

What regulations shall be enacted in the matter, whether they will require the fish to be of a certain size or weight, or whether it will be merely left to the inspector, by looking at the fish or handling them, to decide whether they belong to the first, second or third class, we cannot imagine. But we do know that a great deal of trouble will be imposed on these people, and that there is no commercial need of those regulations. The trade is almost entirely a local trade. Those engaged in it for many years know what is best in their own interest, in putting up this fish, and, therefore, what is best calculated to please their customers and procure the best prices obtainable. Perhaps there is some idea this smoked herring will be assorted also, and, if so, we should consider the amount of trouble that will be occasioned, leading to such small results. I do not know that any fish from the county of Charlotte comes to the Montreal market. My impression was it went almost entirely to the United States, very little coming to St. John. People leave out the idea of any inspection of smoked herring. Every man can choose for himself whether the herrings are of the better or inferior quality. There is no necessity of ascertaining whether the fish has been sent to the market in that condition. My conviction is that any inspection will be merely officious, harassing and annoying; and if it takes out of the county of Charlotte \$3,000 a year, there is no good reason for imposing so heavy a burden upon a class who at present find it exceedingly difficult to provide the ordinary necessities of life for themselves. The Bill will affect but one or two localities in the Lower Provinces, but it will be found by them to be a very objectionable measure, harassing, annoying, vexatious and burdensome.

Mr. MILLS. The Minister who has charge of this Bill has not given the House any information as to its character. He is bound, however, to make out a case in its favor; the burden of proof is upon the hon. gentleman when he proposes a measure imposing restrictions on trade—to control and regulate an article produced by private parties, and deciding upon what conditions it shall be sold. But he has not done so, nor has he shown that the fish to be subjected to compulsory inspection is of less marketable value than the fish from other countries. If he had undertaken to show that the smoked herring caught in the vicinity of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are not as well cured as herring caught elsewhere, and, consequently, brought a lower price, owing to their inferior quality—that if differently classified, they would command a higher price, and that, comparing them with the fish caught elsewhere, they were inferior for the want of such inspection and classification, he would have made out a case in favor of that measure. But he has not attempted anything of the sort. He proposes to take a leap in the dark. He says the member for Charlotte (Mr. Gillmor) does not know what the consequences will be, because a measure of this sort has never been tried. But we are not obliged to make experiments before we know the consequences. When you subject an article to a burden of ten or fifteen per cent. of its value, it should be shown that some great advantage is thereby to be obtained. If the hon. gentleman could show that, by this inspection, the fish would bring five per cent. more, in sale, he would not even then make out a case for the measure. To do so, he must show that this burden on the fishermen, occasioned by this inspection, will be a fair test of the additional price they will obtain in consequence of it. He has not, however, attempted anything of the sort. He has no warrant in the action of the United States, or any other country, for the course he has called on this House to take. He has been wanting in his duty to this House in asking it to support a measure of this sort, without having submitted a tittle of evidence to show it would be productive of any advantage to the people engaged in the trade.

Mr. DALY. I think the arguments adduced by the hon. members for Gloucester and Bothwell, rather tend to sup-
Mr. ANGLIN.

port the measure before the House, for this reason: that, instead of enacting an Inspection Law, we are now, in reality, asking the House to pass a measure for the amendment of the law hitherto prevailing. The inspection fee paid last year has been considered excessive. This Bill, I think, proposes a reduction from two cents to one cent per box; and if there is to be an inspection at all—and we think it desirable—the arguments of the member for Gloucester would go towards opposing the law and not the reduction contemplated. In the interests of the fishermen, which the member for Gloucester is advocating, we should support this Bill.

Mr. MOUSSEAU. The philosophical gentleman who represents Bothwell has propounded a new law of evidence. He says the burden of proof in this case rests on the shoulders of the Government. To prove what? That the execution of this proposed law will produce no bad results. The hon. member for Charlotte says: "The law you are introducing is already in existence, but has never been executed; but I believe that, if carried out, it will produce bad results." Now, there is a provision here, in the first section, for an amendment of the law to secure a better inspection of fish. I believe, all things considered, and notwithstanding the objections of the hon. member for Bothwell, that a measure such as the present, to secure a proper and reliable inspection of fish is desirable, not only in the interest of the trade but in the interest of the public.

Mr. BLAKE. My hon. friend stigmatizes the hon. member for Bothwell (Mr. Mills) by a title which I am sure we will all agree the hon. gentleman (Mr. Mousseau) will never deserve himself, because it is clear that his conduct with reference to this measure indicates that he is not animated by the philosophical spirit in dealing with matters of legislation. The law in question is a permissive law so far as the Government is concerned—it is of a general character, and applicable to a great number of articles of production. As to this particular article of commerce, or production, it has never been brought into execution at all. It is quite true, as the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Daly) has said, that the proposal before the House is one to mitigate in some particulars the severity of the law, but it is also true that the hon. Minister proposes that the law shall be no longer in this respect a dead letter. He proposes to enforce the law, and contemporaneously with its enforcement to mitigate the fees to be charged, and therefore we are to-day face to face with the question whether the law shall or shall not be enforced with respect to this particular article. The Minister has said that although not a philosopher, he is disposed to try an experiment, and he will try his experiment upon the fishermen of Charlotte and perhaps other counties, though I believe the County of Charlotte is the one mainly interested. But why is he to try his experiment upon them? To settle a question in dispute between those who are engaged in trade, and the Boards of Trade of Halifax and Montreal. He says the people at those ports think it would be a good thing to pass the law; the fishermen themselves say it would be a bad thing to pass the law, and the hon. gentleman, not being a philosopher, does not pretend to solve the question by an effort of reasoning, but he says, let us put the law in force; let us apply the test; and though I am not a philosopher, next Session I will have found out by experience, which is the only way I have of learning these things, how the law works.

Mr. DALY. Will the hon. gentleman pardon me if I interject the remark that we passed the law last year, and brought it into operation.

Mr. BLAKE. No.

Mr. DALY. Yes; the law came into operation and fixed a scale of fees which we are now seeking to mitigate.