

depression from the United Kingdom, that what has been suggested by the papers is a very dangerous experiment. I do not want to say that I hope the people concerned will lose their money, but I do think that it would be very much better for the Empire as a whole if, instead of going to Russia for the purpose of development, they should assist in developing parts of the overseas Dominions. There is plenty of opportunity to do that. I am not suggesting that New Zealand can export wheat to any extent, because I am afraid the cost of production would be too heavy. We grow very big crops, but the financial balance to the producer is very small. But I know what Canada can do. I have crossed Canada so often that I know something about her producing-capacity, and I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that Canada could produce enough wheat for the whole Empire if it became necessary; and Australia could do it too, or, at all events, can increase the quantity it at present produces.

#### **Britain's Growing Market in New Zealand.**

The Prime Minister of Australia, referring to the purchases that are being made by the people of the Dominion from Britain, mentioned the fact, and I have no doubt it is correct, that in 1913 New Zealand purchased £10,000,000 worth of goods from Britain. This is approximately correct, but for the first six months only of the present year we purchased over £10,000,000 worth of goods from Britain. I know that business has increased enormously, and I do not need to say that we are going to do our best to place some very large orders for machinery and metal manufactures, and to take advantage of the arrangements of the British Government to encourage the purchase by the overseas Dominions of their supplies in the British markets, and thereby assist in lifting the depression and providing employment for those who are experiencing difficulty in finding it now.

#### **New Zealand's Preference Policy.**

Now, just another word or two about the principle of preference. We all know that Canada led the way in the principle of preference; I remember the legislation being agreed to perfectly well, and there are very few of us who disagreed with it at the time. I am very glad to see that the idea has developed; all the Empire has taken it up to a certain extent. New Zealand has increased her preferences enormously. She commenced in 1907 in a very small way. About forty articles or commodities were given preference, and now the number has risen to 425, and I am prepared to ask Parliament to go further if the British Government—and I am not making any bargain, because I am simply suggesting reciprocity—if the British Government will simply continue in what they propose to do—*i.e.*, to extend the preference as opportunity offers.

#### **The Changing Attitude of the British Public towards Imperial Preference.**

I said that I had some idea of the difficulties that will be met with later on, and I can see these difficulties in the distance. So far as I am able to judge I do not think there will be any difficulty in the British Parliament about the commodities which have been mentioned here this morning, but I believe that the British public are being educated up to the necessity of making the Empire a self-supporting Empire, and I think we should all work in that direction.

I have come across a number of public men in this country, men who take an interest in public affairs, men some of whom have been in the British Legislature at different times. A very influential man said to me, "At one time Free Trade was my religion, but I begin to see now where we are getting to, and I am no longer a Free-trader in the sense in which the word is used to-day." He holds the same opinion as I do, that what is called free trade in Britain is not free trade in the proper sense of the term. There are many such people. I have met them repeatedly. I have come across them at public meetings and in places of public resort; and I believe when the opportunity arrives that you will find a tremendous vote in favour of the principle which it is proposed to affirm in connection with these resolutions.

#### **The Empire should support British Industries.**

Let me emphasize the point I referred to just now. I do hope that the different countries of the Empire will do all they possibly can to place orders in the British markets for metal manufactures, or for any other form of manufactured goods, and as soon as possible, so as to employ some of these million and a quarter men who it is estimated are out of work. We can do a great deal of good by encouraging each other. I have not the slightest doubt that there is sufficient capital in Great Britain to employ the whole of these people if they were only satisfied that the country was going to get over its financial and commercial difficulties. I believe it will.

At a crisis like this we must have confidence in each other as British citizens. I am not speaking for the people of any other country. We must have confidence not only in the country where we happen to be located, but also in the Empire. If we can adopt that principle and continue in it I do not think it will be very long before we find the depression lifting. I think it is lifting now. I have heard many evil predictions during the last six weeks, but I hope they are not going to be verified. We can look round the Dominions and there is not one of them now suffering from depression. We have that to start with. Our neighbour, Australia, is prosperous; so also is Canada. I think South Africa is prosperous, and I know my own country is particularly prosperous, much more so than it was a year or eighteen months ago. The outlook is good, but we do not forget that Britain is our market. If anything went wrong with the British market and the purchasing-capacity of the British people was thereby reduced, then we are going to be affected, and, even looking at it from that point of view—and that is a selfish point of view, I admit—it is our duty to assist in lifting the depression.