

Constant and disinterested search for a common ground of conciliation for the various interests will enable us to attain our objective. Our great leaders spent their lives strengthening the bonds of unity. Sir Wilfrid Laurier himself, who has remained great in the memory of the people, sacrificed for the sake of this unity certain theories that he had stoutly defended. Was it not for this highly patriotic reason that at the beginning of his regime he abandoned the idea of imposing on this country his policy of free trade? Was it not under the influence of the idea that had inspired the Fathers of Confederation, on which he had fashioned his own thought, that he decreed the construction of a new transcontinental railway to provide a further link between the East and the West of Canada?

But let us be careful. Utilitarian tendencies often triumph over principle and sentiment, and at times a cracking is heard in the national structure. Winnipeg has its eyes turned towards St. Paul and Chicago. And though trade between north and south at times offers alluring advantages, is it not our imperative duty to divert it into an east-and-west channel by equally favourable arrangements? Any negligence in this respect will be counted against us. Let us take care lest our commercial expansion should be effected at the expense of national unity.

An eminent observer of Canadian affairs, Siegfried, grasped the full significance of our political position from this point of view. Analyzing the two tendencies which divide opinion among us, he writes:

One would make Canada the customer of the United States for manufactured goods, and the United States' source of supply for natural products; the other would protect Canada against economic invasion from the United States and endeavour to develop a traffic from West to East, for export to Europe, independently of the United States.

And he adds:

Do not be deceived; in this matter it is really Canadian unity that is at stake.

While we were lulled into a false sense of security, an illusory feeling of satisfaction with an artificial prosperity, for which an easy-going policy was largely responsible, the world crisis took us by surprise and almost overwhelmed us. Day by day we felt bowed down beneath the weight of our obligations, and we recognized the improvidence of our undertakings. The task which thenceforth faced us was a gigantic one, requiring all our resources and energy.

The Government deemed it wise to withdraw to our old positions and give to the

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country a strong conservative lead. That it committed minor errors in its quest for salutary measures is conceivable and possible. But it must be agreed that its effort has been proportionate to its task and that on the whole, both from the economic and the national points of view, its management has been sound and it has re-established the great Canadian tradition.

It has been said that the Government by its policy is ruining our trade; that we should adhere to the Council of the League of Nations and lower our tariff. The criticism is really not correct, since Canada has retained its rank as an exporting country. And then what is desired? Shall we allow our industries to perish in order that we may maintain our import figures? Where should we be then, and how should we pay for those imports and meet our foreign obligations? Apparently no attention is paid to the persistent fact that since the period of great production all countries have isolated themselves by a stern economic nationalism. Whether these countries have been represented at the League of Nations or not, none of them, so far as I know, have yet signified their intention of making concessions. Does it devolve upon a young exporting country, overorganized as regards production, to take the lead and be the first to enter upon the path of self-denial? Logic and self-interest require that it should seek markets for its goods in exchange for products which it can absorb. This object has been attained by skilful and determined efforts, and thus we have been enabled, notwithstanding the sarcasm provoked, to show a favourable trade balance, to meet our fixed charges, and to maintain an unshakeable credit throughout the world.

In spite of persistent and often childish criticism, the Government has not allowed itself to be diverted from its duty, but has done everything possible to sustain the energy of the people and stimulate their zeal and their confidence in the ultimate result. And the people, rightly impressed by this firm determination on the part of their leaders to overcome obstacles, have respected orders and gladly submitted to all sacrifices required by the circumstances, and at no time have they lacked loyalty to their country and to the authority they have chosen. And I would add, with great pride, that Canada's example in bravely meeting the greatest crisis of modern times, and the enlightened action of her Prime Minister, were important factors in the work of readjusting and restoring conditions throughout the Empire.