

But if the whole subject were handled and discussed and a report submitted to this Conference upon the five propositions I have put up, or any more that may be submitted, I think we should be advanced to a position where we could usefully discuss it here, whereas I am rather afraid that if we just took it now and considered it we would not get very far.

Committee to Report only on Mr. Bruce's Last Three Proposals.

Sir Robert Sanders : Would it not be better to do what you, Mr. President, suggested—to refer the last three of these proposals to a more or less expert Committee for discussion? The first two were tariff proposals, which really raise the broad question of principle more than anything else. I do not think that a discussion by a Committee would add anything very material to our present knowledge of the subject. On the other hand, the three subsequent proposals were subsidies with a home price fixed, import licenses like the present hop-control, and stabilization. All those three are principles which want a good deal of explanation and working out, and I believe that if a Committee considered those three questions as an alternative to the tariff proposals it would be more useful than putting all five before the same Committee, which would have first to consider the big question of whether they were going for a tariff or whether they were going for anything else.

Mr. Massey : Are you referring to the proposals in connection with British agriculture?

Sir Robert Sanders : They refer both to British and Dominion agriculture.

Mr. Amery : Might I say that I would much rather like to support Sir Robert Sanders's suggestion, from this point of view: that the three latter subjects do require very careful investigation, not from the point of view of policy, but as to how far they would work practically. On the other hand, the preferential question is so important from the point of view of policy that I fancy that all the principal representatives would want to be present. If so, the Committee would in fact not be smaller than this body. Although the room is very full, I think the actual number of principal representatives at the Conference is not really so very large.

Mr. Burton : I go further than the First Lord upon this. It seems to me that no Committee of this body could settle the question of preference. That question is entirely one of policy. You know what you could propose to us, and we know. We have examined, and I take it you and your officials have examined very carefully, how far you are able to go in meeting us. We know what we can offer from our side. Those matters must be discussed at this table, and we can only settle them here. Detailed points on one or two of these matters, such as the First Lord and Sir Robert Sanders have referred to, may be threshed out by experts. You, Mr. Chairman, have made to us certain definite proposals on behalf of the British Government, which you say they are prepared to stand by. I think we should say now what our view is with regard to those matters, whether we accept them, what we think of them, and so forth, and tell you what we can do from our side. That can only be done at this table, and reference of matters of that sort to a Committee, especially a Committee of experts, cannot possibly carry us any further.

Mr. Amery : May I add a word again to what Mr. Burton has said? If on consideration of these other proposals or suggestions any of us are prepared to go further than when we started the Conference, that, least of all, is a matter which an expert Committee could decide for us. That is only a matter for the principals. I should be inclined to think that Mr. Burton is right.

The Chairman : Would that meet you, Mr. Bruce? Because if you take your last three points, if it is put as fairly as it is put by you, they require a good deal of amplification before we can consider them usefully. For example, how your Control Board is to work, how it is to be constituted; is it to be an English Control Board or is it to be an Imperial Control Board? It is necessary to know how it should operate. At what stage will it operate? By what principles would it be actuated? And so on. All that has an effect on such a question as whether it can work into the ordinary selling agencies of the markets. All these things could be worked out by experts so that we knew what it was we were asked to consider and what were the pros and cons of it. About the other thing, I must say I do feel very strongly that the whole value of this Conference, when you come to the big questions of principle, is that we should face up to them here. If I may say so, your own speech this morning was the very best example and proof of the truth of that.

Procedure agreed to by Mr. Bruce.

Mr. Bruce : I think I can quite agree that the last three proposals should be considered by a Committee, and when the Committee has gone into them and really threshed them out and considered all the details it should bring a report back here, and then the whole question of the alternative ways of securing markets can be considered. I am sorry I was not able to be here earlier; but may I ask one question? I gather that you have made quite definite proposals with regard to existing duties and preferences?

The Chairman : Yes, and with regard to certain new duties which we would have on.

Mr. Bruce : These proposals are extraordinarily welcome from our point of view, and we are very gratified that the British Government has seen its way to make them. I want to make this point quite clear: When I was speaking I tried to draw a very definite line between the position as it exists to-day, where you have duties and are granting a preference, and any action that may be taken with regard to them. What I mean is that it will not be sufficient for us merely to deal with the present position in respect of existing duties and preferences, but that there is something further to be considered, and I want to have that aspect of the question made clear. I had no idea of the matter being dealt with by a Committee: I thought it could be settled here and settled with reasonable promptitude. Am I right in that?