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Trade and Commerce.

Sir George Foster on the Work of His Department.

There is a growing custom in the House of Commons, and a good one. The custom is for a minister, before the estimates of his department are taken up in Committee of Supply, to give a statement of his proposed expenditures and explain generally the policy he intends to pursue. No better speech on those lines has ever been made than that of the Minister of Trade and Commerce, Sir George Foster, on 18th April.

There has always been a big field for the Department of Trade and Commerce, but it has not always filled that field. Sir George Foster is doing his best to make the department all that it ought to be, and his explanation of his plans makes most interesting reading. Sir George has been spoken of as one of Canada's "elder statesmen," but there are no youngsters in political life with fresher ideas than those of this man who has spent the greater part of his adult life as a minister of the Crown. From the point of view of *Civilian* readers, the great thing about Sir George Foster's speech is that the policy it covers is one that will give some members of the Civil Service a chance to distinguish themselves and to render service of the highest value to Canada. In the course of his remarks Sir George had occasion to refer to the corps of trade commissioners that represent Canada as officers of the department in nearly all the important commercial countries of the world. He bore hearty and eloquent testimony to the good work these men are doing and indicated that even greater opportunities for service would open to them in a short time.

Everybody nowadays is telling everybody that things will be different after the war, and that we ought to get ready. But Sir George Foster's explanation of this situation was—well, different. It had the weight of experience, the power of imagination, the brilliancy of consummate oratory. And, above all, it ended not with a mere suggestion that somebody else ought to "get busy," but with an explanation of the plans that Sir George had for meeting the situation so far as he himself was concerned. The solution of the problem as he set it forth was, in the main, foreign trade.

He has already begun his work of

preparation, and in this connection said: "I have adopted a system of training sub-commissioners. Young men who have gone through the universities, or through the colleges or the schools, who are well educated, and have shown excellence in certain lines of economic and business pursuits, have been taken into the department and have been trained in the departmental work so as to get the home view, as it were, of these matters—trained with reference to tariffs and customs regulations. They have then been given travelling commissions through different parts of Canada, under instructions to make for themselves a thorough examina-