

OTTAWA LETTER.

Ventilating Sir Louis Davies and the Government's Trade Policy.

W. F. Maclean of East York Wants Canada to Meet the United States With a Prohibitive Tariff.

The Far Western Members Demand State Ownership or Control by Commission of Canada's Railways—What Mr. Blair Says—The Paris Exhibition was a Great Picnic.

OTTAWA, March 4.—A few days ago a well known English commercial agent of Sir Louis Davies, that he was the most incompetent person who ever filled the office of minister of marine and fisheries. This remark taken in a general way, is hardly correct. In his capacity as a business man Sir Louis is doubtless all that has been said of him, but when it comes to looking after the interests of his party and the heeler who support that party, the minister of marine and fisheries is a howling success. When under fire before the house in supply, Sir Louis promised on all occasions to vindicate his business in such a way that the interests of grubs and not those of the country would be best served. It was therefore not surprising when he opposed a motion by the Hon. E. G. Prior of Victoria, B. C., asking for copies of all specifications and plans issued by the department of marine and fisheries, and calling for the tenders for the construction of two government vessels in British Columbia. Also, copies of all tenders received for the construction of same, together with a statement showing the amount of the deposits made by the several tenders, etc. and calling for the successful tender and all correspondence and papers connected with the same.

Mr. Prior's reason for calling upon the government for this information was that the government is at present about to enter into a contract for two steamers, the cost of which will be in the vicinity of \$125,000. Out on the coast it is a common street rumor that the department of marine and fisheries have not acted as they should and that some underhand, crooked work is being carried on in connection with the contract. It is noticeable on all occasions that a man with a clear conscience is only too willing to refute any charges or allegations made against him, and he is only too ready to satisfy parliament by remaining silent and under suspicion. His excuse for not bringing down information asked for is that the contract has not yet been awarded, and any publicity given to the figures submitted by those who have tendered would be deemed necessary to call for new tenders. The opposition, however, contended that only state papers could be preserved by the cabinet. All public documents, particularly when the house is in session, must be forth-coming on demand of any member, particularly if such member has reasons for believing that the bringing down of the aforesaid information would be to the interests of the country. But Sir Louis is not prepared to meet this argument in a fair way, but had recourse to the old excuse that he was simply following the example of the old government. Some one suggested that such a progressive government might introduce a new system, but it is quite apparent that Sir Louis in the ways that the present administration is able to improve on.

Some of the facts brought out in the discussion show that the minister of marine and fisheries has just as much version towards tenders in items of large expenditure as in small ones. The several offers received for the two steamers can hardly be termed more than bids. There was nothing binding on any of the contractors. They were allowed to come in without making deposits, and the result was that the lowest man, who Sir Louis says is a conservative, was pushed out or induced to withdraw and allow the next highest tender, who is a grub, to take over the work. This is a fair way, and it is not until after that document is signed, sealed and delivered that the opposition may expect any information in regard to the deal. The honorable minister will be obliged to carry on his tender no tory policy to the full satisfaction of his brother ministers.

The government's trade policy was ventilated last week, and the references made to it during the debate show that the charges made against the preferential trade arrangements with the old country have considerable foundation. The opposition has for several years pointed out the weakness of this tariff. Early in the session it was referred to as a one-sided preference, and a one-sided preference it seems to be. Mr. Monk, the first lieutenant of the conservative ranks, moved an address "for copies of all correspondence between the Italian consul for Canada and the prime minister and the minister of trade and commerce, respecting the proposed improvement of the trade relations between Great Britain and Italy, and all correspondence leading up to the placing of Canadian goods by Italy upon its general tariff." In Italy, as in the majority of the continental countries, two tariffs are in force; one is a general tariff and the other a preferential tariff. Countries whose duties are calculated to prohibit free trade intercourse between Italy and that country are compelled to do business under the general or higher tariff, while nations favorably disposed are given the benefit of the

lower tariff. Up to the time that the Laurier government adopted preferential trade with Great Britain, Italy allowed Canadian goods to come in under her lower tariff. Under such conditions Montreal and other ports worked up a considerable and ever increasing trade with the Mediterranean ports of that sunny land. But now a reaction has set in and the trade is being rapidly taken away by others; the reason is that Italy, following her custom, has raised her highest tariff walls against this country, and trade between the two countries is being greatly hampered. Such a condition of affairs is very displeasing to C. H. Catteller and Mr. Cressy, two Montreal business men who spent some years in working up a connection between the two nations. Their zeal was eventually crowned with success, but to see the good fruit borne away by others is not at all to their liking, and their experience has been enjoyed by others who have similar dealings with other countries.

It was pointed out by members of the opposition that the government had made a great mistake the day they gave to the British manufacturers and British workmen a preference in our market without getting anything for ourselves. The only objection the conservative party ever offered to the preferential trade policy of the Laurier administration was that while it gave everything to the Britisher it reserved nothing for the Canadian. Even this proved to be a matter of no great importance, for the fact, inasmuch as today it is conclusively established that the government did not give everything to Great Britain but distributed most of the plums in the United States and unfortunately it is impossible to make a correction in the reference to Canada. What the government should do, in the opinion of the opposition, is to arrange a tariff which on an sliding scale would give preference to all nations willing to favor Canada. W. F. Maclean, East York, considers that the time has arrived when Canada should meet the United States with a prohibitive tariff. He submitted a motion that the duties on raw materials and Canadian workmen would contain in a nutshell the preferential policy of the thinking members of the opposition. With the birth of the Australasia confederation, the prospective growth of the great nation in South Africa, and the feeling of unity which characterizes all parts of the British Empire during the past year, it is felt that the time to move in the direction of inter-empire preference has arrived. Such a policy would do even more to cement the units of our great commonwealth than has the South African war.

Mr. Sifton, in the course of some remarks which were not listened to with any degree of interest, informed the house that it was the policy of the liberal party in Canada to reduce the duties and to remove to some extent the burdens of the excessive tariff which was imposed on imported goods by the late conservative government, an observation which resulted in a chain of "G's" on the part of the opposition. Mr. Sifton took advantage of the opportunity to ask the hon. minister of the interior if that was the opinion he had expressed during the last election in regard to the tariff on agricultural implements. But Mr. Sifton did not like to be called down in that way, and undertook to turn the discussion in a new direction. He wanted to talk about Hugh John Macdonald, but the opposition insisted on an answer, and he was compelled to announce that although he had a few years ago strongly condemned the conservative government for imposing a duty of 20 per cent. on agricultural implements, that he was now prepared to defend that policy. He had gone to the people of Manitoba and declared that he "would never rest until the duty on agricultural implements was totally abolished." This Mr. Sifton declared to be wholly incorrect, but Clarke Wallace, who had him in hand just at that moment, had the minister's speeches in which he bitterly attacked the duty on agricultural implements and when he pledged himself to do what he could to remove the duty. Mr. Wallace asked the minister of the interior if he justified the duty on agricultural implements as it is today, and the Napoleon of the west could only answer: "I was before my constituents and I justified this tariff as it stands today upon agricultural implements." A voice from the opposition benches asked how much it cost the minister to justify the tariff, but Mr. Sifton has probably troubled himself little with the cost now that he is back in the government. He was told that the "justification of his action" in regard to the tariff consisted of the desertion of his colleagues and the concentration of the grit forces in the constituency. This was all that saved Mr. Sifton, and that is all he cares for the farmer of the farmer's wants. How uncomfortable Mr. Sifton and his following felt on the agricultural implement discussion being carried on was made manifest when Mr. Bourassa rose to a question of order. The speaker ruled that the discussion was not in order. The government does not like to hear its elastic trade policy talked of, and so any excuse served to thrust it into the background.

Mr. Emmerson is a much talked of man these days. It is a generally accepted axiom in and about the parliament buildings that a man's abilities will show themselves quicker in the house of commons than in almost any other sphere of life. It is wonderful how quickly a man stands up when he rises to make his maiden speech, and Mr. Emmerson has been weighed in the balance and found wanting. His liberal friends in particular are greatly disappointed with his address on the corporation bill amendment, and say that he is one provincial ex-premier who will never attain any prominence in federal affairs. It is almost pitiful to see a man with such excellent advance notices thrown down in this unceremonious way. It is generally conceded that Mr. Emmerson's tide has touched high water mark.

OTTAWA, March 5.—The men of the west who occupy seats in the house formed a sewing circle yesterday. It looked that way for the several hours during which the house sat the representatives of the constituencies of Manitoba and the Northwest took the lead in the talking. They rallied at the railway convention and if all they say is a true life in the Northwest must be a burden for business men who have any considerable quantity of freight to move or are put to the necessity of travelling extensively. Mr. Davis of Saskatchewan started the ball rolling; he moved that this house is in opposition to the public interest in demand that the railway companies of Canada should at the earliest moment be brought under the control of a board of railway commissioners, clothed with full power to enforce the provision of the railway act, and to prescribe and enforce the observance of such regulations as may be necessary in the public interest. The discussion, which at first was sectional in character, broadened out as it proceeded, and before adjournment it had resolved itself into a consideration of the question of state ownership of railways. On many occasions Mr. Blair of Ontario has been heard to receive very little sympathy, but yesterday had been in his seat he would have heard member after member in the government benches not only favor a railway commission but state control by government of all of the principal railways of the country.

Considering that a week ago most of these favorably disposed persons expressed views quite opposite in tone, one is almost led to believe that the change in front is the leading platform in the government policy. The present session abounds in right about faces, and Mr. Blair will find some trouble in turning this one aside. Mr. Davis favors ownership or control by a commission. His reasons are: "The government of the United States has practiced throughout the Northwest by the many railway companies on whom the farmer is dependent for the forwarding of his grain to the seaboard. One of the strongest arguments he advances in favor of this scheme is that the government of the United States has prepared to bring in a bill for the establishment of the railway commission during the present session, and he hoped that next year the consideration of the question would be sufficiently advanced to enable a definite programme to be laid out. He promised to bring the matter to the attention of his colleagues at an early date, and he thought that the suggestion had at least one strong virtue, which was that the experiment was worth trying.

Dr. Kendall struck a different line of argument in the few remarks he made. He sympathizes with the people of the west inasmuch as he has the advantages of government ownership on the intercolonial, and he would like to see the general nationalization of our commercial highways. He asked the minister of railways to consider the possibility and danger of the amalgamation of the railway, coal and iron interests of the country, and suggested that if there was any danger in this direction the government might take steps to meet it.

Mr. Bo. Cen, the leader of the opposition, was of the opinion that Mr. Davis had not made himself clear as to what he wanted and as to how he proposed to regulate the business of the railways or remove any of the responsibility for the neglect in construction home to the guilty parties. He was of the opinion that a commission does not mean anything. He would like to know whether the commission was to be an advisory board, as in Massachusetts, or whether it was to administer the present railway act in a better way than it was administered by the railway committee of the privy council. Personally Mr. Borden favored some amendments to the railway act which he considered necessary. He also expressed his opinion in favor of considering Dr. Kendall's suggestion in regard to consolidation of large interests of the country. Mr. Borden sympathizes with the people of the west. After Mr. Davis had expressed his views strongly on a question of watching the interests of the country and had pointed out the advantages arising from the establishment of railway commissions in the United States he made an earnest appeal for better rates in the Northwest. His motion was adopted, and the government will take the matter under consideration. Just what that means the years to come will determine.

OTTAWA, March 6.—The department of agriculture was the scene yesterday of a most interesting and important session. Hon. Sydney Fisher was the artillery; Mr. Tarte might be compared to a mounted corps, while the foot, which was held in reserve, appeared in the person of Mr. Jardine, Paris Exposition commissioner, who, before the evening for much undesirable attention, came in to supply, and the item placed before it for consideration was an appropriation of \$30,000 to defray the Canadian expenses of the Paris Exposition. It was brought down as a supplementary estimate, and before it was approved the opposition demanded a full explanation of the many obscure portions of the expense account of the Paris Exposition as given in the auditor general's report. It was thought necessary that the minister of agriculture should explain why the government had asked for \$175,000 when they spent \$135,000, or rather, why they had spent the latter amount when they only had permission to make an outlay of the former.

From the evidence submitted the trip to Paris seems to have been a great picnic. The living expenses placed at the disposal of the commissioner and their assistants averaged about \$6 per day, and this may be considered quite equal to the wants of any person of ordinary tastes. Mr. Fisher in trying to explain these mat-

ters had to call upon Mr. Tarte for assistance and the both ministers had to refer in turn to Mr. Jardine, who was one of the chief commissioners. The first item that engaged the attention of the committee was one of \$75,000, under the head of general expenditures, for payments to the colonial committee of account of space, etc. This money was devoted to the erection of the Canadian building and the defraying of expenses in connection with space on the ground of the Imperial building, where Canada also made a display. This Imperial space cost \$10,600, which was subsequently refunded by the Imperial committee, who found that they had no authority to charge Canada for the amount. The explanation caused Mr. Wallace to observe that he was very glad that the government, having paid \$75,000 for nothing, were able to get \$10,600 of it back.

Mr. Borden of Halifax listened with great attention and greater amusement to the minister of agriculture and the minister of public works endeavoring to explain why over \$77,000 had been spent in the erection of the Canadian pavilion when it was worth in the estimation of the Toronto expert only ten thousand dollars, and in Mr. Tarte's opinion not more than \$40,000. Then the hon. leader of the opposition demanded an explanation as to the parties who were responsible for the neglect which resulted in such wasteful extravagance. Mr. Tarte explained that the Canadian government had no control over the erection of the building. It was a matter for which the Imperial commission was alone responsible. All that Mr. Fisher seemed to have done was to have paid over the contract price and asked no questions.

Mr. Tarte went to Paris and found a building which in his opinion was entirely unsuited to the requirements of the Canadian exhibit. It was then that he discovered that only two colonies were taking part in the fair, West Australia and Canada. When Canada had been invited to participate, the government was given to understand that all the colonies intended to send exhibits, and as a consequence the space for the display of the Canadian articles was exceedingly limited. Subsequently it was discovered that Canada would have to take about four-fifths of the colonial space, and it was the energy of the people of this country that saved the British colonial display from disaster. Mr. Tarte also found that the building had not been finished according to specifications, although the architect had taken it over and given his certificate that the building was satisfactory.

Mr. Fisher was quite willing to accept this as a plausible explanation, and was apparently ready to proceed on some other business when Mr. Borden insisted on an attempt being made to excuse the lack of business on the part of the government. Mr. Borden explained this building item as a business proposition. But Hon. Sydney Fisher had endeavored to explain it by talking about the Empire, its progress and the growth of trade of this country, which, as everybody knows, was to be explained by the success of the national policy introduced into this country some years ago by the conservative party. It was quite unnecessary to talk of these matters, as the majority of the electors were conversant with them, but Mr. Borden considers the people of Canada will no doubt be interested in a satisfactory solution of some of the items which the Paris exhibition commission had under its care. Mr. Borden asked that the government had sought to bring responsibility for the neglect in construction home to the guilty parties. If it was the contractor's neglect that was responsible for the disgraceful structure that gentleman should be compelled to make restitution, and if it was the architect's neglect it should be brought to account. In answer to Mr. Borden, Mr. Fisher said that no recovery had been made from either of these persons, but the government had asked through Lord Strathcona if any action could be taken. The Imperial commission declined to consider the matter, and then Mr. Fisher allowed it to drop.

Mr. Borden thought it a most extraordinary proceeding. That a building worth one half the money should be paid for without a question was amazing to him, and he thought the government would have shown better taste if they had placed on the table any correspondence in connection with the case. He urged that it was not too late to give this question some attention, and it should receive the prompt and serious consideration of the minister of agriculture.

Mr. Tarte, it may be added, was so much disappointed with the building he was to take charge of that he paid an architect \$300 to put the Canadian pavilion in a presentable appearance. According to his story the structure threatened to fall over the heads of those employed within, and it was only after a lot of work and energy had been expended to induce it to stand upright. Mr. Tarte seemed to have the happy faculty of mentioning these things just at the time when the minister of agriculture did not want to hear them, and Mr. Borden was given many opportunities for criticizing the conduct of the Canadian portion of the exhibit. He submitted that if even common business caution had been exercised and the grossest bungling and incapacity eliminated the Canadian portion would have been a credit to the country, while some thousands of dollars might have been saved.

Clarke Wallace furnished no end of amusement by describing the luxurious furnishings in H. Fisher's apartments in Paris. Fisher is an immigrant and does little work. When the exhibition was on he was the acting city agent of the Canadian government, and was given a house in the city which was furnished in a most sumptuous manner at a cost of \$7,613. There were six rooms in all, in which white carpets and rugs, a desk at \$65.00, chairs ranging in price from \$25 upwards and sofas, curtains,

etc., of the most expensive materials played a prominent part. Mr. Fisher is still in possession of the rooms and is likely to be there some time to come. Even as an immigration commissioner he is intended to shine, and Mr. Tarte thinks that considerable more money should be devoted to the Paris agency. The minister of public works is strongly of the opinion that if a generous grant were made to defray the expenses of this office considerable trade from Belgium and France may be brought in this way. All that is needed he says is energy and of course money. The government may be expected to heed Mr. Tarte's advice, and before long it would not be surprising if the Paris office blooms forth resplendently.

The opposition also insisted on knowing all about certain gentlemen who received money from the government as commissioners, secretaries, typewriters, etc. Some of these were paid handsomely for the few months they devoted to exhibition duties. Mr. James G. Jardine, the hon. minister's reserve force, was one of these. Mr. Jardine received \$1,199.42, which was for salary at \$2,500 a year, living allowances at \$5 per day, travelling expenses, etc. He was seated last night on the floor of the house near Mr. Fisher, and was required from time to time to prompt the minister of agriculture when the latter was in the midst of confusion. Mr. Jardine occupied a rather modest position up to the time his name was mentioned. It was Mr. Bennett who brought him into prominence. Mr. Jardine it seems was up in Mr. Bennett's riding at various times and made himself generally obnoxious as a supporter of the Ontario and Dominion governments. He was for a long time in the employ of the Ontario government, but subsequently Mr. Mulock pitched him down and thrust him on Mr. Fisher's hands, much the same as Mr. Sifton's hands. Mr. Jardine resembles Mr. Preston in other respects, inasmuch as he has quite as unenviable a reputation for funny things in connection with elections. When Mr. Jardine left Toronto Mr. Bennett says he was across between a page and a messenger in the local buildings at Toronto. When he reached Ottawa the minister of agriculture was compelled by the postmaster general to discover inherent commercial ability in Mr. Jardine, which recommended him very strongly for the position of chief commissioner at Paris. The result was the adoption of Mr. Jardine and his installation as one of the Paris picnic party.

But this short history might have been untold had not Mr. Fisher been indiscreet enough to taunt Mr. Bennett with Mr. Jardine's opposition. Then the facts were trotted out. Mr. Bennett showed the Paris commissioner no mercy. He scored him and scored the men who were responsible for bringing him there, until the ministry was glad to leave Mr. Jardine to his fate and change the subject. A funny incident happened, however, before the situation was closed. Dr. Macdonald, chairman of the committee, finding that the situation was getting too warm, electrified the house by stating that the discussion was out of order, giving as his reason that the gentleman would not be allowed to refer to any person who had no connection with the Paris Exposition accounts. He claimed that somebody had alleged that Cap. Sullivan, the notorious grit machine worker, had been in company with Mr. Jardine. It was found that the only suggestion that could have been made in that direction was by the chairman's own conscience. Certainly nobody in the house mentioned Cap Sullivan, and it seems funny that he should have been brought in side by side with Mr. Jardine. Clarke Wallace thought that association of this Mr. Sullivan (who might be an evangelist) with Mr. Jardine would have a good effect upon the latter, and he saw no reason for refraining from coupling their names together, beyond the fact that Cap Sullivan might suffer as a result. It may be added that Mr. Jardine was the Paris exhibition commissioner for \$2,500 a year. Just what his duties are nobody seems to know. Probably his hardest work at the present time is drawing his pay, an employment which seems to be in favor just now about the offices of the different departments of the government.

J. D. McKENNA.

Children Cry for CASTORIA. Subscribe for the Semi-Weekly Sun.



Songs of Praise. Ottawa, Jan. 20, 1900. I have used SURPRISE SOAP since I started house and find that it lasts longer and is better than other soaps I have used. J. Johnston. Fredericton, N.B., Dec. 14th, 1900. Having used SURPRISE SOAP for the past ten years, I find it the best soap that I have ever had in my house and would not use any other. I can get SURPRISE. Mrs. T. Henry Troop. St. Thomas, Ont. I have to wash for my family and work on the railroad, and SURPRISE SOAP is the only soap to use. We tried every other kind of soap, and I can't say why our overalls have such a good color. Maudie Logan. Can't get wife to use any other soap. Says SURPRISE is the best. C. Hughes. SURPRISE is a pure hard SOAP.

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LOCAL LEGISLATION

Attorney General P... List Bill P...

Interesting Debate in the House of St. John

FREDERICTON, house met at 3 o'clock. Bill No. 1 relating to Bail Associations was...

Hon. Mr. Lablollie Hazen's enquiry with Kingston bridge was...

Hon. Mr. Lablollie Hazen's enquiry with Marysville bridge was...

Hon. Mr. Lablollie Hazen's enquiry with the bridge at Mars...

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