

## INTRODUCTION

The Government, Parliament, and people of Canada have so many things of vast importance urgently claiming their attention just now, that I would hesitate to bring up a question of such dimensions as that of a Free Port for Canada now, were it not that I regard it largely as a war measure.

No well-informed man believes for one moment that when peace is proclaimed, the world will at once resume the statu quo ante bellum. The great problems for the British Empire are to make the recurrence of war impossible, to conserve its maritime and commercial supremacy. The situation is complicated by the diversity of fiscal policies within the Empire and especially by the difficulties in the way of reconciling Great Britain's traditional devotion to Free Trade which has undoubtedly been the chief factor in creating her unrivalled mercantile marine; with anything substantial in the way of tariff reform upon Protectionist lines.

I believe that the best solution of the problem will be found in the adoption of a system of Free Ports, which would make it possible to get all the advantages of Protection for our own manufacturing industries, while leaving the great business of maritime transportation absolutely free and untrammelled by customs regulations and impositions.

The great self-governing colonies and most of the crown colonies would

be less than British if they did not cherish their autonomy. But the spirit of mutual concession between the various parts of the Empire, which has been strikingly manifested in recent years, is stronger than ever today. Nevertheless each separate part of the Empire must work out a question like the Free Port project with due consideration for its own interests as well as a proper regard for the well-being of the whole Empire; and—not forgetting its devoted Allies.

I have been much encouraged by the cordiality with which the idea of the South Shore Free Port has been received by all who have taken the little trouble necessary to understand the subject. My chief difficulty has arisen from the fact, that "so many people know so many things that are not so."

I have yet to meet a man who is not under the delusion that he knows all about Free Ports, and not ten in a thousand have the faintest idea what a Free Port really is. They nearly all assume that a Free Port is a port that is free from shipping dues. Naturally they want to know, why one port should be favored more than another in this matter and how the Government is going to recoup itself for the loss of revenue by non-payment of shipping dues. Of course shipping pays just as high dues in a Free Port as in any other port; and