

## THE REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEES.

The conclusions and recommendations of the Conference based on these reports may be summarized as follows:—

*Resolutions Regarding Customs Administration.*—The Conference recommended that the aims to be kept in view should be:—

- (i) The avoidance of uncertainty as to the amount of duty which would be payable on the arrival of goods in the importing country;
- (ii) The reduction of friction and delay to a minimum;
- (iii) The provision of facilities for the expeditious and effective settlement of disputes relating to all matters affecting the application of the Customs Tariff;

and that any measures which Customs Administrations might take to safeguard themselves against evasion should be consistent with these principles.

*Statement Regarding Commercial Relations with Foreign Countries.*—The Conference considered two broad groups of questions affecting the commercial relations of the several members of the Commonwealth with foreign countries.

In the first place, the Conference discussed the general question of the relationship between intra-Commonwealth preferences and the most-favoured-nation clause in commercial treaties with foreign powers. Each Government will determine its particular policy in dealing with this matter, but the representatives of the various Governments on the Committee stated that it was their policy that no treaty obligations into which they might enter in the future should be allowed to interfere with any mutual preferences which Governments of the Commonwealth might decide to accord to each other, and that they would free themselves from existing treaties, if any, which might so interfere. They would, in fact, take all the steps necessary to implement and safeguard whatever preferences might be so granted.

In the second place, attention was drawn to recent tendencies in foreign countries to conclude regional agreements between themselves for the mutual according of preferences which were designed as being exclusive, and not to be extended to countries which were not parties to, or did not adhere to the agreements. On this point, there was a general agreement that foreign countries which had existing treaty obligations to grant most-favoured-nation treatment to the products of particular parts of the Commonwealth could not be allowed to override such obligations by regional agreements of the character in question.

The Conference recognized that the fact that rights are accorded by most-favoured-nation treatment did not preclude a foreign country from seeking the consent of the various Governments of the British Commonwealth to the waiver of their rights in particular cases, and that these Governments must be guided by consideration of their individual interests in deciding whether or not to meet the wishes of the foreign country concerned, so long, however, as the general principle that rights of this kind cannot be arbitrarily withdrawn was fully and carefully preserved.

The Conference, in addition, recommended that where two or more Commonwealth Governments shared a common interest in any proposal for the waiver of particular treaty rights, they should consult together with a view to arriving, in so far as possible, at a common policy.