

Possibilities of a Self-supporting Empire.

There is another point I have often emphasized, that anything in this way provides another tie of Empire. I look upon it that what we are doing now is only a commencement. There are tremendous possibilities in the way of a self-supporting Empire. I hope every public man will look at the question from the point of view of the Empire rather than from a strictly local aspect. We have got past that stage.

Amendment of Merchandise Marks Act.

There is this one other point, which I am not going to elaborate, because I understand it is going to be provided for by legislation. I refer to the necessity, at least the desirability, of an amendment of the Merchandise Marks Act, which would allow the public here, the consuming public, to know whether the goods they were purchasing are produced within the Empire or outside the Empire. That is practically all I am asking for.

The Chairman: Sir Robert Sanders says he has a statement to make in answer to that, and I think it would be convenient to take it after your speech.

The 1917 Resolution on Imperial Preference.

Mr. Massey: I am going to take a little credit for what is happening. When I came here to the Imperial Conference of 1917 Mr. Bonar Law, who has passed away and whose death we all regret, was leader of the House. He was an enthusiastic supporter of Empire preference, and, after consulting with him and one or two others, I drafted a motion and submitted it to the Conference, affirming the principle of Empire preference. It was referred to a Committee, representative of the different parties in the Government at that time—because, do not let us forget, it was what was called a Coalition Government or a National Government formed for the purpose of carrying on the war—and they gave it a great deal of attention. I can remember Lord Milner taking a very prominent part in connection with it as well as Mr. Bonar Law, but, at all events, it came back from the Committee to the Conference, where it was unanimously agreed to. I mentioned it the other day when taking part in the opening of a big sale of Empire produce which is going on this week in London at the Army and Navy Stores, and the point I made then and which I want to repeat now is if it was the proper thing for all parties to support Empire preference at that time, with the lessons of the war before their eyes, it is absolutely right now.

Improved Outlook for a Self-supporting Empire.

I am not so pessimistic as to believe we are going to have war next year, or in ten years, or anything of that sort, but I hope when it does come—and it may not come in this generation—I hope when it does come that the Empire will be better prepared in the way of foodstuffs and raw materials necessary for its citizens than it was at the commencement of the last war; and this is the way to do it. I know this is only comparatively a small thing, but it is an earnest of what is to follow, and I am glad to think, whether the idea was mine or not, the germ was there; it was laid up; it has been one of the reasons, at all events, leading up to the position to-day, and from the point of view of a self-supporting Empire I have no hesitation in saying the outlook is better than ever it was before. That is all I have to say.

The Chairman: I think it would be convenient, Sir Robert, if you were to make your statement.

Merchandise Marks Bill and "Empire Produce."

Sir Robert Sanders: My statement is in regard to the Merchandise Marks Bill. I may say that that Bill was introduced by a private member in the House of Commons early in the session which is at present going on, and it has passed through the Committee stage. It has now been arranged that the Government is to take up the Bill for the remaining stages, and it will come on in the session which begins next week. At the suggestion of the Prime Minister of New Zealand it was agreed that this question should be placed on the Agenda of the Imperial Economic Conference, and I wish to announce that in deference to the wishes of the Dominions it has been agreed that the words "Empire produce" and "foreign produce" should be used in the Bill instead of "imported produce" in order to distinguish between articles coming from the Dominions and articles coming from foreign countries. It has also been decided to insert in the Bill a general provision as to indication of origin applying to all the cases falling within the scope of the Bill. This general indication would be either an indication—whether by means of a direct statement or some recognized mark—of the country in which the articles are produced or a statement that the articles are Empire produce or foreign produce. This decision has already been communicated to the various Dominion Prime Ministers, and as I believe it will meet the principal criticism of the Bill on the part of the Dominions I presume it will not now be necessary to discuss this question at this Conference.

Mr. Massey: I would like to thank Sir Robert Sanders for the information he has given us with regard to what appears to me to be a very important matter. I will not discuss it now, but my object in bringing it up was that I wanted to give the consumers in this country the opportunity of discriminating—because they are just as patriotic as other people—between foreign produce, in which they have no interest, and produce and commodities from within the Empire—the goods of their own fellow-citizens. I think I know what most of them will do.

The Chairman: We are all very grateful to you for bringing it up, in the interests of all the Dominions as well as of your own.