

pared with a smaller amount of money if the first will bring you an adequate service and the second will only keep you halting along with an inadequate service. I think that hon. members on both sides of the House would favour an idea like that. It is better economy to spend well and get good returns than to spend poorly and to get equally poor or worse returns. What measure of help we may get from the West Indian Islands we do not yet know.

However, the proposition that was made by this government on my report to the Colonial Secretary was this: That the Canadian government was ready at any time to meet the representatives of the West Indies so that we might go into the matter face to face with each other in order to carry out what seems to be pretty well in train for being accomplished. Already nine legislatures in the West Indies, including British Guiana, have passed resolutions in favour of carrying out the conclusions of the West Indian commission. I may say that since that return was prepared, I notified the Colonial Secretary to intimate to the West Indian Islands that if they would send their representatives to Ottawa for a conference, we would be very happy to welcome them here, but that if they would rather that the conference should be held in the West Indian Islands we would send our representatives there. Since that I may say that I have received by cable a communication, informing the government—and I am sure all members on both sides of this House will receive the announcement with pleasure—that it has been decided that the West Indian commissioners appointed by the different legislatures shall come to Ottawa, and I expect at present they will be here about 27th of March. The date was fixed late in March originally in order that if we had to go to the West Indies we would not be there in the very hottest season, but happily the West Indian commissioners are coming here, and they will include representatives from most of the islands of the West Indies and from British Guiana. I am sure these gentlemen will receive from the members of the opposition and from the government a right hearty welcome.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. Hear, hear.

Mr. FOSTER (North Toronto). I hope that we may be able to have results, as a return for the long and somewhat patient negotiations which have been going on now for a series of years.

Sir WILFRID LAURIER. I agree with my hon. friend (Mr. Foster), that we have had a very important discussion on this matter, and I was glad to notice that the remarks of my hon. friend (Mr. Pugsley),

Mr. FOSTER (Toronto).

on our trade relations with the West Indies were so well received by the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Foster). I do not know what trade is to be developed with the West Indies, but be it much or be it little we are all anxious to get it even if we have to pay pretty liberally for the privilege. I regret that our efforts to stimulate trade with Australia, efforts that have been constant for the last ten years, have been fruitless. I may say to my hon. friend from St. Antoine (Mr. Ames), that the exposé he has made to-day of the possibilities of trade with Australia is, in my judgment, the clearest we have ever had in this House. He has told us the way in which that trade can be developed if any trade can be developed with Australia. Of course, it is quite true that the uncertainty of government in Australia has been one reason for the ill success of our negotiations in the past, and I fear there is no certainty that the government now in power will remain long in office, but if a fusionist government under Mr. Deakin is returned I know that he will be most anxious to have with us favoured trade relations. But, the difficulties in the way are not only political. Australia has only two large staples of export, wool and meat. We buy Australian wool to-day, but we buy it largely through Great Britain, and perhaps if we had direct communication from Australia we might get that product direct to Canada. But, I should judge that there is no market at all in Canada for Australian meat and I do not know that the tariff views of the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Foster) would favour a very large importation of meat from Australia to Canada. At all events there are some sections of our country where such a proposition would not be favourably received. For my part I think it would be well to make some sacrifice to develop a trade with Australia. I agree with the hon. gentleman (Mr. Foster), that there is a wide field in Australia for Canadian manufactured goods, and if it is possible to induce the Australian government to give us a slight preference over the Americans the benefits to us would be immense. I think it possible that in a very few years we could increase our export trade to Australia which is now only \$1,000,000 annually, to perhaps \$12,000,000. I agree with the suggestion that we should send commissioners to Australia. We have at present in Australia a very able Canadian agent in Mr. Ross, who is well versed in business, who is conciliatory and diplomatic. He has the ear of all parties in Australia and no better man could be found to negotiate, but Mr. Ross could not move a step forward in these negotiations without being in constant communication with the government here, and the better way is for us to send a commissioner to Washington.