

*The Budget—Mr. Bennett*

that the principle of preferential trade is not acceptable to the colonies generally, or the mother country, then Canada should be free to take such action as might be deemed necessary in the presence of such conditions.

London, August 11, 1902.

I wonder what hon. gentlemen opposite will say now.

Mr. RALSTON: Will my hon. friend permit me a question?

Some hon. MEMBERS: Sit down.

Mr. RALSTON: Will my right hon. friend permit me just to remind him that at that time the fiscal policy of Great Britain was the imposition of duties, and all that was being suggested by the Canadian representatives was the hope and the expectation that Great Britain would reduce its tariff as against Canada. My right hon. friend—

Mr. BENNETT: I have read it.

Mr. RALSTON: But that is what it says.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Order.

Mr. BENNETT: I think the hon. gentleman might take his seat. I do not desire to enter into a discussion with him.

Mr. RALSTON: My right hon. friend offered in exchange—

Mr. BENNETT: The hon. gentleman has said that the fiscal policy of Great Britain at that time imposed a duty upon corn, and that Canada desired to secure free entry for her wheat into the markets of the United Kingdom. But I have read the memorandum, and it speaks for itself. It is a bargaining memorandum, and it speaks for itself. It is a bargaining memorandum and it threatened England, saying that unless she did give a preferential tariff Canada would take such steps as might be regarded as necessary.

Mr. RALSTON: It speaks of hope and expectation.

Mr. BENNETT: Perhaps after the hon. gentleman has read it he will understand it.

Mr. RALSTON: I have read it.

Mr. BENNETT: That must have been a long time ago.

One more thing, Mr. Speaker. It has been suggested that this government is not making any active preparation with which to meet the conference. This government will discharge its duty to the full in that regard. If the agenda which was read, and which was made public in July of 1930, was prepared by the British government, as I believe it was, at the time it was being prepared the right hon. gentleman was Prime Minister of this country.

[Mr. Bennett.]

That is clear. All that I know of the agenda with respect to the 1930 conference was what I said I found in the despatches in the office when we took over. The agenda for this conference will be prepared, as we believe it should be, after we have had what consultation it is possible to have by cable, and if those people who are desirous of attacking any effort which they think redounds to the credit of those making it will just bide their peace and await the event, they will discover that this government is ready and prepared to deal with every problem that will be met with by that conference in a manner worthy of this dominion and of the knowledge which is possessed by those who will represent it.

I do not propose to say more in this respect. I do not propose to traverse the ground as to what shall or shall not be discussed at that conference. As to its importance, on the one hand the right hon. gentleman minimizes it, and on the other hand he magnifies it. It is one of the difficulties of the party opposite that they can see no merit in any proposal that does not originate with themselves. This party sat in opposition for long years, in good repute and ill. During that time in the country in which I live it was almost an offence to call oneself a supporter of this party, but during all that time I kept one constant beacon light before me; I had the firm belief and faith that in such a conference lies the best assurance of the development of every part of the British Empire and of my own country as well. I deny the right of any man to say that you do not promote the growth and development of the commonwealth of British nations as you promote the growth and development of that part in which you live. It has been said by reputable statesmen in Great Britain that there must be supreme confidence in our ability to develop our country and start on a new pathway of progress. We believe that this empire consists of an aggregation of units; this commonwealth of nations consists not of one but of many, and the development, the prosperity and the wealth of each makes for the advantage of the whole. To that end we have at least devoted as much time as we have been able to find under the conditions under which we labour here. Every day brings a new problem; almost every hour brings some difficulty with which we have to deal, and if the opposition decides to take two or three weeks to discuss problems for the purpose of preventing us from being able to go about the country's business, they must accept the responsibility. We should like to be engaged in considering these problems, and the opposition must accept full responsibility for what has transpired, as they said they would.