

as though Canada would actually get a preference on each of the 294 items in the list and that the arrangement would work out very advantageously. But upon scanning the list you find that there is an almost infinitesimal number from which Canada could reap any benefit at all. So that, I think the argument of my hon. friend who has just taken his seat is a very good argument, that it would be better to sit down together and frame a list of really serviceable exchanges between the two countries leaving in what would be mutually advantageous and leaving out what would be barren and unfruitful. It seemed a few weeks ago to Mr. Ross, our agent in Australia, that it might be possible for the Australian government to put upon its statute-book, at the session just past, a British preference in favour of Canada, and the question was asked as to whether this government would advise that an effort be made to bring that about. Looking at the matter as carefully as I could, I came to the conclusion not to make that effort and it was for the reason that I thought it would be better, instead of tying ourselves up to an exchange of preference for preference, to try and come to an arrangement which would be less expensive in the matter of items but more fruitful in the matter of actual results. The proposition that I have made in writing to the Minister of Trade and Commerce of Australia is one which I hope will result in a conference, if possible, between members of the governments and if it is not possible between members of the governments, at least between special commissioners who shall be empowered to act by the two governments in that line. To my mind it is far better that members of the government shall be brought together where they can exchange views, can authoritatively dispose of item after item under discussion and can give and take in the way of coming to a favourable conclusion. I hope that idea may be carried out and I hope it may be carried out just as soon as possible.

My hon. friend from St. John (Mr. Pugsley) thought that we were rather putting the cart before the horse when we favoured preferential trade arrangements as a precursor to improved steamship arrangements. Well, that is a matter of opinion. My hon. friend is of the opinion that the improvement in trade communications should precede the other, at least that it should not be retarded in the least because the other does not exist and that it serves as an incentive to preferential rates. My own opinion is, and I hold it pretty strongly, that it is a great assistance to the betterment of steamship communications to have the inducement of favourable tariff rates between two countries. That holds as well with reference to our trade relations with

the West Indies as it does with Australia, in fact, I think a little more so; I have made these few remarks with reference to our relations with Australia. It is not my part to indicate what I think will be the course of negotiations. My hon. friend who has just taken his seat has given us his views very extensively and very pertinently, but if it so happens that I am to be one of the negotiators, it would probably be better that I should not have gone too largely into the matter prior to my meeting our friends from the other side.

With regard to our relations with the West Indies, I laid on the table of the House the return to which my hon. friend has alluded. The matters in hand at the present time sprang out of and are based upon preceding negotiations and examinations the most important and comprehensive of which was that which was gone into by the British West Indian commission of which two Canadian Ministers were members. The three things which are under consideration now between ourselves and the West Indies are improved telegraphic or cable communications, improved steamship communication and improved trade relations. For a number of years Canada has given to the West Indian Islands a large and generous preference which has met with generous appreciation by the West Indian Islands and which, they acknowledge, has been a help to the West Indies in various ways and particularly in reference to the encouragement of their sugar industries. I am not going to take up the time of the House to dilate upon the conditions which seem to me to favour a reciprocal arrangement between ourselves and countries situated as the West Indies are. Suffice it to say at the present time that all of these three points that I have mentioned are very important. Improved cable and telegraphic communications contribute to quickness in the transaction of business and the increase of trade. The same is true, but in a still larger sense, of improved steamship communications.

I am not very enthusiastic and I have not been for a number of years over the steamship communications which have been existing between ourselves and the West Indies. I do not think they have been up-to-date, as modern and as enterprising as they should have been and as I think it is necessary for them to be in order that they shall adequately promote trade and commerce. We have not had as quick, as rapid, or as punctual communication as it is possible to have consistent with the conditions there and which it is necessary to have in order to promote trade to its greatest extent. I would not consider it a matter for very much doubt or hesitation if it comes to be a question between a larger amount of good as com-