

Before I come to my hon. friend's remarks on the Imperial conference there is one item in the speech from the throne of which he made no reference, but to which I should like to refer because in a way it relates itself to the period of the Imperial conference; that is the announcement therein contained of the appointment of an envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary at Washington. I take it that in the absence of any comment my hon. friend approves of the action of the government in that particular. If he does not, I should be happy if he would say so at the moment, because I have been under the impression that all parties in this House looked favourably on the appointment of a representative of Canada at Washington. I know there are individuals who hold opposite views. But I should like my hon. friend to say quite frankly whether the Conservative party in the House take an opposite view to the government's in the matter of that appointment. If he should say so, I would wish to draw his attention to the circumstance that in 1920 the Right Hon. Sir Robert Borden, then leading the House, made a long statement as to the reasons why Canada should be represented at Washington by a Canadian minister. The Hansard of that session contains the account then given of the negotiations which Sir Robert Borden's government had had with the government of Great Britain respecting the appointment of a minister at Washington from Canada. The matter was agreed to, and an understanding was reached which was acceptable both to the British government and to the Canadian government of the day, and also, I understand, to the American government.

Now, that arrangement, as I recall it, went further than what is proposed by the present government. The arrangement as made by Sir Robert Borden's government provided that the Canadian minister would, in the absence of the British ambassador, fill his position at Washington. Hon. members who were in the House at the time may recall that the Liberal opposition of the day took exception to that particular feature. We did not see how an appointee of this government could act as the representative of another government. In the event of any mistake arising it would be difficult to know which government would be expected to take the necessary action to bring about redress. We could not see wherein an arrangement of that kind would be of advantage either to the British government or to our own, and we have decided therefore that the representative of the government of Canada at Washington shall represent the affairs of this country only.

May I say that the appointment of our minister to Washington has been made in precisely the same way as the appointment of an ambassador from England 9 p.m. to the United States would be made. It has been made upon the advice of the Canadian ministers to the crown, and the crown accepting their advice. The necessary letter of credence will be taken from His Majesty the King to the President of the United States.

Mr. BENNETT: Would that be by the crown in the right of Canada or of England?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The crown in the right of Canada.

Mr. BENNETT: The Governor General here signs the commission?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The King actually signs the formal document that accredits the minister to Washington, but on the advice of his Canadian ministers.

Mr. BENNETT: That is what I wanted to know.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The appointment was made in the first instance by order in council of the Canadian government. His Majesty the King was informed of it and after Washington had been communicated with to ascertain whether the person appointed would be acceptable to the President, and a reply was received in the affirmative, the further necessary action properly to accredit the minister was left to His Majesty the King.

Mr. BENNETT: If it is not trespassing on the Prime Minister's speech, may I ask why the appointment should not be signed by the Governor General here rather than by the King? Why should not the appointment come from Canada rather than from England?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: He is the King's representative.

Mr. BENNETT: I know, but he is also Canada's minister.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The formal document appointing the minister in the first instance is signed by the Governor General. The appointment is made by order in council of the Canadian government, and the Governor General signs the order. That order having been communicated to His Majesty, His Majesty agrees to the appointment and accredits the minister.

Mr. BENNETT: If there is an equality of status, why the necessity for having the matter transmitted to England?