

they should abandon entirely the protective duties, upon which now they rest very largely for the revenues which they collect. That is a proposal which is supported by the Cobden Club by extreme—I suppose I ought to say orthodox—free traders, and there is, no doubt, a great deal to be said for it. I do not deny that possibly it might be, for all concerned, the best solution. (Hear, hear.) At the same time, I am bound to point out that that would not bring about commercial union in the sense in which we have generally understood the word, because that would be in the direction of cosmopolitan union, but it would offer no peculiar advantage to the trade of the empire as such. But, to my mind, a much more fatal objection is the fact that, speaking generally, the colonies will not adopt this proposal. We must consider it, therefore, as counsel of perfection and if we are to wait until the colonies generally are converted to our views in regard to the advantage of free trade, let us recognize the fact that in that case we must postpone the hope of a commercial union to the Greek Kalends. (Laughter and hear, hear.) Gentlemen, free trade in this country has been developed, no doubt to the great advantage of this country for the period of half a century (hear, hear) but, in spite of that, it has made no converts. We do not find, and again I am speaking generally because I know there are exceptions, we do not find that there is any considerable approach to our system on the part of the colonies, and there is no approach at all to it on the part of foreign countries. (Hear, hear,

It is very remarkable that my hon. friend the Secretary of State, with this speech in his hand did not see any of this. I am reading from the speech just as it comes before me. It is very remarkable that my hon. friend's eye never happened to strike this part of the speech of the Hon. Mr. Chamberlain.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—I read the specific statement, not the sentimental parts.

Hon. Mr. FERGUSON—He is now dealing with specific propositions. There is no sentiment at all in what I have read. He had discussed one proposition which came from the orthodox school of free traders in England, and he dismissed it. He now comes to speak of another proposition, and that is the one which the colonies are making. He says :

I pass on then to the second proposal which has been laid before a similar congress to this, which found expression at the great congress held at Ottawa a year or two ago. This is a proposal which has been advocated with great force and eloquence by colonists and is the very reverse—in spirit—at any rate—to the proposal which I have just been considering. For whereas the first requires that the colonies should abandon their system in favour of ours, this proposal requires that we should abandon our system in favour of theirs; and it is in effect that, while the colonies should be left absolutely free to impose what protective duties they please both upon foreign countries and upon British commerce, that they should be required to make a small discrimination in favour of British trade in return for which we are expected to change our whole system and to impose

duties on food and on raw material (hear, hear.) Well, gentlemen, I express again my own opinion when I say there is not the slightest chance that within any reasonable time this country, or the parliament of this country, would adopt so one-sided an agreement. The foreign trade of this country is so large and the foreign trade of the colony is comparatively so small that the small preference given to us upon that foreign trade by the colonies would make so small a difference would be so small a benefit to the total volume of our trade that I do not believe the working classes of this country would consent to make a revolutionary change for what they would think to be an infinitesimal gain. (hear, hear) Well then, gentlemen, you will see that so far we have only arrived at a dead lock. We have a proposal by British free traders which is rejected by the colony and we have a proposal by colonial protectionists which is rejected by Great Britain. We have, therefore, if we are to make any progress at all.

My hon. friend the leader of the House says hear, hear, when he hears the statement that the British proposal is rejected by the colonial protectionists. Surely my hon. friend will not say that Canada is now represented by the protectionists, but my hon. friend must consent to put himself in the position of a colonial protectionist since he applauds the rejection of the British proposal. Mr. Chamberlain goes on to say :

We have, therefore, if we are to make any progress at all, to seek a third course, a course in which there shall be give and take on both sides, in which neither side will pedantically adhere to preconceived conclusions, in which the good of the whole shall subordinate the separate interests of the parts. I admit, that, if I understand it correctly, I find the germs of such a proposal in a resolution which is to be submitted to you on behalf of the Toronto Board of Trade.

Now, what was the resolution of the Toronto Board of Trade? We will thus get at what was meant by Mr. Chamberlain when he found what he thought was the germ of a practical proposition on which this great problem could be worked out. Here is what the Toronto Board of Trade says :

Resolved that in the opinion of this conference the advantage to be obtained by a closer union between the various parts of the British empire are so great as to justify an arrangement as nearly as possible of the nature of a Zollverein based upon principles of the freest exchange of commodities within the empire, consistent with the tariff requirements incidental to the maintenance of the local government of each kingdom, dominion, province or colony, now forming part of the British family of nations.

We have the distinct declaration of Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, that he saw the germs of a practical proposition in this resolution of the Toronto Board of Trade.

Hon. Mr. SCOTT—What became of the resolution? It had so poor a reception that it had to be withdrawn.