

Mr. Woodsworth, H. of C. Debates, February 11, 1936, page 123.

Since taking office the government has been active along several lines. To-day we heard about the United States agreement. Personally I think it is good as far as it goes, but I should like to ask: What about the method employed? We are told it is an agreement rather than a treaty, and as such most of its clauses do not need to be ratified by parliament. That is the information we have been given. I am inclined to think that if the Prime Minister were sitting on this side of the house he would have a great deal to say about such an action taking away the rights of parliament. Some hon. members may recall what he said several years ago in connection with the Ottawa conference. In discussing the agreements there made he said, according to Hansard for 1932-1933, volume I, at page 41, in urging that the government should have made only a tentative agreement:

We are no longer free to settle in our own parliament what our fiscal policy is to be because that has been settled for us by a meeting of the executives of different parts of the empire, and that without consultation with their several parliaments in advance. . . . Will this House of Commons have the right to alter one line of those agreements? Will this house have any opportunity of lowering or raising any duties as fixed in those agreements? Will the British government have that right? On the contrary, will not all legislative bodies be told, "These agreements were arrived at in the conference at Ottawa and they are to be put through without any change whatever." What then becomes of the freedom of parliament? What is the significance of parliament in that event? Why have a parliament at all, if executives of different parts of the empire can meet together and lay down a new imperial policy and compel its adoption by the imputation of a want of patriotism or a desire to bring about the dismemberment of the empire, as against those who are not prepared to support such measures?

Well, I personally do not worry a great deal about the method, but I should like the Prime Minister at his leisure to explain why it is that he complains so bitterly of the methods used at the Imperial conference in regard to the Ottawa agreements and yet feels free to bring to this house an agreement which need not be ratified in its details by the house, but which, we are told, is to go through as arranged.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I do not like to interrupt, but the two are entirely different. May I say that all that has been effected up to the present has been the reduction of certain duties under a statute that this parliament passed which gave to the government authority to reduce duties at any time provided a like concession was made to it by some other country. The agreement to which I took exception and to which my hon. friend has referred was an agreement which increased duties, put additional taxation on the people of this country without parliament having authorized anything of the kind by statute or otherwise.

Mr. BENNETT: It did not become operative until passed by this parliament.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Neither will this agreement.

Mr. BENNETT: It is operative now, since the first of January.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: Well, we may leave that to be threshed out in future. Personally I cannot see wherein the difference lies. I am glad it is in the direction of lower tariffs, but at the same time I do not see that the method in the two cases is so fundamentally different.

1. Different principals in Canada-U.K., and Canada-U.S.

Trade Agreements:

Canada-U.S. Agreement involved lowering not raising tariffs;

Hence no additional taxations (See brief, Vol. I memorandum No. 14.)

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