

to help the great primary, basic industries of the country in their production by lowering the duties? If it can be used as an instrument of national policy by increasing duties, it can also be used as an instrument of national policy by decreasing duties. I think the time has about come in this country when what is most needed is a tariff which will help us export commodities, rather than a tariff that will help to prohibit importations. But to be just and effective, a tariff of the kind would require as an auxiliary something in the nature of a tariff board the membership of which would have knowledge of conditions in other parts of the world. Last year we heard a great deal about the necessity for a tariff board. We were held here for days by the government insisting their bill should go through in the form in which it was drafted, assuring the members of the board ten years of office no matter what happened. What has become of the board? We have heard nothing further about it. If there was ever need of a tariff board it was when the currency question was to the fore in Great Britain. If we had had a tariff board at that time we would not have taken the slam we did at Great Britain in the year we are to have her representatives here to meet us and other representatives of the Empire in an economic conference. Our friends opposite treated Great Britain in a way that our neighbours to the south, another great competitor of Great Britain, did not begin to do.

May I stress as a further reason which I think ought to appeal to all this year—the figures which I have given of the effect of the tariff as it is upon revenues. There is no doubt at all that the revenue of this country has suffered tremendously through the customs receipts having fallen to such a low point. Why should we impose additional taxes on the great body of the people, direct taxes in the form of sales tax, income tax and the like, when by a reversion to a moderate tariff, we may have a tariff that will serve all the purposes that are needed in the way of protection of industry, that will also help the great basic industries by permitting something in the way of competition within the country, that will be of service to the great consuming public as well, and will at the same time help to give us much of the revenue which we need at this time. These are the reasons which have actuated us in bringing forward the amendment in its present form.

There is one other matter with which I would like to deal, and it brings me to the final part of what I have to say. I refer now to the forthcoming Imperial conference. That

conference is going to deal with questions of trade, and of tariffs as affecting trade, more than with any other questions. That is the strongest of reasons, if there were no other, why the amendment which has been presented should be brought before the house at this time.

In regard to the Imperial conference, may I say first of all that nothing is going to be gained by exaggerating the significance of that event. It is a great event, a great national event, a great inter-imperial event, and let us hope it will prove to be also a great international event, but nothing will be gained by saying it is the greatest event since the Reformation. Nothing will be gained by saying it is going to mark a new dispensation. Nothing will be gained by saying, as the Prime Minister himself said when he landed in Halifax last December, that it will be the greatest event of the kind that ever occurred within the empire. I do not think this exaggeration is going to help things at all. Let us hope the conference will help to increase trade between this country and the other parts of the British Empire. If it does that, it will be a great event; but this object will not be helped along by super-exaggeration.

If it is to be the great event that hon. gentlemen opposite say it is to be, is it not surprising that, up to the present time, though we are within three months of the event itself, and I hope within three weeks of the prorogation of this parliament, we have not thus far had any discussion of the questions that are to come before the conference. The government has not brought forward any statement with regard even to the agenda, and when we have asked for information we have received only curt, and, I might almost say, rude replies. If the event is so important, I submit that this house is entitled to a little more information than we have had up to the present time in reference to it. A day or two ago, I asked the Prime Minister if the agenda had been prepared, and if we could be told anything about it. I also asked whether committees had been formed here in Canada. What was the reply? The reply was that we could not get any particulars with regard to the completed agenda; nothing was said about any other particulars. With regard to the committees, we were told that it was not in the public interest that it should be made known what these committees were. We were told that there were committees, but it was said that it was not in the public interest to disclose who composed the committees or what they were doing. I submit that such information is very much in the public interest.