

Eighth Day.
30 April 1907.

PREFERENTIAL
TRADE.
(Mr. Deakin.)

advantages of the increase of trade within the Empire is an increase in the strength of the mercantile marine with its general relation to naval supremacy, and also in itself a great means of employment and source of national strength. Anything that multiplies the shipping of the Empire, any devices that increase its cable communications and postal facilities are all extremely valuable means of unity to be sought in themselves quite apart from preferential trade, but where preferential trade helps them, it is another argument for preferential trade to whatever extent it encourages them. Ships and cables, and rapid regular frequent communication in all forms appeal very strongly to the people of Australia, perhaps because they are, with New Zealand, the most remote outposts. We look forward with hope to increasing every means of inter-Imperial alliances in association with trade, and also independently of it by other and more direct means.

In the Australian attitude on this question, and I believe the attitude to be the same in all the other Dominions, these really are very considerable motives. Our people and the thoughtful all the world over recognise the immense advantage of the support they gain from each other as parts of this Empire. They cherish that union and desire to possess even stronger ties than exist at present. They realise that the modern world is full of critical occasions, especially for a great world power with enterprising rivals, and are very anxious that any means of making the Empire more distinctly self-dependent both in peace and war, should also be sought and used with a view to possible emergencies. So, from quite a variety of what you might consider at first sight outside considerations, they are powerfully drawn towards the proposal which is roughly embodied in the resolutions now submitted to the Conference. Peace, education, progress, our independence, and the maintenance of our social conditions, are all bound up with the capacity of the empire to hold its own even against hostilities. Years ago I had occasion to point out to those with whom I am associated in the Commonwealth, that we owed our opportunities and possibilities to the shelter of the position which we enjoyed under the flag, and to remind them that what we prize in the way of liberties, institutions, opportunities, racial relations, and power depended upon the maintenance of this Empire and its strong arm. Many of them share that view. That is the deepest self-interest we have in union—an interest which we share in common with you. The possibilities of the severance of this Empire, of its defeat and destruction, are too painful to contemplate, and, thank Heaven! in no prospect that we can see. But the mere suggestion of them and their possibilities makes us turn with even more intense anxiety towards every opportunity, small or large, which we can find for preparing ourselves against a day of trial and for securing what we hold dearer perhaps than life. To us it appears that henceforth the individual will become more and more dependent upon the social and national structure in which he finds a place. It makes all the difference whether you are grains of sand or the same grains compacted into solid rock. Anything that encourages the development of Imperial organisation, which, without limiting the self-governing powers of the several parts, or unduly trespassing on the individual liberty of the citizen, shall compact them together in co-operative relations for the discharge of social duties, political obligations, and industrial efforts—every possible increase of that co-operation—marks a higher stage in civilisation, giving greater opportunities to the individual and greater strength to the nation to which he belongs. That is a political gospel. The nation and the individual act and re-act upon each other, and in the British Empire we think we see the greatest future at present open to any people for that inter-action affording the fullest free play to individual energy and enterprise, and at the same time by willing consent uniting its peoples together for their great common ends of one national destiny.