

WEST INDIA TRADE AGREEMENT; MEMBER FOR CARLETON MOVES AMENDMENT

Tells the Finance Minister that Reciprocity is Not Half as Dead as the Naval Bill, and It is a More Active Issue Now Than Ever

Mr. F. B. CARVELL (Carleton, N. B.): Before this Bill passes I desire to call the attention of the House to one phase of the matter which in my judgment requires further consideration, and in respect of which I hope the Government will see their way clear to accept an amendment which I intend to propose. I refer particularly to those clauses of the Bill which have reference to transportation. I think hon. gentlemen on both sides of this House are agreed as to the advisability of passing this legislation; it will be an advantage to Canada and, I think, to the British West Indies. Any steps taken to increase the trade of this country cannot but be a benefit to the country as a whole. If I were to blame the Government at all in regard to this matter, I would charge them with being niggardly in their treatment of these colonies. I think that instead of making a reduction of twenty per cent. in the duty upon certain imports, many of these things might have been admitted free, thus increasing largely the trade between Canada and the West Indian colonies and, to some extent, reducing the cost of living to the Canadian consumer. I think that practically everything coming from the West Indian colonies to Canada should be admitted free, because, viewing the matter from the standpoint of the protectionist, the articles which we would import from the West Indies are not produced in Canada, and there would be no competition in that respect; and, viewing it from the standpoint of the consumer, we would be getting a cheaper living. I believe that the only way we can justify the course being taken is to work up a direct line of business between Canada and the West Indies; in other words, the benefits which we hope to obtain by this agreement would be better secured by establishing a means of direct communication. We have not done much business with the West Indian islands during the last ten or fifteen years; the figures are so small that I think the Minister of Finance must be surprised when he realizes how infinitesimal has been the business between Canada and the West Indies as compared with that between Canada and other countries of the world. I think, therefore, that whatever we do should be done along the line of stimulating the trade between Canada and the West Indian colonies. In the Maritime provinces we have had, along certain lines—particularly in fish—a large business with the West Indies for a great many years. I might mention that the Maritime provinces have tried to carry on a business, not so much with the British West Indian islands as with Cuba, in respect of potatoes and I think that in this regard a special subsidy was given—and I believe it is still in force—to a steamship line running direct between the port of St. John and the island of Cuba. The result has been that a market has been found for a very large quantity of potatoes which under other conditions would not have been marketed. I notice in the press that only within the last week a ten-thousand barrel shipment of potatoes was sent from St. John to Cuba; this was no doubt due to the subsidy to which I have referred. If you want to stimulate trade between Canada and the West Indian Islands, you must have direct steamship communication between Canada and those colonies; otherwise, if the steamships call at United States ports, you will establish a trade between the United States and the West Indies rather than between Canada and the West Indies. The articles exported from Canada—hay, oats, flour, and general farm produce—almost invariably go to the West Indies through United States ports. In some cases these might be Canadian goods transhipped through United States ports, but it will be found that three-fourths, and probably nine tenths, of all such goods as are produced by Canada and shipped to the West Indian

markets go through United States ports, simply because in the United States they have splendid transportation facilities. It is true that they have the transportation facilities because they have the business; they carry on not only an export but an import trade in the way of fruit, sugar, and the other tropical products of the West Indies. We can work up a large business between Canada and the West Indian islands, just as they are doing in the United States, but we can do it only by means of a direct steamship service. A statement was made by one of the delegates of the Ottawa conference—I speak now from memory—that the rates were about four cents a hundred pounds less via New York to Montreal or Toronto than via the direct route. If that is the case, this business, unless something is done, will find its outlet through United States ports, and not through Canadian maritime ports. If the Canadian Government is going to subsidize these steamship lines—and I think they are—I contend that these steamships should be compelled to ply direct between Canadian and West Indian ports. The Government will be able to control the rates by means of a subsidy contract; they can make the rates as cheap as they are via United States ports; they can drive the business through our Canadian ports, and will not only work up a trade between the producers of the respective countries, but will encourage the development of all the activities incidental to navigation and railway transportation. This is a very important matter indeed as affecting all of Canada, and, if we are desirous of obtaining the full benefit of this treaty, I think this business should be done through our own and not through United States ports. I believe also that the subsidies must be sufficiently large to make the work attractive to a big steamship company, and one that will give us an up-to-date service. If I have any objection to offer to the subsidies we have been granting in the past to Cuba and the West Indies, it is that they have been too small; certainly they have not produced the results that should have been obtained, and we have had a very inefficient service. When I say that, I think I am using as mild language as a man could use who knows anything about it. I know something about the service between St. John and Halifax, and the West Indies in the past, and I have no hesitation in saying that it has been entirely unworthy of Canada, one which has been almost a disgrace to Canada, and certainly of no benefit to the Dominion from the point of view of transportation, or from any other standpoint. The service was so bad that no person has been known to take advantage of it a second time. It might be said that this is pretty strong language, and I admit it is, but I think I have reasons for making the statement. Possibly the subsidy was not large enough to justify any better service. If that was the case, then give a bigger subsidy, but if the subsidy was large enough to justify a better service, then I think the department has been remiss in its duty. I am not applying my remarks to the present minister so much as to previous ministers. What ever may have been the cause, the result has been a very inferior service, which has been of no benefit to Canada from any standpoint whatever. If I am right in my statement, I think the service requires a much larger subsidy. I do not believe that we shall ever get satisfactory results from a service of steamships starting at Halifax, calling at St. John, and thence proceeding to the West Indies, or calling at St. John on the way back and then proceeding to Halifax. Such a service is too slow. We are living in an age of progress, and there is no use of talking about a steamship service which takes about a week to get started. The vessel is partly loaded at Halifax, and then it goes to St. John to finish the load-

ing, which usually takes about a week. That is too slow for this progressive age. In my judgment, the service should either be from St. John alone or from Halifax alone; or, if there is jealousy between the two ports—and I am afraid my hon. friend from St. John would not agree to the service being from Halifax alone—and if we cannot have a single service, let there be two services. The service should be of some benefit to the people of Canada, and should stimulate trade between Canada and the West Indies, and I am afraid that the present service has done neither the one nor the other. We have simply been paying out large sums of money to transportation companies and getting no benefit. I do not say that the transportation companies have not given as good a service as they could afford in the circumstances, but there should be a service that would be of benefit to exporters and to Canadian commerce in general. I believe that the contract should be made with a real transportation company and not with some local company which might organize itself into a transportation company, hire steamers, and do what I might almost call a tramp business. I do not wish to pass any reflections on the service we have had in the past, but I know there has been at least one service between the Maritime provinces and a portion of the West Indies that has not been the success it might have been simply because the company who were carrying it on did not own vessels. They were not a real transportation company, and consequently were not in a position to give the people the benefit they were entitled to receive. I am satisfied that those gentlemen gave all the service they could afford to give; the difficulty was that they were not a transportation company. They hired a vessel here and a vessel there, paid big prices for rentals and had little or nothing left for themselves, with the result that the exporters had to pay bigger freight rates than the business justified. I do not know what ideas the minister may have. We have heard reports about the Government entering into a contract with the Elder Dempster Line and also with the Canadian Pacific railway. I believe there is no company in Canada in such a good position to undertake this service as the Canadian Pacific railway. I hold no brief for the Canadian Pacific railway. When the elections come round they are about the hardest competitors I have, but they are a good transportation company, and whatever they do they do well. If the Canadian Pacific railway entered into a contract with the Government to give a fortnightly service, or a three weeks' service, or a monthly service, they would carry it out loyally and from a business standpoint. They would be able to give a thorough bill of lading from any point in Canada to any point in the British West Indies because they would have a continuous service both by rail and water. For these reasons, I think they are in a better position to carry on this service than any other company. I repeat that I am casting no reflections upon any company which has been carrying on business between Canada and the West Indies, or which may intend to do so in the future. I merely mention this to support my original proposition that if this service is to be a success we must carry it through on Canadian ports, and we must be able to give a service as cheap as or cheaper than the service through American ports. If there is a difference of four cents in one hundred pounds in favour of the New York route, that is almost prohibitive against Canadian traffic, but if we gave a sufficiently large subsidy, and the business was carried on by a Canadian company which had a through service from a point we will say in the Rocky mountains to Trinidad, we would have a service which would be a real competitor with that from New York and Boston. We all know that if we have the transportation facilities we

will get the business. I do not have to argue to this House that good transportation facilities always produce a paying business, and the better and cheaper the transportation facilities are, the more business we will secure. Therefore, I submit it is important in the interests of the trade of the West Indies and of Canada that we should have a service between either St. John and the West Indies, or between Halifax and the West Indies, or from both St. John and Halifax, and that it should be carried on by a company who would own and operate their own boats and be able to give a service up-to-date, so that the shipper would know exactly what to figure on. That service should be from Canadian ports and Canadian ports alone. Therefore, I move, "That the said Bill No. 28 be not now read a third time, but that it be referred back to the Committee of the Whole House, with instructions to amend the same, by adding to section 5 thereof the following sub-section, namely: (3) All steamships so subsidized shall be required to ply direct between Canadian port or ports and the said British West Indian colonies."

Continuing in the evening Mr. CARVELL said: My hon. friend the Minister of Finance (Mr. White), has labored for over an hour to prove to this House that it would be impossible to accept the proposed amendment of my hon. friend the member for St. John (Mr. Pugsley). I am in the class of the Opposition opposed to the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Maclean), and I must say that to me the Minister of Finance has made the matter about as clear as mud. Possibly to a man of the intellectual ability and knowledge of the West Indian trade possessed by my hon. friend from Halifax, it may be a little clearer than that, but I know I am voicing the sentiment of every hon. gentleman on this side of the House. I will not follow my hon. friend in his remarks relating to the transportation problem, because I have already discussed that, and I understand I would be out of order if I did so again. If I followed my hon. friend at all, I understood him to say that he could not adopt this amendment because, if he did so, the whole treaty would fall to the ground, or could not be put through. If he is going to prevent this Parliament and the people of Canada from changing their tariff so that it will decrease the cost of living, the sooner we know it the better. For all the advantages we are going to get from this one-horse agreement the thing is hardly worth discussing. My hon. friend the Minister of Finance has laboured for a year and has brought forth a mouse. He wants reciprocal trade with the British West Indies whose total trade, including imports and exports, amount to something like \$13,000,000 while our trade with the rest of the world amounts to a billion dollars. He says we must put ourselves in a position where we cannot do anything to reduce the cost of living. Why, Sir, I do not think there is anybody in Canada who would lose much sleep, or even a penny to give away to a passing beggar, if this thing went through. It is such an infinitesimal thing compared with the trade which Canada does with the rest of the world. It is not worth the time we have taken to discuss it in this House but as my hon. friends brought it down as the great achievement of their 18 months rule, it was worth the while of the Opposition to discuss it to some little extent. My hon. friend could not resist the temptation to have another fling at what he calls the corpse of reciprocity, to which he refers every time he gets on his feet. He had something to say about reciprocity in the early part of this session when I took the liberty of giving him some of my views, and I think I convinced a good many people, and raised some suspicion in the mind of my hon. friend himself, that reciprocity is not dead as he thinks. I want to tell him tonight that it is not half as dead as the Naval bill, and I hope that he will have an opportunity of finding that out within the next three or four months. He will find that the naval emergency was buried six months ago, if the people of Canada have a chance of expressing their views, and I hope they will have the opportunity in next few months. However, I am not going to discuss reciprocity now, I shall probably have another opportunity of doing so before the close of the session. I simply wish to tell my hon. friend that where I come from it is a much more active issue than ever it was before, and that it is becoming more active every day, and I think that what is true of my own portion of Canada

is true of other portions. I want to come back to the task of making it clear that sugar could be admitted from the West Indies free. My hon. friend says that the British West Indies are not concerned about whether the duty on sugar coming into Canada is high or low, but that what they are concerned about is that they must have a preference. I think that is exactly what he said. Mr. WHITE: I think it is substantially correct. It is the preference they want. Mr. CARVELL: All right. As I understand it, the duty on raw sugar under the seventy-five standard, amounts to about fifty-two cents on the 100 pounds, or practically one half cent a pound, and under this agreement the British West Indian islands must have a preference of twenty per cent. In no case must it be less than fifteen cents per 100 pounds. All my hon. friend has got to do is to reduce the general duty on sugar coming from the rest of the world, so that there will be fifteen cents per 100 pounds free, and then he can make sugar free from the West Indies to Canada. Is there any objection to that? Mr. WHITE: Even if that were done—and I do not say it would be advisable to do so—the point I am making is that the fifteen cent preference would still be taken by the planters. Mr. CARVELL: That is a point which my hon. friend did not make before. He read extracts from something which Mr. Fielding said three or four years ago, which may have convinced him, but which, I am satisfied, did not convince anybody else in this House. When he attempts to tell this House that we cannot make sugar free from the West Indies because of this agreement when he could do so, so long as he left 15 cents per 100 pounds as against the rest of the world, I must say I cannot follow his logic. Under this agreement he could make sugar free so long as he left a duty of fifteen cents per 100 pounds as against the rest of the world. The West Indies would still get a preference. Mr. WHITE: My hon. friend is misrepresenting entirely what I said. I was dealing with refined sugar which would be included in the sugar in schedule B. The point I was making was that if the refined sugar were admitted free, as it would be under the amendment of the hon. member for St. John, it would have to be admitted free from the United Kingdom, and the sugar refiner in the United Kingdom, having the advantage over the sugar refiner here, would be in a position to cause the latter to give up business. There is no doubt about it. Mr. CARVELL: That is the first time I have heard refined sugar mentioned in this debate. I never suggested for a moment that we were dealing with refined sugar. It is raw sugar we are talking about. Mr. WHITE: What does it say in schedule B? Mr. CARVELL: No refined sugar comes from the British West Indies. My hon. friend is quibbling. I do not wish to use harsh language, but there is no other word in my vocabulary which defines his attitude better. We are talking about raw sugar and my hon. friend knows it. He knows that the duty on refined sugar is about one and one half cents per pound, and he knows that we are talking about raw sugar, the duty on which is about one-half cent per pound. I could not understand what he meant by saying that if sugar were admitted free into Canada, the refiner in Canada would be driven out of business. As I have already said, he knows that he could admit raw sugar free from the British West Indies, so long as he left fifteen cents per 100 pounds on the sugar coming from the rest of the world, and by doing so he would not affect any sugar refinery in Canada. But if he went so far, he would have to go further for the benefit of the consumer. Mr. LALOR: How would that affect the beet sugar industry in Ontario? Mr. CARVELL: If there were any industry to affect, possibly that question would be worth answering, but the industry is so infinitesimal, when you consider the great sugar consuming people of Canada, that it is scarcely worth while discussing at all. If there is such a thing as protection run mad, it is the protection of a few people who raise beets in the province of Ontario, while the people who use the sugar have to pay a big price for it. That may be according to the logic of a high protectionist such as my hon. friend, but it does not appeal to the ordinary business sense of the sugar consumer in Canada. Mr. WHITE: Will my hon. friend look at the first item of schedule (Continued on page ten).



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