

Mr. PUGSLEY: Did not my hon. friend say we might just as well ask him to tell us whether the tariff of France is to be continued as it is, as to ask him if the tariff with the Mother Country is to remain as it is? Did he not say the treaty with France was just as applicable to this as the arrangement with Great Britain?

Mr. FOSTER: I referred to the duties on goods coming from all countries.

Mr. PUGSLEY: Does the clause mean that the four-fifths which is to be paid is four-fifths of the duty paid on goods coming from those countries in regard to which there is the highest tariff?

Mr. FOSTER: My hon. friend has been told that over and over again. I told him in plain English not more than five minutes ago, that the duty imposed was four-fifths of that imposed on goods coming from any foreign country.

Mr. PUGSLEY: Then would it be four-fifths of the duty imposed on similar goods coming from France?

Mr. FOSTER: Certainly, if that were lower than the duty on the goods coming from the United States.

Mr. PUGSLEY: I understand my hon. friend to say that as we have a preferential arrangement with France under which goods come in at a lower rate than from other countries with which we have no such arrangement, similar goods coming from the United States are to pay four-fifths of the duty upon similar goods from France. But is that the meaning of this Bill? It does not say so; the matter is left in absolute uncertainty notwithstanding the efforts of my hon. friend the Minister of Justice to give an opinion upon it.

Mr. EDWARDS: Sub-section (a) says:

At the rate of four-fifths of the several rates of duty, if any, imposed on similar goods when imported from any foreign country.

Would not the West Indies have the right to ask that the four-fifths apply to the lowest rate of duty from any of these foreign countries? Supposing a customs officer says to an importer: that four-fifths is four-fifths of the highest. But, the importer says, there is a country where it is lower, and I think I am right in asking that it should be four-fifths of that lower rate. I ask my hon. friend if that is not a reasonable deduction to make, and if the West Indies would not have the right to make that deduction? It seems to me that this is implied in the last words of sub-section (b): 'whichever shall be the lower rate.' My hon. friend will say that refers to sub-section (b), but I say there is only one conclusion to be drawn from those

words, taken together with the words 'any foreign country'—that it must be a four-fifths of the lowest rate of duty from any of those countries not coming under the preferential tariff.

Mr. MACDONALD: The point raised by the hon. member for St. John is one which has not been made clear by the explanation of my hon. friend (Mr. Edwards); the matter should be expressed in the Bill in more concise language. I would like to call the attention of the minister and the committee to a statement the minister made a short time ago, to the effect that if this Bill was one dealing with preferential trade with England, there would be no reason why he should not discuss the policy of the Government in that regard. There is no question as to the fact that this is a Bill which deals with the preferential trade with England in the most direct and positive way, and that there is a clause here under which the Government have power, by the mere publication in the Canada Gazette of an Order in Council dealing with this proposition, to materially affect our trade with England. In paragraph 7 of the Bill it is stated:

The advantages or concessions granted by this Act to the colonies parties to the said agreement shall extend to the United Kingdom and such of the other British colonies and possessions as may be admitted thereto by proclamation published in the Canada Gazette so long as the colonies parties to the said agreement continue to be entitled to such advantages or concessions.

What does that clause mean? I do not propose to discuss it in detail at this stage, for we will have to come to it later. But that clause clearly indicates what the Government may take power, by publication in the Canada Gazette of an order dealing with the question, to in some way affect the present preference so far as the Mother Country is concerned. Now we come back to the proposition which I made earlier in the evening in regard to this matter. I apprehend the position of my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce to be this: He is ambitious to carry into effect trade agreements with the Mother Country perchance, and certainly with the colonies. We shall assume that for the moment his ambition in regard to the Mother Country is quiescent, though I am not sure that he was not very active when in England, or that he did not confer with the men proposing the policy as to what the colonies are to say and do when the Mother Country comes to provide for the preferential idea. I think my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce was not very far away when some such idea was talked over among those who occupy the seats of the mighty in the Old Land. But under this Bill my hon. friend the