

(Continued from Page 20)

WAYS AND MEANS—DUTY ON AMERICAN WHEAT.

The house then went into committee on ways and means and to impose a duty on foreign wheat.

Mr. Harrison made some allusion to the correspondence between Lord Sydenham and the Colonial Secretary, and stated that it would be seen that the privilege of originating measures relative to colonial trade had been ceded by the Imperial Government—a concession which proved the deep interest taken in the welfare of this country by the mother country. The produce of Canada could not be admitted into the ports of Great Britain free of duty unless a duty were placed here upon foreign produce coming into the country, and he considered that the advantage thus to be gained was a sufficient reason for placing the duty he was about to propose. The only question to decide was the amount of duty it would be expedient to impose. He thought the better course to adopt was to take the amount deemed sufficient by the Imperial Parliament in the tariff recently enacted in respect to Canadian grain—3s. 6d. per quarter, or nearly 6s. currency per bushel. It was a low rate, but as it had been considered sufficient at home, he conceived there could be no objection to it here. It was considered too low, however, the rate could be easily altered hereafter, as the question was now a local one, having been left to the House to decide. He had taken the course of proposing a duty on the article of wheat, and omitting for the present others upon which it was intended to impose protective duties, because the matter could be disposed of more easily by considering only one proposition now, as the whole subject would occupy a long time in discussion, and the present session would soon close. At the next session they could enter upon the proposition of taxing the inferior grains, with beef, mutton, &c. He was anxious that this decision of the house on the proposition which had been submitted should be communicated to the Imperial Parliament as early as possible, and if the present session passed without so deciding, he was afraid a whole season would be lost. He then moved that it is expedient to impose a duty of 3s. sterling per qr. on foreign wheat imported into this Province.

Mr. Durand said he regretted that the hon. member for Kingston had thought it expedient to omit other articles of agricultural produce equally important with that of wheat; if the house allowed the present session to pass over without doing anything for the agricultural interests in respect to the articles which had been omitted, there would be nothing done this year.

Mr. Viger was opposed to every species of protecting duties; as they were in all cases imposed at the expense of some part of the community, but as the Imperial Government had conceded to the house the right of legislation for the country in matters relating to its commerce, and was also desirous to extend the further boon of admitting our agricultural productions free of duty, he did not see that there could be any opposition to the imposition of a duty here upon the imports from a foreign country, to whom Great Britain did not think proper to extend that privilege. It was not for that house to say what course the mother country should adopt in relation to the commerce of other countries; it was sufficient that we were favored. He deemed protective duties as a part of a system of bad political economy, but as regards these Provinces, the proposition submitted was a generous one, (hear, hear.)

Sir A. McNab suggested that the propositions should be submitted to the house separately. First the propriety of imposing a duty, and then to decide on the amount, to which Mr. Harrison stated that he had no objections.

Mr. Hincks said that hon. gentlemen would give him credit for the exertions which he had made on the subject before the house. The hon. member for Richmon expressed himself opposed to all protective duties, but he would ask why was it that one interest was to be protected at the expense of another. We have protective laws for our shipping and other interests, and were we to exempt only the agricultural produce of our country from the general system of protection? Why not impose duties, for the purpose of revenue, upon these as well as upon mechanical productions. Under the present system, one

class was paying largely for articles for the benefit of another class, a system under which the agriculturists particularly suffered. He did not believe that the farmers desired large duties—they did not seek to be enriched at the expense of other portions of the population. He did not deem it necessary now to go into the other questions, the Governor General had been invited to cooperate with the house on these subjects, and instead of the vexatious delays from session to session, and from year to year, which had formerly taken place, the matter could be at once decided by the house. He had no doubt that this change was effected through the great agricultural petition, and hon. gentlemen would bear in mind that the prayer of that petition was not so much that a specific duty should be imposed, as that the Governor General should be directed to cooperate with the Legislature, in measures which Parliament might deem necessary for the protection of the agricultural interests. That prayer had been granted, and he did not conceive that a delay of three or four months would do any injury to the country. He had no doubt the house by a large majority would declare in favor of a moderate duty on wheat. With respect to the objections from Eastern Canada, he could not conceive that there was any plausibility or weight in them. The price of flour would be regulated by the demand in the home market, and the price in Lower Canada could not be more than the supply of the home market would warrant. He conceived it a fallacy to suppose that the burden of tax would fall upon the consumer, and was of opinion that it could not be shown to him that the tax could operate upon any other than the American producer. He had no idea that American wheat would be admitted into England as Canadian after paying the duty here, still less would American flour—if the wheat was entered here and ground into flour, then he had no doubt, it would go as Canadian flour, as at present, but as to the fear entertained that this trade might be carried to such an extent as eventually to demand a stoppage, he was of opinion that there was not enough capital in the country to purchase Western wheat to an extent sufficient to effect such a change. Upper Canada was a wheat growing country, and imported their chief importations from Great Britain. Now, he was desirous of paying for the imports by the exports of grain, and it could not be expected that Lower Canada should interpose to prevent such an interchange.

Mr. Moffatt said in the course of the debate, that looking at the correspondence of Lord Stanley now before the house, he could not see very clearly, that although American wheat coming into Canada and paying duty would go into England free, that Canada wheat would go in at the same time free. The Dispatch before him was dated 2d of March last, and received by the Government here on the 14th of April, and on carefully perusing the document, he saw no allusion whatever to the Governor being desired to promote this duty being placed on foreign wheat coming in, or authority to him to promise them that Provincial wheat would go into the British markets free. There may be probably a subsequent correspondence which contains more satisfactory assurance that Canadian Corn will be permitted free, for the Governor in his despatch says distinctly "in obedience to the wishes" he saw no wish implied in the document on the table—(Mr. Harrison said that there were further instructions received.) Then, continued

Mr. Moffatt, there might be something more explicit provided by the administration between the 14th of April and the present time than has been shown to the house. Our colonial interests are by no means more favorably circumstanced now than they were before the passing of the late Tariff by the Home Government, for when the Corn is lowest in England the duty is highest on our produce, thereby taking from us the advantage of the favorable time of going into the market, and there were other indications to be viewed, closely connected with this question, which seemed to his mind not to be altogether what the Government would have them think, there were some important points in the late treaty with the United States.—The river St. John, which was the boundary line, was conceded for the transit of American produce, and might not a similar

train follow by having the line of the St. Lawrence conceded in the same way. He could not see that it was for them to place a duty on American produce in the present state of affairs, if he supported it, it would be against the convictions of his conscience, as far as he knew, until some further warrant was had from the British Government. It was conceded by Sir R. Peel that the British Government was to place Canadian produce on a footing with their own, but he thought it would be better to suspend the consideration of the subject until further despatches were received. He concluded by saying that he would, if there were any thing wrong in it, throw all the responsibility on the Government, and let them bear the consequences if the steps proposed were not fully borne out by the promised advantages to this country to be derived from the imposition of duty on American produce coming into this colony.

Dr. Dunlop said that the hon. member for Oxford appeared extremely desirous to protect the interests of the farmers of Upper Canada, but, however good his intentions, he must allow them to know their own business best. He thought he could manage his farm better himself than if the whole house was to sit there and direct him, and the farmers of the country were in the same predicament. We have been told by the hon. gentlemen that the present session is to be a short one. Why should it be a short one? Why, when a measure of this enormous consequence is coming before the house? When a new trade has just been established with the United States, and Canada is to be made the conduit, we are now to consider the imposition of a definite tax upon it, and that tax must pass to-night, because we are to have a short session, and why, when we are to consider a measure which will either benefit the vast improvements which we have contemplated, or make them hang as a mill-stone round our necks? Why not take time to consider, and not hurry on the matter in this way? Some are of opinion that if we admit American produce duty free, the tolls on our canals, the increase of our shipping, &c., will pay for these improvements; others are of opinion that if we can squeeze a small portion of revenue out of foreign wheat, that we should do so: if the latter, it should be so small as not in its operation to injure the country. How was this to be ascertained? Not by the imposition of 3s. sterling per quarter duty; that should be a matter of the greatest consideration. Submit it to a committee of practical men; to the farmers of Upper Canada, the millers of Upper and Lower Canada, the store-keepers of Upper Canada, and to the merchants of Montreal; they must consider the average price of grain in the United States, what it can be conveyed for to Montreal, and what to New York, with the duties at Liverpool, and then strike the difference, and from that, decide upon the question. When that was done, then, and not till then, should we know in which direction the proposed duty would send the American trade. As to the argument of the hon. member for Oxford that the duty would fall upon the producers and not upon the consumers, he confessed it was absolutely new to him, and he was not a little startled to hear such a doctrine propounded.—If he was in Lower Canada and had to pay the additional 3s. per quarter, it would be hard to convince him that he paid nothing and that the Americans paid the duty. He hoped to be enlightened on this new doctrine when the hon. member for Oxford would be appointed lecturer on political economy to the university. He could not for the life of him discover the politics of flour—whether it was Whig, Tory, or Radical—he did not know where these distinctions existed; it was a mere matter of proof and calculation. Tell us what duty we can lay on without hurting our own trade, to meet the views of the mother country, and it shall be done. But he was afraid that if they proceeded as now proposed, they would only kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. He hoped that time would be given to hon. members to examine the question.

Mr. Simpson was opposed to the duty. Mr. Parke spoke in favor; he conceived that if an impost were levied upon foreign wheat, the impetus which would thus be given to our own agriculture would more than repay the loss of the foreign carrying trade.

Mr. Boulton thought the measure impor-

tant, and one that demanded mature deliberation. He considered that it did not only affect the farmers, but all the country, and especially merchants, shipowners, forwarders. The farmer was unable without their assistance to bring his produce to market. He thought the British Government had the Welland Canal in view when the loan to this country was proposed. The export trade of the country was of great value, and care ought to be taken that the merchant should not be injured in attempting to enrich the farmer. He was favorable to the government measure, provided the amount of duty would not be such as to put an end to the American trade; but if it were stopped, the Welland Canal would be useless. He thought that the farmer did not reflect upon the duties in Great Britain, or on the general character of the trade of the country, when raising his crops; his object was to raise as much as he could by his exertions and his industry. He thought the only question was, would this duty be to such an amount as to exclude American produce? If not, he would vote for the measure. If we lay a duty on that checks the trade and diverts it into new channels, it would not so easily be brought back again; and he cautioned the members of the treasury benches against imposing such a duty. His intention when he rose was to move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again to-morrow, for it was a most important question and ought not to be hastily decided, and that the despatch ought to be closely studied so as to arrive at a correct idea of its meaning. He would suggest that this should not become a law until the home government allow Canadian produce to pass duty free.

Mr. Williams hoped that the hon. representatives of Agricultural districts would not allow this glorious opportunity to pass without taking advantage of it.

Mr. Boswell felt how much the agricultural interest was involved in the present question, and was prepared to vote for putting a duty on American produce coming into the country, whether England put on a duty or not.

Capt. Steele was favourable to the proposition of putting a duty on foreign wheat, and when the question of the amount came before them, he would be prepared to give his opinion. He thought that the interests of at least 75,000 of the people were now in the protection of the house, and that they ought not to be sacrificed to any other interests. He would not impose a high duty, but a small duty was required to put the corn grower in the back settlements upon equal terms with the American corn grower; and in supporting the resolution he hoped he would not be injuring the interests of any class.

Mr. Roblin, after some observations which we could not distinguish, hoped to see Eastern Canada, as well as Western, agricultural. It has been so, and although the crops recently have been injured by the flies, it may not again occur for a long time. He thought that since the government had the power of co-operating with the home government in regulating the duties in question, that they ought gladly to avail themselves of the opportunity.

Mr. Harrison explained the reason of this measure being pressed forward whilst other important measures were postponed. This was a measure which involved relations with the Home Government, and it was indispensable to settle it as soon as possible, for delay might be dangerous; and the others could be over without any danger until the Legislature would again meet, which would be some time during the winter.

Mr. Jones thought it was a party question, and would oppose protecting one class of agriculturists at the expense of another; for the interests of both ought to be consulted. He contended that the argument advanced relative to the protection which the cost of transport affords to the Canadian Farmer, was unsound, as the Americans at Oswego, Rochester, &c., have equal if not better facilities. He would, however, only assent to the measure introduced by the hon. member for Kingston, upon the principle that it afforded equal protection to the Eastern as well as the Western section of the country.

Mr. Hincks made some observations in reply, and said if he understood the gentleman right he objected upon the ground that he conceived the measure was brought forward to advance the interests of West-