

Dr. SMARTT: Prints especially, those cheap designs of prints with colouring and everything of that sort. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has said, and to be sure it is very depressing to us to hear it, that the people of this country for three years have had the case of preferential tariffs put before them in the most admirable manner, but nevertheless they had unmistakably and unalterably made up their minds. I am very sorry to hear it. Personally I do not believe that it really and truly describes the situation, because I think anybody who looks round here will acknowledge that there is a very strong undercurrent among the people of Great Britain in the direction of recognising that tariffs must be treated scientifically like everything else, and that there are periods of time when you must revise everything you have done in the past, and see what is necessary to be done in the future, and I hope that that is the spirit in which the present Government will look into the whole situation.

With regard to the statements which have been made as to the amount of Colonial goods, especially raw products, going to foreign countries, I must say, Lord Elgin, that I cannot view that with the same equanimity with which the representative of India or the Chancellor of the Exchequer viewed it, because what does it mean? The Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to the wealth of London; he referred to London being the clearing-house of the world, but surely your returns show that London's pre-eminence is day by day and year by year becoming undermined. Surely anybody that has any knowledge of the wool industry in the Dependencies knows that, year by year and day by day, that industry which formerly ramified in London is gradually leaving the London market, and is being sold direct on the various markets of Europe. You may say that is necessary, that it reduces the cost of the raw material, but surely when Sir James Mackay and the Chancellor say that the countries that are supplying these articles are still getting more largely goods from the foreign countries in payment, I would say at once, would it not be better if by some mutual understanding we should see that that wool is worked by the looms of Bradford, and that the goods made from that wool are sent to the Colonies from the looms of Bradford, and not sent to the Colonies from German or other manufactories? This is the reason why we desire to ask you fully to consider this question, because there is no doubt that in the Colonies we see day by day that we are receiving more foreign supplies, and it is because those of us especially who feel the deepest sentiments of attachment to the Empire realise that without preferential trade it will be impossible to prevent that drift of trade which is taking place that we so strongly urge the Imperial Government carefully, dispassionately, and absolutely disassociated from political considerations, to reconsider the whole situation.

With regard to food: I can thoroughly understand the feeling of a large section of the people of Great Britain who hesitate to do anything that might be said to increase the cost of living, but have the Government of Great Britain, or have the people of Great Britain ever considered what their position would be in the case of a great European war? We are always told that while the Navy holds the seas England will be able to feed herself; but supposing you had a great European war, and you had a combination of great wheat-producing countries against you, and by your policy you refused to encourage Canada, Australia, and other portions of the Empire—with their enormous resources—the command of the seas would be useless if the countries who grow wheat were banded against you and would not ship that wheat to feed your starving population. Surely that is worthy of consideration on the part of an Empire whose existence in a period of war depends on being able to feed her people.

Tenth Day.
2 May 1907.

—
PREFERENTIAL
TRADE.