

and I do not want to say anything which could injure it in any way. But our fishermen need not be afraid; there is no condition of affairs that can arise that will enable a French fisherman to drive an English fisherman out of the trade. I know that some people in Halifax took an interest in a vessel fitted out at St. Pierre; but when they came to find the immense expense attending the fitting out of a vessel there, and the different modes and habits of the people in taking fish, they saw that one good smart man from Nova Scotia shores would take double the quantity of fish in a day that a French fisherman would. They found out that it made no odds that, as the hon. gentleman stated, they grant 10 francs a quintal on all the fish they export; our fishermen have been able to hold their own. There is no class of people who are more industrious and deserving than our fishermen; and any hon. gentleman who on a fine day happened to be in the port of Lunenburg and saw five or six of these fine cutters scudding up the coast, he would think he was in the presence of the royal yacht squadron at Cowes. Those vessels are finely fitted out, and are manned with our best class of people; and the fishermen of Nova Scotia need not fear competition with the fishermen of St. Pierre-Miquelon; their habits are different, and they understand their business much better than those people do. I would be sorry to advocate any course which was going to injure any industry so important to the people of the Nova Scotia. But I do not regard with any apprehension the fears which have been entertained by our fishermen in regard to the imports of late years. I believe that, if a few cargoes come, as perhaps they may come under the usual circumstances of trade, they will be absorbed and will go abroad without any injury to our own trade; and I believe that, if this matter had not been stirred up—I will not say for political reasons, because it was not that by any means; for it was raised by both sides—still, as the House will understand, the fisherman might have had the idea which he now has, that, but for French fish coming in, he could get so much more for his own. It was, therefore, very easy to get as many signatures to that petition as the hon. member for Shelburne (Gen. Laurie) has referred to. These are some of the details which are quite familiar to the Minister of Customs, who has observed the working of this matter in Halifax before, and I think he will bear me out in saying that every precaution has been taken to see that no injury to the revenue has occurred.

Mr. BURNS. It may be that the duty recently imposed on English codfish has been the same as that imposed on French codfish, but it was not so until a recent date. On many occasions I called the attention of the Minister of Customs to the fact that the practice prevailed in Halifax of bringing in French codfish and exporting them as English or Canadian codfish to Italy, in order to avoid the duty imposed in that country on French fish.

Mr. JONES (Halifax). There was never a quintal of French fish sent from Halifax to Italy at any time.

Mr. BURNS. I am advised to the contrary. In the county I represent, there are some of the largest fish establishments in the world, and I am informed by the managers of those establishments that that practice prevailed very largely in Halifax, and, in fact, all over Nova Scotia, and by it a great injustice was done to our fishermen, as fish caught by the French had the advantage over ours of a bounty of 10 francs a quintal. I have been informed that these fish were brought into Halifax and sent in British bottoms to Italy, and so evaded duty, because, in the absence of a treaty between Italy and France, a duty is imposed in the former country on French fish, and thus an injustice is alleged to have been done to our fishermen. As to the importation of fish in bond for the purpose of exportation, I am not prepared to say whether a great

Mr. JONES (Halifax).

injustice is done in that way or not, but my impression is that it does operate to the disadvantage of our own fishermen, as they are brought into undue competition with fish which are caught under the bounty system. I desire now again to call the attention of the Minister of Customs to this, and to press upon him the necessity of giving consideration to the complaint that I have made on behalf of the fishermen in my county, by ascertaining if this practice has prevailed, and, if it does not prevail now, to what extent it has prevailed in former years, because I am informed that it did prevail to a considerable extent, and that it became so notorious that some international complications resulted and that questions are even now being followed up in connection therewith.

Mr. JONES (Halifax). I ask leave to make a short explanation. The hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Burns) has referred to the export of fish from Halifax to Italy. The only cargo that, in my recollection, was shipped from Halifax to Italy was shipped by my own firm; and probably owing to some such representations as the hon. gentleman has referred to, that cargo was seized by the Italian Government as French fish, though it had the properly certificated papers from the consul and the Custom house. I immediately cabled to the High Commissioner in London, Sir Charles Tupper, and sent a member of my firm over; and I am bound to admit here that Sir Charles Tupper took the most prompt and energetic steps in the matter, and, through the Foreign Office, made the most decided representations to the Italian Government, which resulted in the release, in a week or two, of this cargo; but owing to the detention, we sustained a loss instead of making a profit, and I am now, through the High Commissioner, prosecuting a claim against the Italian Government for having improperly interfered with my property. That matter is now in the hands of the British Government, and Sir Charles Tupper says he thinks the claim is a very proper one. I say publicly that I found the greatest advantage in having a gentleman of such large experience as Sir Charles Tupper in London, having communication with the Foreign Office, and through the Foreign Office with all the consuls and with the Italian Government. But for that, I believe we would have had to submit to the injustice of paying two shillings a quintal more on our cargo; but the fact that we are prosecuting that claim against the Italian Government, and are bound to prosecute it to the end, is the best proof I can give that there was no French fish on that vessel.

Mr. BURNS. Of course, I accept unreservedly the statement of the hon. gentleman that there were no French fish on his vessel, but I think the very fact of the detention of his vessel must prove that such a practice had prevailed. The attention of the Italian Government must have been called to the circumstance that French fish were being shipped to Italy in British bottoms, and there must have been some such foundation for the seizure of the hon. gentleman's cargo.

Mr. JONES (Halifax). -I understand that the report was made from Newfoundland by some one who was interested in the business, though I do not suppose it was intended to injure me. There was no other shipload of fish sent to Italy from Halifax except that one.

Mr. EISENHAUER. A few days ago, I referred to this matter. The hon. member for Shelburne (Gen. Laurie) has gone very thoroughly over the points which I would desire to bring before the House. Our fishermen are of the opinion that if a more rigid system were followed in regard to those bonded fish, it would have the effect of keeping a large quantity of these foreign fish out of the country, and that would raise the price of our own fish. Whether that would be the case or not, I am not prepared to say. The hon. member for Halifax (Mr. Jones) seems to think that the importation of foreign fish does not affect the price of our fish. The county I