

unable at the present to say that the negotiations have made much progress.

Mr. Chamberlain, referring to the grant, concluded with these words :

It is a small one, and must be treated as part of a great question of the future condition of the West Indies. To that matter we shall return as soon as the negotiations with the United States and Canada have come to an end ; but in the meantime we hope that the committee will not refuse the small grant we have asked.

Acting on the request of Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Labouchere and others abstained, apparently with difficulty, from going into the general question, and the vote was carried by 236 to 78, with a majority of 158. Now, there is a clear indication that at that time Mr. Chamberlain had some negotiation with this Government and with the Government of the United States for the purpose of bringing about a reciprocity between the West Indies and Canada and between the West Indies and the United States.

We have nothing to do with the United States here, but we have with Canada and the West Indies. As the Government are determined to make a one-sided preferential arrangement with England, I may say that I was very glad to see them take up a thoroughly Imperial position and show an interest in our colonies generally ; but I do not think, in the light of what we have here, and of what we know took place in the Imperial Parliament, that we ought to be satisfied with what the Minister of Finance tells us, in his Budget speech, on the very matter we are now discussing in committee. He said :

Knowing as we do that Her Majesty's Government are following this question very closely, knowing that they are dealing with a difficult problem in the face of many difficulties, it has occurred to us that, as the West Indies are our natural market, as they are British colonies, though far away in one respect, colonies with which we have close relations, that we have some Imperial responsibilities in this matter—it has occurred to us that we should be willing in a small way to lend a helping hand to those colonies in the sunny south. If we adhere too rigidly to the underlying feature of our preferential tariff, I am afraid we shall have to admit that the terms of the tariffs of the West Indies are not favourable to us, and perhaps we could not by a mere reciprocal clause extend the preferential tariff to the West Indies. We have examined the tariffs of the West Indies, and we find that while they are high tariffs to a considerable extent, they are in no sense protective tariffs.

The hon. gentleman gave the list of the West Indian tariffs, but now, when he states that these tariffs are high but not protective—that is his description of them—what would be in the way of any one or all of these islands that he set out in that list in his financial statement, giving to Canada, say, the 25 per cent preference which Canada is now about to give them ? I think we ought to be told in the committee why it is that the

Mr. DAVIN.

Government have not sought to get that preference in their markets on, for instance, our flour, oats, potatoes, butter, cheese, codfish, planks and boards. Why should it work other than well in their case to give us a 25 per cent preference ? Seeing what the character of their tariff is, they are not estopped by any free trade tendency, as is supposed to prevail in England and with the English people generally. I explained, the other night, that, even in England, there would be no difficulty—but I only referred to that in passing—in meeting the only argument that was used against Mr. Chamberlain's original idea to impose a countervailing duty on sugar, namely, that it was a tax on food. I just refer to that in passing, but what I say now is, that, in the light of the debate in the Imperial House of Commons, and the promise of the Minister of Trade and Commerce, that, when the Minister of Finance came to deal with this matter, he would enlighten us with regard to the debate in the Imperial Parliament and Mr. Chamberlain's statement, we ought to have some explanation from him. Now that we are in committee, and can probe, in a conversational way and at the same time in a more thorough way, any subject that comes up, I think the Minister of Finance should give us some information on this matter.

As regards the question that was raised so pointedly by my hon. friend from Westmoreland (Mr. Powell), I think it would be a misinterpretation of the position taken by him, to hold that he feels any antagonism against giving a preference to England, or that he feels that some injury would be done to us, if England gained something by the preferential tariff. One of the horns of the dilemma set up by the hon. member for Westmoreland was this, that, if English goods come in, it would be because the 25 per cent preference enabled them to compete with goods from the United States, and so the Canadian consumer would not really get the benefit that was intended, because there was a contradictory position taken by the Minister of Trade and Commerce, and, I think, also by the Minister of Finance. At one time they say : We are giving you 25 per cent of advantage, and we put a plus quantity on the side of the consumer in Canada : and the next moment, they say : We give you a 25 per cent advantage, and we put a plus quantity to the same amount on the side of the manufacturers and merchants in England. You cannot have your cake and eat it. The consumer cannot have the advantage of that, and at the same time the English manufacturer. The Government must adhere to the one side or the other, and I think that was a point well taken by the hon. member for Westmoreland, and pressed home logically, and not met.

What I rose chiefly to say was this. Those hon. gentlemen have taken the position and not the best position—that they will give