

CHAIRMAN : We also cannot accept that resolution ; but the resolution that we would desire to put before the Conference is in accord, I think, with the general tenour of Sir Wilfrid Laurier's remarks, and it is to this effect : " That this Conference, recognising the importance of promoting greater freedom and fuller development of commercial intercourse within the Empire, believes that these objects may be best secured by leaving to each part of the Empire liberty of action in selecting the most suitable means of attaining them, having regard to its own special conditions and requirements." That is the resolution which His Majesty's Government would desire to put as summing up this discussion.

I do not know how I am to deal with the further resolutions before the Conference from New Zealand and the Cape, but I suppose it would be, at any rate, desirable for the Conference to settle these that are now submitted by Sir Wilfrid Laurier with the addition which I propose first, and if there is anything else which has to be added the other Colonies will then mention it.

Mr. DEAKIN : Let me simplify matters by saying that in order to obtain what, I hope, will be unanimity, I have no objection to accepting the proposal No. 4 of the Conference of 1902, instead of the new proposition. We put it in other words for the purpose of separating the fiscal relations between the Dominions themselves and the relations with the United Kingdom more distinctly. I accept that proposal, and if Sir Wilfrid Laurier moves the whole of the resolution, shall be happy to support it.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : I move the resolution of 1902 and Mr Deakin accepts the fourth resolution in preference to his own for the sake of unanimity. With regard to the resolution moved by Australia : " That it is desirable that the preferential treatment accorded by the Colonies to the products and manufactures of the United Kingdom be also granted to the products and manufactures of other self-governing Colonies," I say that I think the Chairman's idea an excellent one and I am ready to support it. I think it might be the substance of another resolution, and not this one. Therefore, so far as I am concerned, I propose to adhere to the resolution I have moved. The point raised by Lord Elgin, I think, is well covered in the last words of the fourth resolution : " That the Prime Ministers of the Colonies respectfully urge on His Majesty's Government the expediency of granting in the United Kingdom preferential treatment to the products and manufactures of the Colonies, either by exemption from or reduction of duties now or hereafter imposed." We do not impose or wish to have the appearance of dictating, but if preferential duties are imposed we should have a preference in respect of them. The point raised by Lord Elgin is well covered by that.

CHAIRMAN : No. 4 would be met by new resolution.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER : I say resolution No. 4 covers the idea that you have in your mind, that is to say, each party should be left to determine for itself what is best. We are unanimous so far in this, but the British Government tell us, No, we are not prepared to admit the system of preference. We say, We do not ask you to admit it now. It is for you to decide, but whatever duties you do impose we ask for a preference upon them. That leaves you to determine hereafter whether you put new duties or not. That is really the subject between us, and it seems to me the resolution of 1902 substantially meets the objection you have at the present time. I re-affirm, and all the Colonies affirm here, that we have no intention at all of dictating that the Government should put new imposts which they do not want to, but if they do put them, we should have preference upon them.

Twelfth Day.
7 May 1907.

PREFERENTIAL
TRADE.