

Mr. BENNETT: I do not think it desirable to go further into this matter at the present time, except to correct one misapprehension. There never was a moment in the conduct of the conference when relations reached the state the right hon. gentleman has described. There never was such a moment, except in the imaginations of base men who wrote in newspapers stories that were entirely fabricated. There never were such moments, and that fact is well known to those who desire to know and appreciate what transpired. When the appropriate moment arrives I shall dwell at greater length with respect to the matter.

I desire to observe at this moment, however, that when one says there can be no such thing as bargaining he forgets one of the essential elements of a contract. A contract consists of an offer and its acceptance. It involves consensus ad idem, and if the parties have not consensus ad idem there can be no contract. There can be no contract unless there are negotiations so that the parties may arrive at that consensus ad idem which is essential as the basis of a treaty. Hon. members must bear in mind that a treaty is nothing more than a contract between states, as distinguished from an agreement between parties. I suppose the proposals put forth by Sir Wilfrid Laurier would not have been called bargaining by my hon. friends opposite. There is bargaining when the parties say, "You do so and so and I will do so and so; if you give these concessions, we will give these concessions; if you do that, we will do this." You may call it bargaining; you may call it anything you wish, but there can be no treaty unless there is discussion and negotiation. Proposals made in the first instance may be varied by subsequent discussions and negotiations in order that the minds of the people who are negotiating may meet, and a contract or treaty may be the result.

That is what transpired at the Imperial economic conference; it transpires at every conference where bargains are made and contracts signed. It transpires at every conference where treaties have to be made. It always will be so; it must be so. We can hardly conceive it possible that anyone who has the knowledge of a novice concerning business matters would suggest that bargains could be made, conclusions arrived at, treaties made or contracts settled, that did not involve bargaining,—unless, indeed, that person expected Canada to be but a rubber stamp and to say "Yes" to any proposals which might be made. That however was not what we understood the word "conference" to mean. The very derivation of the word suggests its meaning,

and we carried out what we understood a conference to mean, namely, to discuss matters, arrive at conclusions and form contracts, treaties or agreements between parties.

One more word with respect to this effort, unworthy as it is, to talk about imperial policies with respect to trade. In order to draw a red herring across the trail, the right hon. gentleman used the word "imperial" as a word with which to appeal to sentiments to which the right hon. gentleman is a past master in appealing. Those who desire to learn the meaning of the word "imperial" in the sense in which it was used this afternoon should read the record. Read it and see what it means—see what is desired to be left by implication. Then it is likened to defence—why? Is there an hon. member in this house who does not know why? Is there an hon. member who has read the debates who does not know why the word "defence" was introduced in connection with the question of imperial trade? Is there one? There is not one—every one knows. But the agreements are not other than single agreements; they lack that spirit to which the right hon. gentleman endeavoured to direct attention. There is a separate agreement with the Free State, a separate agreement with South Africa, a separate agreement with Rhodesia, and a separate agreement with the United Kingdom. As Sir Arthur Salter said in the article published in the New York Times to which the right hon. gentleman has directed attention, that nothing has proved the status and the position of the dominions as does that conference; each standing separately, negotiating as separate nations and with one another, they made separate agreements. I make this reference in order that so unworthy an effort to talk about imperial policies and defence may be exposed, and exposed at once.

The right hon. gentleman referred at some length to the portions of the speech from the throne referring to the report of the commission on railways and transportation. I shall not in any way anticipate that discussion, but I desire to show the unfairness of the right hon. gentleman's criticism. I explained to the house a few days ago that on the day we received the report it was put in the hands of the printer so that it might be made available to hon. members. I explained that there were charts in that report that it took some time to prepare, and daily I have been endeavouring to push forward the work. I was informed on the very day I mentioned the matter to this house that that report would not be available until to-morrow, I believe I will be in a position to lay it upon the table of the house tomorrow.