

SESSIONAL PAPER No. 18

Bread for the People, as well as for the Army : Humanity, as well as Policy justifies the measures—a few Interested Traders would have been dissatisfied and would have endeavored to have made a Clamor against it in London, but in Canada it would, instead of a Revolt which some People affected to fear, have given general Satisfaction to the Canadians who looked for it and Stood in need of it, & would have given them a Confidence in that Government, whereas there are not wanting people to insinuate to them that they could not rationally expect Redress from a Council, one half of which at least was Composed of Dealers in Wheat & Meal Mongers.¹—

The Legislative Council, having resolved not to fix the Price of Wheat and Flour by Ordinance, were pretty unanimous in preparing & passing one to prevent the exportation of Provisions for two years, tho' there is nothing repugnant to the Laws of Trade in the Ordinance,—Yet not to interfere with the Custom-house, the Legislative Council required the Naval Officer to take the Bonds &^{ca} tho' that Business could have been done with more ease to the Merchants at the Custom-House. The Ordinance received my Assent & I hope will next Year be productive of good Consequences in keeping low the Price of Provisions, as I will on my part be Careful that the Respective Officers be diligent in putting it in Force.²—

As many of the Members who were averse to fixing the Price of Wheat and Flour, had declared their Readiness to Concur in passing an Ordinance against Ingrossing, Forestalling & regratting in place of the Address to me for the Renewal of the Proclamation, the Heads of an Ordinance were prepared accordingly. In consequence of the successful attempt to engross the Wheat in the Spring 1779, which I have already mentioned to Your Lordship, I had Consulted the Attorney General & Received his opinion in writing that the Statute of Edward the sixth against Ingrossers Forestallers & Regrattors was in force within this Province. In Conformity with that Opinion and with the advice of a Quorum of the Council I issued a Proclamation declaratory of that Law, & of the Method of convicting Offenders by the Justice of the Peace in their Quarter-Sessions without the Intervention of a Jury which in this Case was the most advisable mode of Prosecution, as the Old Subjects who give the Ton on Juries are Traders and few of them have any Objection or Scruple to get Money whether by Ingrossing, Forestalling or Regrattig

The Legislative Council made the Same Statute the Basis of the Ordinance & extended the Offence of Ingrossing and Forestalling to the Proprietors of milk & Manufacturers of Flour, As otherwise a Combination

¹ That Haldimand's suspicion of the grain merchants was really unfounded, and that he was virtually holding them responsible for an unusual dearth of food products in the face of an unusually large consumption, was afterwards abundantly proved even from his own despatches. The grain merchants were ultimately prohibited from either buying or selling grain, yet the price was not lowered; the bakers were then regulated, but without increasing supplies; finally, it was resolved to compel the farmers, with the aid of search warrants, to bring out their supposed hoards, still nothing of consequence could be extracted from them until the following harvest.

² This Ordinance was entitled, "An Ordinance To Prohibit, for a limited time, the exportation of wheat, pease, oats, biscuit, flour or meal of any kind; also of horned cattle; and thereby to reduce the present high price of wheat and flour." See Ordinances, 1763-91, p. 100.