

Mr. FOSTER : I am sure the Minister of Finance is very thankful for the sympathy of my hon. friend.

Mr. PUGSLEY : The Minister of Finance must have felt very badly about it, as he has not since returned to the House. The reason I consider this subject to be germane to the present discussion is this: paragraph (b) says that the duty on goods from the West Indies shall remain at the several rates of duty, if any, set opposite to each tariff item respectively in the column, 'British preferential tariff' in schedule A to the Customs Tariff, 1907, and in any amendment thereof, whichever shall be the lower rate. Now it seems to me that in the discussion of this question we have a right to know whether, during the next few years, we are to give to the West Indies a preference of 33½ per cent or of 20 per cent; and it is important for us to know whether my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce shares in the views, which are reported to have been expressed in England by Canadian ministers during the past summer, that England could not expect to have the preference given by Canada continued unless she gave a preference in return. That was the inference left in the minds of the British people, that the continuance of the British preference would depend on Great Britain granting preferential trade to Canada in return for the preference which is granted to the Mother Country. Now we, on this side of the House, do not believe in that idea at all. We do not believe there should be any bargaining with the Mother Country. We think that the right thing for Canada to do was exactly what she did when the British preference was voluntarily conceded to the Mother Country; and we think that those statesmen, whether they be Canadian or British statesmen, who go about seeking to induce the people to believe that it is imperative in the interests of the Empire that the British public should have their breadstuffs taxed for the benefit of the overseas dominions, are doing a vast injury to the Empire. I think we ought to know from my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce whether it is intended to continue the British preference, and whether these duties on goods from the West Indies will be based on a preference of 33½ per cent or on a preference of only 20 per cent. We have a right to know that in considering the benefits which are to be conferred by this arrangement upon our brethren in the West Indies, as well as upon the people of Canada. We are interested, of course, in having the duties upon West Indian goods as low as possible for two reasons. The first is that it means reducing the cost to the people of Canada of those West Indian products

which they consume. That is of enormous importance. It is of enormous importance to our people to understand at this time when they are paying into the revenues of this country by way of taxes from \$35,000,000 to \$40,000,000 more than is required to carry on the services of the country, whether there is to be a substantial reduction of taxation upon the foodstuffs which they obtain from the West Indies. On the other hand it is important with reference to our exports to the West Indies, because the larger our imports, the greater necessarily will be our exports, because to carry on a profitable trade you must have traffic both ways; the vessels which bring goods from the West Indies must go back to the West Indies with Canadian products in order to carry on a profitable business and to enlarge the trade between the two countries. Therefore, does not my hon. friend the Minister of Trade and Commerce think he ought to inform the House—

Mr. FOSTER: What about?

Mr. PUGSLEY: As to whether or not the preference voluntarily given to Great Britain by Canada against the protests of my hon. friends opposite is to be discontinued if Britain does not give us a preference in return, or whether it is to be continued so that we may confidently hope that while we are getting our products into the West Indies at a reduction of 20 per cent we will be able to get our goods from the West Indies at a preference of 33½ per cent.

Mr. FOSTER: My hon. friend looks at me as if he expected an answer.

Mr. PUGSLEY: Clearly.

Mr. FOSTER: If anything in the wide world could draw an answer from me, it would be the mellifluous persuasion of my hon. friend so attractively exercised. I feel inwardly, if the proprietaries were not to be too much outraged, that I ought to give him the information he asked for in such seductive tones. My hon. friend has been a member of a Government. What does he mean by putting these questions to me? He says he wants to know as an importer of goods from the West Indies whether he is always going to get them at the same rate as at present. He wants to know if the British preference is going to stand, or if the schedule is going to be changed. Does not he see that if I answered these questions I would be giving him in advance information with reference to our tariff? What purpose has my hon. friend in putting these questions? Is there some trading concern behind him anxious to get a tip during the next two or three years in regard to certain tariff schedules, whom he might be able to advise? I trust