

Further on he repeats the same view in another form:

I have myself not the slightest doubt that if danger threatened Canada again, this country would respond as it responded in 1914, but I believe in future it will be best for all that before a Government takes a step so momentous as the dispatch of troops the will of the people should be known. Canada wants peace, the whole Empire wants peace, and our policy will be directed to that goal.

My right honourable friend suggested consultation of the people because, in his own words, "This would contribute to the unity of our country in the months to come, and would enable us best to do our duty." I fully agree with that view of my right honourable friend, except that instead of a dissolution of Parliament I should prefer a referendum.

I believe that sufficient attention has not been given to the words spoken by the Prime Minister at Geneva in 1936. In his speech before the League of Nations, on September 29 of that year, he said:

What I have said and quoted does not mean that in no circumstances would the Canadian people be prepared to share in action against an aggressor; there have been no absolute commitments either for or against participation in war or other forms of force. It does mean that any decision on the part of Canada to participate in war will have to be taken by the Parliament or people of Canada in the light of all existing circumstances: circumstances of the day as they exist in Canada, as well as in the areas involved.

I was near the Prime Minister at the time he spoke, and I knew the importance of those words.

My right honourable friend has suggested consultation of the people, to maintain the unity of the nation. There is hardly any doubt that if to-day or to-morrow a Government decided to recommend to Parliament the sending abroad of expeditionary forces it would find itself with a Rump cabinet when facing Parliament, and that, surely, would not make for unity. The only alternative would then be the policy propounded by my right honourable friend, an appeal to the people.

My right honourable friend and I, in supporting that policy, are but echoing the opinion of the old chieftain, Sir John A. Macdonald, who refused to send troops to Egypt in 1885 and would undoubtedly have sent them only in response to a pressing demand or mandate from the people. In a letter to Sir Charles Tupper, dated March 12, 1885, he stated the Government thought the time

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had not yet arrived, nor the occasion, for our volunteering military aid to the Mother Country. He added:

We do not stand at all in the same position as Australasia. The Suez Canal is nothing to us, and we do not ask England to quarrel with France or Germany for our sakes.

Mark these following words:

Again, the reciprocal aid to be given by the colonies and England should be a matter of treaty, deliberately entered into and settled on a permanent basis. The spasmodic offers of our militia colonels, anxious for excitement or notoriety, have roused unreasonable expectations in England, and are so far unfortunate.

Honourable senators will note that problems referred to by Sir John A. Macdonald are still with us, unsettled. But there is one point that has never been in question: the defence of our country if ever attacked.

Now I come to the trade agreement with the United States of America. It provides wider markets for our Canadian products, and involves an important revision of the Canadian tariff structure. It will lead to a much greater reduction of taxes on trade than has ever before been attempted. Modification of existing Imperial agreements was agreed upon between the United Kingdom and Canada. The intra-Imperial convention was terminable in August, 1940, and the convention of 1935 with the United States was terminable December 31, 1938. The new conventions ensure that the benefits accruing to Canada, to producers and consumers alike, will continue for a longer period of time.

The Speech from the Throne refers to measures taken to cope with unemployment. Our constitutional limitations have hampered long-range remedies, but within the scope of our jurisdiction the Government have not failed in their duty, as is shown by the measures they have adopted and applied. I draw the attention of the Senate to this paragraph in the Speech from the Throne:

The Dominion Government have taken active measures to stimulate private employment through the Home Improvement Plan, the National Housing Act, and the Municipal Improvements Assistance Act. Under these measures certain local taxes have been assumed, and loans made to individuals, organizations and municipalities. The sales tax has been eliminated on important building materials. Special aid has been given to the mining industry by subventions, tax exemptions and improved transportation facilities. At the same time, direct employment has been increased through a substantial expansion of federal public works, and through assistance given to the provinces in the construction of highways, for land settlement, for special projects for farm employment and for forest conservation.