

SPEECH

OF

THE HON. A. T. GALT,

ON

BRINGING DOWN THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT,

May, 10th 1864.

Hon. Mr. GALT rose and said:—

Mr. Speaker, there are circumstances under which every one must feel a certain degree of embarrassment, but there are no circumstances under which I could be expected to feel greater embarrassment than in addressing the House on the present occasion. I have, however, this consolation, that in endeavoring to perform a duty which I owe to the Government and the House in the position I occupy, I am sure in the performance of that duty I shall receive every indulgence at the hands of the House. (Hear, hear.) I am sure I will meet with kind support from the House. (Hear, hear.) I do not desire on this occasion, in fact it would not be proper for me to introduce into my statement anything of the nature of criticism or censure on the conduct of other Governments preceding this one. It shall be my duty to state to the House, as far as in my power, what the Government deem to be the financial position of the country, and how I intend to meet its expenditure. In performing the duty laid before me, I shall endeavor to make it as plain as lies in my power, and shall try to convey as fully as possible the position in which I conceive the financial affairs of the country to stand. I am sure the House will bear with me, if I do not in my first address convey that full information to which, I acknowledge, it is entitled—information which, in the multiplicity of details, connected with a financial statement, a Finance Minister may sometimes omit to give as fully as might be desired. I shall proceed briefly to advert to the position of the country during the past year. It is not necessary to refer to the expenditure and revenue for the past year; it is not necessary for me, because the accounts have long been in the hands of members, and because I know that the able gentleman who preceded me in office will himself give the fullest information with regard to any point on which the House may desire to make inquiry. Sir, I may be permitted to advert with great satisfaction to the statements brought down in the Trade and Navigation Returns; I think, considering the circumstances under which we are now placed, this ought to be a subject of congratulation, for the prosperity of the country and the advancement of its material interests are not subjects affected by party considerations.—

Whatever may be our views as to the proper persons, or the best policy, I think that when we are able to mark an improvement in the industrial pursuits of the Province, we ought all to unite in expressing our satisfaction. (Hear, hear.) And therefore I have great pleasure in referring to the introductory remarks in the Trade and Navigation Returns brought down by my hon. friend the member for Chateauguay. By these returns it would appear that the trade of the country for the past year, notwithstanding the vast war raging on our Southern frontier, is, in a very high degree, satisfactory. I will give, in very few words, a synopsis of those Trade Returns. In 1863, the Imports were set down at \$45,984,000. Excluding coin and bullion, I find the imports for 1863 to amount to \$41,313,316. The total amount of Exports is \$41,831,312, and deducting coin and bullion, \$40,146,000, which may be said fairly to balance the Imports. If we examine the exports of the country, they will be found to indicate an improvement in the Lumber Trade in a very large degree; and that they are largely in excess of the previous year. The increase has been from \$9,000,000 to 13,000,000. Another most important interest is one which immediately concerns the City of Quebec, more, perhaps, than any other—I mean the ship-building interest, which affords employment to thousands of mechanics for a long season of the year, and certainly is a source of great importance to the Ottawa lumber trade. We find that the increase was from \$988,000, in 1863, to \$2,287,000 in 1863. The increase last year over the previous year was \$1,290,000, or rather more than 131 per cent. This is a subject on which we surely ought to congratulate ourselves. We come to the agricultural interest; and, though looking at the statement of exports, there would appear to be a falling off in that most important interest. Such is not the case. It appears by the return that there is a falling off in the exports of \$1,573,000; yet,