

Twelfth Day.
7 May 1907.

PREFERENTIAL
TRADE.

(Mr. Deakin.)

met by fresh adaptations from time to time. Then, if I may be pardoned for saying so, it did appear to me to be somewhat inconsistent, that Mr. Churchill's argument against preference was based first of all upon an assumption that the duties, or taxes as he prefers to call them, which may be imposed are to come up for review, and are to be the subject of criticism every year. Yet at a later period of his address he referred to any reciprocity arrived at as being embodied in a treaty. This, I should have thought the only practicable means of dealing with this subject. I cannot imagine a reciprocity which would be shifting on one side or the other or on both year by year, and which would thus come up for yearly re-discussion.

Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL: It is not only a question of Parliamentary procedure. The procedure in Parliament embodies the rights which the Commons of England have won over a thousand years of constitutional struggles, and they are rights which can be asserted, and there is no right more fundamental or more jealously held than the right of criticism of taxation, and I cannot believe that that right would ever be parted from by the House of Commons in whole or in part. That was my point.

Mr. DEAKIN: That was one of the points, but if any reciprocity is to be arranged at all, it must be arranged by a treaty, for three or five years, as both parties might agree. The assent of the British Parliament once given to such an arrangement it certainly could not come under direct review in an effective way until the expiration of that period whatever it was.

Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL: It would be subject to criticism, but it would be irremovable.

Mr. DEAKIN: Anything is subject to criticism; but it would not be terminable except by mutual consent or at a definite period, and certainly it would not encourage criticism more than the Budget, as a whole, does. There would be a tendency to pull the new plant up by the roots to see if it was growing, but that occurs in regard to the thousand-and-one or rather the ten thousand and many different things affected by or affecting the finances of the country. Criticism we must always have, and I am sure the Under-Secretary of State would not be associated with any proposal to limit that criticism. His argument that these proposals, because they are financial, invite criticism, applies to the whole scale of the operations of the Empire. While this Empire continues to grow, its figures and finances will continue to grow. That gives a greater field for criticism or review, but I do not suppose anybody wishes to check the growth of the Empire in order to avoid that criticism. Consequently, that mutual arrangements for mutual benefit are to be deprecated, because they afford temptation to critics and possible friction, is to apply an argument which no one will attempt to push to its logical conclusion. It is a fair debating point to make—but I must relinquish comments of a personal character, as Mr. Churchill has had to leave—that it suggests the indulgence of a riotous imagination when we find the Under-Secretary pointing to the natural, the ordinary, the inevitable proceedings in every Legislature as grounds for rejecting a new development of policy, because it must involve a clashing of interests, and the annual review of its incidence by Parliament. Is our party system to destroy everything except itself? Are we to put aside great projects because they are debateable, or close the Empire to avoid friction in the House of Commons? We cannot move without friction, nor live without differences of opinion. We cannot advance without the clash of opposing interests. Every development of self-government, and every growth of our industrial