

London to determine the kind of aid that should be given to England. This conference was the natural outcome of previous meetings held between some of the British ministers and the representatives of the most important of the three classes which we find amongst the 80 colonies or possessions under the sovereignty of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The universal policy of the world is shaping itself towards the supplanting of territorial, or local, or internal trade, by a general or universal trade, or in other words a maritime commerce.

The government is to-day, asking the representatives of this country in this House assembled, to declare themselves on the programme which they are presenting for the creation of a naval defence in connection with the large maritime trade which Canadian merchants are building up. As a representative of the most important city of Canada, the commercial metropolis, and the greatest national port of the Dominion, I cannot give a silent vote upon this great issue.

I owe it to my constituents of the city of Montreal, and I owe it to myself to explain, through what process of personal reflection, through what conception and reasoning, I have, freely, independently from all passing pressure and unlinked to any superior influence, formed my opinion upon the plan which the government has submitted to us.

I do not expect to satisfy the expectations of everybody with my declarations and my vote, but, I at least, hope that, those who after mature reasoning, while not thinking as I do, will feel bound to admit that, in so doing, I have nothing in view but the welfare and greatness of my country.

Allow me then, Sir, to indulge in a brief retrospect of the work and progress of some of the great empires of the past, and the greatness of which was based on their maritime trade. Some of my hon. friends have already quoted from the lessons of the past, and I have listened to their statements with great pleasure; because the past will always be for mankind the best teacher. In anything we do, whatever may be our differences, divisions and strifes, we are nevertheless bound to seek, in the past, for our safest methods to solve the problems of the present. History there teaches us that the greatest and the richest and the happiest nations have been those which gave the best of their energies and wealth to the building and maintenance of a great maritime commerce, through the equipment of both a merchant fleet and a war fleet. Allow me to remind you briefly of the best illustrations, which occur to me, of the soundness of my views. Athens, Lacedaemon, Crete, Lesbos, Chios,

and all the Greek cities and colonies, were nonentities in the political world until, through a skillful and costly combination of forces, money and ships, and under the guidance of an Athenian admiral (if I am permitted to use a modern term to designate its commander) they put to sea a fleet, powerful enough to repulse Asiatic barbarians and other foes. So long as, but not one minute longer, than they had the most powerful fleet, the Greeks were the governing political leaders of the ancient world. Greece was at its political zenith between the time of the battle of Salamis, and that of Aegospotamos, which are the Alpha and Omega of their political and commercial pre-eminence. Rome was a second-class power before the battle of Antium, or, so long as the Romans could not send vessels to conquer Carthage and Asia Minor, and could not rule on the sea as they did on land. During the feudal ages, Venice and Genoa were the supreme arbiters of politics in Europe, just because they were the undisputed masters of the Mediterranean. The most prosperous cities of Europe, during the 400 years from the 12th to the 16th century, were the eighty free towns, holding meetings of their delegates, every three years, either at Lubeck, or Cologne, or Hamburg, for the purpose of assessing the contribution of each town, of securing new trading privileges, and of better defending both old and new ones. Neither a monarchical state, nor a polyarchial state ever enjoyed a greater amount of respect, of prestige from the other monarchies or republics, than those eighty cities composing that quasi-state known, as the Hanseatic League. I contemplate with wonder the enormous waste of human energies and wealth which went to create, upon the ruins of the empire of Venice, that other great Portuguese empire, which was the ruler of the world during the 15th century, just after the discovery of the route to the orient via the Cape of the Tempests, to use the description of Camoens. And then, upon the partition of the unknown world by Pope Nicholas V, in 1454, and Alexander VI in 1493, Spain reached out for America, and astonished Europe by the vastness and richness of her new discoveries. Spain reigned supreme in Europe, during the 16th century. The Netherlands got the monopoly of the trade of the world, during the 17th century, through the audacity, activity and devotion of its mariners. France, during the 18th century, was the arbiter of the maritime destinies of the world, and it was not until then that she was recognized as the dominating political power in Europe.

England came, after Trafalgar, to become as she remains to-day, the ruling state of the world, just because of the indisputable supremacy of her fleet. But, to-day, other