

would use his best efforts at the present Congress to have the duties reduced with regard to Canada?

Mr. FIELDING. Practically, yes. I was coming to that in a moment. Not by specifying a particular section, but he had given us the assurance—and that was the very point I was about to make—of his desire to bring about better trade relations with Canada, involving mutual concessions on the part of both countries.

Mr. SPROULE. Could he give any below the maximum?

Mr. FIELDING. If he could give the minimum, that is below the maximum.

Mr. SPROULE. What I want to know is this. In the event of our imposing certain restrictions upon the trade between us and the United States, either by means of an export duty or otherwise, which would bring us under the maximum tariff or the special provision made in the case of pulp, could he relieve us of that provision which would bring us under the maximum tariff?

Mr. FIELDING. The only thing the president himself can do, under the existing law, is issue a proclamation, and I believe it has been issued at Washington this afternoon—that is the understanding—and if anything could occur which, in his judgment, would amount to discrimination by Canada against the United States, he undoubtedly would have the power to recall that proclamation and thus leave us in the maximum tariff. I feel sure, however, that the whole trend of the negotiations is such as to assure us of the cordial desire of the president to improve our trade relations whatever may happen.

Mr. J. A. CURRIE. I did not understand the hon. minister to say that the president would do his utmost at the present session of Congress to have a reduction made in the tariff.

Mr. FIELDING. I am not sure that it will be done at the present session of Congress. That is a fair matter of debate, but the president gave us abundant assurances of his desire to bring about better relations with Canada, involving mutual trade concessions. There was a time when our people used to say: what is the good of these assurances? We have had hopes before about reciprocity which have not been realized. That is true, but there is this important difference. On all previous occasions we were seeking reciprocity, and the United States were either indifferent or hostile. The situation is changed to-day. It is not Canada which is seeking recip-

city to-day, but the President of the United States comes to the government of Canada and publicly declares his anxiety to open up negotiations. That is all the difference in the world. Under present circumstances, with the President of the United States coming to us in that spirit, I attach the utmost importance to the assurances which he gave us. We separated at Albany with the understanding that the matter might have to be taken up at Washington at an early day. The president gave us the assurance of his willingness to accept a very moderate concession to meet the difficulty. They had asked for the French treaty; they knew we would not give them the French treaty. The question was whether we could give them something short of the French treaty with which they would be content. So, we separated at Albany and resumed the negotiations at Washington on Friday last, when I had the honour and advantage of having accompanying me and associated with me my good friend the Minister of Railways (Mr. Graham). The whole matter was discussed in the same friendly spirit. The desire of both sides was to avoid a tariff war. We could not give to the United States, as I have said, the benefits of the French treaty. We were not prepared to take any steps which would waive our rights and contentions in that respect, and we were not willing to grant any special concessions to the United States. The question that arose was: could we, by making some reduction—not to the United States alone, but to the wide world—create a situation which would be accepted by the President of the United States as a sufficient justification for him to issue the proclamation giving to Canada the benefit of the minimum tariff? That was the problem before us, that was the line upon which we endeavoured to reach a settlement. Now, one of my friends opposite said that this was a bluff. That is possible. There are people in the United States who say that they do not think the president would, in the end, have imposed the maximum tariff upon Canada. That is held by some persons, and, for a time, it was held by a good many. I am bound to say that the best information I could obtain, from sources that were entitled to respect and confidence, led me to believe, for the reasons I have given, that the president, with all his friendly regard for Canada, might have his hand forced and might have to impose the maximum tariff upon us by refraining from issuing his proclamation.

Mr. J. D. REID. Did the hon. minister have that information when the French treaty was being put through?