

Right Hon. Sir GEORGE E. FOSTER: What reason, I ask, what necessity compelled the entrance of Canada into this diplomatic field—in Europe, for instance? What loss in any material way will be incurred if Canada does not enter the field? In the old conditions she had no part nor lot; she had no interest in their institutions; she had not inherited them in any way or degree. The old conditions have changed materially, are changing from day to day more and more rapidly, and the new diplomacy which is taking its place is not on all fours with the old diplomacy. Why, then, should Canada enter in and assume to herself the habiliments which are being laid aside?

There is one other point. The whole system of diplomatic representation rests upon the undoubted and absolute sovereignty of the power which accredits, and the power to which the plenipotentiary is accredited. It will be difficult for European and Asiatic countries to understand how we can possibly sail under those colours with conditions as they are. Take, for instance, the two countries with which the Government proposes to enter upon this heightened diplomatic status. France is a country which pretty well understands—better, perhaps, than any other country in Europe or Asia—the peculiar constitution of the British Empire. She has been closely connected with the mother country, and has a sympathetic and intimate relation with Canada itself. To France, as to the United States, the situation of Canada as a part of the British Empire, and the peculiar circumstances under which that Empire has developed from century to century, are understood, even though there be an anomaly in those connections. She understands pretty well from a political point of view about how the system works out. What, then, do we lack in France itself under the present system that we would gain by adopting the system of plenipotentiary representation? There is no contiguity of boundaries and consequently there are no differences such as are liable to arise between countries having a boundary in common. I have never found that France itself has raised any bar against the free and full admission of our Canadian representative to her departments because he does not wear the braided coat of a minister plenipotentiary. In my experience in France, extending over a good many years, I have never found it difficult to get an introduction to any department or to any member of the Government. If that were so in the olden times, it has become more and more a feature of Canada's present trade and

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commissarial representation in Paris. To my mind, plenipotentiary powers conferred on our present High Commissioner, or on anyone else to take the place of the High Commissioner, would not facilitate the freedom and intimacy which now exists in communications between us and the French Government. If, then, there is no demand from France for it, or if there is no bar upon our easy access to Departments and members of the Government in France in relation to whatever questions may arise, we will set that aside. I think honourable members will agree with me that on neither of those counts do we need to make a change from the present situation.

Plenipotentiaries and ambassadors are the indices of political affiliations; but we have no political affiliations with France or with Japan, and we do not wish to ally ourselves by political affiliation or connection with either of those countries. Then why should we put forward and carry out a system which has its very essence and foundation in the fact that there are or may come political differences, with adjustments to be made on account of those that may arise? Surely we do not anticipate either of those from the public of France. The interests that exist between France and Canada to-day are interests of a business and economic nature, and no other. The good-will which is injected into business and economic relations may well be expressed by the trade commissioners as they exist to-day, and as they have been functioning and by individual business men and corporations of traders through the trade commissionerships. What more is really needed? Do you need to place a minister plenipotentiary in Paris in order that he may answer questions as to how a certain article in a French treaty works upon a certain business or industry which wishes to export to France? All such matters come well under the trade commissionership, and are well attended to at the present time; therefore to my mind there is no need of setting up a plenipotentiary ambassadorial establishment in Paris to answer any little questions or adjust any differences which take place in reference to the operation of a tariff.

As to the formation of a tariff, which must be founded upon experience and information with reference to resources and commodities which may be profitably interchanged between the two countries, and about which certain tariff and customs regulations may be useful to carry out systematic communications that may be necessary, these things are amply provided for to-day by trade commissioner-