

The Resolutions signed by the Delegates from New South Wales, Tasmania, and South Australia, enter into fuller details. They maintain the right of the Australian Legislatures to control their fiscal policy as between themselves, without interference on the part of the Imperial Government; they express the desire that the connection between this country and her Colonies in Australia may long continue; they deny that any treaty can be constitutionally made which treats those Colonies as foreign countries; they maintain that Foreign Governments ought not to be allowed to become parties to stipulations respecting the trade of one part of the Empire with another, whether by land or sea; they declare that, if the article in the Treaty with the Zollverein, referred to in my above-mentioned Despatch, were interpreted so as to prevent the Australian Colonies from imposing differential duties as between themselves and foreign countries, those Colonies would claim to be considered free from the obligation; and they refer to the agreement between New South Wales and Victoria as to border duties, as a precedent for reciprocal arrangements between the Colonies. Lastly, the delegates who sign these Resolutions, whilst they agree that efforts should be made in the Colonial Legislatures to provide for mutual freedom of trade, assert the right of the Colonies which they respectively represent, to impose such duties on imports from other places, not being differential, as each Colony may think fit.

The Memorandum by Mr. Vogel, expressing the views of the New Zealand Government, commences by an examination of the Acts which have been passed, giving to the British North American Colonies certain powers as to reciprocity with each other and with the United States. It then proceeds to discuss the question of treaty obligation; and on this point it observes, that "it is a matter which should create much satisfaction, on broad and enlightened national grounds, that the right of Her Majesty's Colonies to make between themselves arrangements of a federal or reciprocal nature, without conflicting with treaty agreements, has been recognized."

The New Zealand Government think "it would have been demoralizing to the young communities of Australasia had they been taught to believe that reciprocal tariff arrangements between the Colonies were inconsistent with Her Majesty's treaties with Foreign Powers, but that they could override the spirit of such treaties by the subterfuge or evasion of a Customs Union."

They suggest that the object of the Zollverein Treaty "seems to be, to prevent the Colonies making such reciprocal arrangements with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland as from time to time may be found desirable;" and they ask "why a foreign treaty should contain a provision tending to preclude the union of different parts of the Empire."

They urge that, in considering the subject, the question should not be confined to that of mere intercolonial arrangement.

"It may be for the interest of the Australian Colonies, just as much as it has been for that of the British American Colonies, that arrangements should be made to admit free articles from the United States or from some other country. It is desirable that the Secretary of State should define the position of the Australasian Colonies in this respect."

They conclude by pointing out that "Great Britain must logically do one of two things—either leave the Colonies unfettered discretion; or, if she is to regulate tariffs or reciprocal tariff arrangements, or to make treaties affecting the Colonies, give to the Colonies representation in matters affecting the Empire. In other words, she must apply in some shape to the Empire that federation which, as between the Colonies themselves, Her Majesty's Ministers constantly recommend. To urge the right of Great Britain to regulate these matters under present circumstances, is to urge that the interests of the Colonies should be dealt with in the absence of the requisite knowledge of their wants and requirements."

It is apparent at once that these propositions, taken together, go far beyond what was understood by Her Majesty's Government to be the original request; namely, that the Australasian Colonies should be permitted to conclude agreements amongst themselves, securing to each other reciprocal tariff advantages.