

formed that if suggestion is made by the Canadian Government to the French Government of giving under a new treaty the benefit of the intermediate tariff to French exports we might have from the French Government the benefit of their minimum tariff. My right hon. friend understands the very great importance of this subject in view of the large exports from Canada to France. The denunciation of the treaty, I regret to say, has threatened to dislocate that trade. But as my hon. friend states if there is a possibility of getting an arrangement by which benefit would be taken of the intermediate tariff, well and good. I suppose that is the best bargain my right hon. friend has been able to secure.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: That is all we can do.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

On the motion for Supply:

Mr. J. H. SINCLAIR (Guysborough): Before you leave the Chair, Mr. Speaker, I wish to be allowed to draw the attention of the House to a matter I regard as of very great importance, and that is the delay in connection with the placing on the table of this House of the Auditor General's Report. For several sessions past the law which requires the Auditor General's Report to be laid on the table of the House within one week of the opening of the session has been disregarded.

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: Does my hon. friend intend to carry on the discussion or is he just asking a question? I think if Saturday follows Friday as to the orders—

Mr. SPEAKER: The motion for taking Saturdays only called for the order of business to be the same as on Fridays or on Thursdays. It did not make applicable to Saturdays the rules which are applicable to Thursdays and Fridays; therefore under a ruling which was made two years ago, a motion is required on Saturday for Committee of Supply.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Guysborough): I was not sure about the rule, but my right hon. friend did not observe the rule about five minutes ago—

Sir GEORGE FOSTER: I was answering a question.

Mr. SINCLAIR (Guysborough): —and I followed his example. I was referring to the fact that the law requiring that the

report of the Auditor General be placed on the table of the House within one week of the opening of the session, has been neglected or disregarded by the Government for several years past. It will be within the memory of my right hon. friend that some years ago the fiscal year was changed so as to enable the Auditor General to have his report ready in the month of October in each year. The report brings us up only to the 31st March of the previous year, so that it was estimated at that time that there would be ample time between March and October to prepare the Auditor General's Report and have it ready for the House, provided that the House met in November. Plans at that time were made for the session being held in the fall. The House did not meet this year until February, but the report was not ready when the House met. Section 48 of chapter 24 of the revised statutes reads:

Such accounts and the reports of the Auditor General thereon shall be laid before the House of Commons by the Minister of Finance on or before the 31st day of October next, following, if Parliament is then sitting, or if not sitting, then within one week after Parliament is next assembled.

That is the law. I wish to point out how it has been carried out during the present session. The House met on the 26th February; but the first volume of the Auditor General's Report was placed on the Table, not within one week of the opening of the House, but on the 19th March. The second volume was placed on the Table on the 25th March; the third volume was placed on the Table on the 25th April, and the fourth volume, which contained all contentious matters, was not placed on the Table until the 14th May. This made it impossible for the Public Accounts Committee to do their work. The House had been in session for nearly three months before the complete set of the Auditor General's Report was placed on the Table. The committee could not, of course, perform their duties without the report, and in this way the whole business of the Public Accounts Committee has been nullified for the present year. This is a matter of great importance, and I was very much surprised, in looking into the matter a few days ago, to find that the law had been disregarded altogether by the Government, not only for the present session but for several sessions past. I went back a few years to see how the former Government had done their duty in that respect, and while I did not go into the details, I looked up the year 1907-08 and