

Minister say before the proceedings had started at the last Imperial conference? First of all, he said that he was the leader of the Conservative party in Canada; that the Conservative party stood for protection; that any policy he was prepared to consider must be based on protectionist principles; that the policy of his government was known as "Canada first"; that "Canada first" meant no goods would be permitted to come into Canada from abroad which could be produced or manufactured in this country; and that the only basis upon which he was prepared to consider any question of trade was that of what he called empire reciprocal tariffs. He gave his own definition of reciprocal preference, or "empire preference" to give the exact term he used. What was this "empire preference"? It was a preference to be created, not by reducing in any particular the existing rates of duty, but by adding to them to the extent of a ten per cent increase. He went a step further: He said he would not agree to discuss the matter with any part of the empire until all had adopted the principle of protectionist tariffs which would enable them to bring into being a reciprocal, empire tariff along the lines which he had indicated. Only on those lines could there be any discussion or consideration of the question. He went even further and said: We will not consider any alternative; no alternative that can be suggested will be satisfactory to us as compared with what we have proposed. What he had proposed was, in effect—this was exactly the way in which it was received by the British government—that Great Britain must change her fiscal policy, in consideration of which her people would be allowed to send to Canada such goods as could come in over a tariff wall which would keep out anything produced or manufactured in this country. That was what Mr. Thomas designated as "humbug." There must be no more "humbug", so far as the Imperial conference is concerned. If it is to be a success, all such methods of procedure will have very speedily to be dropped. My right hon. friend will not be able to get anywhere with his "Canada first" policy as a basis of negotiation within the empire. The people of Britain have already said, members of parliament of the mother country have already stated very emphatically, that they are not going to be satisfied with any trade agreement that will exclude from Canada all goods which can be produced or manufactured in this country.

I have not time to go into the matter fully, or to make clear the British attitude in that regard. I could quote at considerable length

from statements that have already been given to the public. In this connection however I point out how different the attitude of Britain is from that of Canada. All the public men of the different political parties in Britain who have spoken have stated with one voice that so far as the conference in Canada is concerned, their representatives should come here, not riveted to any particular formula or policy, nor with the desire to get what they wish particularly for themselves, but rather with an open mind to try to discover what may be for the common good. Speaking in the British House of Commons on January 27, Mr. Thomas said:

"We shall go there, not riveted to any creed or dogma but with a single-minded desire to effect a real settlement and I am sure the dominions will not only realize—as they do realize—the advantages of their association in the British Commonwealth, but if they reciprocate in the spirit with which we intend to go there, there ought to be no doubt of the success of the conference.

"While it is quite clear," Mr. Thomas said, "you have what is called a conflict of particular interests, frankly I see no reason whatever why this conflict cannot be merged into a common recognition that the interests of all are more important than those of any section.

"In that connection the British government will go to Ottawa quite prepared to depart from certain well known principles that have hitherto existed in this country. In fact there will be no embargo, so far as the British government is concerned, to the points of policy they will be prepared to discuss.

"But having said that from our point of view it is equally necessary to keep clearly in mind that we have a very distinct point of view and interest in the policy of the dominions themselves. No conference will be successful, lasting or beneficial if it is assumed that all the concessions will be on one side."

Later, on February 22, he said:

"Don't let us go to Ottawa in a haggling spirit, but let us go and see what we can throw in the common pool for the benefit of all.

I might quote similarly from Mr. Neville Chamberlain, Sir Austen Chamberlain, the Right Hon. Stanley Baldwin and numerous other speakers, including some of the premiers of the other dominions. Let me take, by way of example, Mr. Forbes of New Zealand who, in an interview given to the press on February 25, said:

In accordance with her traditional practice in empire affairs New Zealand will not go to Ottawa with any desire to bargain unduly with Great Britain. Any bickerings over tariff questions will be avoided at all costs.

And so, with respect to every voice that has come from across the water to this side, there has been the note that those who attend the conference are coming not wedded to any