

no disadvantage to the export of our own products. The hon. gentleman, answering an objection which I suppose he anticipated would be raised by those who took a different view, said that if the fish were not sent to Halifax, they would be sent direct to the West Indies, but he went on to explain that those fish were not sufficiently cured to enable them to be sent to the West India market. I may inform the hon. gentleman—and to that extent it will strengthen his argument—that the fish from the French Islands are, as a class, superior to our own bank fish cured in our own country; that they are fit for any market in the West Indies, and as he anticipated or as others would say, this fish if they did not come to Halifax would go to the West Indies direct from St. Pierre, as they have been in the habit of being sent for many years past, and when there they would fill up the markets which are supplied, as a rule, from Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. If this fish is sent to Halifax, our people have the advantage of handling them, they have the advantage of packing them, and they have the advantage of employing their vessels to send them to the West Indies and of bringing return cargoes back to Halifax. Therefore, so far as that is concerned there is no loss to the commerce of the country. It is not unnatural, I suppose, that when a question is brought forward by interested parties, that a class of people, even fishermen, intelligent as they are, are very soon led to believe that their interests are seriously infringed from the importation of French fish. The conclusion would be that the agitation which was gotten up among the fishermen along the coast, resulted in the petition which the hon. gentleman says has been so largely signed and now presented to this House. I say, Sir, it was not at all unnatural that those people should take that view of it, because we know, if you go to parties who are interested in any branch of trade, and point out to them that the same class of goods is coming in from abroad and that they think they are not getting as much from what they are producing as they should get, that they will naturally arrive at the conclusion that it is owing to the importation of a small quantity of a similar article from another country. That was the way with regard to this French fish. I might give the House a slight history of this question, and, going back three or four years, I may point out that in 1884 there were no French fish imported into Nova Scotia at all, and the price of our bank cured at that time was \$2.25 per quintal. I admit that this was a very low price for our own fish, but the price was not affected by any importation from abroad. In 1885 the price of our own bank fish was \$2.75 per quintal, and there was no import of French fish to create this low price. Therefore, the French fish were not responsible for those low rates. In 1886 a small quantity of about 1,000 quintals came in from the French Islands, and the price of our fish was \$1.90 and subsequently advanced as the season went on. Therefore, during this season again the importation of French fish was no factor in the low rates which prevailed for our own products. In 1887 some fish was imported in the early part of the year when our own cure opened at \$3.25 per quintal, but the price subsequently advanced until in the latter part of the season it reached \$4 per quintal, showing that the importation in the earlier part of the season of a small quantity of fish had no effect whatever in lowering the price of our own article. In 1880, 18,000 or 20,000 quintals of French fish were imported when our own fish was selling at \$4 per quintal, a price which, I may say in presence of any gentleman who is familiar with that grade of fish, was a remunerative price indeed. Unfortunately, the catch happened to be very light in the early part of that season, and the price went up to \$4 a quintal, and some fish came in from St. Pierre and sold at that rate. But the season went on, and the small quantities of French fish that came into the market were absorbed, and our own

fish advanced to \$4.25 per quintal. Therefore, the fish from St. Pierre had no effect whatever in lowering the price of our fish; but our fishermen, unfortunately for themselves, thought they would be able to control the prices of fish, and they kept back their catch. They did not recollect that Newfoundland, with its large catch, was alongside of us, and that fish would be imported from St. Johns if prices went too high. Although \$4.25 was paid for bank fish of our own product, they still refused to bring in their fish, and they held them over till spring, and then, crowding them into the market, forced prices down to \$2.25 or \$2.50 per quintal, losing \$2 per quintal, which they might have obtained in addition if they had brought them in early. There was not a French fish in the market to contribute to this result. All the fish from St. Pierre had gone out last fall; though to-day, I suppose, our fishermen, smarting under the losses they have suffered from their own bad judgment in not bringing their stock to market, are inclined to put them down to every cause but the legitimate cause. The hon. gentleman has referred to the quantities of French fish that go to the Mediterranean. If the hon. gentleman had read the Newfoundland papers and the reports of the Chamber of Commerce there, he would have learned that they attribute the preference that is given to the French fish in the Mediterranean ports to the fact that they are much better made, that they arrive in better condition, in much smaller quantities than the fish that come from Newfoundland. Early in the autumn their custom is to take from 10,000 to 15,000 quintals of fish from Labrador. They take them in all kinds of weather, half made, pack them damp and green, and send them to Genoa, Leghorn or Naples, and they arrive there in a condition that compares very unfavorably with the condition of the Icelandic and Norwegian fish. The fish from Iceland and Norway are sent in immensely increasing quantities to Portugal, Spain and the Mediterranean ports; and that is one of the things which have largely affected the trade of Newfoundland in that part of the world. That is, no doubt, entirely owing to the inferior quality of the fish the Newfoundlanders send there, compared with the fish which they are brought into competition with. The hon. gentleman has asked that the Government should take means of seeing that fish are handled in a different manner. The question first is, is it in the interest of commerce to exclude these fish from our ports? Next, if they are allowed to come in, should they be exceptionally dealt with? We know that the importers of wheat, when they bring it from abroad, are allowed to handle it in bond and to export it in different packages from those in which it was imported; we know that coal is not left in a bonded warehouse, but is exposed to the atmosphere; and a good many other articles are treated in the same way. Fish must naturally go into a store that is dry; a damp store would impair its value. Hence, when cargoes of fish have come in, the Customs authorities have allowed them to go into ordinary fish stores to be dried and then exported. I cannot see how that course has caused any loss to the revenue or any injury to any branch of our commerce, and I hope the Government will hesitate before they impose any restrictions upon, or hamper what may be a very necessary part of our foreign trade. We know that if these fish come to us, we can export them in bond to Portugal, where the duties are the same as ours; and now they can go to Italy as well. For these reasons I cannot see what steps can be taken, or, indeed, what steps are necessary, to make any change in this regard. These fish have been coming during the last few years, and no injury has arisen. They were not coming in this year when prices were very low, and were not contributing to those low prices. A few came in last year when all the fish our fishermen had to dispose of could have been sold at very high rates, if they had been willing to accept the market prices. Our fishing industry is a great industry,