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### THE COAL AND FLOUR DUTIES.

A Halifax correspondent writes to the MONETARY TIMES: "I sometimes think you deal too much in what I may call an Ontario spirit, as regards the question of coal. To carry out the policy you advocate would simply mean the shutting down and bankruptcy of an industry in which many millions are invested, the depriving of some thousands of families of a livelihood, and indirectly serious injury to our shipping, besides affecting to a ruinous extent, traders and others throughout the coal district. As there would remain only the home market, it would mean a loss of \$60,000 to \$70,000 a year to the Provincial Government, now paid as royalty. Would it reduce the price of coal in Quebec and Ontario? That is questionable, many being of opinion that the difference would go to a large extent, if not wholly, into the pockets of foreign operators. As regards the flour tax, flour is now a cheap commodity. Even Mr. Mackenzie, if I mistake not, once said in his place in Parliament, that no tax could affect the price of flour here, as its price is determined in the Liverpool market. I think he was right and that this tax can be justified on the ground that it helps the Canadian farmer and injures no one. Bread, however, should be cheaper than it is, but that is the fault not of the impost but of the bakers."

That we do not approach the question of these duties in a sectional spirit the fact of our objecting to both of them is sufficient proof. The coal duty is intended to benefit Nova Scotia, the breadstuffs duty to help Ontario. In opposing the flour and grain duties, we are not acting in a Nova Scotia spirit any more than we are acting in an Ontario spirit when we object to the coal duty. Our correspondent sees that the two duties are interdependent, that the one cannot be maintained without the other, and that if they fall they must fall together. He is willing to save both. There is a certain equity in the view he takes. Nevertheless, Nova Scotia, if polled to-morrow would probably give a large majority against the wheat and flour duties; there is scarcely room for doubt that this would be its deliberate decision. But it is not at all certain that a majority of voters, in that province, would condemn the coal duty; on the contrary, it

is as certain that they would sustain it as that they would reject the wheat and flour duties. Our correspondent's position on the flour duty is untenable; for surely if the duty has no effect it cannot help the farmer. Its tendency must be to raise the price of flour in Nova Scotia, which is an importer of flour, though it cannot do so generally throughout Canada, some sections of which are exporters of flour. American flour, when imported into Nova Scotia, must compete against Canadian. But Canadian flour cannot always so easily as American reach Nova Scotia, and sometimes Ontario, before the North-West raised its own bread, had no surplus with which she could supply Nova Scotia. And some of the American flour imported into Nova Scotia, is of a lower grade than that which Canada exports. The half dollar added to the price of the barrel of flour at the Halifax custom house must increase the cost to the consumer. But it does not follow that the farmers all over Canada, hundreds and even thousands of miles from Nova Scotia, can in consequence of that duty get fifty cents a barrel more for the flour they send to Liverpool; it is quite certain they do not get a fraction more for it.

Neither the coal nor the flour duty was intended to be permanent. Both were created as a leverage to compel the United States to give us reciprocity; and if free trade in coal would produce in Nova Scotia the evils which our correspondent predicts, still we are not permitted to forget that the object of temporarily imposing the duty was to bring about free trade. That is the ground on which it has been defended. When we are told of evils that might happen we must look to what is actually happening now. Coal for all purposes is increased in price fifty or sixty cents a ton and even more. This means a great deal. It means that our manufactures are handicapped in their motive power; it means that the sufferings of the poor are needlessly and cruelly increased. That a duty on coal or any other commodity does not add to the price is a proposition that will not bear discussion. The denial has sometimes been used as a subterfuge; but it is a denial of the rule of addition; and if we are to accept it there is no mathematical demonstration which might not be similarly treated. But nobody would be convinced. Rings and monopolists can sometimes overrule ordinary principles of trading, no doubt, but that they can systematically and permanently do so, has yet to be demonstrated. What right have the coal men of the east or the west—for the North-West too has its coal—to tax consumers in other parts of the country for their benefit; to put obstacles in the way of industry; to add new pangs to the sufferings of the poor?

If there be thousands of people now employed in the coal trade of Nova Scotia who would not have been employed in it without the coal duty, they can show no right to tax the rest of the community for their benefit. The mistake was in coaxing them, by means of a duty, into a business out of which they would otherwise have kept. Their going out of it or remaining is a serious question for them, but they get no advantage by remaining which others are not called upon to pay for.

### WHEAT PRODUCTION IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA.

Mr. John Bookwalter, an American whose interests were long connected with agriculture, in the Western States, has paid considerable attention to the conditions under which wheat is grown in different countries. After making extensive enquiries into the subject in England, he has undertaken, in a letter to the London *Miller*, "to dispel an illusion generally current as to the superior advantages and facilities enjoyed by the American farmer." He makes a comparison between English and American farming, but it is easy to detect some unconscious unfairness in some of his methods. For instance, when he says "much land can be purchased in England for eighty to one hundred dollars an acre," "while in many wheat growing States, such as Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, lands are held from thirty dollars to seventy-five dollars an acre," it is obvious he takes the cheapest wheat lands in England and the dearest in America. That the rent of land is sometimes relatively higher in the United States than in England seems to be undeniable; for while good lands can be rented for from twenty to thirty shillings an acre, in England, from three to five dollars is often paid in America.

Mr. Bookwalter takes the average selling price of an acre of wheat in England and in the United States; the quantity of the former he puts at thirty bushels, of the latter at thirteen. This comparison is probably as nearly correct as any comparison could be. The difference between the English and the Chicago price he finds to be \$1.05 and 76 cents. But, as he points out, the price received by the American farmer whose produce has to travel a long distance to reach Chicago is less than 76 cents, while in England, distance making little difference, the price is nearly uniform in different parts of the country. Straw is rated much higher in England than in the United States, where it is often classed as "refuse." This, however, is not properly a difference in the conditions under which wheat growing is carried on, in the two countries, but a difference in the modes of farming, and if the American farmer sacrifices advantages which are within his reach, he has no right to charge the waste to the conditions under which his occupation is carried on. On wheat straw in England Mr. Bookwalter puts a value of from \$7 to \$9 an acre, while for American his figure does not rise above \$2. He thus arrives at an aggregate value for the average acre of English wheat of \$40, while the American acre returns only \$12. But not only does he make the value of the produce of an English acre of wheat more than three times that of the American, he finds the situation of the American farmer greatly aggravated by the low exchangeable value of his crop. "The farmer of England," he says, "must not forget the blessing that is vouchsafed to him in the great privilege he has of exchanging one bushel of wheat for that which the American farmer will be compelled to exchange from one and a half to two bushels for." By an oppressive system of taxation, Mr. Bookwalter contends, what nature