

Hon. Mr. POWER—There is a legal maxim which says the law does not pay any regard to trifles. The amendments which this Bill proposes to make in the existing tariff are mere trifles, and therefore I think it is wiser not to consider them. I may make one or two observations on the changes which are proposed by this Bill. One is to reduce the duty on binder twine from 25 to 12½ per cent. I hope it may afford a certain measure of relief to the farmers of the West who use binder twine in large quantities, but I hardly think that it will, for this reason—pretty nearly the whole business of manufacturing cordage and rope of all kinds on this continent is in the hands of a single combination. The National Cordage Company of the United States controls nearly the whole output of that country, and the Consumers Cordage Company of Canada controls the whole output of Canada except what may be made in the Central Prison at Toronto and what may be made hereafter in the prison at Kingston under the arrangements made by the Government, and the consequence is that the reduction in duty cannot materially affect the price of binder twine, because the cordage which would compete with that of the Consumers Cordage Company is the cordage manufactured by the National Cordage Company in the United States and they are one and the same concern practically. There is, therefore, no substantial competition. If the duty were removed altogether it might be worth the while of the manufacturers of the old country to make arrangements to send binder twine to Canada. Under the present circumstances, I do not think it will be, and the probabilities are that this reduction in the duty on binder twine will have a very immaterial effect. Then, as to the duty on coal oil, I do not understand that the duty has been reduced, but the regulations which go along with the tariff have imposed an almost prohibitory duty on coal oil, and these regulations have been to a certain extent modified. That will probably help to reduce the price of that very necessary article. Meanwhile the Government have the whole subject of the tariff under consideration. I suppose we may be thankful this year for very small mercies, and we may hope that by next year the eyes of the Government will be properly opened and that they will give us a material reduction in the tariff.

Hon. Mr. DEVER—If the reduction of 12½ per cent duty on binding twine does not make any difference, the entire removal of the duty would not make a difference. I think this Bill reduces the tax to a very low point, and brings fairly into competition the binding twine of other countries. Everybody must be satisfied that the duty now is merely nominal. Before New Brunswick came into the Union we used to pride ourselves that our duty was only from 12½ to 15 per cent. We thought we were doing very well, and I think still that we were doing well. I should be glad to see our tariff reduced to a uniform 12½ or 15 per cent, and I do not think that there would be any difficulty in accomplishing it and earning the gratitude of the country. This Bill is a great step in advance in the matter of binding twine, because it is certainly acceding to the wishes of the farming community, whom we are most anxious to consider. If there is any class of people that feels the effect of the high duty, it certainly is the farming interest. Therefore, when we make concessions to the farming community, it should be, and I believe it will be, satisfactory to the whole people of Canada.

Hon. Mr. BOWELL—I have no complaint whatever to make of the comments made by the hon. gentleman from Halifax, but I think if he had carried his logic a little further he would have come to the same conclusion as my hon. friend from St. John. If the reduction from 25 per cent to 12½ per cent is to be of no benefit because the market is controlled by the American combine, that combine would exist to just as great an extent if the market were free, and consequently if they control the market now with the duty lowered to 12½ per cent, they would control it if we had no duty at all. If they charge an exorbitant price now, they would continue to charge an exorbitant price then, were it not for the advantage given to the manufacturers in Germany and England to compete with them under a duty of 12½ instead of 25 per cent. In reference to coal oil, we import into this country some 10,000,000 gallons per annum for consumption, and the reduction of from 3 to 4 cents per gallon is no small decrease. That is brought about by the facilities which are offered to the importers of that oil by the removal of the restrictions which existed formerly in reference to the