

Canada and the Imperial Economic Committee.

The work of the Imperial Economic Committee, appointed last year to consider the marketing in Great Britain of foodstuffs from the overseas Empire, and the proposals for expenditure by the Empire Marketing Board, were reviewed yesterday by Mr. Amery with characteristic enthusiasm. Reference was made to the position taken by Canada at the 1923 Conference upon the proposal to establish a permanent committee in London with practically fixed personnel to deal with a wide but undefined range of economic questions. We supported inquiry into every possible means of improving inter-Empire trade relations and developing our common economic interests; instead, however, of establishing a single and permanent committee for this purpose, we considered it preferable to appoint from time to time, as occasion required, *ad hoc* committees with specially fitted personnel. It was on the latter basis that the present Imperial Economic Committee on the Marketing of Empire Foodstuffs in Great Britain was eventually set up. Its reports upon the general situation, and on meat, fruit, and dairy products, are valuable analyses of the present situation and contain many suggestions for improving conditions of which advantage will doubtless soon be taken, most notably in legislation for the marketing of Empire produce.

On the same basis, it should be possible to organize an effective and helpful inquiry into the marketing of other foodstuffs than those already considered and the marketing of other commodities, including mine and forest products, and Canada would have pleasure in co-operating in such further inquiry.

Empire Marketing Board.

Reference has also been made to the establishment by the British Government of an Empire Marketing Board to administer a grant of £1,000,000 a year. As Mr. Amery has recalled to us, when the present Government of Great Britain felt itself precluded from carrying through certain new preferences on Dominion and colonial products which had been put forward at the Conference of 1923, it decided to provide a sum equivalent to the estimated value of these preferences for the furtherance in other ways of the marketing of overseas products in Britain, and later it was decided to bring the marketing of British produce as well within the scope of the grant. Canada has for a generation taken the position that the Mother-country was as fully entitled to self-government in determining its fiscal policy as any Dominion, and we still maintain that view. The expenditure of the large sum thus provided, mainly, as has been indicated, in publicity in Britain and in research, particularly on tropical and semi-tropical questions, should prove of unquestioned advantage to Empire production and marketing. It is, of course, for the Government and Parliament of Great Britain to decide whether either preference or this substitute policy is to be established or to be continued, and it is equally clear that the responsibility and direction of administration must rest with the representatives of the British taxpayers who provide the funds. On our part, I may say that the Canadian Government, recognizing the need of taking still further advantage of the great market of the British Isles, is at present considering various methods of providing assistance for the maintenance and extension of our exports to Britain.

It would, I submit, be a great mistake to limit our consideration to State action. The most striking development in marketing in recent years is the growth of self-help, through producers' co-operative marketing organizations, of which the great Western Canadian agricultural co-operative societies, and latterly the wheat pools, are perhaps the most far-reaching and significant.

Production of British Films.

I shall touch at this time on only one other point, that of film production. No one who realizes how widely and deeply the thought and life of the people can be affected by this new and tremendous factor in our recreation and education will underestimate the seriousness of the present situation, in which so small a proportion of the moving pictures exhibited in the British Commonwealth are produced within the Commonwealth. The possibilities of conscious and unconscious influence on the business and political and social outlook are tremendous. The art and industry of the moving picture have found at last the universal language, and no geographical bounds can be set to the appeal of an attractive film. I can see no reason, however, for assuming that the present inadequate representation of British and Dominion films will prove permanent. The initial advantage of the United States will lessen with time, as has been the case with other industries in older lands. The possibilities of utilizing the splendid scenic and historic backgrounds and trained actors of Britain, the unsurpassed opportunities afforded in the Dominions for films of outdoor life, the marked way in which the technique developed in any country is being made available in others, provide grounds for expecting that with energy and skill the present proportions of British and foreign films will soon be altered. As Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister has said, it is not desirable at this stage to explore the possible lines of action which might be taken to encourage the production of British films; the question is being referred to a sub-committee. In any consideration of State action, the division of jurisdiction between Federal and Provincial or State authorities is of course a factor in the situation in Canada, and I suppose in Australia. I need only add that I assume that, in any discussion or policy as to production of British films, we mean films produced in any part of the British Commonwealth.

I hope we shall have an opportunity at a later session of going more into concrete detail on some of the economic questions which are before us.

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Mr. Bruce: Prime Minister, to my mind and, I think, to the mind of the majority of the people of Australia the economic question and the question of promoting inter-Imperial trade are the most