

South Africa agrees with Findings of Food and Materials Committee.

Mr. Burton: I agree entirely with the finding of the Committee on Food and Materials. Mr. Bruce has said that the Committee could not possibly have had time to examine the matter fully. I do not see how any fuller examination could have led them to a different result. I am glad to hear that he disclaims responsibility himself for these proposals.

South Africa's Experiences of Trade Controls.

We have had plenty of experience of these attempts to put matters right by subsidies and restrictions and control and licenses and things of that sort, and I am perfectly certain that no solution of our difficulties is to be found along those lines. In South Africa we had quite a recent experience in regard to the control of imports of boots and shoes. It was a most highly unsatisfactory proceeding from beginning to end, but I am glad to say we have given it up now and meet our difficulties there by the imposition of a tariff.

Protection by Tariffs the only Real Solution.

I am inclined to think that there really is no alternative to protection by tariffs, if we except these arrangements being made amongst ourselves now by way of helping on trade. But Mr. Bruce seems to think that if these proposals were turned down—and I think it was inevitable that they should be turned down—there may be some other way of doing it. What other way of doing it is there? The tariff idea I understand, but the other thing I confess I do not understand. However, I entirely agree with the findings of that Committee, and, as I say, I do not see how they could have come to any other conclusion.

The South African Position : No Interference with British Fiscal Autonomy.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I just want to say with regard to preference generally that my attitude on behalf of South Africa remains what it was at first. We welcome what you propose to do in respect of the matters you have mentioned. As to going any further, the principle of reciprocity, as I told you, was advocated in South Africa many years ago, and is perfectly sound in itself. But while we welcome what you propose to do, we do stand upon this basis: that we claim the right in our Dominion to settle our own fiscal policy, and therefore we do not claim any right, whether by actual motion or even by "methods of education," to interfere with the right of the British people here to settle their own fiscal policy for themselves. That is our position in broad outline.

Appreciation of Great Britain's Further Preference Proposals.

Now, as to the details of your statement to-day, Mr. Chairman, I am very glad to hear your proposals with regard to fresh apples. That, I think, will be of material assistance to South Africa, where both in the Transvaal and in certain parts of the Cape Province there is a great deal of apple-growing going on, and which can undoubtedly be extended considerably. This proposed preference of yours will mean about 2s. 6d. preference on a bushel, I think, and it should go a long way to assist the South African producer to pay his freight and enable him to compete in respect of this article in your markets. That is quite a good thing from our point of view. I welcome also the proposal with regard to fruit-juices and honey. The honey may be a comparatively small matter now, but is capable of being expanded. With regard to wine, I shall have something to say about that to-morrow.

Now, I just want to mention one further point. Mr. Bruce expresses appreciation of the proposals you make of your volition. I am afraid, Mr. Chairman, that that attributes to us in the Dominions a shy modesty and backwardness that we are not exactly entitled to—I am afraid, not even Australia and New Zealand. In view of the speeches we have heard to-day we cannot make that claim. As a matter of fact, we have brought representations to the notice of your Government in various matters, and what I want to say is once more to express our appreciation of the fair and liberal way in which you have met the representations that have been made.

Appeal for Preference on Canned Crayfish.

There is one point of detail, and that is canned salmon. I have nothing to say against that. On the contrary, I welcome it, but may I point out to you that, whereas in South Africa we do not can salmon, we do carry on a very large and increasing business in the canning of crayfish. I think, last year, if I am not mistaken, we exported about a quarter of a million pounds' worth of this commodity. It used to be more appreciated in France than here, but now the market is shifting and there is a good deal of it coming here. If excellent salmon from Canada and elsewhere are entitled to have this preference, it seems only fair that preserved crayfish from South Africa should be included in the same category.

Principles on which Proposed Preferences based.

The Chairman: Let me take that point up with you now. I have gone into that. The tests we were inclined to lay down for ourselves in considering any of these propositions were: (1.) Is there a reasonable chance of the Dominions being able to provide a large volume of trade? (2.) Is it a trade which they have not already exclusively enjoyed? Because, obviously, if there is no risk of competition a duty would merely put up the price. Conversely, if they are doing the whole trade at present, and there are not competitors, we should only put up the price by putting on a duty.