

great primary producing countries in the Empire cannot make their production pay they may gradually go out of production altogether. This would have an extremely serious effect upon Britain and upon the whole of the Empire. That Britain, for her own sake, will be compelled to do something with regard to this matter, quite apart from the development of the Empire, and purely with regard to her own food-supplies, appears to me to be becoming increasingly evident. Strangely enough, I had a cable to-day which, I think, throws a great amount of light upon the present position of the British food-supply. It reads as follows:—

“With the object of enhancing values cattle, Argentine Government has passed legislation fixing minimum price export beef. This affords striking illustration of what Great Britain may expect when dependent on foreign sources for supplies.”

The latter part is obviously the prejudiced opinion of the gentleman who sent the cablegram. But the point is certainly this taking that particular instance: that the present position in the meat trade is such that to a very considerable extent Australia will be driven out of meat-production unless some alteration takes place. If one of the meat-producers of the world inside the Empire disappears it is going to be more easily possible for foreign suppliers to do this sort of thing, and not at their own expense; they will certainly be doing it at the expense of Britain, which is the best market that is open to them.

For those reasons I certainly urge that this question has to be considered without prejudice and, if possible, by casting aside all our preconceived ideas in regard to these matters.

#### **Imperial Royal Commission suggested.**

Now, I have a practical proposal to put forward. It is this: The question of securing the British market for Empire and British agriculture is, to my mind, the outstanding question of the moment, and we have to try to do something in regard to it. The only effective method that I can see is to immediately appoint an Imperial Royal Commission to take into consideration without delay these questions and the schemes that I have put forward, and any others that may be advanced, with a view to making a recommendation to this Conference as to what action they consider would effect the objects that we have in mind. I understand, of course, that somebody will say that the time is too short, that we shall be sitting here only a month or perhaps five weeks, and that it could not be done in the time. I, personally, cannot see why it could not be done if we were quite determined to do it, and obtain a recommendation. There is no further inquiry necessary. Britain has had Royal Commissions which have inquired into almost everything. The whole of the facts are there; everything is known. All that is necessary is to appoint an Imperial Royal Commission, with a personnel that would command the confidence of the whole of the people of Britain and of the Dominions, to consider these schemes and to go into this question. It would only need to consider the information already available, and to make a recommendation to this Conference. That is the suggestion I make.

I offer very sincere apologies to the Conference for having spoken at such inordinate length, but I think you will realize that Australia regards this question as of paramount importance. Our obvious sincerity with regard to it may perhaps excuse us for the infliction of so long a speech upon you.

## **PUBLICITY.**

Among the first questions considered by the Conference was the extent and nature of the publicity to be given to its proceedings. The Conference decided that as much publicity as possible should be given in the course of its meetings, and that a summarized report of the general results of the deliberations of the Conference should be published as soon as possible after its termination. In order to ensure the fullest day-to-day publicity it was agreed to make arrangements similar to those made in connection with the Imperial Conference, and Mr. J. C. C. Davidson, C.H., C.B., M.P., Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was accordingly placed in general charge of the arrangements for publicity, and was asked to be present at the meetings of the Conference for this purpose.

## **AGENDA.**

A draft Agenda prepared by His Majesty's Government as a basis for discussion was submitted to the Conference at the commencement of its proceedings, and was adopted. The subjects on the Agenda were in general outline as follows:—

1. Oversea Settlement within the Empire.
2. Co-operation in Financial Assistance to Imperial Development.
3. Imperial Preference—
  - (1.) Tariff Preference.
  - (2.) Imperial Preference in Public Contracts.