

THE GUARDIAN

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THE MORNING GUARDIAN

FRIDAY, MAY 20, 1903.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S ATTITUDE.

The Colonial Secretary's recent address in which he took a stand for preferential trade both ways between the United Kingdom and the Colonies has been variously interpreted. One view is that in his new departure he aims at the leadership of the Conservative party, and is playing to oust Mr. Balfour from that position. There is no doubt that Mr. Chamberlain is an ambitious man. And, as he is now in his sixty-seventh year, if he is to attain the foremost position in national affairs, it is quite time that he should decidedly enter himself for the race. But we do not see that it is necessary to attribute personal motives to Mr. Chamberlain, or to conjure up imaginary differences between him and his leader in order to account for his present attitude. Mr. Chamberlain is in many ways the strongest man in the Unionist party. He was himself in turn a Radical and a Liberal in succession in his younger days,

and has been twice a member of a Liberal Government. But after he left that party on the Home Rule question the way to reconciliation with his early associates seems cut off by an impassable gulf. The Liberal section of the Unionist party has not grown in strength, and the party membership is overwhelmingly Conservative. That majority is not likely to call Mr. Chamberlain to the leadership while any presentable Conservative leader is in sight. No man is more fully aware of these conditions than the Colonial Secretary himself. We do not therefore think that it is personal ambition or aspirations towards the leadership of the party that has led to his committal to the policy of preferential trade.

We think his attitude is best explained by an honest conviction that the changes he proposes would benefit the Empire. No one doubts Mr. Chamberlain's patriotism, and no Colonial Secretary before his time ever took so deep an interest in the Colonies. Canada has made advances in the way of trade preference to the Mother Country and other Colonies stand ready to follow in this line should the United Kingdom respond in like fashion. This tendency toward imperial unity Mr. Chamberlain feels ought to be encouraged. He sees also that unless some response in kind is made to the Colonies that even Canada might recede from her present position. That would be the entering wedge of disunion, leading on to possible dismemberment. Mr. Chamberlain sees that the time is a somewhat critical one in that regard, and so he takes occasion by the hand to move in the direction of a closer and more intimate union.

Most actions and attitudes are the result of mixed motives, and all party leaders feel the need of some noteworthy proposal to lay before the people at election times. Of late the by-elections have gone against the Government. Mr. Chamberlain has not been active in the matter of the Irish Land Bill for obvious reasons, he having incurred disfavor in Ireland from his pronounced opposition to Home Rule. He naturally feels that the Land Bill is not alone a sufficient program on which to appeal to the country, and hence he brings preferential trade to the front. Whether we have rightly or wrongly divined his motives, we are pleased with the stand the Colonial Secretary has taken. It has attracted great attention at home and abroad, and if anything can create a pronounced sentiment in Britain in favor of preferential trade within the Empire his judicious advocacy must prove a powerful incentive to that end.

It is gratifying to learn that the latest Montreal strike on the street railway has been declared off and the men have returned to work.

There will again be lively times in the Ontario Legislature when the Royal Commission's report is handed in. It is promised within an early period.

The British Columbia Government has been defeated as the result of the recent crisis, and an appeal to the people has been asked for. It will probably be granted, inasmuch as the present Opposition could not probably carry on the administration of affairs.

Yesterday was a genuine spring day and shows that the warm weather which has for some time past favored the western Provinces has at last reached us. We have had a cold, backward spring, with little growth of vegetation so far. Hereafter, should the favorable weather continue, we shall have rapid growth.

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