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Practical Work in Empire Building

CONTROL of its Raw Materials by the British Empire is Vital, Says Final Report of Dominions Royal Commission—Control of Minerals and Petroleum—Emigration, Ports, Shipping and Cables.

SOME of the principal recommendations in the final report of the Dominions Royal Commission, just issued, are summarized as follow: (1) It being vital that the Empire should become self-dependent for supplies of essential raw materials and commodities, a complete survey should be made of Empire production and requirements. (2) Create an Imperial Development Board to undertake this survey, and generally to carry on permanently the work of the Commission. (3) Local governments to carry on research in dominions, limiting the Imperial Institute's activities to India, the Crown colonies and protectorates. (4) Control and supervise emigration under a central emigration authority in the United Kingdom, assisted by consultative board of representatives of the dominions. (5) Make special efforts to increase emigration by women. (6) Arrange adequate capital, training, and assistance for ex-soldier settlers. (7) Extend and improve Imperial communications by deepening harbors, developing fast steamship services, regulating freights, extending and cheapening cables. (8) Improve and strengthen consular services and commercial intelligence. (9) Unification of legislation on trade marks, patents, and companies; establishment throughout the Empire of decimal coinage and metric weights and measures.

"It is vital," says the report, "that the Empire should, as far as possible, be placed in a position which would enable it to resist any pressure which a foreign power or group of powers could exercise in time of peace or war, in virtue of a control of raw materials and commodities essential to its well-being." Pending the results of the Development Board's investigations, it is suggested that the Imperial and Dominion governments should take steps to stimulate output and control supplies by: (a) Grant of bounties; (b) government purchase at a minimum price; (c) restriction of foreign control within the Empire; (d) restriction of government purchases to articles produced from Empire materials.

It is in regard to articles mainly produced and controlled in foreign countries that government action is most needed in order to promote economic independence, and it is suggested that the Development Board should investigate: (1) Measures to prevent waste in existing sources of supply; (2) possibilities of new sources of supply; (3) possibilities of substitutes where important commodities are not available within the Empire.

Among the facts brought out by evidence a few of the more important may be mentioned. The dominions

purchase almost as large a quantity of manufactured articles from foreign countries as from the United Kingdom, and their sales of raw materials to foreign countries (including re-exports from the United Kingdom) are larger than to the Mother Country. This points to the need for concerted action for the promotion of inter-Imperial trade. For example, no steps have yet been taken to ensure that the large amounts of capital advanced in the Mother Country for public works and similar objects in the self-governing dominions shall, within due limits, increase the opportunities of the manufacturers of the Empire. A new policy in this respect is urgent, and should be one of the first and most serious duties of the new British Trade Bank.

The commissioners urge the further stimulation of cattle-breeding, sheep-raising, and the keeping of pigs, not only in Great Britain and Ireland, but in the dominions, more particularly in Canada, where these industries are at present little developed, and in their opinion steps should be taken to encourage the shipment of pedigree stock from the United Kingdom to the dominions. At the present time the United Kingdom exports cattle and sheep for breeding to the Argentine Republic in larger quantities than to all the dominions put together.

Temporary measures of control will be required on the termination of the war in connection with the meat supply, etc., from the dominions. Owing to the depletion of live stock resulting from the war there will be a shortage of beef, mutton, butter, and cheese over a large part of the continent of Europe, and unless special action is taken there may be a risk that Australia and New Zealand supplies will be diverted. The commissioners believe, therefore, that it would be sound as a temporary measure to continue the policy of government control of refrigerated space in vessels trading to the United Kingdom from Australia and New Zealand.

Special action is called for where materials are produced in the Empire in sufficient quantities for its needs, but have hitherto been shipped to foreign countries for treatment or refining. Examples are zinc, tungsten ore, and monazite. Since the outbreak of war steps have been taken by the Imperial government to secure control of production in these cases, and the commissioners suggest that this policy should be developed and extended. They think it most desirable that the principle of State purchase of tungsten ores should be maintained for a number of years after the war.