

pounds, will frequently weigh 38 or may be 40 pounds, but nobody would say that this would contravene the law. So also, if a bag of potatoes happen to weigh 84 or 86 pounds, it would not contravene the provisions proposed by my hon. friend. I believe that in the interests of the farmers of the province of Quebec, the proposal of my hon. friend is fair and just. I do not see that it can interfere in the slightest degree with the arrangements in the province of Ontario or elsewhere, where potatoes happen not to be sold by the bag. If the proposition were made that the weight of a bushel of potatoes should be changed it would be a serious one, and I myself would not support it; but where we are adopting the weight of a measure which has not been fixed by any law of Canada, and has only been fixed by certain municipal regulations, I do not see that there is a reasonable objection to the Parliament of Canada fixing the weight of such measure in the province of Quebec. It would, in my opinion, be unfair for the members from other provinces to object to that. Of course, as suggested by my hon. friend (Mr. Fortin), if we pass this law it will override any municipal regulations imposing a penalty for the bag of potatoes not being 90 pounds.

Mr. SPROULE. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Fisher) is not well informed as to the custom in other provinces, because it is a very common thing in Ontario to sell potatoes by the bag. It is distinctly understood there that a bag of potatoes shall be one bushel and a half, or 90 pounds, and consequently it would be very confusing to make this change. If we look at the market quotations in Montreal and Toronto and find that potatoes are selling at so much a bag; then if the standard of weight be different in the two cities, one would have to enter into an elaborate calculation to find the comparative value of potatoes in these markets. That would be, to say the least, confusing.

Mr. CLANCY. We have at present a good law fixing the number of pounds for each bushel of potatoes, and no matter what the size of a bag of potatoes may be, it contains an equivalent for the bushel or some proportion perhaps in excess of it. I am unable to see that the proposed amendment would relieve the farmers from the necessity of weighing their potatoes. Suppose we fix a bag of potatoes at 80 pounds, and that a farmer without weighing it puts in 79 pounds; he would still be subject to penalties as provided under the municipal regulations. This amendment does not relieve him of the necessity of weighing. In my opinion it is a dangerous thing to change the law to suit every whim and change that may be suggested by every municipality in Canada.

Mr. TAYLOR. If potatoes that are grown in the province of Quebec were marketed
Mr. FISHER.

and consumed in that province, there could be no objection to this law passing, but such is not the case. Every year grocers and speculators from the province of Ontario, and I presume other provinces, buy potatoes in Quebec, and ship them by rail and water along the shores of Lake Ontario and the River St. Lawrence, where they are sold by the bag. If they purchase an 80-pound bag of potatoes in Montreal, then it will not comply with the Ontario regulation which requires 90 pounds; and there will be a grievance against the province of Quebec for giving light weight; for I take it that nine out of ten of the dealers will not know that this law has been passed at all. If the potatoes grown in Quebec were confined for sale and consumption to that province, there would be no objection to this amendment, but as they are sold in other provinces where the regulation is 90 pounds to the bag, then I maintain that the regulation in Quebec should be the same.

The MINISTER OF INLAND REVENUE. It would appear at first sight that this matter was a very easy matter to settle, but the more we discuss it the greater the difficulties appear to be. In order that we may consider it better I move now that the committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Committee rose and reported progress.

SUPPLY—THE BUDGET.

The MINISTER OF FINANCE (Mr. Fielding) moved that the House resolve itself into committee to consider of the Ways and Means for raising the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

He said: I rise to move, Mr. Speaker, in accordance with notice, the motion which you have put from the Chair, and before concluding my remarks I shall place upon the Table of the House a series of resolutions to which it is my desire to invite the attention of the House.

A little less than one year ago, under circumstances which perhaps marked the occasion as one of some importance in the history of Canada, I had the honour to deliver in this House my first Budget speech.

In rising to-day to perform a similar duty, I am sure that I have ample grounds on which to congratulate the House on the condition of the country, and on the results of the policy of the Government which it was my privilege to announce to the House in April last. Canada has had an eventful year, a year marked by great political advancement, material progress and steadily increasing prosperity.

Following the usual practice in Budget speeches, I shall first ask the attention of the House to a brief review of the operations of the financial year 1896-97, which ended on the 30th of June last, the accounts of which have been in the possession of the House for some