

16 June, 1911.]

TREATIES.

[10th Day.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER—*cont.*

the tip of my tongue, but I remember there are treaties with Argentina, Austria-Hungary, Bolivia, Columbia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and two or three others. Our trade with those nations is very insignificant, and we are not really affected by those treaties at all. If we gave a preference, for instance, to the United States, we might have to give it to those nations also ; but we have not any trade with them ; therefore, the matter is not one of any practical moment, but the existence of such a treaty might be a serious obstacle in any trade development that we contemplated in Canada, and therefore I think it is well we should pass this Resolution. The gist of the objection which is made here is, that if this is allowed this would destroy for good and all the principle of commercial unity. I do not know at the present time what principle of commercial unity exists, in view of the different tariffs of the Mother Country and the Dominions. The United Kingdom's own tariff is a Free-Trade tariff. All the other communities represented at this Board have not that fiscal policy. They have different fiscal policies, all based upon the principle of raising the revenue by Customs duties ; but no two tariffs in any of the Dominions represented at this Board agree ; every one is different from the other. All agree in principle, that is to say, that the revenue is to be collected by means of Customs duties, but they differ as to the articles on which duty is to be imposed. Now, when we recognise this primary fact that there is not absolute commercial unity but commercial diversity at this moment in the British Empire in so far as fiscal legislation is concerned, it is not difficult to follow the consequences of the Government in the United Kingdom making a treaty which suits its own views and its own requirements, but which will not suit the requirements of Australia, or of South Africa, or of New Zealand, or of Newfoundland, or Canada. Therefore, the principle is no longer at issue ; it has been conceded long ago, and it has been recognised that there should be that trade diversity or commercial diversity in the matter, not only of fiscal legislation, but the corollary of fiscal legislation — commercial treaties. I referred to it the other day. The matter is as plain as noonday. It is well known by everybody. The principle is now accepted by the United Kingdom, that whenever they negotiate a treaty they apply that treaty to the United Kingdom alone, and will not apply it to the self-governing Dominions except with their consent. His Majesty's Government to-day, when they negotiate a treaty, stipulate that it shall apply to the United Kingdom, but shall not apply to the self-governing Dominions, unless it is accepted by them. That has been the policy, not of this year nor last year, but it has been the universal policy followed upon every occasion for the last 15 years at least. Here is a very concrete example. We have had a treaty with Japan negotiated some 15 years ago. Canada accepted to come into that treaty. I do not think Australia did, nor New Zealand, nor any of the other Dominions except Canada. The treaty has been negotiated for the United Kingdom. It suited the policy of the United Kingdom. It so happened it suited our policy ; but it would not have suited New Zealand or Australia, and, therefore, they were not tempted to join in it, and would not join in it. The treaty has been denounced by Japan, and a new treaty has been negotiated which is altogether for the benefit and the advantage of the United Kingdom, and to that we do not object. It has new features which make it not acceptable to us in Canada, and His Majesty's Government therefore would not suggest that we should accept it ; on the contrary, they have left it to us whether we should come into the new treaty or not, and we have determined not to come in. That, therefore, shows that whether it is right or wrong — and I think it is all right in the circumstances of the British Empire such as they are to-day — this diversity should be acknowledged. It is acknowledged in fiscal legislation, and it is acknowledged in the consequences of fiscal legislation in all the new treaties that are negotiated. If we find that there is a bar to our development in the old treaties, why should not the old treaties be treated as the new treaties are ? So far as I understand this principle is acceptable to His Majesty's Government. Therefore it seems to me that instead of making for separation, as is suggested in some quarters, on the contrary it makes for closer union in this : that they recognise there are differences of opinion between the different parts of the British Empire, which had better be recognised in fact as they exist. In insisting upon this