

Now, Mr. President, I have said that I think we have a great opportunity at present in developing the resources of the Empire. But necessity is also laid on us and on you to prosecute this development and to reconsider our old policies.

American Economic Policy necessitates Empire Development.

The assumption of the American debt seems to me to be an event which is bound to call for reconsideration of many of your old policies. The United States of America have not only erected a high tariff wall round their frontiers and debarred many of our products from going to her, but she now claims, and rightly claims, payment of a very large amount of money annually from this country.

The necessity under those circumstances is forced upon this country to develop the Empire as far as possible, to turn its attention to those portions of the Empire especially which are capable of great development and of producing those articles which in great quantity you still take from America. You, Mr. Chairman, have mentioned the matter of cotton. Cotton is a raw material which in largest quantity we still take from the United States. But that is not the only raw material which we take from her; she supplies us not only with cotton, but very largely with copper, and very largely with tobacco; in fact, she has supplied us, and still continues to supply us, with a very large number of different raw materials which the Empire is perfectly capable of producing if properly developed. Mr. Massey has spoken with very great force and conviction of what has been done in New Zealand.

Economic Possibilities of African Continent.

I wish to turn your attention for a moment to another side of the Empire—to the African Continent. The African Continent is, more than any other, a British continent. With the exception of certain important parts held by France and Belgium and Portugal, practically the whole African Continent is a portion of the British Empire. It is capable of producing practically everything which you want by way of raw material. It is said to contain the biggest copper-fields in the world. It is capable of producing all the cotton which this great country will need for its industries. It is certainly capable of producing most of the tobacco you want, and the development of this enormous African asset which belongs to the Empire is, I think, a task to which more than ever before you and we should have to turn attention in the years to come. There is a whole continent to develop. It contains all sorts of climate; it contains all sorts of resources in great abundance. It has been very largely neglected, and I am sure that if we go in for a settled policy of developing our great undeveloped African estate and producing those things which we are capable of producing we shall go far also in providing the means with which to pay off that enormous American liability which hangs like a millstone round your neck.

Skilled Labour and Capital required.

I speak from the African point of view, and the African point of view is a peculiar one in regard to a number of the questions which have been raised here to-day. Take the question of migration, of settlement. There again Africa has its own peculiar angle for the consideration of its problems. We have a very large unskilled native population which does the rough work necessary for the development of the continent, and when we come to discuss questions of settlement, so far as South Africa and other portions of Africa are concerned, we are at once met with the fact that the ordinary immigrant, unprovided with skill or capital, is not wanted in Africa. The work that he does in other continents is done in Africa by the native population. When we come, therefore, to deal with this question of settlement, so far as South Africa and the other portions of Africa are concerned, we have to bear in mind that the sort of immigrant we want in South Africa is different—a man of skill, a man of very special training, a man of the overseer type, a man of the skilled artisan type, or a man with a certain amount of capital, however small. That is the man we want, and not the ordinary unskilled labourer that the other portions of the British Empire claim in such large numbers for their rough work. What we want especially is capital. The resources are there, in South Africa and all over the continent in so far as it belongs to this country—the resources are there, but it requires capital for their exploitation, and I hope that during the course of this Conference, and in the discussions we may have outside this Conference, it may be possible to shape some general Imperial policy of developing that great asset which I am sure is going to repay, and amply repay, whatever capital the people of this country and the Government of this country may be prepared to put into it.

Additional British Preferences to Dominions will aid Empire Development.

With regard to preference, let me say this: I have said that we do not want to bargain. We gave, many years ago, in South Africa a preference to British products, and we claimed nothing in return. That has been our attitude, and that remains our attitude. We are not going to bargain, and you are going to be free agents in whatever you are going to do. But we appreciate very much what has already been done by you in the direction of preference, and I am sure that, without departing from the settled fiscal policy of this country of not imposing duties either on essential raw materials or essential foodstuffs, it is quite possible for you to give the Dominions such additional preference on a number of articles that there will be a tremendous development of Empire resources. You cannot fairly claim that the Dominions should in very large numbers take immigrants from these Islands and at the same time refuse to help the Dominions in taking the produce of the work of their hands. The two policies go hand-in-hand, and I am sure that without any inroad on your existing fiscal policy you can so shape your course and give such preferences in future as will very much facilitate this work of migration and of Empire development.