

has informed this House stated to the commissioners of the West Indies that so long as the British preference lasts, they will have a preference in our country not of twenty per cent, which is the preference which they give to us, but of thirty-three and a third per cent. Surely, that being so, we have a right to know what is the policy of the Government in regard to the British preference. Is it intended to discontinue it unless Great Britain gives us a preference in return? Is it intended to increase it? Is it intended to lower it? Surely the Government must have some policy on the question. It is not a new question; it has been discussed both on this side and on the other side of the Atlantic; it has been discussed at gatherings in the Mother Country at which Ministers of the Crown were present and took an active part and one likely to affect public opinion in the Mother Country. It is a question on which this Government should have a policy, and they ought to be able to state what that policy is. My hon. friend admits that if this were a ratification of an agreement between Great Britain and Canada it would be his duty to tell the House what is the Government's policy with regard to the British preference. When we bear in mind that the preference to the West Indies does not follow the British preference but rests with the discretion of this Parliament, what applies to one case applies to the other. I do think my hon. friend upon reflection, will see that he is not taking the course which will best advance his Bill, if he merely draws himself into his shell and tells us he will give us no information. As suggested by an hon. friend near me, he seems to emulate one of his younger colleagues, the Minister of Railways (Mr. Cochrane) whose delight seems to be to keep from this House information to which members are entitled. We wish to assist in this legislation, and I think the hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce would act more wisely in giving us the information for which we reasonably ask.

Mr. FOSTER: I almost fail in the hope of convincing my hon. friend, for I am afraid he does not want to be convinced. Why does he not ask me what our policy is with regard to imports from France or Germany, basing that question on the arguments he has just used? Why not say: You have an arrangement with the West Indies which you propose to enact into law, providing that their goods shall pay only four-fifths of the duty paid by goods coming from Germany. What is your policy with regard to goods coming in from Germany—what will it be next year or the year after? Surely, the hon. gentleman will see the illogical position in which he places himself. Any information germane to this arrangement between us and the West Indies

that can be given I am glad to give, but we are not legislating now with reference to France, Germany or Great Britain, and consequently the discussion is not germane.

Mr. PUGSLEY: The hon. gentleman has asked me a question. We are not, he says, legislating with regard to goods coming from France. Germany or any other country with which we have a preferential arrangement. But we are legislating as to goods coming in from Great Britain. Does the hon. gentleman pretend to say that our treaty with France places the goods from the West Indies affected by this treaty in the same position with regard to our preference to France as our preference to Great Britain places goods from the West Indies in comparison with goods imported from Great Britain? If so, how is the Minister of Customs going to fix the four-fifths of duty to be paid? I think the hon. gentleman ought to enlighten us upon that. Are we to have a variable scale of duty? Is the four-fifths to be estimated on the duty of similar goods from France, or on the duty on similar goods from the United States?

Mr. FOSTER: My hon. friend surely can read the clause: it is as plain as can be.

Mr. PUGSLEY: Let me read it, then. I will read it to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Doherty), and I should like to get his interpretation of it. The Minister of Trade and Commerce has just suggested what strikes me as a difficulty which this section does not get over, and which, it seems to me, must be overcome, if he is to have any certainty with regard to the duty. Let me read this to the Minister of Justice who can understand things a good deal better than most people:

It is agreed between the Government of the Dominion and the governments of the above-mentioned colonies severally that:

1. On all goods enumerated in schedule A, being the produce or manufacture of Canada, imported into any of the above-mentioned colonies, the duties of customs shall not at any time be more than four-fifths of the duties imposed in the colony on similar goods when imported from any foreign country.

That relates to goods imported into the colony. Now we come to goods imported into Canada.

2. On all goods enumerated in schedule B, being the produce or manufacture of any of the above-mentioned colonies, imported into the Dominion of Canada, the duties of customs shall not at any time be more than four-fifths of the duties imposed on similar goods when imported from any foreign country.

Now, the Minister of Trade and Commerce tells me that this treaty affects our relations with France as to the goods coming in under preference. Suppose, for the