

IMPERIAL ECONOMIC CONFERENCE AGREEMENTS

On the motion to adjourn:

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I may say that we hope to finish the debate on the Address to-morrow.

Hon. Mr. HUGHES: In reference to what the right honourable leader of the Government has just said, I should like to ask him a question. Will the trade agreement come before this House next week for consideration? The idea that I have is this. Many of the members, myself among the number, do not feel that they are capable of discussing the trade agreement without having had an opportunity to read it over and a few days for consideration. The debate on the Address affords a unique opportunity of discussing the agreement and every other subject mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. When the trade agreement has passed the other House and is brought here, everybody will be eager to go home, for Parliament will have nearly finished the work for which the session was called, and the agreement will not in my judgment receive from this House the consideration it ought to receive. Could we postpone discussion of the Address until next week, so that some of the members might have an opportunity to discuss the trade question then?

The leader of the Liberal Party in the other House and several other members felt that the trade agreement was so important that further time should be allowed for the consideration of it, so that it might be discussed intelligently. This view was presented to the Prime Minister, and he thought it reasonable and postponed the discussion on the trade agreement until next week.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: As I understand it, the contention of the honourable gentleman is that we in this House shall not have a reasonable opportunity to discuss these trade agreements, because after they pass the other House they will have completed their fall business and will want to adjourn.

Hon. Mr. HUGHES: Yes.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Adjournment is as much the prerogative of the Senate as of the House of Commons. I would also call the attention of the honourable gentleman to the fact that it is not a trade agreement, but trade agreements.

Hon. Mr. HUGHES: What is that?

Hon. Mr. McLENNAN.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: They are in the plural, not singular, and I feel certain that they will pass one at a time, and will come to us in that way. I speak subject to correction by anyone who knows the particulars better than I do. The honourable member asks when the agreements will be likely to come. I can only estimate how long the opposition will take in the House of Commons. I have no such means of intimate approach to the leader or the other members of the Opposition as the honourable senator himself has, for he is within that intimate, affectionate circle where he can get all the information he wants at any time.

Hon. Mr. HUGHES: I have no such prerogative.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: There is no reason why we should not continue the debate on the Address as long as anyone desires. I certainly have made no effort to curtail it. We shall meet to-morrow, and I am sure we shall listen with great pleasure to the speech of the honourable gentleman from King's (Hon. Mr. Hughes). If we do not finish the debate to-morrow night, we shall adjourn it.

Hon. Mr. HUGHES: I wished to bring that feature to the attention of the right honourable leader of the House before to-morrow. It is worthy of consideration. I know there are some members who wish to speak, but who are not prepared to speak this week.

Hon. Mr. CASGRAIN: If this debate could continue until next week, I should have considerable to say in answer to the statements of the right honourable leader of the Government; but it takes me some time to prepare. I want to examine the whole of the Duff report, and although I read as much of it as I could last night, I got through only about one-third. I should like to deal as justly with this report as I did with the Drayton-Acworth report. But, of course, if the debate is to be finished to-morrow I shall not be able to do that.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: I have given assurance that I am not urging the closing of the debate to-morrow. If honourable senators want to continue the debate, I have no objection.

Hon. Mr. CASGRAIN: If it is not possible to refer to the matter in this debate, there will be another occasion, I suppose.

Right Hon. Mr. MEIGHEN: Certainly. I know that the honourable senator is competent to make an attack at once upon any-