

of the reciprocity agreement. It is utterly impossible for any one to express a reasonable opinion on that agreement, from an economic point of view, without having such information. If the ministers who made the arrangement at Washington did not have this information, then they entered into the agreement without really knowing what they were doing. If, on the other hand, the government has this information, I care not in which department it is, then every member of this House is entitled to that information, and the answer which I have read is a very extraordinary answer for the government to give. The only inference we can draw from it is that the government think that every member of parliament should go and dig out this information for himself. We have a staff of clerks employed in the different departments of the government at great expense to this country; they do not belong to the Liberal party any more than to the Conservative party; and if this information is not in the government's possession, it should be obtained. The clerks are here for that purpose, and I submit that we are entitled to the information to enable us to make up our minds in a reasonable way on the very important question before this House.

I have here a book prepared by the tariff commission in the United Kingdom which gives a lot of statistics similar to those asked for in this return. I have also an official publication of the Senate of the United States, White Book No. 849, headed 'Reciprocity for Canada' in which are given a number of statistics regarding relative prices in the United States and Canada, and a great deal of other valuable information. Is this country so poor that information of a similar character cannot be provided for us in order that we may discuss this question intelligently and make up our minds on it in a reasonable way? The government either should have had this information in their possession, before entering into this arrangement, or they have been very derelict in their duty. If they have this information, why not give it to us? They should not have brought this agreement down without producing that information. Or if they have not got it, why can they not obtain it and lay it before the House?

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I could not catch at first the tenor of my hon. friend's observations, but as he went on I think his complaint was that a return ordered by this House had not been supplied by the Department of Trade and Commerce. As the minister of that department is not sitting here, it is impossible for me or any member of the government to give any information regarding the refusal of that department if it made any such refusal. The

matter is a new one, of which we have had no notice, but I shall take a note of my hon. friend's complaint and submit it to my hon. colleague.

Mr. PERLEY. What I submit is that we should not be compelled to resort to the newspapers or the libraries to obtain information which ought to be in the possession of the Department of Trade and Commerce. That department or some other surely must have had these figures before our ministers entered into this agreement, and if so they should be put into the possession of this House, and to tell us to hunt them up ourselves is not treating us with the consideration to which we are entitled.

Mr. LAKE. The Department of Trade and Commerce has given an answer which is not at all satisfactory to my hon. friend especially in a matter of such emergency. The plea that the matter is new and brought on without notice is no reason for not supplying the very necessary information asked for.

Mr. FOSTER. I think we would search the records in vain to find anywhere any such answer given to a demand for information on a matter of paramount importance as that given by the Department of Trade and Commerce to my hon. friend (Mr. Perley). That department has been in existence a considerable number of years, it should be manned by a competent staff and have access to all trade records just as much as any department in the United States or elsewhere. Yet when an order is given by this House for a return giving statistics absolutely necessary for a reasonable discussion of this proposed reciprocity agreement, we are told by the Deputy Minister of Trade and Commerce to go to the library, and look the thing up for ourselves.

Mr. STAPLES. I would like to ask the Minister of Customs (Mr. Paterson) if he had this information in his hands when he went to Washington and entered into this treaty. It seems to me that it was a very singular procedure on the part of a couple of our ministers to enter into an agreement such as this without being possessed of all such information as my hon. friend has moved for. Take for example the prices of wheat and barley. Does the minister know what was the average price of wheat at Minneapolis, say for the last ten years, and at Fort William? Did he know before entering into that agreement what was the average price of land in the maritime provinces as compared with its average price in the adjoining states? Did he know the average prices of cattle, hogs, &c., in both countries? It seems to me, from the information we have been able to