

But having rendered due testimony to the dignity, the continuance in action, the magnificent traditions of British diplomacy, here again I claim the right to judge the result of that diplomacy from the point of view of a loyal but true Canadian. We hear that one of the reasons for which we should put our hands in our pockets, and throw plenty of money in the coffers of the British government, is because of the protection given to our mercantile navy by the British fleet. I told you a moment ago that we had no mercantile navy, that the British government prevents us from having any. They keep control over it; therefore they should defend it. But of that later on.

The point I want to examine first is, how has British diplomacy acted in the interest of our trade? How is it that, not longer ago than in 1907, when the representative of the United States at the Hague Conference, Mr. Choate, proposed to have a declaration made and agreed to by all the maritime powers of the world, that in case of war, the private property of the belligerent nations should be exempt from seizure on sea—how is it that the first to stand against that proposal were the representatives of the British government? Without consulting the interests of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, simply because they thought that the British navy was powerful enough to continue with the old practice of piracy in time of war, the British representatives refused to accept the salutary proposal of the United States, and thereby let our trade exposed to plunder in time of war. I fail to know that, in those days, much sentiment was spent on “the solidarity of the sister nations”. I fail to know that, in 1907, the representatives of the British Government consulted you or me. They have not consulted the Canadian government; they have consulted no representative of the Canadian people.

Now, let us see how British diplomacy has cared for us in other instances.