

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

BRITISH IMPERIAL
PREFERENCE IN RELATION
TO AUSTRALIA

BY

REV. VINCENT F. CLEARY, M.A.

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS
AND SCIENCES OF THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY



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WASHINGTON, D. C.

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TO THE MOST REVEREND JAMES DUHIG, D.D.,
ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE,
ZEALOUS PROMOTER OF THE SPIRITUAL AND
TEMPORAL WELFARE OF A NOBLE PEOPLE.

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PREFACE

British Imperial preference, according to Sir William Ashley, consists in "the charging, by States belonging to the British empire, of lower import duties on goods coming from another State of the empire than on like goods coming from countries outside the empire, or in exempting empire goods from duty altogether."¹

To consider British Imperial preference in its relation to Australia, as is the purpose of this dissertation, the history of Imperial preference in general must be traced, at least in outline, and its history in Australia in particular must be reviewed. This is done in Chapters I and II.

Chapter III gives a sketch of the Imperial Economic Conference at Ottawa in 1932 in somewhat greater detail, because this Conference was of special interest and importance in the history of Imperial preference.

After this historical background the subject of the trend of Australian trade is discussed in Chapter IV. In a study of preference in relation to Australia, it is important to know on what countries Australia has depended in the past in her trade relations, and on what countries she now depends, to observe the trend of Australian trade, and to see how the various products have figured in that trade.

In Chapter V the results of preference on Australian trade are considered. The first part of the Chapter is devoted to the more general question of the effect of preferential tariffs on colonial trade, and the latter part deals with the effects of preference upon imports to Australia from the United Kingdom and on exports from Australia to the United Kingdom.

Chapter VI deals with Australia and Empire self-sufficiency. In this Chapter the economic self-sufficiency of the British Commonwealth of Nations is discussed, so that it may be decided if it is sound policy for Australia to aim at a greatly extended preferential system, for extended preference, in the end, means

¹Sir William John Ashley, "Imperial Preference," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (ed. 14; London and New York, 1929) XII, 122.

Empire self-sufficiency. Then the question of the abandoning of preference by Australia is considered. This question is fittingly discussed here, because such a policy would be a complete negation of a self-sufficient Empire. The last section of this Chapter discusses the acceptance by Australia of a limited preferential arrangement, that is, an arrangement intermediate between the two positions already considered in this Chapter. In the final Chapter—VII—the conclusions suggested by this study are presented in a brief manner.

From a background of historical, political and commercial considerations the dissertation treats of Imperial preference from the Australian point of view, in order to suggest what should be the future policy of Australia concerning preference. Most of the previous work done in this field has treated Australia's attitude towards preference only incidentally, and usually as an appendix to broader economic or tariff studies.

The writer is happy to acknowledge his indebtedness to Doctor Frank O'Hara for his University courses of the past three years. He is also grateful to his other Professors of the Catholic University—Monsignors E. A. Pace and J. A. Ryan, Doctors O'Grady, Rolbiecki, Smith, Walsh, Coutinho and Cooper. For the special work of the dissertation he wishes to express his thanks to Dr. O'Hara, who suggested and directed the work, and to Dr. Coutinho, Dr. Wright, Mr. J. A. Ball and Mrs. Frank O'Hara for their valued criticisms and help.

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