

favoured Customs basis than is accorded to the like products of foreign countries."*

The Imperial Government was not directly represented at this Conference, but, on receiving the copies of these resolutions, the Marquess of Ripon, then Secretary for the Colonies, sent to the several Colonial Governments a Memorandum setting forth in some detail the objections on behalf of Great Britain to the proposal that she should enter into any such fiscal rearrangement, and pointing out in particular that "the gain to the Colonies, whatever it might be, would, even at first, be altogether incommensurate with the loss to the Mother Country."†

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S EARLIER POLICY.

This did not, however, prevent Mr. Chamberlain from recognising in 1895 the value of this idea as a leverage for his wider project, and, addressing the Canada Club, in London, in March, 1896, he proclaimed the doctrine that Imperial union "can be most hopefully approached, in the first place, from its commercial side," and that "a true Zollverein for the Empire, a Free Trade established throughout the Empire, though it would involve the imposition of duties against foreign countries, might probably lead to a satisfactory arrangement, if the Colonies were on their part willing to consider it." At this time he rejected the notion of the preferential bond as totally impracticable. "That, while the Colonies should be left absolutely free to impose what protective duties they please both on foreign countries' and British produce, they should be required to make a small discrimination in favour of British trade, in return for which we should be expected to change our whole system and should impose duties on food and raw material. . . . My own opinion is that there is not the slightest chance that in any reasonable time this country would adopt so one-sided an arrangement. I do not believe that the working classes of this country would consent to

* C. 7829, page 2.

† C. 7524, page 5.