

Mr. BLAKE. Will the hon. minister, who, though not a philosopher, will perhaps call himself a practical man—because it is said these qualities are antagonistic to one and other, though I do not understand how they can be—tell us whether the inspection is now going on?

Mr. MOUSSEAU. No; it is not.

Mr. BLAKE. Is the hon. member for Halifax satisfied?

Mr. DALY. There are inspectors of fish.

Mr. BLAKE. But I mean inspectors of smoked fish in Charlotte. I know there are inspectors of some kinds of fish in some localities, but we are speaking of this kind of fish in this locality. The hon. member for Charlotte (Mr. Gillmor), who knows of this subject, says that almost the whole production of this particular article is in his county, and he says the trade of these fishermen is almost exclusively with the United States ports, and that it does not reach Montreal or Halifax. This statement is not denied by the hon. Minister; he does not say that he has informed himself that this trade reaches the ports of Montreal and Halifax, and, therefore, I fail to see what interest the Boards of Trade of those cities have with the particular question, or why their verdict or opinion as philosophers that this is a good thing to be done, with reference to a trade which does not concern them, should be taken as a sufficient basis for putting a law into operation. Therefore, I say that my hon. friend from Bothwell (Mr. Mills) was right in saying that the hon. Minister did not lay a foundation for asking the consent of the House to this measure. The hon. member for Charlotte (Mr. Gillmor), and the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Anglin), told us of the difficulties of the actual inspection of the vexatious character of the impost, and of what this burden will be in its mitigated form, but the only answer which the hon. member makes is to flourish a memorial from the Boards of Trade of Halifax and Montreal. As my hon. friend from Gloucester (Mr. Anglin) says, this may be a small matter, but we are bound to deal with a measure which materially affects only a small portion of the population just as tenderly as if it affected a larger number of persons. And if you find that a small number of persons, with a narrow trade from which they obtain only a moderate subsistence, are to be burdened with an impost of a vexatious character and which involves a tax of five per cent. on their gross catch of this particular article, then I say that in this respect the question is a serious one. I agree with the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills), that the hon. Minister has not made out a case for the enforcement of such a law, though I do not say that a case might not be made out.

Mr. LANGEVIN. This Bill which it is proposed to amend has not been amended in any particular since it was introduced, and it would be as well that the House should read the present Bill so that they may know for what they are voting, and what foundation there is in the arguments of hon. gentlemen opposite. The Bill consists of only one clause, and is as follows:—

Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows:—

The Act passed in the forty-third year of Her Majesty's reign, intitled: 'An Act to amend 'The General Inspection Act of 1874,' and the Act amending it,' is hereby amended by repealing the tariff of fees to be collected for the inspection of smoked herrings, contained in the third section of the said Act, and substituting the following:—

a For each box of smoked herrings—one cent.

b For each half-box of smoked herrings—one-half cent.

c For each quarter-box of smoked herrings—one-quarter cent.

Now, what does the hon. member for Charlotte (Mr. Gillmor) propose? Does he wish the law of last year to remain as it is? Does he wish the tax on each box of smoked herring to remain double what it is now proposed to make it?

Nevertheless, the hon. gentleman's motion proposes nothing else than to give the Bill the six months' hoist.

Mr. BLAKE. Not at all.

Mr. LANGEVIN. That is the meaning of it. The present Bill simply proposes to reduce the tax on each box of smoked herring, and this is a reduction which was promised by my late colleague the present Judge Baby, but which was overlooked at the time, and is now introduced. The hon. member for West Durham (Mr. Blake) says the law is a dead letter. You have not appointed inspectors, and the law is a dead law. What would have been the consequence had we appointed inspectors last year?

Mr. BLAKE. I am not complaining of your inaction.

Mr. LANGEVIN. I hope I am not misrepresenting what the hon. gentleman said. He stated we had not appointed inspectors. Why? Because, if we had appointed them they would have had to collect fees, and by delaying the appointment of inspectors we have given time to Parliament to look over the law again and to reduce the fees. We have asked the House to take that course, and the House assented in so far that there has been no amendment until now. Here we are at the third reading of the Bill, and an amendment is proposed at the last moment by the hon. member for Charlotte, and if it is put I hope the House will vote it down.

Sir RICHARD J. CARTWRIGHT. I desire to correct a misapprehension of the hon. Minister. He has stated that the motion of the hon. member for Charlotte is simply to go back into Committee and to make the fees as they were before. As I understood the motion, it is to make the fees optional, and thereby relieve all those fishermen in his district who do not believe that this measure will be any benefit to them. Whatever may be the merits of the case itself, it is perfectly clear that my hon. friend's motion goes to the root of the whole matter. It is to relieve those poor men, who lead that very laborious and very dangerous existence, from the necessity of parting with a large part of their profit to pay these inspection fees. I must say that, although I do not profess to have any knowledge of the fishery question in the Maritime Provinces, this House ought to be most careful not to impose any burden whatever on men who, as we all know, are engaged in the prosecution of a calling so laborious and so dangerous as that of fishermen.

Mr. LAURIER. The hon. member has altogether misconceived the true meaning of the amendment of the hon. member for Charlotte. He does not propose that the fees be reduced; he only asks that inspection should be optional in the county of Charlotte. The law of 1877 does not apply to the whole Dominion, but only to such portions where inspection districts are organized. There are inspection districts organized in all the Maritime cities, and in all those cities the inspection is compulsory whenever the fish is shipped. The fees for inspection have been very high so far, and the hon. member for Charlotte anticipates that if the fees for inspection are decreased the inspection districts will be multiplied, and that, sooner or later, the county of Charlotte will become part of an inspection district. If, to-morrow, for instance, the county of Charlotte were organized into an inspection district, inspection would immediately become compulsory, and that is what the hon. member objects to. The hon. member says that at present a large part of the smoked fish produced in his county is shipped from that county to the United States without being inspected, and he proposes that wherever there are inspection districts inspection should not be made compulsory, but left optional; so that if, to-morrow, the Government organized his county as an inspection district, then the law shall not make inspection compulsory, as it is now. He does not ask to have the law altered—he could not, as the