitherto existing bonds of subordination to the United Kingdom, coupled with a definite grant to that Dominion of autonomous power and authority, also in regard to the outside world and its relations with foreign Powers.

A Common Sovereign.

According to this opinion, each Dominion is, by virtue of its self-governing constitution, created a free, independent State, with a right to international recognition by foreign Powers, but with a common connecting link between itself and the United Kingdom, centred in the King. This mutual connecting link should, therefore, be regarded as no more than an actual de facto personal bond, without any legal or constitutional subservience to any authority other than that of the sovereign will of the people of the Dominion concerned. According to that opinion, therefore, each Dominion, by virtue of the self-government granted it, would be on the same footing with Great Britain, as a sovereign, free, international State; and, apart from the personal bond of their common sovereign, there would be no bonds between them other than those which may from time to time be agreed upon. Therefore, all unity among the Dominions themselves and between the Dominions and Great Britain, must originate in agreement and co-operation.

This doctrine, to which I have subscribed ever since the establishment of the Union, has not been without its opponents either here or elsewhere in the Dominions. Some of you will remember how in 1918, after my address to the students here in support of this doctrine, the Government of the day, through one of its Ministers, hurried hither to refute my contention in that respect as constitutional heresy; and how, shortly afterwards, in consequence of an expression used by me assigning independence to the Union, another Minister pointed out in the House of Assembly that there was such a thing as a prison for crimes of this description!

Fears of Separation.

From this it is sufficiently clear, not only that there has been difference of opinion with regard to that doctrine, but also that this difference has at times been strong and vehement. The reason for this vehemence, no matter how much it has been...
toned down by time, and is bound eventually to be regarded as unreasonable if not ridiculous, originated in a sense of fear, from which we have not emerged even to-day.

That fear was, that if this doctrine of a purely personal bond were accepted, the Dominions, as well as Great Britain, would go too much their separate ways by entering into foreign relations with other States, and that in that way a conflict of interests would arise, which would ultimately lead to a discontinuance of mutual co-operation.

That that fear is not entirely without foundation may be freely admitted. But let us now examine in what way opponents, who could not identify themselves with this doctrine, tried to evade this fear.

Here we must distinguish between the period preceding the signature of the Versailles Treaty and that from 1919 to date.

**Before Versailles.**

So far as I am aware, the principle of independence of the Dominions, binding themselves to Great Britain by means of the personal bond of the King, was never accepted by any of the Dominion Governments as such before 1919. Whatever may have been the opinion of individual Ministers, in this or that Dominion, Governments like that of the Union carefully avoided advocating it, and never endeavoured to put it to practical test, excepting in a few instances, where, under force of circumstances, they were compelled to move in that direction and act in accordance therewith.

They were constantly possessed by the fear, to which I have just drawn attention, of the disruption of the Empire, and they knew of no means of avoiding this danger other than by the acceptance, and even the defence (as was the case with the Government here) of a status of subordination to and dependence on the United Kingdom. Not everywhere did this fear lead to the acceptance of the doctrine of subordination to such an extravagant degree as with us. But fundamentally, the attitude taken up by the various Dominion Governments has been the same, viz., rejection of individual State independence.

One of the consequences of this has been, that nowhere has any attempt been made by any of the Dominions to obtain formal recognition of its international status by foreign Powers.

**Britain's Attitude.**

Also, that no encouragement has been given thereto by Great Britain is a matter of course. What is more natural than that she should likewise harbour the fear which the Dominions and Dominion statesmen so obviously allowed themselves to be influenced by? If these men considered it undesirable to accept the full consequences of their new status, as self-governing States, by what right could we expect that any recommendation would be made, or even encouragement given, in that direction by the British Government? Not only did the British Government abstain therefrom, but some of its leading statesmen did not hesitate to discourage any attempt in that direction.

In all fairness we should admit that, considering the opinion of the majority in the Dominions themselves, the British Government in general took up a correct attitude towards the Dominions and acted patriotically towards Great Britain. Where justice has not been done in this respect to the Dominions, the responsibility rests with the Dominions themselves and with their responsible leaders, who, sometimes, as here in South Africa, took it upon themselves to declare that we were not entitled to a measure of freedom expressly assigned to us by eminent British statesmen.

The result was that until the conclusion of the Versailles Treaty in 1919, it was in practice as well as in theory the general opinion in Government circles that the Dominions, notwithstanding the possession of self-government, were, nevertheless, subordinate to Great Britain, and had no rights in regard to matters of foreign policy.

**An Awakening.**

It speaks for itself, that there was no lack of experts and others to show that on legal and theoretical grounds this was exactly as it should be; that self-government to the Dominions did not in any way create these Dominions independent States, and that they could, therefore, have no right to an international status.
Meanwhile, this subordination of the Dominions to Great Britain drew more and more attention, and disclosed to an ever-increasing extent the dissatisfaction of the people of the various Dominions. When thus at the outbreak of the great world war, the Dominions suddenly appeared on the battlefields as belligerents fully armed, the international significance thereof could not be concealed, either from the Dominions themselves or from the outside world; and as the full significance thereof increased, it necessarily led to an awakening of the people, and no less of responsible statesmen, to a measure of international self-consciousness, such as never had been the case before.

"On Their Guard."

That it was therefore no longer possible to continue to accept the doctrine of Dominion subordination to Great Britain, was generally felt and accepted when the time arrived for the conclusion of peace. The Dominions, by what they had achieved during the war, had not only become fully conscious of their international status, but they had also been put on their guard, by their bitter experience and sacrifices, against being compelled to repeat these sacrifices, in the matter of a dispute to which they had been no party, and between Powers with whom they, as presumed subordinates of Great Britain, had no voice and enjoyed no right of expressing their views.

When therefore the War was at an end and peace had to be concluded, the Dominions had to decide whether, dominated by the fear of disruption of the Empire in case they accepted the status of Sovereign States, they should continue to adhere to the position of subordination, or whether they should accept the independent status of international States. Urged on by the additional fear which they had felt during the course of the war, namely, that their position of subordination might again plunge them again into a war in the prevention of which they had no say, and spurred on by their awakening to national self-consciousness, the Dominions could no longer be satisfied with their former status, as hitherto exercised.

1919 and After.

To satisfy this new insistence on more right of action in matters of foreign policy, they had necessarily to take up their stand on the basis of international freedom and independence. This was, in fact, done by the statesmen who represented them at the Peace Conference.

The course adopted by these statesmen is peculiar and deserves our attention. This brings us to the second period—the conclusion of Peace in 1919 and thereafter.

It is clear to me that the unambiguous and sound course which our statesmen should have followed there, should have been that of the recognition of the personal bond of a common King with Great Britain; without any other legal ties, but strengthened by such further ties as historical contact, common interests, and mutual agreements, as the will of the people of each separate Dominion might have been prepared to approve of. The leaders of the Dominions at the Peace Conference were, however, not able to carry their convictions as far as that. The furthest they would go was to effect a compromise between the view-point of Dominion independence and that of Dominion subordination.

A Fictitious Super-Power.

To obtain this, the idea of the unity of the Empire group was created, according to which the Dominions, in foreign affairs, would be on the same footing as Great Britain; while at the same time no one, not even Great Britain, should have the right to act as a separate State entity in international affairs. In order to arrive at any decision in international matters, or to take any action, it would be necessary that the group should discuss the matter as a single unit, and, as such, arrive at a decision. A doctrine was, therefore, created according to which each of the Dominions, as well as Great Britain, would be individually subordinate to the group as a fictitious State Super-Power or supreme State authority.

The question might be asked whether, according to that doctrine, the decision of the majority of the group was to be binding on the minority? There is no reference made to this anywhere. It seems to have been simply assumed that there would and could be no minority. The argument appears to have been: the group must decide as one unit: therefore, the group will be unanimous.
Group Unity.

On this basis the Dominion statesmen, after consultation with those of Great Britain, arrived at an agreement during the Peace Conference, and accepted the doctrine of a "free and equal status"; and when the Peace Treaty itself had to be signed, an endeavour was made to give expression thereto, in different ways, one of which at once strikes the attention. This was the manner in which the Treaty was signed by the Dominions.

The idea of the Unity of the Group, with subordination of the Dominions to the group, had, of course, to replace the old theory of unity by subordination to Great Britain, which had to be sacrificed as obsolete; and, as in the case of the rejected theory, the impelling motive for the adoption of this idea was—the fear of disintegration, accompanied by the all too anxious desire to find a preventative in what must necessarily, if adhered to, result in nothing less than a quasi federal Empire, with the highest authority vested in the Imperial Conference; where, in case of difference, Great Britain would of necessity, by virtue of her powerful world influence and world interests, be the decisive voice; while in international affairs she would be considered as the only internationally-recognised State of the Group.

In Practice.

Let us now consider whether in practice the idea of the Unity of the Group has answered its original purpose, or whether matters followed a different course, as just indicated.

The main objects it was intended to achieve were originally two:

1. The recognition of the Dominions as independent international States.
2. The assurance of the continued existence of the Empire by united action in foreign policy.

What has become of these objects? I think I am not saying too much if I maintain that so far nothing more has been attained along the fresh path than a further obscuring of the Status of the Dominions, and an endangering of any desirable co-operation between the Dominions and Great Britain.

Portuguese Opinion.

In order to give you an opportunity of judging how far I am right, I may cite in the first place the following:

Firstly, concerning our Status:

We are informed in the Press that in the Portugues Senate a question was asked on the 4th instant concerning our international Status, as the result of a statement on the subject which I had recently made in Parliament. After a certain Senator had expressed the opinion that "the Union could not be considered an independent country," the Minister for the Colonies stated that South Africa is "a Colony with large autonomy, but dependent on British Sovereignty." Portugal is an independent State, and one of the foreign Powers with whom we, as neighbours, come in most frequent contact on international matters.

This is her opinion as to our international status. We may take it for granted, therefore, that opinion is not more favourable for us in the case of other foreign Powers. In other words, notwithstanding our free and equal status with Great Britain, we remain in the eyes of the outside world subject to British sovereignty, i.e., a subordinate of Great Britain.

This also applies to all the other Dominions.

Is the Portuguese Minister correct in his statement or not? Whether he be right or wrong, it is clear that his view does not agree with the theory of our equality of status with Great Britain.

Real Status Obscured.

It will be seen therefore from the foregoing that I am justified in saying that one of the two main objects of the idea of the unity of the group, namely, the recognition by foreign Powers of the Dominions as independent international States has not been attained, and that our real status has thereby only been obscured.
The idea of the unity of the group has not, as regards the conception of our international status by foreign Powers, brought us any further than we were before 1919. To-day, as then, they repudiated our claim to an independent international status.

In the second place, I wish to examine with you the question, in how far the group unity idea proves to be conducive to the continued existence of the Empire, and therefore to what extent it answers its purpose as a remedy against disruption. Let me first of all refer to a contribution to the March number of the "Round Table" by a prominent Canadian politician, by whom, in all seriousness, the following question is put:—

"Is there a place in the British Commonwealth of Nations for Canada, if she becomes a sovereign State, precisely as Great Britain is a sovereign State?"

To which question the writer answers as follows:—

"This is the question to which Canadian nationalists want an answer. Obviously, if there is room in the British Commonwealth of Nations for Great Britain as an independent nation, but no room for any other independent nation, Canada and the other Dominions are not nations, are not equal to Great Britain, but are in fact glorified colonies pretending in the face of the world to be something which they are not."

I feel convinced that when a public man of authority in a country such as Canada feels and speaks like this, all that can be said is that the principle upon which we have been engaged in building up the Empire since 1919 is more calculated to bring about its fall than to serve as a foundation for its future existence.

Reality a Necessity.

It is clear that a Dominion such as Canada wishes to see in its equal status real international independence, and that if it is prevented under the régime of the existing group-unity idea from obtaining that independence, it will be compelled to obtain it along a different way. The national aspirations of the peoples of the young Dominions are too forceful to be satisfied with mere appearance, where the reality has become a necessity.

But apart from the question in how far the theory of the unity of the group satisfies the national demands of the Dominions, I wish to answer the question briefly as to what extent that theory has proved to be feasible in practice.

The main idea of that theory is the united action of the group—i.e., of all the Dominions together with Great Britain—in treating with foreign Powers. No Conference with a foreign Power, in which the group may be interested, may therefore take place unless all the members of the group, at least if they so desire, are represented thereon.

But it has happened more than once that the most important International Conferences have been held without proper representation thereat being granted to the Dominions.

I do not wish here to examine the reasons for this. My intention is only to state that in actual practice the two main objects of the idea of the unity of the group have proved to be failures.

Locarno.

The most convincing proof thereof we find in the Treaty of Locarno, which was recently concluded. This treaty has been entered into by the British Government in such direct conflict with the principles on which the group-unity idea is based, that it has been found necessary to exempt the Dominions from any responsibility resulting therefrom, and also to give each of the Dominions separately the option of ratifying the treaty or not.

This treaty is, for the reasons I have already stated, of such uncommon interest that nobody will be surprised that General Smuts, as an enthusiastic supporter of the group unity idea, found it necessary to utter the protest of which I have made mention in the beginning of my speech.

General Smuts is one of those with whom the idea of the unity of the group originated, and according to him this idea must serve the purpose of maintaining the unity of the Empire, and the observance of this idea in practice is, to his mind, an essential condition for the continued existence of the Empire.
Unfortunately for those who hold, as General Smuts does, it has been impossible for the British Government, in this very important case of the Locarno Conference and the Locarno Treaty, to give effect to the essential condition of that idea—joint representation and joint decision—that is, unity of action.

Group Unity Rejected.

But of much more importance still is the fact that the British Government, by acting as it has done, not only has for good rejected the idea of group unity as being impracticable, but has also, by leaving it optional to each separate Dominion to be a party to the treaty or not, recognised that the Dominions cannot be prevented from acting in international matters as independent States.

Thereby it has finally broken with the idea of the unity of the group and group sovereignty, and we have fortunately returned to the recognition of the Dominions as International States.

That this idea has had to be rejected as a constitutional principle was unavoidable, because it has proved unfeasible in practice, and because the Dominions are not prepared any longer to remain in the position of subordinates in international matters.

In international matters it is only the really independent State that counts, and under the group unity idea none of us, not even Great Britain, could lay claim to sovereign independence.

So long, therefore, as the Dominions and Great Britain have not arrived at establishing some kind of super-authority, either by means of federation or by way of unification (both of which are out of the question), the idea of group unity, if strictly carried out, can bring us, inclusive of Great Britain, to nothing but impotence and inactivity in respect of international matters.

The Back-door.

From that position Great Britain has had to save herself at the Locarno Conference, and she has saved herself in the same manner as she had done at the time of the Lausanne Conference, and afterwards again in connection with the Dawes Conference and at Washington, namely, by going her own way independently where her interests required her to do so, notwithstanding at times the threats of Dominions that they were not prepared to enter by the back door.

Unfortunately, according to international law, the group unity allows of no other entrance for the Dominions but by the back door.

Instead of questioning, with General Smuts, the actions of the British Government in regard to the Locarno Treaty, we ought to be thankful to Great Britain for having rejected once and for all such an ineffective safeguard as group unity.

This alleged safeguard has not secured to the Dominions any freedom, equality, or a higher status, which they did not already possess by virtue of their right to and power of self-government. On the contrary, it has destroyed in practice the international recognition of the Dominions, obtained by them through the signature of the Versailles Treaty. The recognition granted to them on that occasion by all the foreign Powers of the world has at the same time been rendered nugatory by those who initiated this group unity idea.

"Back to Versailles."

If we wish to return to a sound basis, it will be necessary for us to go back to Versailles and once more resume our recognition by the Powers of the world as independent international States. The fear that scared us from following this road of independence has been an idle fear. But not only idle. Dominated by that fear, we have taken recourse to a preventative against mutual conflict, which to-day proves to be a Nessus shirt, and which will tend more to wreck than to save the Empire.

If we are called upon, in our own interest, to preserve the good and intimate friendly co-operation between the Dominions and Great Britain, we are equally bound to maintain our international independence. There is, however, no reason whatever why the possession and maintenance of the one should occasion less guarantee for the safe preservation of the other. I maintain that just the reverse is the case. According as the Dominions realise to a greater extent their international obligations, responsibilities and dangers, the feeling of the necessity for closer and more cordial
co-operation between the Dominions and Great Britain will grow and convert itself into practice.

I have, therefore, no doubt that, if we have to return to a sound basis, we can accomplish this only by accepting the doctrine of Dominion independence, based on our rights under the Constitution and recognised at Versailles by the foreign Powers of the world, and by developing on that basis any further relations between Great Britain and the Dominions, so as to give every guarantee that can be expected for permanent co-operation.

To the Outside World.

In order to act for the future in conformity with this point of view and with full international effect, something more will be required from Great Britain and the Dominions than a mere declaration of constitutional rights among themselves. That declaration will have to be formally communicated by them to the outside world.

Should any of the Dominions not be prepared to give adherence to the principle of Dominion independence, they will, of course, be free to remain constitutionally where they are or where they desire to be. But their fearfulness should not be an obstacle to those Dominions to which international independence has become an unavoidable national necessity.

II.

House of Assembly Debate.

MR. HAVENGA (Minister of Finance) moved the second reading of the Appropriation (1926-27) Bill.

GENERAL SMUTS (leader of the Opposition) requested the Premier to make a statement as to the remaining business of the session. He also asked General Hertzog what his policy was to be at the forthcoming Imperial Conference, especially in the light of his recent speech at Stellenbosch, which he (General Smuts) considered a speech of first-class importance. Much of it was contentious and much of it open to dispute, but the Premier wound up with the following conclusion, as reported in the press:

"In order to act for the future in conformity with this point of view, and with full international effect, something more will be required from Great Britain and the Dominions than a mere declaration of constitutional rights among themselves. That declaration will have to be communicated by them to the outside world. Should any of the Dominions not be prepared to give adherence to the principle of Dominion independence, they will, of course, be free to remain constitutionally where they are, or where they desire to be, but their fearfulness (or hesitation) should not be an obstacle to those Dominions to which international independence has become an unavoidable national necessity."

The leader of the Opposition desired to know how far this quotation from the Stellenbosch speech represented the policy of the Government. Was it the intention of the Government to raise this question of Dominion status and the external sovereignty of the Dominions at the next Imperial Conference? Apparently General Hertzog feared there would be no unanimity at the Conference on this point, and, if it were so, was it to be the policy of the Union Government, on their own responsibility, to issue a declaration to the rest of the world of the Union's external sovereignty? General Smuts hoped the House would be allowed to go into this question thoroughly before any such declaration was made.

Premier's Statement.

GENERAL HERTZOG (Prime Minister), after stating that he would make a statement on Monday as to the further course of business, said:

"So far as I am concerned, I take up the position in regard to the status of the Dominions which I have explained on previous occasions. I take up exactly the same attitude as the right hon. member for Standerton, namely, that we are all free independent States, that we are all on a footing of equality and freedom with Great Britain and any of the other Dominions. We are all free, we are all equal."
But, unfortunately, the position is this, that questions have arisen, queries have been raised, as to what is meant by the word "freedom," and especially what is meant by this word "equality." And that is a question of the utmost practical importance to-day, not only so far as we are concerned, but also so far as the other Dominions are concerned, and even Great Britain itself.

As the right hon. member for Standerton knows better than any of us, the edifice which was erected at the 1923 Conference—and General Smuts is one of the builders of that edifice, an edifice which was to serve as the basis of our equality—has lately been tumbling down. In other words, it has been found that, on the basis upon which the Dominions worked in the past, and in regard to which certain important resolutions were taken in 1922, it has been impracticable to carry on. Consequently it has been found that the course which has been followed does not lead to any practical solution of the difficulties which have arisen.

"Necessary to Go Back."

It is clear to me that at the next Imperial Conference it will be necessary to go back, and the question will have to be reconsidered whether the course followed since 1919—or, rather, the course that an attempt was made to follow—is the right course.

I believe that in that short period which has passed there have been four or five cases where the procedure laid down has proved to be inappropriate and impracticable, and it is clear to me that at the next Imperial Conference the whole question will have to be taken into consideration again. I have always maintained and I still do so that it is essential that the question should be definitely and clearly settled.

It was held in the past that the Dominions are and will be subject (ondergeskik) to the Parliament and Government of Great Britain, but that position was dealt with in 1919, when a different state of affairs is supposed to have been created.

Now I say that unless a definite course is adopted, unless the course laid down in 1919 is made definite and clear, then I fear that only one thing can result, and that is that this so-called equality of ours, this so-called freedom of ours, will come to nought.

I think it is generally known to-day, it is generally felt, not only in South Africa, but in the other Dominions as well, that we are gradually drifting back to the status of inferiority, of subjectiveness (onderhevigheid), and I believe that the right hon. the member for Standerton agrees with what I have just said on this matter.

In other words, it is clear that not one of the Dominions is ready to sacrifice, to give up one jot, what is has secured. (Hear, hear.) And I want to add this, that I cannot think of any thing more fatal than that we should go back on the status which we have secured.

Subjectiveness.

The intimate, hearty and friendly co-operation which was aimed at in 1919, when in England and Paris the principle of unity was adopted, has so far not proved practical. And the position to-day is that so far as the individual Dominions are concerned the position is most unsatisfactory, and the pursuance of the present course, it is feared, may lead to nothing else but a subjectiveness to something, either to Great Britain or some other unit, and it is clear to me that what we want to get at is that co-operation which was aimed at, that understanding which is so absolutely necessary, and that when that is achieved it will be necessary for each of us not only to say that the one is equal to the other, but to let everybody feel that we are equal.

Not only must we feel we are equal when we are sitting round the table at the Imperial Conference, discussing matters as absolute equals, but we must also make it clear that we are all free and independent and equal in our relations towards foreign nations, and we must see that it is recognised by foreign nations that the Dominions are free and equal Powers.

To Avoid a "Fatality."

I know that the fear, the nervousness of a breaking up of the Empire, led to this agreement in 1919, but it is quite clear to me, from what has happened since, that the course which is being followed now will lead to the breaking up of the Empire.
rather than to a state of healthy and hearty co-operation. That, I think, must be clear to every one.

The question, therefore, will arise at the Imperial Conference as to what course should be followed to prevent the fatality to which I have referred, and to my mind that fatality can only be avoided if the Dominions are regarded not merely as independent (zelfstandig) units, but if the independence of these units is recognised by the Powers outside. If we follow that course, I feel convinced we should bring about a very much sounder, a very much healthier, position, and a very much more lasting position than can possibly be achieved by the course which is being followed at present, and that is how I propose to put the matter before the Imperial Conference if I am asked to do so.

Naturally, other questions will arise which will have to be dealt with in the most practical manner, but they will all have to be dealt with with a view to bringing about that object.

**Dominion Co-operation.**

What is the aim of the Dominions and of Great Britain in regard to co-operation? There, again, I say this, that it is in our own interest that we should have the best co-operation possible, and the most lasting co-operation possible.

General Smuts has asked whether what I said at Stellenbosch represents the policy of the Government. What I said there is my personal, definite conviction, and, so far as the Government are concerned, my colleagues know what was my view on the matter, and I have no reason to doubt, as least so far as the Nationalist members of the Cabinet are concerned, that they agree with me. And, so far as my Labour colleagues in the Cabinet are concerned, I think they share my views. But in how far it is officially the feeling of the Government, the necessity has not yet arisen for me specially to have to consult them. However, before going to the conference they will no doubt let me know in how far it is a policy with which they agree. I repeat that I have not yet officially discussed the policy with them, but I have no doubt that they are in thorough agreement with me.

**Independent Action Deprecated.**

What General Smuts principally wants to know is how far the Government or myself intend to have the declaration at the end of my speech at Stellenbosch discussed, or, rather, in case I should propose this at the Imperial Conference and it is negatived, what it is I intend to do afterwards, and whether we should be prepared to issue a declaration to the outside world.

In reply to that, I want to say, "No." (Hear, hear.) That would be a very wrong thing to do. If there is one thing which is necessary in achieving our purpose of hearty co-operation, it is clear we must get what we want by means of consultation with each other, and if we cannot achieve the object which we regard as the right one, then we have to try and achieve it later on.

Just as little as the course which was followed in 1919 by General Smuts has proved to be the right one, just as little may my course be the right one. But I consider at the present juncture that it is the right course along which we can get more co-operation and better understanding.

The declaration which I made was this: it is quite clear to me that the Dominions and Great Britain have agreed that the one is not in any way inferior to the other, but that they are all on a footing of absolute equality. That is the agreement which we have arrived at entre nous. But experience has taught us that although we have agreed to that, the outside world knows nothing about it, except in so far as the signing of the Covenant to the League of Nations is concerned. Beyond that, the outside world knows nothing about us as international States.

**Outside Recognition.**

It is only in the League of Nations and through the League of Nations that we are known as international States, but nothing beyond that, and I think the time has come that that position should be changed, and that we should not merely say among ourselves that we are independent States, on a footing of absolute equality, but that we should also make it known to the outside world. When that is done the position will be clear, and then we shall know what our relations are in the future.
We shall stand as equals under the same Crown, bound together by the history of the past, but, above all, bound together by a feeling of goodwill towards each other and by a desire to co-operate for the best and for the interests of all of us. We shall not be able to bring this about so long as there is the present great source of suspicion and friction.

That great source of suspicion, I assure you, exists not only in South Africa. I assure you, from what I have seen, that that source of suspicion and friction exists in a larger degree with some of the other Dominions.

The result to-day is this, that, because our status of freedom and equality is known merely among ourselves, there is a sort of fear, of nervousness, to make our position known to the world at large. Everyone is afraid that some degree of that freedom or liberty may be lost—say, for instance, when Great Britain does something when the other Dominions cannot stand in, or when they cannot come in, and they are all nervous that they are giving away some of their rights and privileges.

**Danger to the Empire.**

If that sense of apprehension and nervousness is not removed, it will lead, in a comparatively short space of time, to the breaking up of the Empire. That is what I am afraid of, and to my mind this can be avoided, and it will be avoided, when that source of friction and suspicion is taken away, and it will only be taken away when it is not merely the Dominions themselves which know of our independence and freedom, but when that freedom and independence is made known to the outside world and is accepted by the outside world. When that happens we shall have a very much healthier condition of affairs than what we have to-day, and I am convinced that many of these factors which to-day lead to disunion and friction will cease to exist.

(Hear, hear.)

The declaration which I had in mind was this, that, instead of us just making this equality and liberty known among ourselves, we should make it known to the outside world, and we should make the outside world realise that in future it is our wish that every one of us shall be regarded in that light. Speaking from reports from nearly every side, our experience to-day is that, because this has not been done, difficulties are continually being placed in our way. Because the outside world has not been informed what our position is, we find that to-day—and it is found by every one of the Dominions—there is an interference with the exercise of our State rights as soon as we have any relations with foreign Powers, and this is a continuous source of friction, of disunion and suspicion, which eventually must be fatal to that co-operation which we are all aiming at.

**Announcement by Great Britain.**

I repeat that, if the Dominions and Great Britain want this friction and this disunion to be removed, then they must, after consultation, take the necessary steps in order to bring about this announcement to the outside world which I have referred to, and there is only one way in which that can be done, and that is by Great Britain telling the outside world what our position is. That has never yet been done, and to-day we are not enjoying in the eyes of the outside world that status which in actual fact we are supposed to possess.

If we ask why such and such a Government acts in such and such a way towards us, the reply, the only one that can be, is: "Yes, it is true, you want us to do so and so, and we should like to do it, but you must not forget that we, as a nation friendly with Great Britain, cannot act towards you as you want us to do, because officially we have never been informed, and until such time as we are officially informed of what your position is we cannot do so, and we cannot treat you as an international State."

Let me say this, that that is a position which is taken up not merely by hostile States. It is the position taken up even by a country like America towards us. It cannot be otherwise. All your international customs oblige countries like America and any other State simply to ignore us until such time as England informs them of our position.

**Friction and Irritation.**

All these things are a continuous source of friction and irritation and suspicion. If there is one thing which should be terminated, and the sooner the better, it is this. Whatever our status may be, for Heaven's sake let it be made known to the foreign...
Powers. Everybody should know what our status is, and until our status is known by foreign Powers we simply do not exist as an independent State. Such an announcement can only be made with the consent of Great Britain, and to my mind it is a matter of so much importance that, unless the announcement is made, I consider that the greatest doubt will continue to prevail as to what our status is.

I am pleased to say that the question of our status has lately been receiving a good deal of attention in foreign countries. In the past the matter was discussed by several authors in well-known periodicals, but I am glad to say the matter has also been taken up by papers in other countries. So long as the position is not definitely cleared up you will get unpleasantness and friction, not only among the Dominions themselves, but also between the Dominions and Great Britain, and for that reason I say that it is in the interests of everyone that a clear and definite statement should be made. I take up the position that we stand on a footing of equality and freedom, and our future relations must be based on our free will and on a feeling of mutual understanding and trust. (Hear, hear.)