

that the copper currency now in circulation in the Province is of a depreciated quality and far exceeding its real value, and great loss has been sustained thereby, and praying that a Law may pass to remedy the evil, by providing for the importation of a copper coinage from Great Britain, and that the same, as well as the copper coin of Nova Scotia may be made a legal tender for a limited amount; which he read.—
Ordered. That the Petition be received, and referred to the Committee of Trade

Mr. S. Humbert moved for leave to bring in a bill to prevent unnecessary expence and delay in the Administration of Justice.—Leave granted.

Tuesday, February 15.

Mr. Wyer presented a petition from the Chamber of Commerce of St. Andrews, praying a continuance of the fish bounty, and its more effectual extension to the shore fisheries.

Mr. Clinch, (who spoke so low that we could scarcely catch any connected observation) opposed this petition on the board of principle, that he Mr. C. was unfavourable to the continuance of 'fish bounties' at all.—We understood the hon. gentleman to say, that if a bill to repeal the fish bounty altogether were brought in he would support it. But if the bounty existing were continued, he thought the provisions of the existing act sufficient, and he did not wish them extended. He hoped the house would consider as to the expediency of doing away with the bounty altogether, instead of making further amendments in the present bill.—He, (Mr. C.) knew something of the mode of carrying on trade in St. Andrews. Perhaps no place in the whole province possessed greater capabilities for carrying on the West India Trade. Lumber could be had there in more abundance than in any other part of the province. It was no doubt very convenient for the merchants to have plenty of small stowage, to mix with their lumber cargoes for the West Indies. Cured fish was a very common article of trade with the West Indies, and, therefore, would always fetch a fair price. On this account, the hon. member thought a fish bounty unnecessary.—There was one thing which he (Mr. C.) did not like, in the existing laws on this subject. The present system of fish bounty allowed vessels from Nova Scotia to fit out in our ports, and to receive the bounty for fish. This he did not think fair. He would consider Nova Scotia as a sister Province, and in all respects endeavor to do her justice.—What was the consequence of the N. Scotia fishermen thus leaving their own shores? Their doing so might perhaps be a little beneficial to the fishery here, but it was taking away the productive labourers from the other Province. No doubt the exportation of fish was very conducive to the benefit of the province; but the fish bounty was merely a taxing of one branch of the provincial industry to support another, which he could not conceive to be a good policy.

Mr. Simonds was opposed to the extension of the bounty as prayed by the petition. By the present laws the shore fisheries had all the encouragement they ought to have. They were now entitled to a very liberal bounty if they performed their business well, and produced merchantable fish; but if they neglected so to do, they were certainly not entitled to the bounty. He, (Mr. S.) thought it a very mistaken policy, for fishermen to be allowed to obtain a bounty, where they did not produce merchantable fish.—It was well known that the greater part of the produce of the coast fisheries in Charlotte County was not available to this province. The poor fishermen get but little benefit from their labours. They were so close to the American shores, that the dealers there would every night purchase from them their fish in a green state, and thus they always get so many of them on hand, that it was impossible that they could cure them properly. They were fit only for the West India market. The poor men were paid principally in rum; an article of most pernicious tendency. This practice, the hon. member thought a most injurious one, and it was the reason why the provincial bounty was not obtained by the poor fishermen. He, (Mr. S.) thought it would be very wrong to extend the present bounty. There was no doubt that a great portion of the revenue of this province was already by the bounty act, thrown into the hands of foreigners. The poor fishermen have no benefit from the bounty, but they are enabled to take care of the bounty should not be thus bestowed. He, (Mr. S.) would therefore oppose the prayer of the petition; the injury being so apparent. He, (Mr. S.) thought the hon. member must, on consideration, himself perceive.

Mr. S. Humbert thought there was no great necessity for much discussion on the subject at present. He had no objection to extending the privilege of receiving the fish bounty to every inhabitant of the Province. The fishermen of Campo Bello and the West Isles were as much entitled to it as any other inhabitant of the country. As to the great chance they had of evading the law, he [Mr. H.] thought, that if a provision could be made to prevent any such evasion, it would be proper to make it, and these poor people ought to have the privilege of the bounty. But unless that could be done, he was not prepared to support the petition.

Mr. Cunard hoped the house would receive and consider the petition. Instead of agreeing with Mr. Simonds, he (Mr. C.) was convinced that the best fish in the country were those brought in from the neighbourhood of Saint Andrews. It was not the fish that were cured in vessels that were the best. (We could not clearly hear the hon. gentleman's observations, but we understood him afterwards to say, that—) Small craft, such as those of the fishermen in question, made better fish than those vessels that receive the bounty. The county of Charlotte had a great range of coast, and yet that range of coast received no bounty. This was a great injury; and if those fishermen should get the bounty, its effects would be very beneficial to the Province.

Mr. Partelow, did not rise to object to the reception of the petition. He thought, however, it would save time if the hon. member withdrew his motion that it should lie on the table, and let it be referred to the Committee of Trade.—As to the fish caught in the immediate vicinity of St. Andrews, the house might not be aware that 7-8ths of the fish caught on that coast always go to the American market. The object of the present bounty is, to encourage the catching of fish for the West India market. As an article of trade, the fish were of course intended to be mixed with lumber cargoes for the West Indies, and to make the cargoes more valuable. The prayer of the petition tended to put the bounty into foreign hands.

Mr. Wyer said a few words in defence of the petition; tending to show that the fishermen of the Charlotte county coast were sober, industrious, and valuable men, who contributed greatly to benefit the manufactures and trade of the province, by consuming great quantities of merchandise, and that the fisheries paid about half the entire revenue of the province.—Petition received, and laid on table.

On motion of Mr. Weldon, the house went into a Committee of the whole, in consideration of the Bill to repeal all the Acts in force relating to Trespasses, and to make more effectual provision for the same.—Mr. J. Humbert in the chair.

After a very uninteresting discussion of the Bill, section by section, it was agreed to, with some few amendments, and ordered to be engrossed.

The house went into a committee of the whole, in consideration of the Bill respecting the encouragement of persons engaged in the Cod and Scale Fisheries, by granting bounties on the same.—Mr. Taylor in the chair.—Bill read.

Mr. S. Humbert, in speaking on this subject, became so animated, as to speak with such rapidity, that it was only possible for us to obtain a few unconnected sentences.—We understood the Hon. gentleman to say, it was the duty of every nation to foster their trade. The merchants of this province wanted fishermen on the south side of the Bay of Fundy, to catch the fish, and bring them to them. For this purpose, encouragement must be given, and if this is not done, our fishermen will not be induced to exert themselves. The present law was found to be ineffectual. There was no mode of getting fish in our harbours; no means of getting fish but by sending cash to Newfoundland or elsewhere, to provide supplies for the West India market. It was necessary to take some steps to alter this evil.

Mr. Partelow regretted the necessity, but he found himself bound to oppose this Bill. He felt it to be a duty he owed the province, to do so: The Bill would not have the effect of putting bounties into the hands of the residents on our own shores, but would have the direct effect of giving the trade to the Americans. The trade was already much engrossed by them. A great proportion of the fish actually taken were caught on the shores of Moose Island, and then a bounty obtained for them from this Province.

Mr. Cunard could not understand the matter in that light. He, (Mr. C.) should support the bill. He conceived that small vessels of 10 or 20 tons burthen were quite as much entitled to the bounty, as larger vessels, of 30 tons or upwards. The best fish were thus cured in small craft. If any opposition should be made in that house to any misapplication of the bounty, he should certainly support such opposition, but he would strongly contend that small vessels should have the bounty.

Mr. Clinch considered that a bounty on fish, or on any thing else, was only a forcing of business. Every business should stand by itself. If merchants found it advantageous to mix fish with their export cargoes, such fish would always fetch a fair price, by reason of the demand for them. Fish are always to be had in abundance. A small increase of price on the article was, in the hon. Member's opinion, far better than a bounty.

Mr. Partelow observed that it was only from the peculiar situation of those merchants that they were thus excluded. He was certainly unfavourable to fish bounties. Smuggling was carried on to a great extent, and a great part of the West India Trade in these isles was carried on, on American accounts, under British names.

Mr. S. Humbert briefly defended the bill, but too rapidly to give us the benefit of his observations.

Mr. Slason supported the bill. Small vessels ought to have equal privileges with larger ones. The people of West Isles have great means of carrying on the fish business, and ought to be encouraged.

Mr. Cunard said, it was quite as necessary to extend the benefit of the country to those who might be beneficial to the country, as to those who already were so. The fisheries were a great support to the lumber trade. Small craft, catching and curing fish, were more entitled to the fish bounty than those now enjoying it.

Mr. Wyer added a few words in defence of the bill. The bounty had a great effect on trade. It was the means of ensuring an ample supply of fish for the West India market.—The fisheries were an excellent nursery for seamen. There were no better seamen existing than those hardy fishermen.

Mr. Brown had listened to what had been said, but still had his doubts on the question. He, however, thought it very proper that the principles of the bill, if sustained, should be general in their effect, and not confined to the county of Charlotte.

Mr. Simonds observed, that every gentleman who understands the matter, must be well aware that it is the shore fisheries on which merchants depend for the supply of the West India market. The fish caught there may very well be made marketable, if proper pains are taken. But what is the effect of this bill? It is, to give a bounty to fishermen, for their carelessness in curing the fish! If the bounty is extended to the West Isles, it will be still more objectionable. Such a measure will exactly enable our neighbours, the Americans, to enjoy a great part of the bounty. There can be no question that it would be a dangerous measure. We do know, that they already have a great proportion of the benefits of the fisheries. They have a large population on their shores, who can successfully come in, and enjoy a great proportion of those benefits. There can be no necessity for this bill. Very little of the business carried on in the West Isles, is carried on with British capital. The house ought to be very careful how it opened a door to the evasion of the laws. Every one must be aware, how very difficult it is to prevent such evasion on the borders of any country; and more particularly in the Bay of Passamaquaddy. The laws are now greatly evaded, and if this bill pass, they will be so in a tenfold degree.

Mr. Scot thought it, perhaps, better to let the old law remain as it is for the present. He would move that the consideration of this bill be postponed in this day three months; which motion, however, was not seconded.

Mr. S. Humbert thought this a subject of very great importance, and requiring much consideration. He inquired, how any other merchants of this Province would like to lie under disabilities, which did not affect the rest of their brethren? He (Mr. H.) was as averse as any man to give exclusive privileges to the county of Charlotte, but why should any of her merchants be tied down, more than those of other parts of the province? It was true, he was sent there as a member by the County of St. John; but he did not confine his views to the County of St. John. He was for the country at large, and would exert himself for the benefit of any part of the country.

The island of Campo Bello was increasing in respectability and in commercial consequence. [The hon. member also named a town of that island, which we could not hear.] The merchants of that town carried on a great trade. Should these merchants continue to be tied down by such disabilities as would affect them? They demand only their rights, as indisputable as those of any other inhabitants of the Province. As to the plea, that the merchants of the West Isles did and would evade the law, he (Mr. H.) thought it the duty of the house to give them their privileges, and then to make provision to prevent their evading the law. It would, in his opinion, be a discredit to the house, if it should leave people unprotected, because it could not make a law to prevent the evasion of the existing laws. He would therefore move, that the Chairman do now leave the chair report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

Mr. Cunard considered that the hon. member who had just sat down, entertained very proper views on this subject.—He does not say, "I am a resident in St. John; I will deprive merchants of other places of the benefit of the bounty."—No, He says exactly the contrary. He says he comes from St. John, but he extends his views over the whole country. His