

Right Hon. R. B. BENNETT (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, when the house rose last night I had been referring to some figures with respect to trade, and the position which Canada occupied, and the efforts that had been made to expand our trade during the great depression.

It is somewhat satisfactory to be able to point out this afternoon that Canada occupies fifth place among the nations of the world, although at one time she had fallen to sixth place. It is important that we should bear in mind that comparisons of incomparable things are very unfair and do not lead to any sound conclusion. From time to time I have observed throughout the country, and particularly by hon. gentlemen opposite, an endeavour to make it appear that the trade of Canada had suffered more than that of any other country, and they would compare the figures of 1928 and 1929 with the figures of 1932, 1933 and 1934. Such a comparison, of course, is not only unfair but I consider it to be more or less of an insult to the intelligence of the people to whom it is directed, for it is perfectly obvious that if you want to be fair you must compare the figures that existed amongst other countries of the world with the figures of Canada at the time to which reference was made and to-day.

The fact is that this country has more than maintained its position among the countries of the world as a trading country during the depression. Notwithstanding all that has been said by hon. gentlemen opposite with respect to restrictions and barriers against trade, this Dominion of Canada has continued to maintain its position amongst the nations of the world in a rather more forward position than other countries of the world. The truth is, according to the figures supplied by the Bureau of Statistics, that at the end of December, 1934, we took fifth position, exceeded only by the United States, Great Britain, France and Germany.

It is also true that during the depression at times we dropped to sixth place by reason of Japan or Belgium exceeding the volume of our trade. But it is, I repeat, a matter for satisfaction that we now occupy the position which we do. Our empire trade has expanded in a phenomenal manner under the operation of the Ottawa agreements. To take up the time of the house this afternoon in giving the percentages of increase, the extent and volume of our trade with our sister dominions and with the motherland would serve no useful purpose, and I shall not take up the time to do it as opportunity will be afforded later on.

[Mr. Cahan.]

I once more say, notwithstanding all the attacks made against the Ottawa agreements, notwithstanding the fact that the Liberal party as represented in this house stood in its place, with one exception, and voted against those agreements, notwithstanding that they have declared from time to time in this house and elsewhere that the agreements were worthless and useless and not satisfactory, and in one instance declared that they would repeal them if the opportunity came, the fact is that this country by these agreements has been saved from national bankruptcy. What is more, when I make that observation I make an observation which is supported by the statements of economists and others who realized that this country had one certain market during the depression, one market to which it could turn under all conditions, one market in which we had a preference over other countries of the world, a market to which we had free access as against the payment of duties by other countries. Had it not been for the markets thus afforded in Great Britain and in other parts of the overseas dominions we would not under the conditions that obtained have been able to survive. I think that is fair, yet in season and out of season hon. gentlemen opposite have seen fit to decry these agreements and to render it difficult indeed particularly with respect to one commodity, lumber, to maintain the position of Canada with respect to the English importer. We were told that the agreements and the arrangements with respect to preference did not represent the view of the Canadian people; that is what the traders were representing, and that the real view of the Canadian people was that put forth by hon. gentlemen opposite.

Well, sir, I trust that once more the opportunity will be afforded hon. members of this house to record their opinions as to whether or not the operation of these agreements has been in the public interest. I am curious to see whether, in the light of what has transpired, hon. gentlemen opposite will say these agreements have been favourable or unfavourable to the welfare of this country. That is for them to say, and I do not believe that the misrepresentations that have been made with respect to these agreements have been based on an appreciation of their real value. I believe that hon. gentlemen opposite, when they begin to realize that value, will take a forward course, renounce their past, deny their vote and support the agreements in their constituencies. That is what I believe will happen. In fact signs are not lacking that they are already thinking of doing so, if one is to