

to carry out anything we are doing by one jump. It seems to me that 60 years ago, when Free Trade was established here, of course England could afford to do it. It was the very best thing she could do at the time; she was practically in the zenith of her fame at the time, and wanted her raw material and food in cheap.

Ninth Day.
1 May 1907.

PREFERENTIAL
TRADE.
(Dr. Jameson.)

Mr. ASQUITH : It was in her own interest.

Dr. JAMESON : It was in her own interest. She forgot how she had built up that position to allow her to afford Free Trade. The last 60 years—we can look back upon that time—perhaps has shown us that she did forget she was built up as a manufacturing nation by Protection, by navigation laws. Then we can see that during that 60 years other nations have adopted the same method that was successful in England. They have caught up to her, or many of them have actually caught up—at all events, they are going to if they have not. It seems to us if they do catch up, and she does not change her methods, she is handicapped against them. They have got the handicap, of course, of Free Trade as practised in England, but they have not adopted it. Our idea is, as Sir Joseph Ward said just now, that having preferential trade throughout the Empire, which is ultimately an ideal, but not practically so at present, might lead to Free Trade within the Empire, and then, as Mr. Deakin said, the enormous factor of the whole British Empire being Free Trade could compel modifications of the fiscal attitude of the rest of the world, and practically compel Free Trade throughout the world, and the recognition of individual effort everywhere. That is the general idea.

That being our idea of what preference may lead to, it is natural that we should do our utmost to influence the Imperial Government to see eye to eye with us on this subject. Already all the Colonies see eye to eye with each other. Therefore it seems to me, the case having been put by Mr. Deakin and Sir Joseph Ward, all that is left for us is to try and show, if we can, that it is not hopeless to get the Imperial Government to see eye to eye with us on this subject. I know we are met at the present time with the answer at once : “The nation has decided against you, and of course the Government must be bound by what the nation has said at the last election.” Even then I do not feel hopeless because looking back to the last 14 or 15 years one sees that governmental, and other opinions on this subject have considerably changed. I should quote for instance that after the 1894 Conference at Ottawa, Lord Ripon, the then Colonial Secretary, issued a memorandum* on that, giving a series of objections why Mr. Hofmeyr’s proposal, at is was brought forward at that time, could not be adopted. First, I think, he put that the Colonies themselves could never sacrifice their revenue to give preference. Well, they have all sacrificed their revenue, so that objection is gone. The next point was that any such preferential doctrine if it was carried out would interfere with existing British treaties with other nations, to the detriment of Great Britain. I believe the ones alluded to at that time were Belgium and Germany. Those treaties have been denounced, and I believe with no detriment to Great Britain. The third objection was that possibly you might have specific tariffs between the United Kingdom and the Colonies, but it would be so difficult to carry it out that it had better be dropped. I think that was very weak, surely it might be attempted, and you could not say specific tariffs were impossible until a commission had sat and inquired into the matter to see whether they were or not. It is a much bigger thing with regard to the United Kingdom, but here we have in tabulated form specific tariffs that are at work now between South Africa and Canada, Australia, and New Zealand respectively—a whole body of them—which makes a considerable difference I am sure in the trade between those

* See [C.7824].