

THIRD REPORT.

At the meeting of the Imperial Economic Conference held on Friday, the 5th October, 1923, a resolution was passed instructing the Commercial Facilities Committee, in connection with paragraph (4) (B) of the Draft Agenda—viz., statistics—to consider and report to the Imperial Economic Conference what steps can be taken in the light of the report of the British Empire Statistical Conference, 1920, and of subsequent experience, to improve trade statistics published by His Majesty's Government in order to increase their value from the point of view of the development of inter-Imperial trade.

The Committee propose that the following resolution (No. VIII—Resolutions I VII, dealing with other matters, having been included in their First and Second Reports) should be submitted for adoption by a plenary meeting of the Imperial Economic Conference :—

RESOLUTION VIII.

The Conference, recognizing the importance of rendering the trade statistics published by the Government of the United Kingdom as valuable as possible with reference to the development of inter-Imperial trade, recommends that the United Kingdom Board of Trade, after reviewing the statistics in question from this point of view, should draw up a detailed scheme and submit it to the Governments of the several parts of the Empire for their consideration.

With regard to the establishment in this connection of an Imperial Advisory Committee which was proposed by His Majesty's Government for discussion, the majority of the Commercial Facilities Committee were in favour of adding the following to the above resolution :—

In the preparation of the scheme referred to and in any further questions that may arise in relation to Imperial trade statistics, the Board of Trade should have the advantage of the considered and combined views of the users of Imperial trade statistics, and to this end should consult with an Advisory Committee generally representative of trade interests and nominated by the several Governments concerned.

The representatives of the Dominion of Canada on the Commercial Facilities Committee, however, explained that their Government could not support such an addition to the resolution, as they could see no advantage in the setting-up of such a Committee, and, indeed, apprehended that it might exercise an influence detrimental to the expeditious carrying-out of the proposal contained in Resolution VIII (as set out above), by hampering the establishment and maintenance of close contact between the Dominion Statistical Offices and the Statistical Officers of United Kingdom Departments. The representatives of Canada further stated that in the event of the establishment of such a Committee the Dominion Government would not wish to be represented thereon.

The New Zealand representatives explained that they were instructed to state that the New Zealand Government did not favour the establishment of an Advisory Committee on the lines proposed.

The Committee regret that they have not been able to reach a unanimous decision on this subject. They desire, however, to place on record that their failure to agree on the recommendation of an Advisory Committee does not imply that any member of the Committee would wish in any way to limit the right of the Board of Trade of the United Kingdom to establish whatever machinery they may think desirable or to consult whatever interests they may wish, either in regard to the preparation by them of the detailed scheme referred to in Resolution VIII, or for their own guidance in other statistical questions.

Signed on behalf of the Committee.

25th October, 1923.

S. J. CHAPMAN, Chairman.

IMPERIAL COMMUNICATIONS.

The questions before the Conference under this heading fell into three main divisions : (1) Shipping communications, (2) air communications, and (3) cables and wireless. As regards shipping communications, the Conference decided at an early stage of their proceedings that the most convenient procedure would be to invite Sir Halford Mackinder, the Chairman of the Imperial Shipping Committee, to make a statement which would cover the various matters arising out of the reports of that Committee, as well as any other questions of importance connected with shipping. Similarly, it was decided to invite the Secretary of State for Air to make a statement to the Conference on air communications, and to invite the Postmaster-General to address the Conference on the subject of Post Office communications (mail-services, cables, and wireless).

(1.) SHIPPING COMMUNICATIONS.

As regards shipping communications, the Conference had before them the various reports of the Imperial Shipping Committee—viz., the Interim and Final Reports on the Deferred Rebate System (Cmd. 1486 of 1921, and Cmd. 1802 of 1923); the Report on Rates of Freight in the New Zealand Trade (Cmd. 1564 of 1921); the Report on the Limitation of Shipowners' Liability by Clauses in Bills of Lading and on certain other Matters relating to Bills of Lading (Cmd. 1205 of 1921); the Report on the Functions and Constitution of a Permanent Imperial Body on Shipping Questions (Cmd. 1483