

titled to boast, and with freedom from certain characteristics which necessarily mar somewhat the efficiency of debate in the Lower Chamber.

I am not sure that I shall be able to live up to the expectations of my honourable friend opposite (Hon. Mr. Dandurand) in the way of answering his criticisms or his questions with respect to certain features of the trade agreements mentioned in the Address. The trade agreements are now before the other House and will come before us in due course, when probably the details of clauses can be better and more thoroughly reviewed than at the present time. However, the agreements are referred to in the Speech from the Throne, and I will make some comment on the observations of the honourable senator, and may partially answer some of the questions he has put.

I feel that something worth while was done at the Imperial Conference. I felt exceedingly proud of the Government of Canada when I saw the results of that Conference. I can say this with all the greater freedom because personally I had nothing whatever to do with those results. Circumstances were such that it was impossible for me to take any part in the deliberations of the assembly, and for what has been done, whatever it may be, the credit must go entirely to the other members of the administration, chiefly to the Prime Minister himself. What Canada obtained by way of concession from the other Dominions was made known in its larger features immediately the Conference was over, but, inasmuch as what Canada gave by way of corresponding concessions involved a modification of the existing tariff structure, and there would be a consequent disturbance of business if announcement were made prior to its taking effect, information on this point has come to the knowledge of our people only within recent hours, and therefore any one of us is rather inadequately prepared to discuss this special feature of the treaties. I have never feared that the concessions would be disastrous to Canadian industry in any major degree; I have always felt that they had to be given, that they had to be substantial, and that it was well worth our while to extend them in order that trade advantages which we think most vital, especially to agriculture, might be obtained.

I have seen some criticism of the whole principle of the negotiation on the ground that it initiates a system of bargaining or trading between different parts of the Empire, and that such a system is of itself dangerous, in that it is likely to lead to friction between those different parts, and may possibly cause

disintegration. I do not feel that this fear of Empire disintegration has any more secure or worthwhile foundation than many others that we have heard of in times gone by. The principle of bargaining is just the alternative to ill-considered or slapdash legislation. It is not a new principle as between ourselves and other Dominions, or between ourselves and foreign countries, and I am entirely at a loss to see why the great self-governing Dominions of this Empire, meeting together in conference, should not be able to come to a mutually advantageous bargain, when we have always assumed that the Dominions could perform such a feat with wholly independent states. Indeed, the fear does not seem to have arisen except in most recent times, and in rather limited quarters.

I am indebted to the honourable senator opposite (Hon. Mr. Dandurand) for going back somewhat over the history of trade preferences and Imperial trade. With his history I have very little fault to find; in fact I do not think I have any at all. I observed, however, from a letter which he read, addressed in 1923 by the then Prime Minister to the proper official of the British Government, that negotiations were conducted and a bargain was sought to be reached. No doubt this was after verbal conversations. But whether it was or not, I do not understand why verbal conversations in the way of a trade bargain should be dangerous if the written exchange of views with the object of making a bargain is perfectly safe.

Going farther back, the honourable senator referred to an offer made, perhaps not by letter, by the Minister of Finance of 1902, the late Hon. Mr. Fielding, to negotiate with the Government of Great Britain, and saying that if that Government would go the distance of extending a preference to Canada, as a result Canada would further extend her preferences to Great Britain. That is so close to the line of negotiation that I am afraid my mind is not highly tempered enough to perceive any distinction. Surely negotiation is safer—

Hon. Mr. DANDURAND: I did not make that argument myself.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I did not think the honourable gentleman had any sympathy with the argument while he was discussing it, and I know now from his frank confession that he has not.

The terms of the treaties are of course of great importance to us in the admittance that they give us to the various Empire markets, and particularly to the great British market,