

Minister of Trade and Commerce takes powers which would enable him to make an arrangement with Australia and New Zealand without coming to Parliament at all. If he goes out to Australia he could make an arrangement under the provisions of this Bill, and include a schedule, which he would publish in the Canada Gazette embodying an arrangement with that country, and he need not come to Parliament at all. What is my hon. friend's policy in regard to England? He takes the power in this Bill to change the preference in some way, although I am bound to say that I cannot see very clearly what it is. Having drawn the attention of the Committee to the presence of this clause in the Bill, surely my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce cannot refuse to tell us what he means.

Mr. FOSTER: I think we may take the Bill through regularly. We are now at section 3, and when we come to section 7, I shall be very glad to give any information to my hon. friend. But we are in Committee, and we must take the Bill section by section.

Mr. MACDONALD: There is no desire on my part to obstruct the minister in any way. We are dealing with a very big proposition which is one of the hon. minister's peculiar subjects. If my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce is not going to tell us what his policy is, to whom shall we go? Who among his colleagues is going to give us the slightest glimmer of light upon it? I would not expect my hon. friend the Minister of Customs to give us any enlightenment on the question of preferential trade. My hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce knows that I would be disappointed if I depended upon his colleague in the Customs Department. I cannot go to the Minister of Railways whose penchant for not saying anything and for declining information respecting his own department is recognized not only in the House but in the country. To whom are we to look for information except to my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce? He knows that this whole question is his own peculiar child. Section 3 of the Bill, notwithstanding anything he may say, contains the kernel or the basis of the arrangement which he made. It contains the check or minimum which he and the delegates from the West Indies placed upon the tariff that was to be imposed under this Bill. My hon. friend knows that the question raised by my hon. friend from St. John is a question of verbiage which will have to be discussed by itself, and which I think calls for some amendment in order to make it clear. But sub-section (d) of section 7 is a limitation which my

Mr. MACDONALD.

hon. friend the minister and the men from the West Indies have introduced, a criterion of what the minimum duty shall be. My hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce will not tell us what the policy of the Government is to be in regard to British preference. He tells us that if we were dealing with a measure in some way affecting our relations with the United Kingdom, he would inform us, but I call his attention to a section in the Bill under which the Government takes power to grant a British preference, if they see fit, without coming to Parliament. I submit that he ought to be frank and tell us what his policy is in dealing with the other colonies, whether he made any arrangement when in England with regard to the future, and, generally, where he stands on the whole question of preferential trade.

Mr. DEVLIN: I feel very keenly upon the subject of the high cost of living in this country. I had occasion the other day to ask the Government what steps they were taking to lessen the high cost of living. I find that one of the steps taken by the Government is indicated in this very section 3 and I wish to call the attention of my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce to the point. I think it must have escaped his attention, and when he reconsiders section 3 perhaps he will not press this arrangement. The people of Canada will not stand for anything that will tend to increase the cost of food and drink in this country.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Especially drink.

Mr. DEVLIN: The hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce told us before six o'clock, if I remember his words, that we imported about 3,000,000 pounds of cocoa into this country per annum. Since then I have had occasion to look up the Trade and Commerce reports, and I find that of that article we import from the British West Indies 679,819 pounds. At all events we imported that amount last year. Now by this arrangement the hon. the Minister of Trade and Commerce is going to force Canada to bring from the British West Indies the cocoa that has hitherto come into this country free. I do not think that this arrangement will change in one iota the trade channels. What then will be the result of the act of the hon. minister? I simply take the one item, a very important item, cocoa. We will be allowed to bring into this country under this arrangement 679,819 pounds, but under the tariff prepared by the late Government we brought into this country all cocoa free of duty, independent of the country from which it was imported. According to the hon. minister, 3,000,000 pounds of cocoa were consumed by the people of this