

Supply—Trade and Commerce

the Geneva agreement, to which my hon. friend referred this afternoon, which was brought about in 1947. When that was brought before the House of Commons in December of that year many of us hoped that the promotion of trade between nations would cease to be the subject of discrimination such as hampered and prevented successful trade in the past. Unfortunately those expectations have not been realized, at least in full measure, because the United States, in direct contravention of the trade agreements, established an import quota on certain commodities, including cheese, simply as a result of domestic pressure upon the government of that country. They are always subject to that kind of pressure. Then the United States took action to restrict imports of fats and oils and dairy products from this country in contravention of the agreement, and I venture to say—and I think the minister would confirm this—that we have lived up to every obligation we assumed under the Geneva agreements. I do not know of any obligation that we assumed that we have not fulfilled. Indeed, we fulfilled the agreement a year earlier than was entirely necessary, and in the fulfilment of the agreement automatically, on January 1, 1948, we did reimpose or raise some tariffs against the United Kingdom and against some of her goods with the result that, though it did not mean a very great deal, it did in fact diminish her ability to earn dollars in Canada.

Mr. Howe: But only at the request of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Coldwell: At the request of?

Mr. Howe: Yes. It allowed them to—

Mr. Coldwell: Only at the request of?

Mr. Howe: Of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Coldwell: I thought it was at the request of the United States. As I remember it, I thought the United States proposed that the United Kingdom—

Mr. Howe: It allowed the United Kingdom to make the trade with the United States that they wished to make, and we did not raise any barrier against England except at the request of England.

Mr. Coldwell: All right. But it does not alter the fact that we did put that agreement into effect on January 1, 1948; we did increase some tariffs against certain British goods on July 1 of that year; we did thereby diminish her earning capacity for dollars in this country. We have fulfilled every obligation. Our great neighbour to the south, the United States, assuming similar obligations, has not fulfilled her obligations to the extent that

[Mr. Coldwell.]

we in Canada have, and to some extent we have been the losers by the non-fulfilment of those obligations by the United States.

As I said, I am not going to pursue this further. There is another matter that I had intended to discuss this afternoon, but owing to the interruptions and so on it would take me a little longer than the time allotted to me permits.

Mr. Howe: Go ahead.

Mr. Coldwell: No; I never like to do that, Mr. Chairman, but I will deal with it on another occasion. However, I think that this parliament and the government must give every consideration possible to this vital problem of Canadian trade and commerce.

Mr. Blackmore: Mr. Chairman, I do not propose to speak extensively on this occasion in connection with the matter of trade and commerce, although I think there is no more vital, interesting and important subject for the house to discuss in the greatest detail. Unfortunately the two speakers from the opposition who have preceded me have indicated the kind of thing that ought to be done, but have avoided carefully any suggestion as to how it ought to be done.

I think that for a member of parliament, in times so critical as this, to spend his time trying to tell the minister what ought to be done—which even every 14-year-old boy in the country knows—and yet to refrain from giving him any idea as to how it ought to be done—which apparently the minister himself does not even in the slightest degree know—is to waste our collective time and the time of the country.

If I were disposed to go into this matter in any considerable detail now I would devote my attention to the problem of how to enable Great Britain to get Canadian dollars.

Mr. Coldwell: Go ahead; we will listen.

Mr. Blackmore: I shall have considerably more to say on the subject before we have finished the discussion of this important matter of trade and commerce. However, I should like much better to hear what others have to say, whether any members in the house have any suggestion as to the way out of the difficulty. If any member has such a suggestion, I will listen with great humility and attentiveness. But it ought to be borne in mind and elaborated upon that what was said by the hon. member for Rosetown-Biggar, just before he closed his remarks, is the all-important fact that confronts us in the world. It is the problem of what the United States is going to do.