

cargo steamers only. You are thus limiting its use to the wealthy, while the poor unfortunate tramps which go to and from our country have to travel the oceans of the world, and take ten days or a fortnight longer to carry our products to England. It may be regarded as presumption on my part to suggest this. I am in deadly earnest about it. I do not know the exact method by which it can be done, but I have a mortal hatred of the toll-bar. I have only met with one during the last ten years, and that, I am sorry to say, was the other day on the road to the Crystal Palace. I have an absolute hatred of the toll system, and if there ever was a system of toll put as a clog to the development of the trade of England and of the Colonies, to say nothing of the trade to the East, it is the continuance of high and almost prohibitive charges on vessels using the Suez Canal, and minimises the splendid effect of the masterstroke of the late Lord Beaconsfield, of the acquiring of the shares of the Suez Canal in the interests of the Empire itself. If we are not to stand still in the Old World and in the New World, I do say we ought to recognise the march of progress which is going on, and we ought not, from the sordid point of view, or from the point of view of the interest upon the shares, to allow this Canal to stand in the way of the Empire's progress. The country I represent would willingly do its share towards improving the present position of the Canal. If we had the right of going through the Suez Canal under the British flag free we would help towards paying the interest.

Ninth Day.
1 May 1907.
—
PREFERENTIAL
TRADE.
(Sir Joseph
Ward.)

Mr. ASQUITH : It is a very interesting proposal. Do you propose to free the Canal for all the world, or only for certain specified nations ?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I said for the nations concerned only; that is, those who own it.

Mr. ASQUITH : So that you would not allow the Germans to go through free of toll ?

Sir JOSEPH WARD : Not at the same rate. Why should we ? If you own a good thing, why give it to an opponent, who is trying to cut your throat every day in the week, upon even terms ? I fully admit it is a complicated question to deal with.

Mr. LLOYD GEORGE : I understand the Austrian Government does remit a portion of the dues to its own ships going through the Suez Canal.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : It is a very sensible proceeding on the part of the Austrian Government, I think.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : The tolls are paid by the Austrian Government ?

Mr. DEAKIN : It is another way of reaching the same end.

Sir JOSEPH WARD : I said it was a very important matter, and I approach it with some diffidence, because I recognise the difficulties surrounding it; but I want to take the opportunity because we are so anxious