

*The Address—Mr. Bennett*

He was followed by Sir Richard Squires, the Prime Minister of Newfoundland, who said:

I refer to Mr. Bennett particularly because the policy and program of the Dominion of Canada, a territory removed but eighty miles by sea from Newfoundland, must naturally affect my own country, separated both politically and geographically though we be. I join with him and the other distinguished Empire leaders who have preceded me in their view that now is the time for action; that this is the body to which not only the entire Empire but the whole world is looking for constructive thought; not merely thought expressed in polished periods, but thought expressed in action. The policy of imperial preference, so ably indicated by Mr. Bennett, will certainly have the enthusiastic support of Newfoundland.

There you have the whole matter.

I had intended at a later date to deal with one particular feature of the discussions at the conference, but it seems desirable that it should be dealt with now. When the committees were appointed and questions considered in detail it was suggested that a quota might meet our views; that is, if England would say that her own requirements would be purchased on a quota basis, about 15 per cent, we will say, home production, and 55 per cent British Empire production, making 70 per cent, and 30 per cent from foreign countries, something might be done for preference. Evidence was taken and opinions were expressed, and as a matter of fact Dr. Addison had a bill prepared that dealt with the quota for domestic wheat. But then the mind of the committee changed, and the government thought it not desirable, because of lack of information, to pursue the inquiry further at that time, and so it dropped for the time being, the opinion being expressed that the question should be further explored if the conference adjourned to Ottawa.

Now let us see what happened in the concluding days of the conference. At page 225 you will find the concluding speeches, on November 14, 1930. You will find the observations made by myself on behalf of the Canadian delegation, and there is one matter that I should like to mention now, because it becomes somewhat important in view of an observation made yesterday. You will find at the bottom of page 225 these words:

Mr. Bennett: I will not do more than say that the experience of succeeding years confirms me in the view, from which I have never departed, that the traditional policy of the party which I have the honour to lead, is best for Canada. I have explained this policy to the conference in a definite way, and there is therefore no need for me to restate my position, except to amplify it by saying that, in view of the report of the committee on

[Mr. Bennett.]

economic cooperation which we have had under consideration, and in view of my own personal inquiries into the agricultural situation in this country, I consider it proper to say that we from the Dominion of Canada are prepared to consider the desirability of accepting the quota system as a solution of the problem of marketing our Empire wheat in the United Kingdom, having regard especially to importations from foreign countries. This view I have already expressed to heads of delegations and it, therefore, seems to me proper that I should now relate it to the view expressed at the second plenary meeting of the conference, which view in no other respect am I prepared to modify in any way whatever. The offer which I then extended to this conference is still open, and will, I confidently believe, be accepted by all at Ottawa.

I therefore move, Mr. Chairman, that the economic section of the conference adjourn to Ottawa to meet within the next twelve months at a date to be mutually agreed upon.

Mr. Scullin followed and said:

Therefore, we are forced to adjourn that section of the conference for further consideration and deliberation after we have had further examination into all the facts. But the economic side of the conference has by no means been a failure.

Then Mr. Forbes made observations in the same sense. Mr. Hertzog said:

I and my colleagues came here with the knowledge that we should have to see that our expectations did not run too high, and our expectations not having run too high we have no great disappointments to carry away with us.

Mr. McGilligan said:

Much may happen between this and then, and if we have then to view these matters in a somewhat aloof and detached way, we shall nevertheless look with interest to see whether climatic conditions can bring about the reconciliation of the many views that in this climate appear to be so irreconcilable.

I am content to leave myself in the judgment of this house and of the country as to whether or not the attitude taken by Canada on that occasion was not the attitude that was taken by the representatives of every one of the dominions represented at the conference. Only some of them spoke in terms somewhat stronger than I with respect to the desirability, nay, the necessity, of immediate action being taken by the government of the United Kingdom to change its attitude on some of these questions.

Let me turn to the view of the conference expressed by Mr. Richard Jebb. I direct the careful attention of hon. members to an article by him in the Nineteenth Century for December last entitled From Referendum to Free Hand. At page 698 will be found the following:

For the past thirty years they have shown themselves only too willing to do business whenever we might be ready.