

right point. I am very glad that the Government now brings down the proposition I urged with great pertinacity and earnestness last Session, and that they recognize that there is no difference intrinsically between Canadian and American oils, and that they should be subjected to the same test. The Government went a long way last Session towards meeting that view, and this Session I am very glad to see that they have gone the whole length in that direction. I am very glad to know that my opinions on that subject have been confirmed by tests which I understand the department has made during the previous year. I think it would be unwise at present to tamper in any way with the fire test, and I am very glad the proposition of the Government does not propose to do so. The hon. Minister who introduced the Bill intimated his willingness, if it be the sense of the House, to relax the gravity test from 802 to 805, and I think that, perhaps, he is acting prudently. I think it may be relaxed to that extent with entire safety; possibly it might be relaxed to a greater extent. I am not at all sure that it would not be safe to relax it to 807, but I do not think it would be safe to go beyond that. In this matter we should proceed with caution. I would rather be conservative in this matter. I would rather the hon. Minister would relax the test to 805 this year, and if found safe to do so, make another relaxation to 807 next year, than take the jump from 802 to 807 this year. It is an experiment which cannot be determined with accuracy in the department itself, it must rest on experience outside the department. I think this legislation is wise and judicious and conservative. There is no doubt that the safety of oil largely depends on its gravity as well as upon the other conditions, for, in order to have a safe oil, it is necessary there should be free combustion. Anything that prevents free combustion, anything that prevents the ascent of the oil freely from the lamp through the wick, anything which has a tendency to char the wick and check the combustion of the oil increases the risk of explosion; the lamp becomes heated, and the gases which would, if there were free combustion, pass off and be consumed, are pent up within the lamp and only wait the opportunity to explode. On the whole, I am inclined to think that these propositions are entirely within the line of safety. I think the House should accept the suggestion to relax the gravity to 805, reserving the privilege of still further relaxing the test if it were found safe to do so, rather than overstep the line and find ourselves using an unsafe oil. I have stated that these restrictions do somewhat enhance the cost of the oil, but it has not enhanced it to the extent popularly believed. The popular impression is largely due to the change in measure. This year we are using the Imperial gallon when formerly we used the wine gallon, and people, on finding they are paying several cents more per gallon for their oil, are apt to overlook the fact that they get a larger gallon than they did formerly. I happened to be absent from the country, during autumn, when a very interesting newspaper discussion was going on, and did not observe it, but since the opening of the Session I have taken some pains to ascertain what has been the cost of the oil that is used in the section of the country from which I come. I obtained from a leading dealer in oil in the Eastern Townships, a firm very reliable in its statement, a statement of the cost of oil to them per wine gallon. The cost in Portland was thirteen cents per gallon; adding the various items of freight, duty, inspection fee, duty on barrels, freight on empty barrels returned to the United States, Customs fees, Customs charges on the returned barrels, the whole amounting to 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ cents for the wine gallon, which is not an inordinate price. I believe also that similar prices have been obtained in Cleveland.

Mr. BLAKE. Are they New York prices?

Mr. COLBY.

Mr. COLBY. I have not enquired with regard to New York prices. I have enquired with regard to Portland and Boston prices, with which I think Cleveland prices correspond. The firm to which I have referred, Messrs. Luke and Mitchell, have given me a statement of the cost, which amounts to 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ cents laid down at Sherbrooke. These prices should have determined the prices of Canadian oil, but it is possible they did not do so, because it is quite possible that merchants who are in the habit of ordering their oil from certain Canadian firms have kept on doing so without any reference to the prices of articles imported, and I have no doubt that, in some instances, owing to the disturbance during the autumn which is likely to occur in any branch trade for a short period, people have been paying more than was necessary to pay in consequence of any legislation that was adopted, if they had enquired as to the cost of oil in the American market. I will go as far as any man in the direction of relaxing the test in order to get cheaper oil within the line of safety. Still, I believe, we ought to be conservative in this matter, because it is one on which hon. members are very ill-informed. This question of the gravity test is not one to which many hon. members have given any special attention. What little attention I myself have given to the subject, has been rather directed to the fire than the gravity test. I am fully persuaded there should be a gravity test in order to procure safety. With these views I shall very heartily support the proposition of the hon. Minister. I believe the legislation is in the right direction. I shall be very willing, at the next Session of Parliament, if it is proved that we have not overstepped the mark in making the test 805 to 8° still further in the relaxation of the gravity test. The problem is one that cannot be solved by discussion here or by any experiments in the laboratory. It can only be solved by experience in the homes of the people.

Mr. BLAKE. To what extent will the relaxation of the gravity test tend to reduce prices?

Mr. COLBY. I believe it will lessen prices by one cent per gallon.

Mr. BLAKE. The Bill, of course, is an improvement on the law as it now stands. It is an improvement certainly to find the fire test equally applied to the imported and the native oils. I find the hon. member for Stanstead (Mr. Colby), who at an early period, with other hon. members, took that view, at length was justified by the decision of the Government itself. Sir, the circumstances under which the struggle took place and was continued, and was for so long successful, for obtaining and retaining a higher fire test for American than Canadian oil renders me somewhat suspicious of the motives which have animated those who have pressed upon the department the adoption of the gravity test; because it is admitted pretty candidly by the hon. Minister on a former, as on the present occasion, that his Petroleum Act was a combining of a regard for safety and of a regard for the National Policy. Now, the argument that was addressed to us when we were asked to sustain a difference between the fire test on Canadian and American oil was not that it was a protection to native oil. It was that the circumstances were such that, in order to secure public safety it was necessary that there should be a higher fire test on American oil. Protection, hon. gentlemen were told by the hon. member for Stanstead, and other Protectionists, they were quite willing to give Canadian oil. Hon. gentlemen said: "Whatever the Canadian manufacturer require in order to give him command of the market, we are willing to give; but we want to be honest about it; and have it put on in the shape of a duty, and by that means we shall know precisely how the thing is worked;" but the hon. gentleman asserted that this was an indirect means of giving an industry an additional amount of protection in a dishonest way under the color of a provision for the public safety. Of course, I