

those merchants, because, if they still desire to handle this fish, they can do it, as it is done by their competitors in New York and Boston, in bond. My colleague has also referred to the fact that we shall still have to meet this competition in the foreign markets, and, in proof of that, he has instanced the great increase in the fishing industry in the north of Europe. That is an argument which might be used on this side of the House as a contention in favor of giving greater consideration to our fishermen than they have hitherto received, and the fact of this great competition in this industry shows the necessity which exists of watching jealously the rights of our own fishermen. I trust the Government, and especially the Minister of Customs, with whom I have had many conversations on this subject, will take this matter into their serious consideration, and we shall have, at an early date, the imposition of such regulations as will give to our fishermen that fair measure of protection which the hon. member for Shelburne (Gen. Laurie) has asked in the motion he has made, and which, after all, is simply giving to them the same measure of protection which the United States give to their fishermen, with whom ours are such active competitors.

Mr. BOWELL. The question brought before the House by the hon. member for Shelburne (Gen. Laurie) is not a new one to the department. Some three years ago, when on a visit to Halifax, my attention was called to similar complaints to those which have now been presented. I made a personal investigation into the matter so far as I possibly could at that time. I met a large deputation of members of the Board of Trade. I must confess they were composed of both sides of politics, and, as the senior member for Halifax (Mr. Jones) has said, those who agree with him politically were very strongly in favor of adopting the course which has been suggested by the hon. member for Shelburne (Gen. Laurie) and the junior member for Halifax (Mr. Kenny), while members belonging to the party to which I belong and supporters of the Government, took the other view. In fact it was a question which was then treated from a commercial standpoint, irrespective altogether of politics. After fully investigating the matter and enquiring from the collector of Customs the course which had been pursued in the past, I was informed that no change had been made, that the provisions of the law which have existed since Confederation still continue upon the Statute-book and were carried out at Halifax, that is the clause which gives the power to the collector of Customs, or such other officer as may be chosen, to adopt such regulations as he may think best in the interests of the revenue, and to allow the packing and repacking of any fish which is brought into the country while in bond. The clause reads as follows:—

"During the regular warehouse hours, and subject to such regulations as the collector or proper officer of Customs at the warehouse may see fit to adopt, as well for the carrying and taking of such goods to the warehouse, as for other purposes, such importer may sort, pack, repack, or make such lawful requirements respecting the same, in order to the preservation or legal disposal thereof, and may take therefrom, samples (and so on) for the purposes of sale or exportation."

I then made enquiry, as to whether the privileges that were given by the collector, under the authority of that clause, had been abused by any of the merchants, and I was assured by him that such had not been the case in the past. The papers, when they are brought down, will show that the inspectors could find no case in which the privileges ceded to importers and merchants had ever been violated under that clause. In looking at the question, from what has been termed by some hon. gentlemen who have spoken, the National Policy standpoint, which is to provide, as far as possible, labor for our artisans and our laborers, and freight for the vessels belonging to those who are engaged in maritime pursuits, I came to the conclusion at that time, that until it could be shown that the privileges granted by

the law, had been violated, either directly or indirectly, that this change would not be in the interest of the shippers, or of the merchants, or of the laborers in Halifax, or those who have warehouses and wharves, which were used for the purpose of resorting and repacking this fish. Being unable to come to the conclusion, that a change would be beneficial, I found myself, whether fortunately or unfortunately, exactly in accord for once with the hon. the senior member for Halifax (Mr. Jones).

Mr. JONES (Halifax). You are sure to be right then.

Mr. BOWELL. I am sorry I cannot say that the hon. gentleman is right upon all occasions. I admit that in the United States the practice is precisely that which the hon. member for Shelburne (Gen. Laurie) has pointed out. When my attention was called to the practice which had prevailed in this country, and also the restrictions which were placed upon imports to the United States, and upon fish in particular, I made enquiry, and I found that the fish there when placed in bond must be exported in the same packages, without any sorting or re-packing. Now, in this particular practice adopted in Canada, I am sure the member for Charlotte (Mr. Gillmor) will give the Government and the department over which I preside credit for carrying out a policy which is a little more liberal than that, and especially will he give us credit when that policy is in the interests of our shippers and our laborers. If a change be made in the regulations, as has been suggested, then there would be a restriction placed upon the importation of fish which is not placed by the law upon any other article. It is true that coal is imported, and, knowing the difficulty which presented itself in the bonding of coal, one of the first regulations which I suggested, and which was carried out by the Government, was to allow importers of coal to bond the article in their yards, making an entry of the full quantity when imported, and obliging them to account for it, either weekly, or fortnightly, or monthly—large railway enterprises and companies were given a longer time in which to make their entries and their returns, than others—so that while the revenue was protected in that respect, the merchant and the importer of coal had not to pay the full amount of duty until the coal was sold. The same system prevails in the bonding of pig iron, and bar iron, and all larger articles which are bulky and very heavy; they are allowed to go into the merchants' yards, exposed almost to any person who might go into the yard to take them away, but no ill result has been found to follow from that practice, and, consequently, I think the House will agree with me in saying that it would be a very great hardship if the merchants were compelled by regulations of the kind to which I have referred, to place coal in bonded warehouses under lock and key which would be held by Customs lockers. Until some injury can be shown to result from this practice, I do not think it would in the interest of the trade that it should be interfered with. When the ex-member for Lunenburg, the member for Shelburne (Gen. Laurie), and the member for Gloucester (Mr. Burns), called my attention to the articles which have been published in the papers relative to charges which had been made against certain Halifax merchants, that they had been importing French fish and in the curing of it under the practice which had prevailed that they had substituted Canadian fish therefor and exported them to Italy, thereby enabling them to have it entered at a lower rate of duty than if it were French bounty-paid fish, I at once referred all the letters and newspaper articles to the Inspector of Customs for the Province of Nova Scotia, who after enquiry made a very full and exhaustive report which will be brought down, he was unable to discover that the law had been in any respect violated. I have also been unable to find by the investigations which I have caused to be made that the equivalent of the fish imported has ever been exported for