

LIGHT DUES.

The PRESIDENT said that Mr. FRY, (Quebec,) late President of the Board, asked, before the orders of the day were called, to bring forward two matters which it was desirable should be acted upon at this meeting.

Leave having been granted,—

Mr. HENRY FRY (Quebec) said—When I was in London last winter I was very kindly invited by Mr. Lloyd, the member for Plymouth, and Chairman of the Association of Chambers of Commerce, to take part in the deliberations of that body at the Annual Meeting in London. One of the questions which came up was that of Light Dues, upon which I made a few remarks pointing out the hardship of these dues to Canadian shippers. The Committee appointed by the Associated Chambers were not successful in securing the removal of these dues, and they were very anxious that this Board should take some action in the matter. They thought that we could take stronger ground than they could, as we supported our own lights and charged British shipping nothing for them. I promised to bring the matter before this Board, and it is one that particularly interests so large a ship-owning port as St. John. In order that I may lay before the Board the facts of the case in a concise form, I will read some extracts from a memorial on the subject submitted to the President of the Board of Trade :

"That the Lighthouses on the coasts of the United Kingdom are in the management of the Corporation of the Trinity House, the Commissioners of Northern Lights and the Ballast Board of Dublin, with powers, subject to the supervision of the Board of Trade, to levy dues on shipping for the maintenance of such lighthouses.

"That the Light Dues, as at present levied, amount to £406,000 per annum, and are in the opinion of your memorialists unequal in operation and unjust in principle—unjust in principle by reason that, as a tax falling ultimately on the consumers of sea-borne commodities, they are levied indirectly, and in the most expensive and prejudicial manner.

"That a Royal Commission sat in 1858-61 on the subject of Lighthouses, and after referring in their report to the constitution of the various boards of management, reported that—

"The government of Lighthouses in the United Kingdom, their management and construction, are all confided to bodies of gentlemen of various employments, none of which necessarily afford them an opportunity of acquiring a knowledge of those branches of science which bear upon Lighthouse illumination.

"The principal in all foreign countries seems to be that Lighthouse illumination, being highly important, and requiring special knowledge of certain subjects, should be entrusted to persons acquainted with these subjects, and that the government should be centralized;

"That the cost of maintaining the lighthouses would, in the opinion of your memorialists, be greatly reduced, were they placed under the direct control of one of the Government departments, instead of as at present having separate and expensive establishments almost entirely occupied with their administration. The number of lighthouses in the United Kingdom, for the maintenance of which light dues are collected, is about 230. The expenditure on these in 1870 was £291,872, or equal to £1,269 per lighthouse.