

Mr. LOW: The annual trade returns speak louder than any comment I might make and they show a marked increase in export trade. The hon. member has referred to Fiji; we have no representative there. As regards the expansion of our trade in Mexico and South America, the results are all shown in fair detail in the monthly trade returns of the department. I am sorry I have not a copy with me to-night. With many hon. gentlemen, I agree that there are great possibilities in the West Indies and countries bordering on the Caribbean sea. It is a matter of dollars and cents entirely. We should like to spend more money in the expansion of our service, but unfortunately in these days of economy we cannot spend all that we should like. In reference to the work performed by our trade commissioners, we have received many letters in the department expressing appreciation of the services rendered. I am of the opinion that the money of the country is well spent in these services and I hope the day is not far distant when we shall be able to supplement the vote by a considerable amount. The vote is slightly larger than the amount asked for last year but not as large as I should like it to have been. However, it is as much as our financial condition will permit.

Mr. STEVENS: The committee will appreciate the minister's response to my questions but it has not been fruitful of very much valuable information. I shall have to be more specific and put my questions one by one. First, has the minister any information regarding the extensive negotiations carried on between the government of Canada and the government of Fiji with reference to the development of trade to the Pacific ports of this country? Is there any definite and up to date information on that subject?

Mr. LOW: Some months ago a representative from Fiji visited Ottawa in an endeavour to promote the banana trade, but for some reason he felt he was unable to compete with the United Fruit Company of the United States. The last I heard from him was that he was going over to New York to meet the representatives of that concern. That is the only information we have had in connection with the trade with the island of Fiji.

Mr. STEVENS: That virtually means that nothing has been done. I recall the incident referred to by the minister; the representative of the island was discouraged by his reception in Canada and he then appealed to the United Fruit Company and a representative of the company went to Fiji. That I

[Mr. Stevens.]

contend is an evidence of failure on the part of Canada. Now we do not want to get entangled particularly with the United Fruit Company. What the Fijians want is some steamship service between their island and Canada which will enable them to get their products into this country; and they are prepared in return to purchase generously from Canadian manufacturers of the goods they use there. I had a talk with Mr. Holdsworth, of the Canadian-Australian steamship line only a few months ago, when I happened to meet him casually in London, and I discussed the possibility of his line furnishing that service.

Mr. LOW: His ships call at Fiji.

Mr. STEVENS: Yes. The Fijian government suggested that a contract be entered into with the Furness-Withy Company to put on three or four—I think three—ships with suitable cold storage facilities to ply between Fiji and Vancouver. That matter remained in abeyance—I am not criticizing but merely stating facts—through the action of the government, in conjunction with the Canadian National Railways, the idea being that the Canadian Government Merchant Marine might undertake the service. The matter has drifted now for fully a year under these circumstances. I want to impress upon the minister the belief that Canada is losing very valuable trade. Australia has developed a banana and pineapple production, having heretofore obtained their supplies of these commodities from Fiji. So that Fiji is now left without its market for these things and she is now looking to Canada for one. It would be to Canada's advantage to develop that trade and get our tropical fruits, bananas, pineapples and so on, as well as cane sugar and other products, from that island. It would be better to do that than to buy them through the United Fruit Company of the United States. I had hoped, in the interests not only of the Pacific ports but of Canada at large; in the interests of the sale of our manufactured goods, that this trade would be fostered and developed. I do not think it would require very much co-operation on the part of the government of Canada to bring about a decided improvement in these conditions. If a year ago the Canadian Government Merchant Marine had decided not to touch it and Furness-Withy could have been given a free hand, they would have put their ships on and developed that trade. It is deplorable that this trade, not tremendous in extent but certainly very valuable, has been allowed to slip away from us; because that is