

tariff between the two countries, at all events, an improvement of the means of communication; for, as I have said, improved communication will probably go as far in improving the trade between the two countries as a reduction in the tariff.

Now, I have observed, from the returns laid upon the table, that my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Foster) is following along the lines laid down by his predecessor in endeavouring to improve the trade relations between Canada and Australia. The returns show that ever since 1900, at all events, the late government has been continually urging, so far as properly could be urged, upon the consideration of the Australian government the desirability of making some preferential trade arrangement between the two countries. So far, their efforts have not been successful. I shall not take up the time of the House by reading the returns, but will very briefly state the nature of the last communication on this subject by the late government and will also read the latest communication from the present government. Mr. Ross represents the Canadian government in Australia. I find that on November 7, 1910—just ten years after the late government entered upon negotiations—the Department of Trade and Commerce communicated with Mr. Ross as follows:

Instructed by Minister of Trade and Commerce direct you should inquire Australian government will they make any concession to the Canadian government if the duty is abolished on Australian mutton. Will they make any concession if duty is reduced 1½ cents? Instruction to observe that in either case such action would be opposed here.

And on February 9, 1910, Mr. Ross cabled:

In reply to your telegram of the 7th, have had an interview with Minister of Customs. In their opinion, think it a better course to pursue to exchange present preferential tariff early next session parliament in June without reference to mutton. Better postpone more extended preferential arrangement owing to the political situation. Our private opinion Australian government will not commit themselves definitely on account of the elections in April.

On the 6th August, 1910, the leader of the opposition, then the leader of the government, cabled Premier Fisher at Melbourne:

It has long been the wish of the Canadian government to have better trade relations with Australia. Ross, our agent, is authorized to negotiate, and I express hope that results satisfactory to both parties may be reached.

On the 8th August, 1910, Premier Fisher cabled the right hon. gentleman, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, as follows:

Mr. PUGSLEY.

In reply to your cable of the 7th, every effort will be made to facilitate the discussion of this matter with Ross, as I heartily reciprocate your wish that results satisfactory to our respective governments may be reached.

Nothing more was done during that year. We find that on the 16th December, 1910, Mr. Ross advised the department that there had been no further developments in reference to reciprocal trade between Canada and Australia, but stated that he understood it was the intention of the Prime Minister of Australia to discuss the matter with the Prime Minister of Canada when they met at the Colonial Conference in London in the May following. I am not aware whether there was any discussion at the Colonial Conference or not; but we know that no results were attained, for the return which brings the facts down to the 15th of the present month makes reference to the negotiations, but does not state that anything was accomplished. Then the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Foster) takes the matter up, and on the 28th of December last writes the following letter to the Hon. Mr. Tudor, Minister of Trade and Commerce for Australia. I think it would be well that the letter of my hon. friend should be placed on 'Hansard' as showing the action taken:

Since 1898 our two countries have been endeavouring from time to time to arrive at an agreement for better mutual trade relations but so far without success.

In the meantime, Canada has admitted the British Colonies, including the West Indies as also the Dominions of South Africa and New Zealand, to the advantages of her British preferential reduction over non-preferred countries, and which amounts to about 30 per cent. of the duty. A return has been accorded by South Africa and New Zealand, and negotiations are now going on for preferential return from the West Indies, and with fair prospects of success.

It seems to me too bad that with our great sister Dominion in the Pacific we have not been long since able to arrange our trade on a preferential basis, and I can assure you that Canada is very desirous both on sentimental grounds and for reasons of mutual advantage, that this anomaly shall be removed as speedily as possible.

We give you already a considerable free list for some of your staple products, although we got no very great return from you in that respect for any of our great staples. We stand ready to give you a substantial preference upon all articles of export in return for a substantial preference to our exports to your country and a free entrance for some of our natural products.

Proposals have been made to exchange your limited preference for a limited preference of entry into our country, but it scarcely seems adequate that we should proceed on so restricted a basis.