

C 67095

ON INTRODUCING PREFERENTIAL TRADE RESOLUTION  
TO THE VANCOUVER BOARD OF TRADE ON SEPTEMBER  
11TH MR. BELL-IRVING'S REMARKS WERE AS FOLLOWS:

The matter of Imperial Preferential Trade is of old standing in the Dominions. During the last twenty-five years probably no other subject has absorbed as much attention in the Motherland and in British Overseas Dominions.

Most of the gentlemen present may be fully conversant with the particulars but a short review of the earlier doings may nevertheless be in order.

Canada offered a preference in 1897 to any country fulfilling certain conditions of reciprocity, Great Britain being the only country which fulfilled these conditions. Germany protested that the Treaty with Britain of 1865 gave Germany privileges for equal treatment commercially. As this stood in the way of Canada carrying out her intention Canada asked that the Treaty be denounced. The Treaties with Belgium and Germany were finally denounced and came to an end on July 30th, 1898. The Canadian Parliament then passed an Act which confined preferential treatment to Great Britain and her Colonies with the exception of Canada. Canada protested that she was treating Germany the same as other countries outside of the Empire. Great Britain on being appealed to declared as she was a Free Trade Country she was unable to apply pressure to persuade Germany to alter her attitude. Canada then took action herself and in 1903 imposed a surtax of one-third on all imports from countries which treated her imports on less favourable terms than those of other countries. Subject to certain modifications that policy has remained the policy of the Canadian Government, independent of party, up to the present time. At the last session the preference was increased. For twenty-six years therefore the Canadian Government has favoured preferential trade, and for twenty years has actually given a substantial preference to the Mother Country. Despite Mr. Chamberlain's great efforts to convert the British public to Preferential Trade, Free Trade Policy in United Kingdom still holds, though there are strong and welcome indications that a change is coming.

During the War various resolutions were passed indicating the intention of making a change; the cry was "never again shall we be content to remain dependent on foreign countries for essential needs." Certain items of imports have been selected and given preferential treatment, but the whole matter has been inadequately dealt with and successive Imperial Governments have avoided the question of any general policy embodying preference. At successive Imperial Conferences and at various Congresses of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire the subject has been fully discussed and endorsed by the Dominions. In 1903 representatives of nearly every Board of Trade in Canada enthusiastically endorsed Preferential Trade at the Congress of Chambers of Commerce of the Empire in Montreal. For nearly twenty years the Tariff Reform League in England, and later the British Empire Development Union, have been actively educating public opinion and have gathered a great mass of statistics on the various resources of the Empire and how special industries would be affected.

On the 23rd of April last a great meeting was held at the Mansion House, London, presided over by the Lord Mayor, in support of the objects of the Empire Development Union, when the following resolution was unanimously passed:-

"That this Meeting of the Citizens of London desires to assure His Majesty's Government of its cordial support in any measures they make take along the lines of recent Imperial Conferences to draw the Empire closer together and promote trade between its different parts."

W.L. Mackenzie King Papers  
Memoranda & Notes

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