

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER : It is more or less related to it.

25 April 1907.

DECIMAL
SYSTEM.

Mr. DEAKIN : They are looped together by this report of 1859. The effect of that discussion in the House was——?

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER : To show on the whole a very adverse feeling to any change. The state of the law here at present is, as regards weights and measures, that it is optional; anybody, if they please, can carry on their transactions on the decimal nomenclature, or whatever you choose to call it, as regards weights and measures.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : In England itself?

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER : Yes; it is optional, but it is not compulsory, and some changes have been advocated by a considerable body of opinion, principally amongst the Chambers of Commerce. The advocates of the change have been advising that the change should be made, allowing an interval for the transformation from one system to the other, and the thing came to a head a few years ago in the House of Commons, when a Bill was brought in, and the thing was very thoroughly debated. I forget the exact figures.

Mr. RUNCIMAN : The Bill was lost by a large majority weeks ago.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER : A very considerable majority in this new House of Commons, which is pretty fresh from the country, and I thought that was probably a fair indication.

Mr. DEAKIN : "Fresh" in the sense you apply the word to horses.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER : In both senses, perhaps.

Dr. JAMESON : The option is very little used.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER : Very little.

Mr. RUNCIMAN : It is used in the engineering trades to some extent.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER : I think we had a very interesting debate about it which, perhaps, you may find worth reading—the report in "The Times" a few weeks ago. The strong opposition came from the cotton trade; I think they were the strongest of all.

Mr. RUNCIMAN : Yes, and the whole of the textile trades.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER : The textile trades as a whole, but the cotton trade in particular; they said it would involve a complete revision of the whole of their machinery as well as the old-established price-list which has been slowly compiled during 50 years.

Mr. RUNCIMAN : And the reconstruction of their looms?

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER : Yes, and, in fact, of the whole apparatus of production, which would be so expensive and involve