

said of preferential trade, "this is one of the best and one of the few means of drawing closer the bonds of unity, and increasing, as Sir Samuel Griffith phrased it very properly, the solidarity of the Empire." I went on to add: "But it is not for the Colonies to urge the adoption of this proposal as one which would be a benefit to them. It is really an Imperial matter, and until the head and heart of the Empire here"—meaning London, Britain—"become animated by the same feeling, and become convinced that this is a good means to adopt, our voices must be futile, the expression of our views may be considered premature." I simply placed it on record that, so far as we were concerned, we favoured "an Imperial tariff which would not only demonstrate the unity of the Empire, but assist to make it a potent reality." So even in 1887 we were face to face with the question which still confronts us to-day.

The next Conference, which met in 1894, in Canada, at Ottawa,* and which was referred to by one of the Canadian Ministers present as a "Trade Conference," took this question into very special consideration. Two resolutions were carried, either then or in 1897, the first recommending the denunciation at the earliest convenient time of any treaties which now hamper the commercial relations between Great Britain and her Colonies. That resolution was carried unanimously. The next was that in the hope of improving the trade relations between the Mother Country and the Colonies, the Premiers present should undertake to confer with their colleagues with a view to seeing whether such a result could be properly secured by a preference given by the Colonies for the protection of the United Kingdom.

Perhaps, as I have not the papers at hand, I may be pardoned for alluding here to a fellow proposal of a distinctive character which was made on the first occasion in 1887 by an exceedingly able representative from the Cape, Mr. Hofmeyr. He proposed, not mutual tariff concessions as between the Mother Country and the Self-governing Dominions, but—I think, for the first time, as far as I am aware—an addition of some small percentage (I think he suggested 2 per cent.) to every tariff of the Empire, either in the Mother Country or elsewhere, so as not to affect in the slightest degree the complete freedom of each portion of the Empire in framing its own tariff, Protectionist or Free Trade. He sought to make that levy upon foreign goods on entering the Empire, the sum derived to be devoted to Imperial purposes, partly to defence, Naval Defence in particular, and partly to assisting trade and commercial development. I do not wish to detain this Conference, and therefore hurriedly abbreviate from memory Mr. Hofmeyr's proposal, which he supported in a most striking and able speech. He attended, though in ill-health, the Canadian Conference of 1894, when he again alluded to the proposals which he had previously submitted, but I do not appear to have a reference to the page. We are very much indebted to Lord Elgin for the mass of material which he has placed at our disposal. I only wish it had been within my power to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it before we resumed these discussions. But the pressure upon us is such that even in making a note of this reference to Mr. Hofmeyr, I have evidently mis-stated the page. Now I have the papers. In 1894 the resolution was passed for reciprocity between the different Colonies and the Mother Country, and also between each other; and another resolution in which they asked for a denunciation of treaties. There were treaties at that time proposed between New Zealand and Canada, and New Zealand and South Australia, to which, however, no effect was given; but the making of such treaties was deliberately encouraged. Then it was that Mr. Hofmeyr, referring to his former proposal, expressed his deliberate judgment to this effect—without waiting to find the reference in order to quote the exact words—that it was highly necessary for the stability of the Empire and

Eighth Day.
30 April 1907.

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PREFERENTIAL
TRADE.
(Mr. Deakin.)

* See [C. 7553].