

that which has been imported. If that were done it would be a direct violation not only of the rules and regulations of the department, but of the law of the land, and any person who would do that in making his export entry would have to commit a fraud upon the revenue and make a false declaration. I have failed yet to find that any of the merchants who have been interested in this particular trade have violated the law. If they turn to clause 103 of the Customs Act, and to many other clauses in the Act, they will find that if that were done it imposes a very heavy penalty upon them. I am as anxious, and I am sure my colleagues are equally as anxious, to protect the fishermen, as any Government can possibly be. The Government have endeavored to assist the fishermen, by putting upon the free list most of the articles which they use, and the Government has also, as an indirect protection, granted them a bounty of a sum at least equal to the interest received from the American Government for giving permission to fish in our waters. I am unable to give an opinion as to the quality of the fish. I understood my hon. friend from Shelburne (Gen. Laurie), to say that in the repacking and sorting of the French fish which is imported into Canada, that Canadian fish of an inferior quality were substituted for them.

Gen. LAURIE. I never said so.

Mr. JONES (Halifax). I understood the hon. member to say so.

Gen. LAURIE. I never alluded to any interchange of fish at all.

Mr. BOWELL. I understood the hon. gentleman to say so. I made a note of his remarks: "equivalents exported for that which was imported."

Gen. LAURIE. I said "could be exported."

Mr. BOWELL. I am pointing out that I am unable to discover that any fraud has been perpetrated upon the revenue. If the fish were inferior, then I could understand that we might need to substitute Canadian fish, for the purposes of exportation. If, on the contrary, they were superior fish, there could be no possible object in doing so, unless there was a desire to impose on the foreign merchant who purchased them, under the impression that they were French fish; but I am under the impression that those who consumed the fish in Italy would know inferior fish just as well as we could, and a practice of that kind could not prevail for any length of time without being discovered. The senior member for Halifax (Mr. Jones) pointed out, I thought, somewhat clearly, that if any disadvantage to our fishermen had arisen from their obtaining a lower price for their fish than they would otherwise have done, it was their own fault, for, instead of selling their catch when they could obtain a good price, they retained it, as many merchants do their goods, in the hope of a rise, and instead of rising, fish fell in the market; and then, for some reason or other, they come to the conclusion that the fall in the value arose from the importation of French fish into this country which came into competition with theirs. But French fish, or any other fish, could not come into competition with Canadian fish, unless it were smuggled in, or having been brought in in bond, it were allowed to be taken out of the warehouse, or from the wharves, and to be taken into the market, and sold.

Mr. KIRK. Except Newfoundland fish.

Mr. BOWELL. There is no proposition to interfere with Newfoundland fish that I am aware of.

Mr. KIRK. Newfoundland fish come in free of duty.

Mr. BOWELL. I am discussing the effect of the importation of French fish, bonded and cured in this country, and the effects of such a system on the fish market of Nova Scotia. The hon. gentleman wants to divert me from that point by introducing a new question altogether, which we

Mr. BOWELL.

shall be prepared to debate when necessary. If the hon. gentleman, with his free trade views, thinks that we should impose a much heavier duty than we have now on Newfoundland and French fish and other fish, I am not prepared to say I would not go with him, and I could only congratulate myself and the House and the country on having another accession to the ranks of the National Policy party. I might say a few words in reference to the charge which has been made, that merchants in Canada who ship to Italy had been substituting Canadian fish for French fish in order to obtain access to that market. When the papers are laid upon the Table it will be shown that my officers could obtain no evidence whatever to justify that charge. I was very glad of it, because it would be a reflection upon our shippers and our largest merchants, who have been occupied in this particular trade for many years; speaking individually, I have sufficient evidence to justify me in believing that almost any amount of fraud can be perpetrated when duties are to be evaded. However, there has been no evidence adduced to my department to show that any of the merchants have been guilty of it in this instance, and I take this opportunity to bear testimony to the honesty of the merchants of the Maritime Provinces in that respect. I do not know that any more rigid system would afford any greater protection to the revenue, but if it can be shown that the fishermen can be protected any better than they are by the adoption of the rigid system which prevails in the United States, I shall be prepared to recommend its adoption to my colleagues; but the House must not forget that if that system is enforced in this country, it must of necessity deprive the laborers and artisans of the seaport towns from which these exportations take place, of the labor which they now receive in unloading, unpacking, repacking and loading again for exportation; it will deprive the warehouse men of the rents and fees they receive for the use and occupation of their wharves and warehouses where the fish are dried, packed and re-sorted; and it will deprive the vessels of this country of that quantity of freight. But if it cannot be shown that our fishermen have received in the past, or will receive in the future, any injury from the continuance of a practice which has prevailed ever since Confederation, then, I believe, and I think the House will agree with me, that it will be in the interest of the Dominion and everyone concerned, that no change should be made. But if, I repeat, it can be shown that the fishermen are injured in any way, directly or indirectly, by the practice now prevailing, I shall be very glad to recommend its discontinuance. I was a little surprised at the statement made by the junior member for Halifax (Mr. Kenny), that he was informed, or understood that these fish were placed in the private warehouses of merchants in Halifax, and were without any Customs supervision.

Mr. KENNY. I beg to correct the hon. Minister. I certainly said so, but that system prevails not only at Halifax, but wherever the fish are imported. They are placed in what are called the fish warehouses. I think that point was referred to by my hon. friend from Richmond (Mr. Flynn) and other speakers, who showed the difficulty there is in handling fish in ordinary bonded stores, which are frequently built of stone, and are damp. If I am in error, I should like any hon. gentleman who is better informed than I, to correct me; but I understand that the fish are placed in the private warehouses of merchants at Halifax and the outports.

Mr. BOWELL. What I intended to say in reply to that statement was, that they are to a certain extent placed in the fish warehouses or sheds under somewhat similar circumstances to those which my hon. friend has referred. I had made particular enquiry as to whether this was done without any Customs surveillance, as to whether the fish when imported was allowed to go into these warehouses in bond with-