

Section 3.—The Imperial Economic Conference, 1932.¹

The year 1932 witnessed a notable event in the history of the Dominion—the holding of the Imperial Economic Conference in Ottawa from July 21 to Aug. 20. Thirty-eight years previously Ottawa had acted as host to an assembly of delegates from the British Empire. That, however, was a Colonial, not an Imperial Conference, and was both restricted in its powers and incomplete in its representation. The 1932 meeting in Ottawa may, in fact, be considered as the first Imperial Conference which has met outside the United Kingdom. It is, therefore, an important landmark in Imperial development.

The origin of the Conference may be found in the previous Imperial Conference of 1930. That Conference unanimously adopted the following Resolution:—

“I. The Imperial Conference records its belief that the further development of intra-Imperial markets is of the utmost importance to the various parts of the Commonwealth.

“II. Inasmuch as this Conference has not been able, within the time limit of its deliberations, to examine fully the various means by which intra-Imperial trade may best be maintained and extended, it is resolved that the Economic Section of the Conference be adjourned to meet at Ottawa on a date within the next twelve months to be mutually agreed upon, when that examination will be resumed with a view to adopting the means and methods most likely to achieve the common aim; provided that this reference is not to be construed as modifying the policy expressed on behalf of any of the Governments represented at this Conference.

“III. The agenda for the meeting referred to in the previous resolution will be agreed between the several Governments”.

At the concluding meeting of the 1930 Conference the Prime Minister of Canada, in accordance with the above Resolution, moved that the Economic Section of the Conference adjourn to Ottawa, to meet within the next twelve months at a date to be mutually agreed upon. This motion was carried unanimously.

To implement the above Resolution the Canadian Government entered into negotiations with the other Governments of the Empire. It was not possible to hold the proposed meeting within the twelve months specified in the Resolution, but toward the middle of January, 1932, the Canadian Government formally invited the Governments of the United Kingdom, the Irish Free State, the Union of South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India, Newfoundland and Southern Rhodesia to attend an Imperial Economic Conference at Ottawa in July, 1932. It was understood that this Conference would, in its organization and procedure, follow the well-established lines laid down at previous Imperial gatherings. The agenda, as finally agreed upon, was as follows:—

A. General Trade Questions.—

1. Examination of aspects of general trade and tariff policy and administration affecting Empire trade, including, *inter alia*, the following subjects:—
 - (a) Recognition of the principle of reciprocal tariff preferences within the Commonwealth;
 - (b) General application of existing and future tariff preferences within the Commonwealth;
 - (c) Extension to other parts of the Commonwealth of tariff advantages accorded foreign countries;
 - (d) Determination of percentage of “Empire Content” necessary to secure preferential tariff treatment;
 - (e) Export bounties and anti-dumping duties within the Commonwealth.

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