

consumption. You were in serious trouble as to your supplies, and you also had great difficulty in limiting your consumption within the supplies that were available. The position is quite reversed now.

Problem of Markets not fully solved by Proposed Preferences.

In saying that I do not for one second wish to be understood to be an advocate of any of these alternatives, or of control in any way, but I do feel we are in difficulties by reason of the fact that the British Government, through the voice of the Prime Minister, has said that there is to be no tax upon meat or wheat. Well, if there is to be no tax upon meat or upon wheat—although the whole of the statement made to-day seemed to indicate that a tariff was infinitely preferable to any other method—and if we are also going to shut the door on other methods and not try to find whether there is not some way outside the tariff of giving effect to what we want, then we have to recognize that we have closed the door to a great extent to any real stride forward in Empire-development. I can only speak for Australia, but in regard to these great industries upon which we are mainly dependent we can only really go forward, we can only accelerate the pace of our development, if we can see some reasonable certainty of having a market for our products, and for that reason I want to make the position that I am taking up as clear as I possibly can.

I, of course, recognize that it is entirely a matter for the British Government to determine what they are going to do in Great Britain in regard to anything that is imported into this country, and it is, of course, in no sense any business of any of the Dominions to attempt to dictate or to do anything to try and put pressure upon any Government to take action in that direction. We certainly would resent it if anybody attempted to exert pressure on us, and we understand we cannot do so to anybody else. All that I have been trying to do is to show the problem we are faced with. The problem, as I see it, is that we must develop the Empire, so that we shall increase its purchasing-power, increase its man-power, and provide a better market in the future for Britain's manufactures than she has ever had in the past. I think that expresses the desire of Britain and of every part of the Empire, but it can only be achieved, and the Dominions can only go forward, if they have some assured market.

Need for Further Investigation of Problem.

It very possibly is the right course—I express no opinion about it—to say that we cannot have a duty upon meat or wheat in this country at this time, but if that is so I certainly do urge that we should never cease from examining every plan that may be put forward. We ought to employ the best brains in the country to try and find some alternate method to the straight-out tariff, which Australia understands and believes in. There is no real difficulty in the solution of this problem if it can once be established that you can give a certainty, or a reasonably certainty, to the Dominions of this market for their primary products without increasing the cost to the consumer in Great Britain.

Problem of the Australian Meat-market in Great Britain.

When one reads the reports of the Linlithgow Committee, when one considers the position, it seems that we must have become very bankrupt in statesmanship and also in commercial ability if it is not possible to find some way of achieving our objective. Take the position of the particular thing I was talking about before—namely, meat. We have established the fact that the average price of Australian frozen meat ex-store in London is 3½d. We produce a pound of beef, including the cost of raising it, probably of driving it great distances, getting it to the meat-works, killing it, handling it, putting it into a ship, and carrying it twelve thousand miles, and as a result of all that—after providing payment for everything, including freight and insurance—we get 3½d., and yet the meat costs 9d. when it is bought in a retail shop. Surely there must be some way of remedying the position without increasing the cost to the consumer in Great Britain. I am sorry to weary the Conference with this particular point, but it is vital beyond words to Australia, and, I believe, to the whole Empire, that we should find some solution. I recognize that there are tremendous difficulties in the way of putting on a straight-out tariff upon these vital necessities of the people, and possibly it is a right decision to say that it will not be done, but if it is not going to be done, then it seems to me some other way must be found of arriving at our objective. I do not want to go at much further length into this question, but there is another point that I feel I must put and must stress, and it is this:—

Acceleration of Empire Production and Danger of Unemployment.

We are in the position now that we are inevitably, even if we do not make any great acceleration, going to get increased production from the Dominions, and if we really do accelerate it, it is going to be a vastly increased production; and we may find ourselves in the future in a position which—I do not think I shall be misunderstood if I say it—Britain finds herself in to-day with regard to her own population. Great industries have been built up in this country; the world has taken a turn in a certain direction; markets that were requisite to keep those great manufactures running have disappeared, with the result that there is no outlet for the production. Tens of thousands, or even millions, of men are out of employment, and a situation has grown up which is so intolerable that something must be done. The situation is of such a character that when one comes to consider what should be done, proposals can be made and can be considered seriously and can be possibly accepted which if they had been made a few years ago nobody would have even heeded, nobody would even have listened to; it would have been said that they were quite beyond the bounds of practical politics and were utterly impossible.