

(September 5, 1933)

Address

BY THE HONORABLE G. HOWARD FERGUSON.

PRESIDENT HARRY SIFTON:—I find myself in the most extraordinary position today and one of great interest and great satisfaction to myself. This whole Canadian Club matter is a riddle as far as I am concerned. First I become president, which I did not expect. I consider it a great honor. Then we discover that Honorable G. Howard Ferguson, a man very close to the hearts of the citizens of Ontario has not honored the Club by sitting in at any of its meetings for some considerable time so we attempted the impossible and asked Mr. Ferguson if he would honor the Club by speaking to us early on his arrival here. To my great satisfaction, and perhaps somewhat secret amazement, he accepted the invitation promptly and he is here. So that you can understand the position I am in. Some few of you perhaps, have read things I have said about him in the past. A grim and grinding sense of duty would dictate that I should repeat those statements here in his presence face to face. Such a thing is the farthest possible from my mind. I would not destroy my comfort and gratitude at having him here for any amount of adherence to ideals. The same type of duty would demand on the other side that I should list all those great accomplishments of statecraft with which his history blazes with stars at very close intervals but that would be to list every first-class disaster that has attended my own political view. I think that the very humanities would rise and object and you would not expect me to do anything of the kind. There are other features, however, particularly known to his close friends about which I may say something in spite of my youth and inexperience and almost consistent defeat

at his hand. Honorable Mr. Ferguson has the great factor in dealing with humanity. He has a perfect genius for companionship and a perfectly miraculous capacity to get along with people. No matter how much abstract scientific intellectuality one may have, he does not get anywhere without that important capacity of ability to get on with people. That is the essence of democracy and I think, Mr. Ferguson, that anybody, including myself, will say that you have got it like nobody else in the world. Time after time I have seen political attacks leveled at his administration, at his own record, which seemed to me to be completely conclusive. I did not see how a beaten statesman could rise even to his knees under such an attack. That morning we get up and we think, well, that is the end of Howard. What do we find? I won't say he is strutting. I would say he is marching bravely through the streets, serenely impervious and with genuine capacity for goodwill. And people would say, "Well, we don't know what you said, but you attacked Howard and that is all we want to know." Now that of course, is a perfectly sincere tribute to a man which will be given to you by everybody who knows him. I know something about the other side and I can say that with perfect sincerity and without in any way complimenting him beyond his deserts. Mr. Ferguson and I, of course, are closest friends on these public occasions. With these few remarks may I very proudly present to the Canadian Club, Mr. G. Howard Ferguson, High Commissioner for Canada.

HONORABLE MR. FERGUSON:—Mr. President and Gentlemen, I would indeed be insensible of kindness if I did not acknowledge my profound feeling of appreciation at this very generous, if somewhat ambiguous introduction. Mr. Sifton and I have been for long periods long distance friends and the occasion is a very happy one when I am able to sit in such close association with him at a gathering of this character. He and I of course have no politics any more. He, apparently, has abandoned the faith of his fathers and I have lost my job.

It is indeed, not only an honor but a privilege to have the opportunity of coming to you today and discussing

with you for a little while, in a very informal way, a few problems that I think are of outstanding importance, not only to Canada and the Empire, but to the world itself. Home-coming is always a very gratifying thing. There is nothing so cheering and nothing so touching as to come back home and it is particularly so to find that you still retain the goodwill of a goodly number of people. I never come up the old St. Lawrence, as I did a few weeks ago in the early morning, and see the sun peep over the horizon and light up the hills of the river and strike the old citadel on that high rock, spreading its resplendent glory all about you, but I feel proud to be a Canadian. There is no finer land in the world than Canada, no land of such vast and diversified opportunity and there are no people that have the same indomitable, persevering, courageous spirit that we have in Canada.

I come back at this time with greater pleasure than ever because I am able to bring to the people of Canada a very cheering optimistic message as to the future. In the old land things have passed the stage of doubt. Great Britain has firmly fixed her feet again on the road of progress and prosperity. They are not indications. There is more than that. There is an advance in every branch of British activity today. The peculiar thing about the Britisher is that he plods along without emotion; undisturbed, undismayed, feeling confident that with the great history he has behind him he is going to overcome his difficulties. The British people have learned, as we must learn, that obstacles are not to be regarded as unsurmountable obstructions in our path but merely as difficulties to be overcome and every fresh achievement lends the stimulus for greater success in the future. It is the spirit of the British people, their character, that carries them on and that character, you know as well as I, is unique among the peoples of the world. It is a character that is the outgrowth of centuries of tradition. It is a character that has been built in the English home because home in Great Britain is not merely a domicile for a family, it is a national institution and in that home is created an atmosphere, not only of love of country, but of confidence in the power of success and achievement in that country.

The British people are a proud race, not the sort of supercilious pride that is offensive but a justifiable pride that commands your admiration, pride in the glory of past events, pride in their power to overcome their difficulties in the future, and that pride is the very atmosphere in which the British people live. Perhaps it could not be illustrated better than by a story that is told of an English lord spending his holidays in the Highlands of Scotland as many of them do. Accompanied by an old Scotch guide they were trudging through the Highlands one day and, thinking he might impress Sandy with his importance and prestige, he said, "You know, Sandy, my family have had the right to bear arms for two hundred years." And the old Scotchman straightened up and said, "Hoot mon, my family have had the right to bare legs for two thousand years." That story illustrates in a very striking way the character, sense of pride, which, after all, is the driving force of success in this world. If we have confidence in ourselves, take an interest in our problems, pride in their achievements, we can meet and overcome whatever difficulties may arise in our pathway. Somebody said centuries ago, "character is the destiny of man," in other words, character spells a man's future and it is equally true to say that character spells the destiny of a nation. If we pursue the course in this country upon which we have set out, of training our own people as to the value of citizenship, we will attain a position worthy of being associated with the great centre of this Empire. Because after all patriotism is the voice of the soul, speaking in terms of good citizenship. That accounts for the position Great Britain occupies today in the world.

It is a matter of great pride and most impressive to me at this recent great international gathering in London to see how Great Britain not only gave leadership and dominated the course of events there but how every country, from every part of the world, expected her to do so and paid deference to her. It taught me that wherever John Bull sits that chair becomes a throne, surrounded by an atmosphere of courage, strength, power, unselfish interest in the public welfare, and furthermore, and not least of all,

with dignity. Britain has had her struggles throughout all the centuries and doubtless in the future will have many more but she has the inherent genius for meeting situations and carrying with her the unanimous support of all her people and the sympathetic support of all the nations of the world. It is a great thing to be a British subject. It is a great thing to be a citizen of a country like that. It is a great thing to feel that even in a very small way we are making a contribution towards the establishment of a power and force in the world that will give leadership for the betterment of mankind and the improvement of civilization.

Great Britain is recovering very rapidly. The mills and places like Bradford and Sheffield, where conditions were peculiar and serious, have been practically silent for two or three years. Today they are running sixty and seventy per cent. of their time and before long will be running one hundred per cent. of their time. In the last four months Britain has absorbed half a million of her unemployed people and all over the country you find that same urge forward with confidence that spells success. Great Britain is giving leadership. The recent conference did not succeed in carrying out its objective for reasons which we all know very well. No ship can stand too many torpedoes. But it was by no means a useless conference nor a total failure. It inured to the advantage of the British people more than to that of any other who were there, because they were taught the lesson in perhaps a more striking way than ever before that economically it is better to deal with your friends than to negotiate with your rivals and your competitors. The feeling exists more intensively and more enthusiastically than it ever has in my recollection, in a great number of years that I have been visiting England, and does more for consolidation of imperial forces in power and commerce than ever before.

At the close of the conference you will recall that the Empire countries got together again under British leadership, and they framed a very important declaration, re-affirming the principles established at the Imperial Con-

ference at Ottawa, and pledged themselves to further co-operation with the Dominions and colonies of the Empire with a view to developing our own resources, increasing our own strength and prestige and giving greater opportunities to the citizens of the Empire. Britain, for the first time in nearly a century, adopted as a policy a principle of protection. That does not mean there are no free-traders in England. There are plenty of people there today who are just as strongly imbued with the doctrines of free-trade as they ever were. I remember hearing Mr. Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, saying on the floor of the House of Commons when he was discussing these very agreements, the question of tariff and reciprocal preferences, and someone on the back benches of the opposition said to him, "What about your free-trade principles?" And he said, "My free-trade principles are just as strong as they ever were and I hold to them just as tenaciously as I ever did, but unfortunately they do not fit into the present situation and I am out for the preservation of this Empire." In other words, what he meant was that Great Britain had held to her traditional policy until every country in the world had adopted protection and she became the dumping ground or garbage heap for the surplus of countries in all parts of the world, increasing her own unemployment, destroying her capital investments, ruining her industry, and depressing conditions generally. She said if we are going to maintain our people in this country, if we are going to give them reasonable standards of living, and decent, humane and constant employment, we must do one of two things, we must either reduce our standards and our wages to the level of those countries with which we have to compete or we must build a wall of some kind of protection, and she decided on protection rather than attempt to reduce the well-being and the social welfare of the citizens of Great Britain. That is the whole story of Great Britain's establishment of a tariff policy. She was forced into it because of circumstances. Fortunately for us, the evidence showed that trade has increased and conditions are improving. Trade returns show, beyond question, that

Canada's trade within the Empire and with the islands particularly has made a very substantial increase. Trade from the islands to the Empire has increased but in a lesser degree. But the future promises well and we, in this country, should never forget the fact that twenty per cent. of the people of Great Britain are food-producers and that the task of providing food for one hundred per cent. of the population is an impossible one and the raw materials that we have in this country have a preference in the best market in the world, acknowledged by all countries to be the best in the world. Not only therefore have we the tie of blood, the pull of kith and kin to tie us closer into the Empire, but we have commercial opportunities and advantages enjoyed by no other countries in the world to give us in the material sense an incentive to imperial collaboration and development.

May I just before I sit down give you a few instances of what the situation has developed in the last year? I have something to do with it as a glorified sales agent in trying to increase Canadian business with the Empire. During the past year the amount of timber, which is an important produce in this country, sold to Great Britain has doubled and it is going on increasing rapidly. As an evidence of the attitude of the British people the London county council, which is the largest purchasing power and the largest consumer of timber in the whole British Isles, laid it down that Empire products must have a preference and be bought in all cases unless it will not suit the purpose for which they are designed, because they build infirmaries, schools, hospitals, all that sort of thing, within the great Metropolitan area of London and maintain them. They have found great satisfaction in the use they have been able to make of Canadian timber and every department of the British government that is going to do that construction has laid it down as a principle that Empire timber must have first consideration. So great centres of population like Birmingham and Liverpool and Manchester and numerous others great and small have adopted the policy of purchasing Empire timber. The one weakness in that situation (and it applies almost to all the products we send

over there) is that we do not always give the people what they want in the form in which they want it. We try to sell them something we have. It is much easier to sell a man what he wants than to try and persuade him that a substitute will do; and our business people here could not do better than to send representatives to the Old Country to study conditions, make contact, learn the requirements of the market, and they will find a spirit of sympathetic co-operation everywhere they go.

One could take tobacco. The amount of Canadian tobacco sold in Great Britain reached up to 10,000,000 of pounds last year, an increase of forty per cent. in a year and all the reports I have been able to get from the large imports and manufacturers indicate that we grow in this country some of the best tobacco grown anywhere in the world and in their blends they are increasing constantly the percentage of Canadian tobacco. That is an important thing for Canada, an important thing particularly for the province of Ontario.

Then again, our wheat. Perhaps it is the most intricate and difficult problem to solve. Providence has so much to do with the production of wheat and the amount of our product and we are not always given notice in advance of what is going to happen so that problems arise every day. But as a result of long collaboration begun two years ago, carried on for a month, taken up again in May last and carried on until just a few days ago, not only with the exporting nations of the world but the importing nations, we have been able to arrive at a reasonably sane conclusion that we are going to endeavor to regulate, just as any other manufacturer would do, the amount of our production to meet market possibilities and distribute it in a way that it will be entirely consumed. If we can do that, and I feel certain it will be done, we will have found a stabilized condition at a remunerative price that will mean tremendous things to Canada by increasing the prosperity and the buying power of the great Western Prairie provinces. That I think is one of the greatest achievements. It did not grow directly out of the conference but was carried on while the conference was there and had

the expert advice and help of members of that conference. As you have seen by the press Canada will have an export quota of 200,000,000 bushels of wheat and other countries a similar amount to make up the total requirements of the world. Under the direction and advice of a permanent committee to be established in London that distribution will take place in a way that will bring the best results. Now that was a great achievement on sound, practical lines, to meet all kinds of unforeseen difficulties of the most intricate character. For the first time in history almost, nearly every country in Europe has a bumper crop. Countries that have not exported a bushel of wheat in their history will have a surplus this year. That situation has to be met. Countries like France, not only have a prohibitive tariff on wheat but they have milling regulations that require every piece of bread baked in France to be one hundred per cent. of French wheat. In Germany I think it is ninety-seven per cent. and Italy ninety-eight per cent. Now after a long tiresome discussion we have been able to find a way to overcome that difficulty with the co-operation of these countries. I say that is one of the greatest achievements for Canada in recent years.

There is another thing we are all deeply interested in—the homely bacon hog. We have doubled the sale of our bacon in Great Britain in the past year. We have doubled it in face of the fact that we do not sell them the bacon they want and we do not sell it to them in the form in which they want it. But the packers here, I am glad to say, are alive to that situation. They realize what must be done and only the other day two export representatives of the Canadian Packers left for Great Britain to spend weeks or perhaps months studying conditions in the various countries so as to be able to produce a product that will find sale and demand in the Old Country. This is a great achievement for this country because, if we can reach the stage where our bacon will measure up to the Dutch and the Danish and the Wiltshire, we shall have revolutionized agriculture in this country by putting it on a basis where it will be practically guaranteed against disaster in the future, by establishing mixed farming

instead of a one crop farming proposition such as we have in so many places today.

Had I the time and you the patience there are innumerable problems of that kind that one could discuss with advantage. You have to live in the atmosphere. You have to be constantly in contact with the people there to understand the problems. A mere visit to two or three brokerage houses of the Smithfield market or the great exchange does not solve the problem nor does not tell you how to solve the problem. There is the most intricate interlocked system of organization that exists anywhere in the world, and you can't break through it. You have to go and fit yourself into it and when you do that, you find the intense pro-empire feeling that exists today in Great Britain. Aye, and I am glad to say, with the warmest goodwill towards Canada, there is an opportunity we never had before and we should take full advantage of it. Not only will it profit us materially but it will put us in the proud position of feeling that we are making some contribution to strengthening the great imperial edifice which we desire to see upon permanent foundations and which must be the home of the people who love liberty and justice.

PRESIDENT SIFTON, before thanking the High Commissioner welcomed as guest to the head table the Minister of Public Works of the Province of Saskatchewan, the Honorable Mr. Bryan. He also thanked Past President Victor Ross for his aid in getting Mr. Ferguson to address the Club.