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IMPERIAL CONFERENCE, 1937

EXPORT OF FOODSTUFFS IN TIME OF WAR FROM THE DOMINIONS AND INDIA

Memorandum by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom

1. In March, 1937, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom drew the attention of His Majesty's Governments in Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Union of South Africa and the Dominion of New Zealand to the recent establishment of the Food (Defence Plans) Department of the Board of Trade for the purpose of preparing plans for the control in the United Kingdom of the supply and distribution of food and feeding stuffs for animals in the event of war. A communication on the same lines has also been made to the Government of India. It was explained that preliminary discussions were taking place with food importers as to the methods to be adopted in an emergency to control imports of foodstuffs, and that it was contemplated that in the course of the defence discussions at the time of the Imperial Conference opportunity would be taken to discuss the co-ordination of measures for the control of supplies and shipment of foodstuffs in time of war. The following notes have been prepared as a basis for the proposed discussion.

2. The Food (Defence Plans) Department is preparing plans for controlling the supply, distribution and prices of all important foodstuffs, including feeding stuffs for animals, during a period of war. In the event of war, it will be a matter for decision by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom as to whether such plans should be brought into operation and when. It is, however, generally recognised that, if war-time control is to be effective, it must be as complete as possible. The broad principle, therefore, on which these defence plans are being prepared is the same as was actually followed in the last years of the Great War when importing and buying on private account were prohibited and importing firms operated as agents on Government account.

3. His Majesty's Governments in the Dominions and the Government of India might decide, in the absence of a free market in the United Kingdom, to control exports in the interests of their own producers and also so as to ensure that such exports should not reach enemy countries. It is hoped that during the Imperial Conference an opportunity will occur for a preliminary exchange of views between the representatives of the various Governments with a view to co-ordinating food control measures in time of war.

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