

if you please, but perfectly safe? It is contrary to the general principle on which it is proper to act with reference to staple commodities. We do not, as a rule, prohibit the public from acquiring what they wish to acquire, unless the public safety requires that there should be a restriction. The public safety does require a flash restriction, and the question is, what is the proper flash test? But the safety of the public does, in no sense, as far as I can ascertain, require this test of specific gravity. You are extending without cause the principle, and extending it in a manner which, I think, is wholly indefensible. What is the consequence of this extension? The consequence is that you are wasting a very great proportion of the crude oil, and you are increasing the expense of producing the refined oil. Our oil is naturally dense, much denser than the American oil. I have learned from refiners that it has been found extremely difficult to refine the oil up to the point of 820; not unfrequently does it require a second, perhaps a third refining, in order to get it to the point. The transaction involves, in the first place, a waste of a very considerable proportion of the crude oil, so that where out of a barrel of crude so many gallons of fair illuminating oil can be obtained, if you do not apply this prohibition, the yield will by virtue of the prohibition be reduced by several gallons. Secondly, it involves considerable additional expense in manufacture to produce oil of a gravity of 802. Therefore, as to quantity and expense of production, the legislation requires that more crude oil shall be used, and that greater expense shall be incurred by refiners to produce illuminating oil than is necessary. Were the Government to apply the principle of the General Inspection Act of 1874, and have illuminating oils inspected and graded, first, second and third class, the public would be protected; but it is wholly indefensible to prohibit the sale of that which may be useful to the public, and both diminish the quantity of refined you can get from a barrel of crude oil and increase the cost of producing refined oil. For these reasons I desire to know the true inwardness of this law, to know upon what representations the Government was induced to propose such an exceptional provision. I desire this information all the more because I observe in another branch of the Legislature this unfortunate Act is once more before us. A Bill has been introduced there altering again the Act of 1879. Therefore we will have the subject before us in a few days, by which time I hope this information may be made accessible.

Mr. ORTON. The remarks of the leader of the Opposition are very important. I fail likewise to see why this law should exist; I do not see why coal oil should not be graded the same as flour, fish or any other commodity. The effect of this law is no doubt to increase very largely the price of coal oil. I will ask the indulgence of the House while I read an extract from a letter I have received on this subject:

"If you desire to get coal oil at proper prices for the benefit of the consumer, when the Inspection Bill comes up get the clauses requiring it to be of a certain weight 8 lb. and 2-100ths struck out and get it graded like flour, fish, hides or any other inspected commodity. See 37 Vic., c. 45 (1874)."

"This gravity business is the last kick of the ring who have been running the business for the last eight or nine years, and if upset will, I fancy, effectually stop them."

"I believe Mr. Atkins personally does not approve of gravity, so you have half of the battle won."

I certainly believe the writer is correct, and that the fact of keeping up this gravity test is one of the main elements in keeping up the price of coal oil.

Mr. COLBY. I am disposed to concur in the main with the observation made by the hon. member for West Durham. In the Bill which I introduced on this subject last year I did not think it necessary, in the interest of the public safety, to place any restriction with regard to the gravity of the oil. I proposed simply that a uniform test

Mr. BLAKE.

should be applied, and that test, from the information I could then obtain, I deemed to be sufficient. I have no more information than has my hon. friend as to the reasons which caused the gravity test to be introduced into the Government Bill. It may have been introduced on the representations of skilled persons, that the gravity of the oil, to a certain extent, concerns its safety. It is pretended by many refiners that it does, but I think there should be a broad margin. I do not think we should be prohibited from using oil, simply because it is of a certain gravity, unless it can be shown that it is unsafe. The argument of those who approve of the gravity test is that if the oil does not stand this test, it has a tendency to heat the metal, and consequently to affect the safety of the oil. That may be true to a certain extent. It would be well for the Government, before the Petroleum Act passes, to give special attention to that, and see whether a point cannot be fixed in which safety can be assured; but I think the principle of prohibiting people from using any staple commodity because it is not of the best quality, is an indefensible one. I cannot see any ground upon which it can be successfully defended. Let it be inspected and graded like any other article, if it be advisable, but not excluded.

Mr. MOUSSEAU. There is no correspondence such as the motion asks for. The Government in regard to the gravitation test was inspired, most likely, by three motives: first, the scientific one; next, the safety of the public, and, in the third place, a desire for protection. However, their chief care was public opinion, and if this principle of gravity was proved, as in the flash test, to operate in a manner to injure the public interest, it might be changed, perhaps, in some way. For my hon. friend the leader of the Opposition must know that in the Senate the Bill to secure the flash test in the inspection of petroleum was amended in the Senate, and that at present both American and Canadian oils were placed on a new footing. Later, however, when that Bill comes up in this House, I will be in a position to answer more thoroughly, on the part of the Government, the question which has been put.

Mr. BLAKE. There is no correspondence then to produce?

Mr. MOUSSEAU. No.

Mr. BLAKE. Then I withdraw my motion; but I take this opportunity of intimating that I will move an amendment to strike out the prohibitory clause as to specific gravity when the Bill comes before this House.

Motion withdrawn.

It being Six o'clock the Speaker left the Chair.

AFTER RECESS.

HARBORS ON THE NORTH SHORE OF LAKE ERIE.

Mr. PATTERSON (Essex), in moving for copies of reports of surveys for harbors made by the late John Lindsay, Esquire, C.E., on the north shore of Lake Erie between Point Pelee Reef and the mouth of the Detroit River, said: For several years past successive Administrations have admitted the necessity of a harbor in the neighborhood indicated by the motion. The subject has been brought under the notice of Parliament from time to time, with the result of the promise that, when the state of the public finances permitted, such a harbor would be created. Two or three years ago a gentleman was appointed as a Commissioner for our inland waters, and he laid before the Minister of Customs a report, which was placed on the Table of this House. In that report it is stated, among other important facts, that during the seven years, ending 1878, 250 wrecks occurred in that section of the lake between Point Pelee Reef and the mouth of the Detroit river, where it is proposed to establish a harbor.