

the President of the United States sent a telegram requesting that the Minister of Finance might meet him at Albany to discuss the matter.

Mr. J. A. CURRIE. A telegram to whom?

Mr. FIELDING. To myself. I have not the telegram with me or I would read it. And let me say that the President expressed the desire that the Prime Minister might also be present. The President said that he was desirous of avoiding any trouble with Canada; and I am satisfied that Mr. Taft, both from a sense of his responsibility in his high office, and from his friendly relations with the people of Canada, as manifested by many years of visiting our country, was earnestly anxious to avoid this trouble if he could. But it was represented to him that the terms of the maximum tariff clause gave him but a limited discretion. He did not feel that he was absolutely free to settle the matter in accordance with his own personal desire, and he felt that that clause had to be considered. Mr. Taft is a great lawyer, and has been a judge, and it was thought by many people in close touch with him that he would feel obliged as a lawyer and an ex-judge to give the maximum tariff clause an interpretation irrespective of what his own personal desire might be. But he was not desirous of straining the clause to our disadvantage. On the contrary, I am sure he would prefer, if there were to be any straining, that it should rather be in order to come to a friendly settlement than otherwise. When it was claimed that in offering us exemption from the maximum tariff they were offering us great concessions, we felt obliged to dissent. We felt that if they wanted us to make some concessions to them, they ought to make concessions to us on their existing tariff. When they proposed, as a means of bridging over the difficulty, that we should give them the French treaty, we had to say 'no, if you are prepared to give us direct concessions below your existing tariff, we are prepared to discuss with you. The President pointed out that he had no power to do that, that Congress only could do that, and that Congress moved slowly in these matters; but he gave us the most positive assurance of his desire to cultivate the most friendly commercial relations with Canada. He made a public speech at the University of Albany, in my hearing, along this line, and he gave a public interview to the editor of the 'Globe', which I hope hon. gentlemen opposite will read, in which he gave expression to the same view; and in all his conversations with me, he was most cordial in the assurance of his desire to

Mr. FIELDING.

bring about closer commercial relations with Canada.

Mr. SPROULE. Who was responsible for the interpretation of this portion of the American law, that where a country discriminates against the United States, there should be levied, collected and paid on all articles when imported from any foreign country into the United States or into any of its possessions (except the Philippine Islands, the Island of Guam and Intuila) the rates of duty prescribed by the schedule and paragraphs of section one of this Act, and in addition thereto 25 per cent ad valorem.' Who was it that gave the interpretation as to what the 25 per cent ad valorem meant? If I understood the hon. minister correctly, it is 25 per cent on the value of the article and not on the duty.

Mr. FIELDING. My hon. friend himself will interpret that clause the moment he reads it. I am afraid that a great many who have not read the clause itself, and have only received information in a general way, have laboured under the impression that it meant 25 per cent of the duty. My hon. friend will see himself, on reading the clause carefully, that it means distinctly 25 per cent ad valorem. No one was called on to give that interpretation. It is the interpretation evident to any one who reads the clause. There is no room for two interpretations. The president is clothed with the power to grant exemption to a country which does not discriminate against the United States. He claims that he has not an absolutely free hand, although he has some considerable measure of discretion. But it was believed by many that the president would be advised by his tariff board, his expert advisers, that the situation in Canada, under the French treaty, did amount to a discrimination, and that he might feel bound in consequence to impose the maximum tariff.

Mr. J. A. CURRIE. Bluff.

Mr. FIELDING. My hon. friend says that President Taft was perhaps bluffing. I will come to that in a moment. We were anxious that, if we were to make some concessions to the United States, they should make us some concessions in return, and the president pointed out very fairly, as I had to admit, that that was not within his power. He could not of himself grant any concessions below the rates of the minimum tariff. That could only be done by Congress, and we all know that Congress moves somewhat slowly, and it would not be possible, within the dates between these negotiations and the 1st of April, to obtain any remedial legislation in Congress.

Mr. ARMSTRONG. Did the president give the minister to understand that he