

10th Day.] COMMERCIAL RELATIONS AND BRITISH SHIPPING. [16 June, 1911.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER—*cont.*

self-governing Dominions has been by each one in its own direction, and there is very little attempt at uniformity, if uniformity is attainable. We passed some legislation ourselves in 1897 which has been followed by, and, I think, has been productive of, good results, when we gave a preferential tariff to the products of the Mother Country. On the other hand, in Canada, we have to complain, and have complained bitterly, of some legislation of the United Kingdom which peculiarly affects a very important Canadian trade—the cattle trade. Our cattle have been subjected for many years past—for over 20 years, if my memory fails me not—to an embargo which was based upon the statement then made that there was disease in the cattle of Canada, which we denied at the time without being able to make an impression. We have protested again and again that our cattle were not diseased. We have asked that that embargo should be removed, but we have failed every time. Our protests are as old as the legislation itself, but though presented year after year, they have not met with any response. We believe that if the true condition of things were known, and if it were found out that the basis upon which this prohibitive legislation was adopted was false, the result would be different from what it is, and we should have some good reason to hope that this impediment to a very important trade would be removed. These reasons, amongst others, induce me to believe that the first thing that we should do, if we are to attain the object which is sought by the Commonwealth of Australia of promoting fuller development of commercial intercourse with the Empire, and if the transport of manufactured goods in British shipping is to be achieved, is to have more information than we have upon this subject; and endeavour to obtain as accurate and full information as it is possible to have. Therefore, I would suggest to the Conference that the first thing to be done would be to have an inquiry into all these subjects and all the connected matters. Therefore, I beg to move the following Resolution, which I venture to place before the Conference:—

“That His Majesty should be approached with a view to the appointment of a Royal Commission representing the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Newfoundland, with a view of investigating and reporting upon the natural resources of each part of the Empire, represented at this Conference, the development attained and attainable, and the facilities for the production, manufacture, and distribution; the trade of each part with the others and with the outside world, the food and raw material requirements of each, and the sources thereof available. To what extent, if any, the trade between each of the different parts has been affected by existing legislation in each, either beneficially or otherwise.”

I have left in blank the number of the members of the Commission and the proportions to be given to the United Kingdom and the different Dominions. If we agree upon the principle, this is a matter which can be settled later on by mutual conversation at this board. What I am anxious to present at this moment is the advisability, I would almost say the necessity, before we proceed any further and before we separate, of our endeavouring to obtain all the information possible as to the trade conditions that exist now between the United Kingdom and the self-governing Dominions, not only with respect to the trade we have with the Mother Country, but the trade which there is with the different Dominions amongst themselves. By way of illustration I may say here that our relations in Canada with our brothers from Australia are not as satisfactory as they ought to be. We have been trying to get mutual preferential treatment, but we have not been able to do so, and I strongly hope that such a Commission as I have indicated would find it possible to come to the end which we have not been able to reach up to the present time.

Mr. HARCOURT: Gentlemen, I think Sir Wilfrid Laurier's motion to-day is only another step in advance in the path of what has been the governing note of this Conference—the path, not of Imperial concentration, but of Imperial co-operation; and on that ground, with a slight explanatory amendment, His Majesty's Government will see no difficulty in accepting Sir Wilfrid Laurier's proposal.

The last sentence which Sir Wilfrid Laurier read—“To what extent, if any, the trade between each of the different parts has been affected by existing legislation in