

Mr. Fielding, then, as now, Minister of Finance, in the course of his budget statement referred to the previous abortive negotiations for preferential trade. The Canadian Government recognized the large opportunities that existed for the development of trade between Canada and the West Indies, whom they regarded as the natural customers of the Dominion. The West Indian colonies were then suffering from a very severe depression, so much so that their condition was a matter of serious concern to the people of the colonies and a grave problem for the Imperial Government. Mr. Fielding claimed that Canada had some Imperial responsibilities in the matter, and he stated that, with a desire to assist Her Majesty's Government in dealing with these problems, the Canadian Government had decided to extend the preferential tariff to the West Indies, without demanding any concessions in return.

The report proceeds further to say:

Under the preference thus granted, the produce of the West Indian colonies was entitled, on importation into Canada, to a reduction of 25 per cent on the import duty. It was at the same time provided that raw sugar, when imported from any British possession, could be entered at the British preferential tariff rates. It was further provided that refined sugar, to be entitled to the preference, must be manufactured wholly from raw sugar produced in the British possessions. Thus refined sugar imported into Canada from Great Britain, to be entitled to the preferential rates, must be manufactured from sugar grown in a British possession. The importance of this further provision has not been fully appreciated especially in the West Indies.

That was the beginning of our tariff and commercial relations with the West Indian Islands, which made possible the agreement with those islands. The sugar cane industry was practically dead, and its future was feared by the owners resident in Great Britain, and the Imperial Government were very much concerned as to the future conditions of the British West Indian Islands. The extension to them of this preferential treatment was largely done upon the ground that Canada was under some Imperial obligations in the matter; that it was their duty to relieve the Imperial Government of what appeared to be an approaching problem in respect to the West Indies by virtue of the decadence of the sugar cane industry. Therefore, without asking for anything in return, we extended the British preferential tariff to the British West Indies. Our commercial relations have since been closer. The appointment of the last Royal Commission which recommended some tariff arrangements was also one of the results. When that British preferential tariff was extended to the British West Indies, the hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce occupied a seat in this House; but he did not favour the application of the preferential tariff to the West Indies. In-

stead of that, in his place in the House of Commons, he opposed it and, so far as I know never expressed his approval of the same. The effect of the preferential tariff on the West Indies sugar industry was very marked; it was responsible for the revival of the sugar cane industry. I think I could almost make the statement, without fear of successful contradiction, that if it had not been for that preferential tariff, it is quite possible there would have been a much smaller sugar cane industry in the West Indies to-day. I think that view has been frequently entertained by many, competent to form an opinion. At least it was of tremendous value to the West Indies and made them favourably disposed to Canada and ultimately made possible the present agreement. Had hon. gentlemen had their way there would have been no preferential tariff and very likely no trade treaty such as we are now considering. The effect of this preferential tariff upon importations from the West Indies, particularly in the matter of sugar, can be seen by the manner in which our imports of sugar from these West Indian colonies have grown since that time. In 1899 the importations of sugar from the West Indies amounted to about £3,860, or about \$16,000. In the figures which have been presented to the House, in the form of a return asked for by myself, I find that the total exports of the principal products of the West Indian islands, which are parties to this agreement, amounted only to about \$26,500,000, of which sugar composed over \$12,000,000; and of that \$12,000,000 worth, Canada took \$6,786,000 worth. It is to be noted also that our total imports from the West Indies for 1911 amounted to a little over \$8,000,000 and nearly \$7,000,000 of this was sugar. So when the Minister of Trade and Commerce ventures to say that if it had not been for the defeat of the tariff agreement with the United States this agreement would not have been before this House to-day for consideration, I say he is making a statement which is absolutely untrue, absolutely unfounded and absolutely unworthy of himself. A tariff arrangement—

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member will excuse me, for a member of the House to say that another has made a statement absolutely unworthy of himself, is out of order according to my understanding of the English rulings on that subject.

Mr. FOSTER: I do not think he meant it.

Mr. MACLEAN: I will not occupy the time of the House, Mr. Speaker, debating whether the expression was unparliamentary or not. I hasten to withdraw the same, and express my great astonishment and surprise that the hon. gentleman should have made such a remark. I was proceed-