

the possible attitude of the Government in regard to British preference—whether there would be an increase or decrease or a permanency—was discussed at the conference. What assurance did the minister give the representatives of the West Indies as to the policy of his Government in this regard?

Mr. FOSTER: The question did not necessarily arise; the representatives of the West Indies guarded themselves by the four-fifths clause.

Mr. MACDONALD: The four-fifths clause would not be much good if you went on increasing or decreasing the British preference.

Mr. FOSTER: If we went on increasing it, section (b) would give them the British preference if that were lower than four-fifths of the foreign duty.

Mr. MACDONALD: If the preference were given to England should become less than it is now, the extent of advantage to the West Indies would also become less, would it not?

Mr. FOSTER: To whatever extent the British preference varied from four-fifths of the duty on the imports of any foreign country.

Mr. MACDONALD: Then sub-section (b) is put in as a check to sub-section (a) in case the Government should make up their minds to deal with the British preference, one way or the other?

Mr. FOSTER: No. This is to give them a chance for a better rate.

Mr. MACDONALD: Did the representatives of the Government discuss with the West India representatives what their policy would be with reference to the British preference?

Mr. FOSTER: That was not germane to the discussion, and it did not come up. What the delegates of the West Indies were assured and what, I think, they expected was that to whatever extent the British preference was greater than four-fifths, they would have the advantage of it, although they could not claim it under the agreement.

Mr. PUGSLEY: This section may perhaps afford an opportunity of considering for a few moments the question of the British preference, because the continuance of the preference of 33½ per cent as against the 20 per cent for which this agreement provides is contingent upon the British preference continuing at 33½ per cent. I had inferred, from statements reported in the newspapers to have been made by the ministers who visited Great Britain during the past year, that the giving on the part of Great Britain of a quid pro quo for the British preference granted by Canada was

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essential to the continuance of this preference. Certain Unionist statesmen in England have taken the ground that Canada has made sacrifices in the past in extending the preference to Great Britain and cannot, according to their opinion, be expected to continue that preference unless Great Britain should impose a tax upon foodstuffs, so as to give to Canada, and other dominions granting the preference, an equal degree of benefit in return. It is evident that some British statesmen have the impression that the British preference is merely of a temporary character, and will not last unless Great Britain gives in return a preference on foodstuffs from Canada.

Mr. FOSTER: I think the hon. gentleman is quite as capable of following the British press as I am. Whatever may have been said in the newspapers of Great Britain or any other country is not germane to this discussion. It seems to me this is not the proper time to discuss the British preference; the matter before us now is this agreement between Canada and the West Indies. My hon. friend will not draw me to-night into the discussion of this broader question, but if the time comes when the Government brings before the House a tariff revision measure, and the hon. gentleman is then as eager for information as he is to-night, I have no doubt he will be satisfied.

Mr. PUGSLEY: Does it not seem to my hon. friend—

Mr. FOSTER: It does not.

Mr. PUGSLEY: The hon. minister should not anticipate my remarks. Does it not seem that this is germane to the question under discussion?

Mr. FOSTER: I think not. What we want to do is to get through with this Bill.

Mr. PUGSLEY: So do we, but we should not be forced to rush through the consideration of a Bill of such importance as this.

Mr. FOSTER: We do not want it rushed.

Mr. PUGSLEY: The hon. minister found fault with his colleague the Minister of Finance because he went out of his way this afternoon to discuss what he thought was important in regard to the reciprocity question. The hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce did not like that, and he rebuked the Minister of Finance almost immediately upon his resuming his seat. He said there was a Bill before the House, and he wanted hon. members to apply themselves to that Bill. I thought it was rather unkind of my hon. friend, as an experienced member of this House, to rebuke his younger colleague, the Minister of Finance, who would hardly be supposed to look at the matter from the narrow standpoint from which my hon. friend desires that this Bill be discussed.