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CURRENT COMMENTS

The Meaning of Chamberlainism

THE new fiscal policy proposed by Mr. Chamberlain continues to hold public interest throughout the Empire. A definite campaign has been started in England, under the leadership of the late Colonial Secretary, and the lines along which it is to be fought are clearly marked. The main feature of this campaign—an agitation for Imperial preferential trade—has been already pointed out in these pages; but a concrete statement of Mr. Chamberlain's theories, as recently announced, will still better show the significance of the movement.

What is proposed is to meet the high protective tariffs of other countries by a readjustment of the British tariff as follows: A customs duty of six cents a bushel on wheat, with a corresponding tax on flour; a duty of five per cent. on meats (bacon excepted), and dairy products; and a tax of ten per cent. on manufactures. With such protection England will not only have a weapon with which to meet foreign trade attacks, but the way will be open to give a commercial preference to the colonies. The British consumer will have the duties on bread and meat made up to him by a remission of the present tax on tea and sugar, so that the cost of living will be no greater than before. He will pay a tax on certain foodstuffs from foreign countries, while the same products bought from British colonies will be admitted free. The suggested duty

on manufactured goods is out-and-out protectionism, whose purpose is to hold the home market for home-made goods; and the abolition of the food taxes can be made a lever by which to secure tariff reductions from other countries, thus enlarging the market for British manufactures.

Mr. Chamberlain's policy thus has the double object of cultivating closer relations with the colonies and compelling foreign countries to give more favorable treatment to Great Britain. The basis of his scheme is a food tax, but, as he points out, England already pays each year some £30,000,000 in duties on food imports, and the suggested tariff is really little more than a clever readjustment. There are undoubtedly many difficulties in the way of accepting the scheme, and Mr. Chamberlain has entered upon the fight of his life, but it seems almost equally clear that as a business man's remedy for a business situation his policy meets the needs of the Empire. Premier Balfour has nothing of half so definite a character with which to meet it, and little may be expected from the Duke of Devonshire as the leader of the "Free Food League."

Canada's Control of Her Own Markets

WHAT the Chamberlain policy means to Canada is of more vital concern to us than its effect upon the British workman. The first result would of course be an increase in the exports of wheat. Last year