

took the hon. gentleman's statement to be accurate. I was prepared, had he done last Session what he intimated it was his intention of doing, to have sustained him by my vote in equalizing the test, as I quite agreed with him that it was a very great additional disadvantage that the attempt to encourage manufactures should be done in an indirect way, under false pretences, and in a manner in which the public could not calculate what the effect of the protection was or what was the exact operation of the whole system. I am not imputing to the hon. gentlemen on the Treasury benches that they did not really entertain these sentiments with which they pressed those Bills; I am speaking of what I believe to have been the views on which inequality of tests were pressed by those interested on the attention of hon. gentlemen opposite. That is all admitted now. Hon. gentlemen have found that the arguments that were then advanced were worthless, that public safety does not require an inequality of tests, that public safety is secured by a fair test, and exactly the same test being applied to American and Canadian oil. There remains the serious question whether the test is not fixed too high in order to keep out safe American oil. I fear it is. Hon. gentlemen have also found, of course, that public sentiment was not such as would admit, in view of the results of that mode of protection, the adoption of the National Policy in this particular department of it; yet the hon. gentleman told us the other day that it was a mixed system under which the public safety would be assured, and a little additional protection introduced. Now, what follows from all this? This follows. When the same source, which you have found misled the Government, the House and the country for some years with respect to the fire test, proposes a new gravity test, you have a right a little to suspect the representations made by those persons; and when to that is added the fact that the gravity test was propounded not in public, not in a manner in which the House had any practical means of forming or expressing an opinion upon it, it is less entitled to respect. My hon. friend for Stanstead (Mr. Colby) says it behoves us to be excessively cautious how we interfere. Were we not rash in interfering in 1879 and 1880? It is well to recall the circumstances under which the prohibitory gravity test was introduced and placed upon the Statute-book. Resolutions were introduced by the late Minister in 1879, which he declared had regard to the fire test. Neither in his speech nor, as far as I recollect, in his resolutions was a word said about the gravity test. It appeared for the first time in the Bill. There was no explanation given about it in the House. As far as appears from official reports of the House—I was not then a member—and without any statement being made, it passed through the House wholly unobserved. It was inserted in a law which the House was told was designed to deal with the fire test, and this new prohibition with regard to oil became the law without one word of explanation, of discussion, or without any opportunity being given to those concerned to make their representations, to give their explanations, to consider the matter, or to the House to form an opinion upon it. In that way a prohibitory gravity test of 807 found its way on the Statute-book. What happened during the Session? The hon. Minister found this Bill of 1879, which had been carried through the House in a very great hurry as far as the fire test was concerned, and with still greater celerity and less discussion certainly, as far as the gravity test was concerned, did not answer the purpose. The fire test being the subject of very much discussion during last Session, the hon. member for Stanstead (Mr. Colby) having from an early period intimated his intention to move an equalization of the tests on American and Canadian oils—the Government having, as we know people constantly in communication with them, persons sitting in the Library and about the House almost the whole Session in

connection with the question, in the interest of the oil refiners, I believe, or of some of them—I say the Government then brought in resolutions, and the Minister announced that those resolutions dealt solely with the question of the fire test. The hon. gentleman did not say a word about the gravity test under the resolutions. The House was not told it was intended to alter the gravity test in any way or shape; the Bill was brought in, run through the House, and passed its stages in about five minutes, without one word from the Minister to inform the House that the Bill dealt with anything else than the fire test. I would like to know how many hon. members knew that the prohibitory gravity test of the previous Session had been by that legislation altered, and made still more rigid than it previously was? Well, the hon. gentleman has found that in both those measures as to the fire test there was error, and that in the principle of inequality there was error. He has found, practically, that in the change made in the gravity test of last Session there was error; because he now announces a willingness to alter that test and bring it to a point between the point of the Bill of 1879 and that of the Bill of 1880—to bring it up again from 802 to 805, which he informs us he believes the minimum test which is safe. As I understand him, he proposes this test on the ground of the public safety, and not from those mixed motives from which he appeared to act on a former occasion—he proposes to adhere to a prohibitory test and fix it at 805. Both these propositions are advanced—first, that the public safety requires a prohibitory gravity test, and, second, that it requires to be fixed at 805. I think when we find that it is proposed to change the action which took place at the close of the Session, after full information to the Government though not to the House, it would be more satisfactory if the hon. gentleman would give us the full details of the evidence upon which he proposes this reduction. The member for Stanstead (Mr. Colby) says there can be no scientific evidence which would prove it, that nothing in the laboratory would enable one to tell the safe point; that the test of practical experience, as the oil is sometimes used, is the only test available. Well, then, where is that, and wherever can that be which will enable us to reduce the gravity test? Will you prevent me absolutely from burning in my house or warehouse oil of a lower gravity than 805, and at the same time announce as your principle of action that, unless by the practical experience of ordinary consumption, it is impossible to tell whether any lower gravity will be safe? How in the world are we ever to know that any lower gravity would be a proper test?

Mr. COLBY. If experience proves that 805 is not safe, we may go to 807 next year, and if this figure will not answer, to 809 the year following. Do not overdo the mark.

Mr. BLAKE. I do not wish to overdo the mark. The hon. gentleman says, that in this matter experience alone is the guide—that practical experience has told us 802 is safe. Well, how does he know that 803, 804 or 805 would be safe?

Mr. COLBY. It is purely an experiment.

Mr. BLAKE. You are going to make a test. The hon. member for Stanstead states the refiner's test is not safe—that you want practical experience to guide you in fixing a test. I say there is nothing to show that any change is safe. But he says, practically, we will make a jump in the dark so far as 805—it would be dangerous to make a jump so far as 806—and that if you find 805 is not safe, by the experience of a year, we can go down to 807, obviously reducing the amount three points this year and two points next year, and, I suppose, the following year, if that is safe, one per cent. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman proposes later to go down half a point, if that is safe; but it