

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

Select Committee on the Newfoundland Trade.

Jovis, 19^o die Junii, 1817.

MICHAEL ANGELO TAYLOR, Esq. in the Chair.

George Garland, Esq. called in ; and Examined.

*George Garland,
Esq.*

YOU reside at Poole?—I do.

How long have you carried on your trade to Newfoundland?—I have carried it on for about 15 years, having had the conduct in England for about 15 years more.

Are you deputed from the merchants of Poole, to state to the Committee the difficulties under which the Newfoundland merchants now labour?—I am.

What are the difficulties under which the Newfoundland merchants now labour?—They are various; I will state them in their order. Perhaps it would save the time of the Committee, and make the whole more intelligible, if I refer to minutes I have made, as well from my own observation, as the facts which have come to my knowledge. It may not be improper for me to preface my statement with a brief account of the mode of conducting the trade. When this trade was first established, the merchants and their immediate servants were the only classes of persons engaged in it. The merchant residing in England made his outfit in the Spring of the year, both as it respected the number of servants he engaged, and the quantity of provisions and tackle he provided, on a scale proportioned to the extent to which he intended to carry on the fishery; the fish was wholly caught, cured, and exported by his own servants, and a very small establishment (if any) was left in the island through the winter. In process of time, however, a third class of persons sprang up, consisting of servants or sailors, who had chosen to remain in the island after the period of their servitude had elapsed, and of their descendants born in Newfoundland. These persons, denominated Planters, procured supplies of all the necessaries of life, and implements for the fishery, from the merchants, engaging to pay for the same in fish and oil. It soon became apparent, that this division of labour was best calculated to promote the success of the fishery; the merchant attending to those parts of the trade which were strictly commercial, such as procuring the needful articles of provision, clothing, implements, and, in short, every necessary whatsoever, which he lodged in his stores, and issued from time to time to the planters as their occasions required, and in the Autumn receiving the fish and oil in payment, which he exported to such parts of Europe as his judgment directed; whilst, on the other hand, the planter was solely occupied in the catching and curing of fish and preparing the oil, for which his laborious habits peculiarly fitted him, and in which his own interest prompted him to the utmost diligence. So preferable has this mode of conducting the trade been found, that it has been gradually superseding the mode first adopted; and, at the present time, the quantity of fish caught by the servants of merchants is extremely trifling; whilst that caught by the planters and their servants, is equal to the demand of every market in the world. I come now to the proof of the distress and depression of the trade. It has diminished immensely in its extent, within the last year. This indeed may not appear to be the case, from the official returns of the exports and imports in Newfoundland in 1816, in which returns the quantity of fish exported is stated to have been upwards of a million quintals; but the Committee will remark, this return is for the period between October 1815 and October 1816; and as the greater part of the catch of each season is exported after the month of October, the return in question relates in reality more to the catch of 1815 than of 1816. It is the opinion of those best informed on the subject, that the whole catch of the last year did not exceed 700,000 quintals. Another striking symptom of the distress and depression of the trade, is to be found in the want of employment for the
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