

THE NORTH ATLANTIC TRADING COMPANY—CONTRACT.

Mr. FOSTER. The Prime Minister will remember that last year, we, on this side pressed urgently for the order in council and contracts with reference to the North Atlantic Trading Company. The government at first was of the opinion that this should not be made public, but in the end they consented to have the papers brought down. On Wednesday, July 19, 1905, at the very end of the session, two orders in council and two contracts based upon the two orders in council were brought down. It is sessional paper 139, and at the beginning of this session it was given to me by the clerk of the House. I find a rather extraordinary feature in connection with it. There is the report to council made by the minister; the memorandum on August 19, 1904; the report of the committee approved on September 20, 1904, and the agreement based on that and approved by that order in council, dated November 28, 1904, and purporting to be:

Between His Majesty the King, represented herein by the Minister of the Interior, of the first part, and the North Atlantic Trading Company, of Amsterdam, Holland, a body corporate and politic hereinafter called the company, of the second part.

And after the different articles of agreement are set forth, it concludes in this way:

In witness whereof the corporate seal of the company has been affixed hereto and this agreement has been signed by the manager and secretary of the company, and has been signed and sealed by the Minister of the Interior on behalf of the government.

Then follows the signature 'Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior' for the first part, and 'The North Atlantic Trading Company' for the second part, with the signatures, or what I suppose to have been the signatures of the manager and the secretary of company torn off. Before it had been laid on the table of the House, it would appear that somebody tore off the signatures of one of the signing parties. This also is a copy and not the original, and as it solemnly purports to be signed by 'a body corporate and politic' and to have the corporate seal of the company affixed thereto, I want to ask the First Minister if he would be kind enough to bring down the original agreement with the full signatures and with the seal of the North Atlantic Trading Company, said to have been attached thereto.

Rt. Hon. Sir WILFRID LAURIER (Prime Minister). The request of my hon. friend is easily complied with. I heard the other day the statement made in this debate by the hon. member for Jacques Cartier (Mr. Monk) that the signatures had been torn off. I inquired from one of the officials of

the department how this was and he told me that he could give me no information further than that the copy of the contract had left the Department of the Interior. As to the original contract with the original signatures upon it, I cannot place it on the table of the House to-day, because this contract is in the hands of either the Agricultural Committee or the Public Accounts Committee and has been there for the last ten days.

Mr. FOSTER. Then if it is there it can be got; it has not come under our cognizance so far.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER: Oh, yes; I made special inquiry to-day about that and I saw an officer of the department and he told me the original contract was there.

Mr. FOSTER. Then we will be able to get it.

Hon. W. S. FIELDING (Minister of Finance). My hon. friend will remember that last year there was the same question about the giving of the names. I remember that the contract was handed to some hon. gentleman opposite,—as papers are sometimes handed across the House, confidentially. An objection was taken for the time being to presenting the names. I have a hazy recollection that the suggestion was offered that the contract might be left on the table with the names removed so as to meet the position which the government at that time took. I do not undertake to say that is exactly what happened, but I know that I myself showed a copy of the contract to one or two gentlemen opposite, I think to my hon. friend (Mr. Foster) and certainly to the leader of the opposition. I think the suggestion was offered that the House might have the document without the names, and that is probably the explanation of why the names do not appear on the document. I do not undertake to say that hon. gentlemen opposite consented to that, but I remember that it was not thought expedient by the government at that time to submit the names.

Mr. FOSTER. I have no disposition to dispute the impression of my hon. friend. I know that such a suggestion was made at first, but my impression is that it was objected to on this side of the House, and that we demanded to have the contract with the signatures in full. That was debated pro and con and at the last I understood that it was assented to that, that should be brought down and that that was the document that was to be brought down. I am not going to press the matter any further. There might be some mistake with reference to the signatures, some impression such as the Finance Minister (Mr. Fielding) has stated, although I did not understand it.