

More than that, I say that the moment the Prime Minister made that statement, the government recognized it had been a mistake, and took good care to see that the error was rectified by the leader of the party in the other house. On the day following, the leader of the government in the Senate gave to that chamber, and through it to the country, a fairly complete statement of what he said he understood were the different committees that had to do with the business of the conference.

May I direct attention, Mr. Speaker, to this fact: The treatment of the house this year, with regard to getting information on these matters, is no different from the treatment of the house in other years. Hon. gentlemen opposite I assume would like to have the cooperation of those on this side. I ask how can they possibly expect cooperation, and how can it conceivably be given, if we are told nothing whatever about the subjects on which we are to cooperate, and if we are denied even the views of the administration with respect to what they intend to put forward at the conference? I do submit that it was an indignity to hon. members of this House of Commons that they should be denied information which the government found it necessary to give to the Senate on the following day.

But this conference is only the postponed conference of 1930. In September of that year, I asked a question of the ministry with regard to the agenda of the conference then about to take place. I was told by the Prime Minister that we could not have the agenda, that it was a secret matter and he did not intend to give it to the house. The hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Garland) addressed some other questions to the Prime Minister, as to whether there would be an opportunity to discuss the agenda and whether he might be told certain things about it. He also received a reply which was to the effect that it was none of his business, and none of the business of any of us on this side of the house to discuss matters pertaining to the Imperial conference. Let me show how differently an opposition is treated in the parliament of Great Britain. On July 30, 1930—and remember it was in September that our Prime Minister said that he could give us no information, because it was a secret—Mr. Stanley Baldwin, who was then leader of the opposition, directed a question to the then Prime Minister. I am quoting from English Hansard for July 30, 1930, at page 474:

Mr. Stanley Baldwin asked the Prime Minister whether he is in a position to make any statement as to the agenda for the Imperial conference?

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

The Prime Minister (Mr. Ramsay MacDonald): The Imperial conference will afford an opportunity for a general review and discussion of all matters, both in the political and economic spheres, of common interest to the members of the British commonwealth under the following heads:

- (1) Inter-Imperial relations.
- (2) Foreign policy and defence.
- (3) Economic questions.

Then are set out the details of what would happen on the political sphere, followed by details with respect to the economic sphere. They are given under headings, and I think I had better read those main headings to the house, because this was the agenda of 1930, and we shall in all probability have exactly the same agenda in 1932 because this is the postponed conference. If the Prime Minister of the country cannot give this information to the house, perhaps, on this occasion, the leader of the opposition may be permitted to do so. Here is the agenda:

On the economic side of the following will be the main headings:

(a) General question of the trade of the empire, including capital investments and establishment of branch industries, the effect of successive tariff changes and the extent and effect of inter-imperial tariff preferences, and also of other factors such as cartels, etc.;

(b) bulk purchase and price stabilization;

(c) development of inter-imperial trade by trade commissioner services, exhibition and general publicity;

(d) oversea settlement;

(e) the past and future work of the Imperial economic committee, the Empire Marketing Board and the Imperial Institute;

(f) questions of cooperation in agricultural research (including cotton growing), forestry and minerals;

(g) special meetings of experts on industrial research and standardization;

(h) Transport and communications, including review of the work of the Imperial Shipping Committee and the Oversea Mechanical Transport Council, survey of steamship services, development of civil aviation, cable, radio, broadcasting, postal and news services. Under this heading would come also the question of the proposed agreements relating to merchant shipping legislation recommended in the report of the conference on the operation of dominion legislation.

Why could not that agenda have been given to this House of Commons at the beginning of this session as well as at the special session of 1930? It was given to the British House of Commons in July, 1930. They make no secret of the agenda in Britain; they have been discussing it from day to day. But I think I know the reason; it is that hon. gentlemen themselves are not familiar with the agenda and have given little or no study to it.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Oh. oh.