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The Imperial Conference

BY THE RT. HON. J. G. COATES, PREMIER OF NEW ZEALAND

PRESIDENT GEORGE H. SEDGEWICK: Gentlemen, there is no doubt that the visits of the premiers of the great Southern Dominions have caught the public imagination in Canada. I am told that New Zealand is admitted even by Canadians to be the most beautiful country in the world. It has grown up in a comparatively recent time and has developed those same British traditions I referred to when Premier Bruce was here. We had the pleasure a few years ago, at the close of the last Conference of hearing Mr. Massey and his successor is with us today. He has had an honorable record in the war where he was given the bar to the Military Cross and it was said of him that his willingness to sacrifice himself for others was an inspiration to all his men. How his own people regarded him was evidenced by their very satisfactory verdict when, after he was called to the Premiership, he went to them for their endorsement.

PREMIER J. G. COATES: Mr. president, Mr. Premier, gentlemen, I would like to tell you how very much I appreciate the extraordinary welcome you have given me. Whether you come here today to hear me or to see what sort of a chap I am like I am unable to say, but I will say that I am somewhat taken aback to see so many here today interested in a visitor from the South Pacific. We heard about the wonderful reception you gave to my colleague Mr. Bruce and, as a matter of fact, I am more often called Bruce than Coates since I came to Canada. Whether I am shining or not in the reflection of Mr. Bruce's glory, I am unable to say. In this respect, however, New Zealand and Australia are very closely associated, situated as we

are in the South Pacific. It is quite true that New Zealanders have a strong and abiding affection for Canadians. We have had many things in common in the past and I think the Great War brought us into even closer contact than would have been possible in any other set of circumstances. You, Mr. President, have referred to my part in the war, but I have got to say that I did nothing at all and if anything came my way it was certainly due to the excellent boys I had with me; and I would ask you not to believe any of these good things about me personally. It was the men who always responded on every occasion. But may I say that I was brought into very close contact with your men, and we were very jealous of the fine name the Canadians made and it bucked us up to see if we could go one better; but that was not possible.

May I express our appreciation—because I include my wife and party—to the people of Toronto, of their extraordinary hospitality. As a matter of fact we have had nothing but the very kindest of receptions from everybody. Your government was simply splendid. Your Prime Minister and his colleagues have done everything one could imagine to make our tour an instructive and informative one and I would like to express my appreciation for their efforts on our behalf.

Then in Toronto your Premier, of course, tries to excel everybody else in hospitality. I know a good deal about Toronto; I know of your extraordinarily fine record in the war; of the wonderful loyalty to the Empire of this section of Canada. We know that applies to Canada generally. It was something to be proud of and I know the Toronto people were proud of their youngsters in those days.

More recently we have had the opportunity of showing you at your Exhibition some of New Zealand's products; and again we have to thank not only the Dominion Government, but your Provincial Government for the assistance placed at our disposal.

We had an opportunity in London of coming into close contact with the various parts of the Empire and amongst the delegations was your delegation from Canada. It was a real pleasure for me to have the opportunity of again chat-

ting over many matters of common interest from the political as well as from the economic side.

There are some people somewhat nervous in regard to the conclusions we came to at the conference. Personally, I don't think the written word is worth very much, and after all there was really nothing new to come to. We have no written constitution of the Empire, none whatever. We are free self-governing dominions within the Empire and what a number of people cannot understand is how that organization can work.

Well, there are a good many reasons why it does work and work well. For instance New Zealand would not like being governed from a country 10,000 or 12,000 miles away. We think we can govern ourselves and organize our own lives. On the other hand if you were to endeavor to have a federal government covering the whole of the Empire I am afraid you would find innumerable and insuperable difficulties would arise. It would be possible by Act of Parliament to provide for the whole of the Empire; but the reason the British Empire has become such a factor and the reason it holds together, in my opinion, is because we have so much in common.

First of all we have the right to self-government, and the form of government we follow hails from the mother of parliaments in London. And it seems to me that when you have got British people, wherever they may be, they can be trusted to govern themselves.

Now are these institutions of value? Yes, to every individual who resides within any one of those countries which form the British Empire that is the case. Just as we have found in the past, so we will find in the future, a combination of the might of the whole British Empire to protect what we believe to be our most valuable asset—that right of self-government, freedom of the individual and equal opportunity of all citizens within our territory. After all, it seems to me, Mr. President, it is not a question of the written word. The definitions are clear, setting out nothing new, but making it plainer than in the past to those who may possibly have had difficulty in being able to understand what their rights and privileges were.

To go to a conference of that description with the pre-conceived idea that one really understood all the problems in the Empire, it seems to me, would not make for the best spirit, or would not form the best spirit necessary to come to a conclusion as to exactly where we stand. There were some who had local difficulties one could not see very readily. They may be political or not. But after one has had an opportunity of sitting round a table listening to all their remarks in regard to their own peculiar difficulties and their own outlook in regard to certain questions, it was only then possible to realize that there was no desire on the part of any delegation at the conference to pull away or do anything likely to break up the Empire. But there was a very strong determination on the part of all delegations that through voluntary co-operation we should do something that would not tend to disintegrate the Empire, but would help to build it and make it stronger and more abiding no matter how far apart the different parts may be. That, no doubt, is one of our tasks for the future—to see if we cannot improve communications and bring about more co-operation and understanding between ourselves. And for that reason we will have to set about arranging for an interchange of representatives from each of our countries in order that as they move about they will be able to convey back to each country the feeling and information gained in that country. I am referring to the political, not the economic side, although the same principle, it seems to me, would apply to the economic side of Empire life.

I may conclude my remarks on this occasion by simply saying that after all it is only a question of understanding; to see the other fellow's point of view, and I don't suppose there are any peoples more fitted than those who have come from the British stock to deal with any question that may come up.

In New Zealand we had difficulties. We had a warlike race, the Maori people, a race we were never able to defeat. We came to an honorable understanding with them and, although New Zealand is only eighty years old, we are able to say that amongst the best of our citizens are

the Maori people. They have taken a prominent part in political life, one of them acting as Prime Minister for some time. They take a leading part in the professions, in mining and farming and the public service. There is no color line so far as we are concerned. And another thing, the Maori race is growing. They have increased ten thousand within the last ten years. But what is valuable is this: the moment a national cause comes along, the moment a crisis arrives the first of our citizens to protect their country and the freedom of government are the Maoris.

How many cases of that description could we quote throughout the British Empire? It seems to me that among those who talk about the break-up of the Empire—the wish is father to the thought. The real solid opinion, the real public opinion, the great mass of the people we hear nothing about, they will see to it that they will retain the privileges they have got and the system they believe in.

I would like to say a word too about the economic side because it seems to me there is a real means of being able to cement more closely the ties that have been made. The spirit is right. The people are anxious to develop their Empire. Now the attitude we take is this: We are anxious and desirous of doing business with our own people, of doing business with our own family in the different portions of the Empire. We recognize quite well that trade must go on generally. But when you come to think of it our Empire is composed of practically all the new country of the world. We have untold resources, resources of every description necessary for manufacture and export; untold wealth yet undiscovered, but already wealth of a character that is of extraordinary value. It seems to me that if we can bring about a political peace, so far as our Empire is concerned, New Zealand's attitude is very simple. We say that so far as imperial politics are concerned we have no party, so far as party bickerings are concerned it does not come into the national life; when it comes to domestic politics there is the devil of a row always; but we are trying to treat the other as something above all local, petty squabbling.

But so far as economic trade is concerned it is ex-

traordinary how people can assist. For instance, the housewife, she is the real asset, gentlemen, as you know, the one who bosses you. You may think you are all right and running the show, but everyone of us is controlled and handled as neatly as possible. I think it was Mr. Munro, Premier of Newfoundland, who got off this one, speaking in the same strain. He said that the average married American man—he was referring to the United States—was the most domesticated animal in captivity.

Well, my point is this, if we can get people interested in this, and get the idea into our homes that everything they buy should be first of all, Canadian, if they can get it, and if not then turn to your own Empire, that will be a real step forward.

So far as foreign trade is concerned that will look after itself. We have got to have it and it is necessary we should, but in ordinary, everyday life I think we ought to do all we can, as leaders of public thought, to tell our own people that they owe a duty to their own people in all parts of the world and every little thing they can do to assist is helping in the development of the Empire.

May I refer to our desire to do more business with you? I notice that you do a lot more business with us; too much in fact. It is about five or six times as much as we are doing with you. We are anxious to see if we can balance that trade somehow. I do hope the primary producers in this country will take a broad view and see that seasonal changes allow of this interchange. For instance you may find it difficult keeping butter through the winter, but you can be perfectly certain of getting butter only three weeks old straight from the dairies of New Zealand at this time of the year or a little later. That would help to balance the trade. Another item is apples. If you want apples in the winter time there is no need to go outside the Empire for them. We think we can give you a quality that will suit your taste. If we encourage the inter-Empire idea and put it into practical effect within the Empire we can fill up the gaps in your seasons.

I notice my colleague, Mr. Bruce, when talking here mentioned Australia and New Zealand. I never mind that,

but as totals were mentioned I think it is of interest to split it. We are only 1,500,000 people and Australia is six or seven millions. The trade between Canada and Australia and New Zealand combined for 1925 was \$30,940,000 and up to March 1926, \$37,674,000. If we divide it again—I do this with the utmost regard for my colleague—the trade of New Zealand for 1925 was \$16,270,000 and of Australia, \$14,669,000. Next year it improved quite a lot: New Zealand, \$19,280,000; Australia \$18,478,000. So that apparently for the last two years at least the business you have done with New Zealand is greater than with Australia, but there is a great field for development in Australia itself. We are anxious to meet you and do what we can. Mr. Malcolm, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, who is present today, has given us a lot of assistance and shown a readiness to fall into line with anything likely to improve that trade. The details I don't propose to go into now, but I can say this without breach of confidence, that the readiness with which we have been met in regard to the many questions we have discussed, (and we are anxious to continue the discussions), paves the way if our business people seize the opportunity for trade relations that will to some extent balance the business between Canada and New Zealand.

May I say that the lines of communication that separate our countries may be long, but we hope to improve them. As a matter of fact the shipping companies sometimes complain of insufficient trade and traffic. We have some good inducements in the winter, especially for those who find it cold here during the winter. I know during the busy portion of the year it is difficult to get passengers back, but on the other hand I am informed that more business will improve these facilities.

We have an extraordinary little country. It has a trading wealth of £79 per head or a total of £118,000,000 per year, which is fairly high; probably, per capita, the highest in the world. On the other hand there are features about our country which no doubt are of interest to you and I will relate a few of them. I am not a commercial traveller yet, but I am fast acquiring the habit. My late chief, Mr.

Massey, who was one of our stout imperialists, used to say that he was one of the best commercial travellers New Zealand ever produced and I think he was probably right.

The northern portion of our country has very beautiful scenery and a thermal action as violent as you would wish it. There are hot lakes and boiling mud which is very good for rheumatism. And there are the usual odors that go with them. There is deep sea fishing—swordfish for instance, which weigh from 200 to 1,000 pounds. You can choose your weight, I understand. There is trout fishing that is quite good. The average caught by several gentlemen last year was nine pounds—rainbow trout. We have duck and deer stalking; the English red deer and Scottish deer. Then there are the attractions of the southern Alps; winter sports all the year round. If you do happen to go in the winter there is good sport in the National Park. So far as the park is concerned it is closely connected with the Maori population, for it was given by an old Maori chief, as a memorial for those who died in the war. During the war he made the statement that he intended to make a present as soon as the war was over and he contributed about 100,000 acres which was the nucleus of the National Park.

I suppose our most valuable asset is our people. We are 99 per cent. British. There are as well Germans and Danes and French people and on every occasion they have been the first to come along when there has been trouble. They are good loyal citizens and we welcome to our shores anyone who is prepared to accept our constitution, stand by our laws and become peaceful citizens.

I don't think it is possible for New Zealand to increase her population at any extraordinary rate. We are not a manufacturing country although manufactures are growing and it is true that unless we have manufacturing we are not able to carry a very heavy population. We recognise that and are doing what we can to encourage people to come to town and set up manufacturing concerns even in a small way and we endeavor to give them every possible assistance because it rests upon our shoulders to develop the country and have a sufficient population to look after it.

Some say there will be another war. You never can tell. These things are very quickly forgotten sometimes and it is the duty of the different portions of the Empire to see that they get a good population, and when they have got it to increase the population by means of immigration, as far as practical, in order that they will be sufficient to protect it should trouble arise. We cannot expect to have vast areas of country unoccupied too long. There is a duty that rests on the shoulders of everyone.

I will conclude by saying a word about trade. All a Government can do is more or less to clear the way and remove obstacles that may exist. But the real responsibility rests with the people, who are responsible for trade—the merchants, industrialists, importers and exporters.

We hope we will be able shortly to make arrangements so that in the future our products will be better known here. We know you are doing a lot in New Zealand and we are very grateful for the way your people place their wares before us. We will have to do much the same sort of thing.

I would like to thank you Mr. President, and each one of you gentlemen for the very hearty reception you have given me. I am afraid my remarks have been somewhat short, but on the other hand I am not a long-talking gentleman—not yet. Probably I want some more experience. I know you are busy and all I can say is that I offer you New Zealand's greetings and shall be glad to take back your messages of encouragement and I hope that these messages will be the means of having a greater exchange of the personnel of the two countries. Nothing would please us better than to see your Premier, Mr. Ferguson, come along. Personally I don't think he can have much to do because he does not look tired. I should also like to see Mr. Malcolm come over. This interchange would have a most beneficial effect. We have the same ideas and ideals and we would see the opportunities that the local man cannot see. At any rate, it leads to one thing, a desire to build up and retain for ourselves the Empire of which we are so proud.