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ROYAL COLONIAL INSTITUTE

TRADE AFTER THE WAR

ADDRESS

GIVEN BY

THE RIGHT HON. SIR GEORGE
FOSTER, K.C.M.G., LL.D.,

Minister of Trade and Commerce, Canada,

*On Friday, July 28th, 1916,
: at the Hotel Cecil, London :*

The Rt. Hon. EARL GREY, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

(President of the Institute),

In the Chair.

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TRADE AFTER THE WAR

THE PRESIDENT (The Rt. Hon. Earl Grey, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.): When I came into the Entrance Hall this afternoon I met so many well-known Canadian faces whose acquaintance I made at Ottawa, that I really thought I was back again in Canada and attending a Canada Club Luncheon, which the Royal Colonial Institute is endeavouring by its example to reproduce in this country. There is no more patriotic organisation than that of the Canada Club Luncheon. Its characteristics are a cheap luncheon quickly served, followed by an address from a National, Imperial, or Humanitarian standpoint, with nothing of a partisan or sectarian character about it. The Institute is highly honoured in having this opportunity of showing its great appreciation of the eminent services rendered to the Empire by Sir George Foster. At a farewell dinner the other day to Mr. Hughes, Lord Northcliffe described our guest as the foremost orator of the Empire, and those of you who were fortunate enough to be present on the last occasion when the Institute had the honour of entertaining Sir George, which was in November, 1912, will entirely endorse Lord Northcliffe's opinion. Indeed, we were all deeply grateful to him for the speech he made on that occasion, for the objects for which the Institute stands—namely, the unity of the Empire and the well-being of the British race—were never more inspiringly or eloquently set forth. Many of us stay-at-home Englishmen feel the greater confidence in the future of the Empire from a knowledge of the fact that the statesmen who represent the virility of our kinsmen beyond the seas, will sit in council with our statesmen at home when the time comes for discussing the terms of Peace. I desire to express the hope that through Sir George Foster's personal

influence and that of others the self-governing Dominions may exercise such a pressure on public opinion in all parts of the Empire as will bring about such a reconstitution of our Imperial organisation as will enable our Oversea kinsmen to share with the people of the United Kingdom the task of fashioning an Imperial policy which will secure the safety of the Empire and promote the systematic and efficient organisation of its infinite resources. For this task is wanted the broad vision, the bold spirit, and the high courage of a lofty and inspired idealism, and I do not know anyone who possesses these qualities to a greater degree than my distinguished friend, whom I will now ask to address you.

TRADE AFTER THE WAR.

BY THE RT. HON. SIR GEORGE E. FOSTER, K.C.M.G.,
Minister of Trade and Commerce, Canada.

I have often tried to solve the problem which now and again presents itself as to why a Chairman, who is a friend of the speaker, should try to make his task as difficult as possible by raising the expectations of people higher than I think, in this case, there is ground upon which to base them. However, there are some problems which it does not much matter to the world whether they are solved or not, and I am not going to spend very much time in trying to puzzle this one out. If Lord Grey feels at home in seeing Canadian faces and meeting Canadian personalities at this Luncheon, anyone from Canada feels very much at home in talking to the members of the Royal Colonial Institute, particularly when Lord Grey, who spent some valuable years in Canada and earned the admiration, respect, and love of Canadians, supports him as Chairman of the proceedings. We have been highly fortunate in our Governors-General, for they have become friends of Canada—warm friends of Canada during their periods of administration, and have remained friends of Canada on their return home, and in wider spheres have been able to do very much for the good of Canada. It is difficult in the period allotted to me, and after a laboured and frazzled

existence of some weeks, going through the country from south to north, visiting the lines at the Front and the Grand Fleet in the north, to do more than touch upon some few points of principle, and details must for the moment be absolutely set aside. I do not flatter myself that I am thinking new thoughts or setting forth new ideas. It is important, however, to call attention to the fact that within two years we have, as it were, passed from one world into another, and in vital respects a widely different one. Are we conscious of this? we who sit around this table, the men in the street, the men behind business counters, the men on the farms and in the factories, scattered through the wide Dominions under the flag of the Empire? Or is it that we are passing through this war, which burst upon us two years ago, and which has so profoundly affected not only the nations engaged therein, but the whole world, and that while we are passing through it too many of us are thinking that some time soon the gates of war will be closed and we shall go back to the quiet paths of peace and take up the threads of life as we left them? We cannot do it, Sir; we have changed. The world has changed. It is impossible for us to take up the threads of life as we left them two years ago. We have changed, everyone sitting round this board feels it in himself. I am not the same man I was two years ago, neither are you, if you are thoughtful men. There has been a revolution in our minds, in our hearts, in our conceptions. We have learned to value things as we never valued them before, to exalt the verities of life and to regard trivialities as dross and nothingness. We have stripped off from ourselves so much of the old clothing of habit and custom and convention that we scarcely recognise ourselves sometimes when we think of the difference between that time and this. Every man has had personal experiences, and by himself or someone that is dear to him has laid down part of himself on the altar of sacrifice—to the death in many cases, and in all cases to some appreciable degree of sacrifice and of service.

Not only have we individually changed, but the nations to

which we belong have changed. Take Canada for instance. In two years she has passed through a phase of existence which has chastened her, strengthened her, burdened her with great responsibilities, but which has elevated her, which has taught her something of the feelings of Gethsemane and something of the pride of an exalted and enfranchised individual personality. We have taken upon ourselves the burdens of heavy expenditures—the burdens of heavy responsibility outside of financial expenditures. We have made a contribution of between 300,000 and 500,000 of the manhood of our country, taking them from the productive work of the farm, the field, and the factory, and sending them to the Front, where they are busily engaged in destroying human life and accumulated property, if thereby haply they may in the end save freedom and justice and civilisation for the coming generations. And other Dominions and this Old Country of Britain have done the same. Millions of the men of the Empire have been abstracted from productive employment and placed at the Front, and millions more have been taken out from productive employment to carry on the subsidiary services which the Army at the Front demands. We never can go back to August, 1914, in these respects. But there has been a change as regards the units of the Empire itself. Two years have brought about transformation and consolidation—have wiped out of existence objections and prejudices and theories that were held firmly, and by the pressure of outward menace and by the development of internal forces have made this Empire in its heart, and parts, a different thing from what it was before. That cannot be taken away from us. We cannot go back in that respect to August, 1914.

But we have also changed our relations with regard to outside countries. Yonder in Central Europe are Powers, formerly our friends, now our enemies, against whom for two years we have been fiercely fighting. We have tried to play the game and fight like men, they have tried and succeeded in branding their brows with the eternal infamy of base action and brutal method that the world will never forget. We never can go back to the

conditions of 1914 in respect to those countries, and though "never" is a long word, it will last for the men of this generation at least. And with neutral and allied countries also our relative positions are different.

What is the object of this introduction? It is simply to impress upon my mind and upon yours that while we have been working and fighting for two years, the old world has passed away and in many respects a new world with absolutely changed conditions is fronting us, and not far in the future either. Are we thinking about it, do we propose to think about it, what do we propose to do when Peace comes? "Oh, well," some good friend will say, "just wait till Peace comes before beginning to talk about these things, the war is on now, do not confuse the issues." The same good people two years ago, four years ago, six years ago, ten years ago, when some minds with vision saw the troubles which were coming and began to talk about them—these same people said, "Why talk of War until it comes, let us go on with the works of Peace, and when War comes we will see what is to be done." Listening to such counsels, we were landed into an unpreparedness that has cost untold treasures of money and blood—almost brought disaster and lost two years of precious time, during which men have had to fight with the naked hand against the mailed fist, against an enginery of War which for twenty-five years had been sedulously and carefully prepared by an enemy with long vision and most cruel purpose. And so to the man who says "I prefer to talk of Peace after the War is over" my answer is given in the short analysis I have made of the indisposition to talk of War until it came. Refuse now to make up your mind as to what you will do when War ends, and when Peace comes you will be in the same state of unpreparedness with regard to the arts and work of Peace as you were with regard to War two years ago. The moral of all this is that in the face of such profound changes we must be very humble—very self-renunciatory, and very modest in our preconceived opinions, and the man who during the last fifty years has been growing up under different conditions, settling his theories and moulding

his opinions and setting himself along the straight track of doing certain things in a certain way, must open his mind and prepare himself for such action as is made necessary by the different and changed circumstances of to-day. That is my first admonition—keep an open mind and approach the thing that has to be done and is fronting you now according to the changed conditions and circumstances. There were very definite theories of war and strategy before this war came, and they were held by men who had fought battles. But there was never a war like this, and the old theories and strategies had to be speedily revised and in proportion as they were thrown aside and our Armies met the conditions according to the necessities we began to forge ahead and the battle fronts to look more favourable. Exactly so with regard to the developments of Peace. We must adapt ourselves to the changed circumstances.

My next point is—that a man never does his best work until he has a clear and definite idea of what he wants to accomplish. As with men, so with countries and nations. The first requisite is to have a definite idea of your task and then go to the task with a firm purpose, and in nine cases out of ten you will accomplish it. What is our task? Modestly, but as earnestly as modestly, I submit that we have to revise our opinion of the tasks of Empire. Hitherto we have lacked vision—you in this country and we measurably in the outside Dominions, our horizons were too small, our outlook too restricted. We never yet, here or elsewhere, have taken in the real magnitude of the task set for us. We have to undertake a work unequalled in the history of the world. What have we been doing for two years? We have been preparing to fight and actually fighting for the defence and for the conservation of an Empire—not simply for London, Glasgow, Ottawa, Auckland, Melbourne, Sydney and Cape Town, but for the whole Empire. We have been preparing ourselves to fight for it. Please God we are now where we can see that defence is assured and consolidation is not only hopeful but definitely certain in the near future. If it has been worth while for us to organise and mobilise ourselves

in order to defend the Empire, is it not far more necessary and important that after we have secured its defence and consolidation we shall mobilise, organise, get together and work together in order to develop the Empire, to preserve which we have poured out our blood and treasure? Fighting is the least normal thing a man does. It is the least normal thing that a nation does. It is the least normal thing for the world to be engaged at. War is intermittent and occasional, but the ways of Peace are always being trodden and its works always being wrought. That is why you need peace warriors to organise and mobilise your forces when you have secured the defence of the Empire. Then comes the greater, the more pressing and more difficult duty of developing the Empire we have won. That is the task set us by destiny and to which we should direct our best energies. What an Empire it is. One quarter of the territory of this globe owns the flag of the Empire, one quarter or more of its man power is sheltered beneath its folds. It has every variety of climate and production, the finest tropical and temperate regions. But there is more. These far-flung parts of the Empire, belting the world, are joined together—not separated by the seas, and we hold to-day the command of these seas. I have just come back from seeing, in the northern part of this country, the Grand Fleet and its auxiliaries, which make up the great British Sea Power, upon which the existence of this Empire has for two years depended and upon which it depends to-day. We hold the power of the seas and thus keep open the highways for intercourse between the different parts of the Empire. We have the largest commercial marine, and we are the greatest shipbuilding Power in the world. More, we have wealth and intelligence, and skill and capacity of productive power, not inferior to any other Empire. We combine the virility of younger nations with the wisdom and experience of the older—a union of twin powers which massed and organised can do for this Empire what no other Power on the round face of the globe is able to do to-day. That is the asset held in trust by us. It is not yours. It is not mine. It does not belong

to the men of this generation to do what they like with it. All that we have a right to is the user of that estate. We are bound to hand it down to the generation that comes after and so down on and on to succeeding generations, unimpaired and improved, so that the men of the Empire in the future may have all that we have, improved by all that we have done for it, and in it, and with it. Call that ideal if you like—say that it is impractical in this workaday age. But there are millions of men and women in this Empire who cherish it, and it must sink into the hearts of the millions left before we have achieved what God meant us to achieve and do our full duty to ourselves and to posterity.

Let me ask a question here—Have we not in the past made something of a fetish of trade? I am not speaking of free trade. You have your own opinions about that. You have a right to them, but these are times which tend to loosen the soil of our minds, and even Free Traders may find it necessary to modify their theories. We talk of trade, we struggle and fight for trade, but I think we have gone a long way in the past to exalt a subsidiary thing into a primary thing, and we ought to revise our ideas. What is trade after all? It is only an incident. If we make it the ultimate end we are on the wrong track. Trade is simply the handmaid of a Royal Mistress whose lineage goes back to the primal days and whose stock will not run out while the world lasts. That Royal Mistress is production. Trade and more trade you call for, because of the profit you make; production and more production should be the slogan in order that the primary resources of the Empire may be developed. Developed for what purpose? Not simply that individuals shall make millions to go to their heirs; not that some firms shall derive immense profits. Profits are good, let them go to those that deserve them in good measure; but the idea to be kept in view is that development, and production and trade, by which it is brought about, are all subsidiary to something else, and that is the national welfare—the good of the nation. And when I say the national welfare, I speak not of an abstract idea, but of a great, practical, concrete thing, the

uplifting of the nation. I have been surprised and delighted in talking to men lately—men at the head of mighty establishments and great businesses—who have said to me the very same thing : “ I hope that this war will teach us the higher things—teach us to value the intermediary things for what they are worth and no more, and to work in earnest unselfishness henceforth for the uplifting of humanity.”

How are we going to go about this Empire task ? I would shortly indicate three things to be done. I have been over at the Base around Calais, Boulogne, Etaples, and have been through the great munition factories in Britain, and I have been absolutely astounded at the power and intelligence and effective organisation which is at this particular time telling in the unexampled amount of munitions of war that have been poured into the trenches for our fighting men. Two years ago little or none of this was in existence. To-day millions of men and some six hundred and sixty thousand women are engaged in the work of munition making. I saw one factory where 6,000 women and girls were making shells. These girls made them and handled them with a deftness and accuracy which gave perfect satisfaction. All this comes from organisation. If we wish we can organise for Peace just as effectively as for War. And the duty is all the greater. The first thing we should do is to set to work as an Empire and explore, chart, and record all our resources—every one of them. Not that New Zealand or Canada, or any other unit, shall simply chart her own resources and keep them to herself, but that we shall explore and chart the resources of the whole Empire so that we may know what we have. We should chart our needs and requirements so that we may know how far we have the supplies necessary to meet them. We must note also what needs to be conserved, and here you come upon another aspect of business which we have too little considered. I hold that the skill and business ability of this country owes a duty to the State as well as to itself. Development, production, and trade have a national side as well as an individual side. We cannot ignore the national side if we are

going to do the thing that needs to be done in this country and Empire. Suppose I happen to own all the coal in Great Britain, that it is mine by indefeasible right. It lies within this Empire. Have I the right to sell it all if I could pick it out at once and hand it over, say, to the Hun? That settles the argument. There comes a time when the State must say: "The children of its future have real claims on the generation of to-day." The country of to-day has also its claim. We must seek a *modus operandi* by which the men of to-day shall get their user, but by which the resources necessary for the defence and permanence of the Empire shall be kept in sufficient quantity. Every right-minded man in his heart will recognise that. Then let him bow to that which he recognises, and let us put our efforts together to conserve the vital things of the Empire for use in this Empire and for all its people rather than for some individuals. But there is no quick and royal road to success in the keen competition of production and development which will confront us when this war ends. You cannot put up tariff walls so high as to protect you against ignorance and lack of skill. The foundations must be deeply and truly laid amongst the people, and they must be educated along practical lines. We must in all ways fit ourselves in this Empire to meet rivals from whatever quarter they come—be as intelligent, skilful, resourceful, ready in organisation and as fully mobilised as they can be, and if possible, more so.

The second thing we have to do is to conserve and develop these resources for Empire growth, Empire advancement, and Empire permanence, for it is the development, uplift and permanence of the civilisation which is embodied in the flag of Empire that is the one great thing in the future for us to work for.

This can best be done by all its parts co-operating one with the other, by plans well thought out and pursued in unison, by directing the migration of Empire population to the end that British stock shall be retained under the flag and not disseminated among foreign nations, by mobilising the capital and skill and experience and commercial marine of the Empire

for Empire development and transport primarily. Within the Empire there is ample scope for our best energies and equipment, and before all else we should develop and populate the vast and incalculably rich estate that we hold in trust.

Lastly, I would say this. It is high time we were defining our attitude in certain respects, and they are briefly these: First, the attitude of the parts of the Empire to each other and to the Empire as a whole. Are we thinking about it? Do we propose to do anything about it? How shall we stand with regard to each other? My own principles are well known. I am not a Free Trader under present circumstances. Speaking personally, I do not hold out the least hope that the Empire can to-day come together on the basis of Free Trade. In the Overseas we are differently constituted from you perhaps. Maybe you are getting gradually into a position which does not greatly differentiate yourselves from us across the seas. It is time the Empire should consolidate itself, and with reference to trade and commerce and production should get about it quickly and hammer out its policy for the future. I attended the Economic Conference. What did I find? I found that Great Britain, with all her power, did not, and could not, speak for an Empire. How much stronger her representatives would have been if the Empire had its defined policy and they could have spoken for the whole Empire. My plea is the homely family plea—let the Empire treat itself and its units more favourably than it treats any country which does not belong to its flag. Preference within the Empire is natural and wise, and I believe necessary. It is also possible and practical.

We must also define our commercial attitude towards neutral countries. That is a delicate subject it is true. But how long is this Empire to attune its ears to every whisper as to possible disadvantage from a neutral country if the Empire dares to arrange its home affairs as it likes. We have to choose between the Empire of to-day and that illimitably greater Empire of the future, and build for that, and even though we may sacrifice some of our profits of neutral trade, we will have our reward as

we go on and future generations will rise up and call us Blessed. These neutral countries are no doubt important commercially, but they have not spilled an ounce of their blood—they have not spent a dollar of their money in all the terrible hell of war which on thousands of miles of front has harried the sons of the Empire and left its long trail of fearful consequences to be borne and combated by many a generation to come. Neutral countries are reasonable; if they are not, they ought to be. And this one consideration can be urged with just force before neutral countries—"You have not paid in blood or money, we have, and we who have suffered have now to reconstruct ourselves, and if we reconstruct ourselves we must be allowed to say how. Whilst dealing reasonably with you, we must be just to our own." Then with reference to our attitude towards the Allies. What is bringing this war to a successful finish? Gradually, little by little after long delays, the Allies are now able to work in unison. They have pooled their issues—put themselves into it regardless of sacrifices—worked together. But think of the tale of war. There lies Belgium, torn, bleeding, outraged, looted. There lies Serbia, a country without a people. There lies Poland, in a vortex of want, pitiable in the extreme. A large part of France has been devastated. When the war is over these nations are to be built up, and it is absolutely necessary to the Allies that their trade relations towards each other shall be placed upon a more favoured basis of treatment and co-operation than that of the neutral.

Lastly, we must define our attitude towards the enemy. Does that need many words. Sometimes I think No, sometimes I think Yes. Make no mistake—right in your midst, in cherished Britain, and in every outpost of the Empire there are men and not a few, who will meet you with this statement: "When war is over we cannot of course cherish hatreds. The world is after all one family. We shall need what Germany can give. Germany must be allowed to recuperate and rebuild. Let things, when peace comes, go on as before." There are men, not a few, who are striving for that to-day, and who will strive

for it to-morrow. And you have to be up and wide awake in order to counteract that influence. I am not an apostle of the doctrine of hate. But I have a memory. I propose to keep it. I am not going to forget what the Germans have done in ignoring sacred pacts, in tearing up treaties, in outraging the humanities, in wholesale looting, in cruel and ghastly barbarity, and in that worst of all, treachery to the sacred claims of friendship and hospitality, under cover of which they wrought their infamies. These are things I do not propose to forget. Do you? The revelation that has been made of the German heart and the German purpose in these two years of war is my sufficient guarantee for demanding that, for this generation, at least, German goods, German wares, German partnerships, German businesses, and Germans themselves shall be excluded from the pale of the British Empire. Give them a good long time to repent, but be sure they do repent, and in sackcloth and ashes, before they are admitted into the community of decent civilisations. Up to that time, justice to ourselves and to our Allies designates our attitude.

A final word. To win this war we had to get together, think together, work together, and fight together. It has been worth it all and is leading to certain success. After peace comes there will be all the greater necessity for getting together, working together, thinking together, with one common ideal and one common purpose. Let me impress upon you again the burden of the trust that has come into our hands. We cannot divest ourselves of it. It is a trust we hold for British traditions, British history and British civilisation, which for a thousand years and more has been a great uplifting influence in the world. The world is young yet, and there is just as much need of this great civilising influence in the future as there has been in the past. On our shoulders lies the responsibility. If we do our duty the Empire trust will be conserved. If we fail in duty the splendid promise and needed realisation may easily pass away and be as an idle vision.



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