

But I feel that we may find ourselves in the same position with regard to Empire production. Things may get to such a point that we may see a crisis impending for the whole Empire, and we may suddenly be faced with the necessity of putting through some revolutionary proposals—always, of course, assuming that the interests of the whole Empire are one. If we found ourselves in a crisis, Britain would be prepared to do anything to try and relieve the pressure and find a way out.

Surely it is better to try and avoid that to-day by seeing if there is not some way we can find by which we shall be ensured that in the future, as this production comes to hand, there will be some market in which it is possible to dispose of it.

Effects on Empire Production of Revival of Trade with Russia.

Another side which I think I ought to stress is that there is going to be a revival in Russia. There are British financial arrangements being made by which the grain of Russia can be handled, and probably and presumably can be disposed of in this market. In the future this may be a very serious question for the Dominions, and for Britain herself and the whole of her agriculture; and I think we ought to see the danger ahead of us, and certainly see if there is not some way by which we can guard our interests, and not have to take extreme measures when something in the nature of a crisis arises.

The position in Russia is that it has the poorest standard of living of any country on the Continent. The whole of its grain-supplies are controlled by one interest and dealt with in any direction that interest chooses. Russia's production poured into the British market would mean that the British agriculturist and the Dominion agriculturist would be placed in a position where, with his standard of living and resultant natural cost of production, he simply could not live. Canada and Australia would have to reduce their production of wheat; and probably wheat-production would almost disappear in Great Britain. That surely is not a thing that we can contemplate very cheerfully, and if we can find some way to meet it, it will not mean inevitably that we cannot trade at all with Russia. We shall probably trade with Russia to a considerable extent, but Russia will not be the solution of the whole of Britain's difficulties in the way so many people suggest.

The trade that has been done with Russia in the past was nothing phenomenal; it was nothing that would really affect very materially the situation in Britain to-day. I would like to put on record the figures for 1913, which was prior to the war, when Russia was enjoying as great a prosperity as she has ever seen. In that year she purchased £18,102,683 of British goods, or 2s. 1d. a head. Of course, the Dominion trade is infinitely more valuable than that. Australia in the same year purchased £34,471,000, or £7 1s. 7d. a head; and New Zealand bought £10,833,265, or £10 6s. 4d. a head. I think you should remember those figures, because if the Russian trade is fostered it will probably very materially affect the purchasing-power of Australia, Canada, and all the other Dominions, and the effect on their purchasing-power will be very much more serious than if Britain did not absorb the whole of the Russian trade, which might be possible if we gave them an unlimited field in the market.

Necessity of ensuring to the Dominions a Market in Great Britain.

All this may possibly appear to be wandering a little from the subject we have before us, but I suggest it is not in the least so. The reason why I am mentioning it is to try and urge the absolute necessity of finding some way, and finding it quickly, by which we can, at all events, give a reasonable possibility of the Dominions having a market in Great Britain. What I want to try and stress above everything is that, even if it is Britain's considered and determined policy that there shall be no tariff upon wheat or meat, let us not on that account abandon our ideas or hopes that there is any possibility of doing anything at all. That is the particular point I want to stress.

Australia's Attitude.

I apologize, Sir Philip, for going at rather considerable length into this question, but there is only one other word I want to say. I want to make it very clear to this Conference that Australia at this moment is in no particular trouble. I am always apprehensive, because I am stressing these questions so much, that an impression will get abroad that Australia herself is in difficulties, and that I am here putting up a fight to try and grab something for Australia. Believe me, that is not the position at all. We are one of the fortunate countries which are in no particular trouble, and we can go on very comfortably. But we have to condition our development to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Our attitude in this is that we believe that our future lies inside the Empire, and we want to do whatever we can to promote the welfare and well-being of the Empire as a whole, believing that, if we do that, while helping the Empire we are also going to help ourselves to an even greater extent.

I want, if I may, to move two resolutions, at whatever may be the appropriate time, dealing with the question generally of the development of the Empire and the methods that should be adopted to that end. Perhaps it would be suitable if I read them now?

The Chairman: I think so.

Resolution moved.

Mr. Bruce: The resolutions as I have drafted them are as follows:—

(1.) That the greatest economic development of each of the several countries and territories composing the British Empire is to be found in the promotion of their mutual trade, and in the development of the resources of the British Empire as a whole.

(2.) That the further extension of the policy of Imperial preference which was inaugurated by Canada in 1897 and which was accepted in 1917 by all the Governments represented at the Imperial Conference offers the most effective means of achieving this end.