

citizens; and to say that every one who sells American nursery stock is habitually dishonest or habitually practices fraud on the farmers, is to insult some of the best men in our own country. The class of men who sell American nursery stock, in my county at all events, and I suppose it is the same elsewhere, comprise some of the best and most respected citizens in the county, men often above the average of the ordinary citizen; and to say that these men habitually practice frauds, while they are equal to or perhaps above the standard of the men who represent Canadian nursery agents, is to insult not only the class to which they belong, but the whole community.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. I did not say any such thing.

Mr. CASEY. The hon. gentleman did not say it in so many words, but he distinctly assumed in his language that this was a statute to prevent frauds. Now, who is charged with practicing the fraud? Not the nursery owner, because he does not bring his trees to Canada and offer them for sale; it is the agent who persuades the farmer to buy, and who is usually a good, respectable Canadian farmer, and who is chosen for that position just because he is a well known respectable farmer in his neighborhood; and to insinuate or assume, as the right hon. gentleman directly did, that these men practice frauds on the farmers, is an insult to the class to which they belong, and an insult which they will be likely to resent. As my hon. friend from North Norfolk (Mr. Charlton) treated fully the subject of retaliation, I will say nothing about that except to reiterate that there is no reason to believe that the Canadian citizens who are agents of American nurserymen cheat any more than agents for Canadian nurserymen. I believe neither of them cheat; I have never seen any cheating by them; and to say that either of these classes cheat is an insult which I cannot hear without protest.

Mr. FERGUSON (Welland). I do not think it is a question of the dishonesty of the agent so much as it is a question of the dishonesty of the men who supply the agent with the stock. No agent can judge the kind of stock which he gets at the time, and which he distributes to the farmers; he may think he is selling a good stock, when he is selling a poor one. I have been victimised myself by an honest agent who bought the stock and sold it to me, and after waiting two or three years, I found that the kind of stock which had been ordered had not been supplied to the agent, nor by him to me. Therefore, the charge is not against the agent who sells in Canada, but against the men who supply him. I may say that the American nurserymen sell their stock wherever they can in their own market, and they send to Canada what they have left on hand so as not to reduce the price in their own country; so that Canada has been made a market for the refuse stock of American nurserymen. If the Canadian nurseryman defrauds the purchaser, the purchaser has a right of action, and can get at the man who defrauds him; but he has not the same means of action against the American nurseryman.

Mr. CASEY. He can get at the agent.

Mr. FERGUSON (Welland). The agent is not responsible, because he may be an innocent man, and I believe he generally is; he cannot judge of the kind of stock furnished him, but he has to depend on the character of the men who supply it to him; and if the right hon. gentleman made the charge, it was not against the agents, but against the men who supply the refuse stock of the United States to the Canadian agents.

Mr. LAURIER. I have no doubt the hon. member for Monck (Mr. Boyle), when he introduced that measure did

it on his own motion, without consulting the Government at all; for I believe if he had consulted the Government, the Prime Minister would have told him that he had better not bring that subject forward, at least in the manner he has done. I quite agree with the hon. gentleman who addressed the House a little while ago that we ought not to be deterred from bringing forward any measure which we think in the interest of the country for fear of retaliation by the United States. If we were to announce such a doctrine, it would be tantamount to giving up our independence. So far I agree with him, and I would agree with the Prime Minister except for this fact, that the title of this Bill is misleading. It is not to prevent fraud, but to prevent a certain kind of commerce between the two countries. We have reciprocity in the articles mentioned in the Bill; and if it were adopted, the consequence would be that this trade which is now going on on the frontier would be put an end to; the American producer could not find a market in our country for his goods. This must be the object of the Bill, as is apparent from the language of the hon. mover himself; and not daring to put that on the Bill itself, he gave it another title. What we find in it are not provisions to prevent fraud, but simply provisions to prevent trade, and for this reason we oppose it on this side.

Mr. FISHER. The hon. member for Welland (Mr. Ferguson) who spoke a moment or two ago, showed clearly, I think, the difficulties that would surround the enactment of a law of this kind. The hon. gentleman defends the character of the agents in this country, and says the First Minister in attacking the character of those agents must certainly have been incorrect, and I agree with him in that respect. But unfortunately by this Bill, as I read it, it would be the agent who would suffer. If the gentleman is deceived, as the hon. member for Welland said he is, it is not likely that he is ever constantly deceived. Yet the agent who supplied that bad stock from the United States, who is the agent under this Bill, would have to provide the bond and the security, and he would have to suffer by forfeiting his security if the stock turned out too bad.

Sir JOHN A. MACDONALD. The principal would furnish the agent with security.

Mr. FISHER. I very much doubt that. He might and might not, as the case might be, and there is no provision in the Bill to make any difference in this respect. The hon. member for Welland also pointed out another thing which is of importance in regard to the working of this Bill. Very frequently agents remain only one year with the one employer, and it is often impossible to tell how the stock sold is going to turn out until two or three years after it is planted, so that by that time the agent would no longer be in the same employ. How long will the hon. gentleman who introduced this Bill provide for the holding of this security? There is another question of far more importance, and that is the international question, in which the honor of the country is really concerned. Only last year we put upon our free list, in consequence of the action of the United States Government, plants, shrubs and trees, and I believe this Bill is simply a subterfuge for the purpose of doing away with the effect of that policy. On several occasions hon. gentlemen opposite have accused the United States of acting unfairly and dishonestly towards us in making Customs regulations and putting charges upon articles in violation of their agreement with us, such as putting duty upon the cans in which our fish were preserved. We have in no measured terms condemned the United States for such action; we declared that they had trailed their honor in the dust. I should regret to see our Government attempting to put us on the