

Ninth Day.
1 May 1907.

PREFERENTIAL
TRADE.
(Sir Joseph
Ward.)

newer one, the way in which it should be done is a matter upon which there may be difference of opinion, but I believe the desire of the whole of us is to achieve the same end, and it is by interchange of opinion on some matters of this character that we may be able to help each other to arrive at a practical solution, and it is that and that alone that I am anxious to bring before the Conference.

I am desirous of saying a few words about another question which has a very strong bearing upon the development of the trade of Great Britain with her Colonies. If you, Lord Elgin, went out to New Zealand to-day, and went into any town there you would find a representative of every important country in the world except Great Britain there. I am not talking of the Governors who so ably represent the British Government, especially on the diplomatic side, and upon matters concerning the carrying on of the Government of the self-governing country in relation to the old land, but I say if you go to New Zealand and to Australia—and no doubt the same remark applies to Canada, though I do not know it from my own experience—you will find all over the country in every large town in New Zealand that there is a Consul or Vice-Consul specially selected. You will find that those Consuls are full of valuable information on all important matters, and especially regarding trade. That they are ready to furnish that information to every person coming from their country. They help their Governments and their merchants by the dissemination of information, mail after mail, year in and year out, upon all aspects of trade, whether it be from Britain to our Colonies, or from our Colonies to Britain. They help the trader in our Colony to get any information he wants upon any aspect of that trade within the foreign territory. You cannot find a single representative of Great Britain in any of these self-governing British countries, so far as I know, to whom any person desiring to do trade with your manufacturers, or with your producers, or with your professional men, in the Old Country can go. I say that is a great blot on the system of the present commercial development and the present commercial position, and it is a great want which will be more felt in the future, when help is wanted, to extend and develop our commercial relationships with one another. The importance of it, from the point of view of a visitor to any of these countries, is so great, that in three out of five cases, if a man cannot get the information he wants, even regarding the trade of Great Britain itself, he goes to one of the consuls of another country and avails himself of his existence and of his system of collecting information for the purpose of doing what he desires. Within my own knowledge, and I say it advisedly, though I do not want to name the country or the people, within the last three years one of the great countries that is commercially an active rival of England, has by more than one of its emissaries travelled through our country for the purpose of getting information upon every conceivable kind of trade and other matters now being done with Britain that might be of use to the merchants of his own country.

Mr. LLOYD GEORGE : An emissary of the Government of the country—an official ?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I do not say that—I say emissaries—I know the actual facts—and I am a little guarded in saying it. I feel sure that this Conference will agree with me that it would be a derogation from the high and essentially dignified position of the Governor of any of our Colonies to be a medium for obtaining and furnishing information concerning great industrial communities whether on the producing side or the manufacturing side. It would be a most inconvenient method of obtaining such information, even if it were desirable, and I feel sure it cannot be desirable. As