

The Examiner.

"THIS IS TRUE LIBERTY, WHEN FREEBORN MEN—HAVING TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC, MAY SPEAK FREE."—EURIPIDES.

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THE LEGISLATURE.

House of Assembly.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12.

THE EMBARGO QUESTION.

(Continued.)

Dr. Conroy said, all interests ought to be considered; and, when the House, at an early period of the Session, placed an Embargo on Potatoes, it was from the conviction they felt that the short crop of last year rendered the step necessary. The majority of the House who ought to be the best judges of the wants of the people, considered it highly expedient to keep sufficient for seed in the Island; but the Bill was thrown out in the other end, and the opinions of the House of Assembly, as was often the case, set at naught. The members of that House were designated wise-acres, and the root itself did not escape from depreciation by those greatest wise-acres of all the world, one of whom said: had he the last Potatoe in his hand he would take especial care to prevent its cultivation. The question of an Embargo upon Potatoes having been decided that Session, it could not be brought on again. At or about the same time, the sense of the House was also taken relative to Oats; and a large majority decided against an embargo. That very decision was a guarantee to the public, who felt certain that they might carry on their business operations with safety. They felt themselves secured by what had passed within the walls of the Assembly; but he was sorry to say, that he feared they would have to complain, and their complaint would be nothing less than that the House of Assembly had deceived them—they had absolutely forbidden them to pay their debts when they were prepared to do so, and had prevented them from obtaining their fresh supplies of Merchandise. Within the memory of those present, there never was a time when so much distress existed as at that time, and yet persons were so unfeeling that they were pressing their poor debtors to an unusual extent. The Office of the Clerk to the Small Debts Court, was besieged with applications for Summonses, and hundreds had been issued at a time when the cry of destitution and distress was continually ringing in their ears. Would to God, that they could place an Embargo on the Small Debts Courts, and those unfeeling Creditors, who displayed a total disregard to all charitable feeling. He was pleased to say, the Proprietors had not, to any extent, followed so bad an example. He was persuaded that nothing less than war or general starvation could justify the principle, or the putting into practice such a measure as the one they were then considering. It would be much better to put their hands into the public purse than perpetrate so glaring an injustice to the Merchants. It behoved the Committee to remember that, when the smallest insect is trodden on, it experiences as much pain as when a giant dies. Let them force contributions, let them mortgage the revenue, and such a step he thought far preferable to the measure of embargo, which, if carried out, would, for a time, crush trade, and what for? He feared, as the hon. Speaker had justly observed, to uphold many indolent and unworthy persons. Should the Committee adopt the measure, they ought to justify themselves by providing for, and indemnifying, those who would otherwise suffer, and upon no other grounds should it have his support.

Mr. D. Maclean said, the hon. member who had just sat down had spoken very much to the purpose, and his ideas on the impolicy of the principle of interfering with trade, in the iniquitous mode then contemplated, were most decidedly his (Mr. D. M.'s) own. He hoped things were not so bad as some represented them. Mr. Wightman's correspondence, in particular, he viewed with suspicion, remembering, as he well did, that gentleman's action, when a Member of the House, upon a similar occasion. He felt bound to oppose a measure that would sacrifice individuals, and would prefer an addition to the present sum appropriated by the House for Roads and Bridges. The hon. Member concluded by moving that an additional 1000*l.* be appropriated, to be applied to the Road Service.

The hon. Speaker would support the amendment submitted by Mr. McLean, because he had sooner do anything than break faith with the public. At the same time he would suggest, that the Committee were out of order in taking up the question at all—it having been already discussed and disposed of in the present Session. When it was considered that the large sum of £3,900, appropriated for Roads and Bridges, was to be made available for the relief of the poor, and that the handsome collection recently raised at a public meeting

under the auspices of the Lieutenant Governor and the Proprietors, would greatly aid in alleviating the prevailing distress—it would be seen that the extreme measure then contemplated was altogether uncalled for. The hon. member for Charlottetown (Mr. F. Longworth) had justly observed, that if an Embargo were laid, it would be ridiculous to suppose that strangers would trade with this Island. He (the Speaker) fully agreed with him (Mr. Longworth) that if loss be entailed upon the merchants by this measure, the Government should afford them relief. He did not wish to be misunderstood in reference to this matter. He had no desire to put the country further in debt; but although it was his intention to support the motion for an addition of 1000*l.* to the Road appropriations, he believed it was highly necessary to meet the distress of the country. [The Speaker, in conclusion, spoke of the necessity of compelling the proprietors to contribute towards the relief of their tenantry.]

Mr. Thornton was in favour of an Embargo, because he believed such a measure, at the present crisis, to be absolutely necessary. He had good reasons to think there was very little grain in the country to spare. Indeed, he did not think there were 20,000 bushels to export altogether; and these were wanted in the country, if not for food, for seed. The people in the neighbouring Colonies were as badly off as ourselves; and no sooner would our ports be open, than they would sweep our shores of the grain, or raise the price to a very high figure. He did not agree with Mr. McLean's resolution. What was the use of supplying the poor with money, if the grain were allowed to go out of the country? The Legislature of Nova Scotia—which could afford to pay 10*l.* to our 1*l.*—would provide for its poor, and the consequence would be, they would come hither, and raise the price so high, that the 1,000*l.* would go a very little way. But if the produce were not in the country, we could not supply ourselves elsewhere—we could not get potatoes abroad, we could not get oats abroad. And where was the use of money, if seed could not be procured with it to sow the land? Some hon. members seemed to think lightly of the reports of poverty and distress which came to their ears. He was afraid such reports were but too well founded. They had already heard of several infractions of the Law—mills had been broken into; and the evils which produced such a state of things was every day increasing. The House was now imperatively called upon to act with firmness and decision; and, though he felt for those who might suffer loss by such a measure as this, yet there were times when strict justice must yield to expediency, and the few must suffer in preference to the many.

Mr. Rae considered it extremely awkward to impose an Embargo at so late a period in the Session, and at a season when some vessels had taken in their cargoes—when dealers had made nearly the whole of their purchases. There was a still more formidable obstacle in the way. Early in the Session the House passed an Embargo on Potatoes; and then it was asked, whether it should be laid on Oats also? But only three Members said that they thought that advisable, but made no motion; and the others scouted the idea. But to such procedure and declaration the Assembly virtually put their seal, confirming every purchase of grain subsequently made for exportation. Yet all this, it seems, must now be overthrown. Well, necessity has no law. But why was not this necessity explained in time? Why did not members from districts which were so destitute, come forward earlier? The state of the crop could be estimated in December, when threshing had been some time in operation. Why did not the magistrates throughout the country report to the Executive that there was an insufficiency of grain? After the example of 1846, neither the Executive nor the Magistracy, nor yet the Members of this House were altogether free from this responsibility. But as the inhabitants must have bread and seed, put on an embargo; and, since we must violate private right by our procedure this Session, let us give compensation to the parties we injure. Either buy their grain and potatoes, or let them sell it, and, if they do not get a price sufficient to remunerate them for what they paid, and their trouble, make the difference up next Session. Pledge the Legislature to that much equity. There has been a cry for bounties for the encouragement of trade, a bounty for the exportation of codfish, &c. Now, here is a trade in full operation, which, in amount, exceeds a hundred times the export of fish, and equals what the most sanguine hope expects; and yet, by repeatedly tampering with it, you threaten to destroy it. If you will not compensate vessels deprived of freights, yet, at least, compensate those who have bought grain, and especially those who, by the enactment of this House, may be compelled to unload their cargoes. He would, therefore, move the following amendments:—That all grain ship-

ped to this date have liberty to go. Or, That every individual who may, previous to the proclamation, have shipped grain, shall be indemnified, on proving to this House that he has sold any of the Oats and Potatoes under 2*s.* 9*d.* per bushel.

Mr. Haviland said, all parties admit that distress to a very great extent prevails throughout the Island, but of what use was it to prevent the exportation of grain when the poor people, who were suffering under that distress, were wholly unable to purchase it. This fact led him to express his concurrence in the resolution offered by Mr. D. McLean—for if the people be put in possession of the means, there would be no difficulty about their obtaining seed, and the necessity for an embargo would be entirely obviated.

Mr. Macintosh was induced to vote for the embargo, because he thought it would be the only practicable relief to the suffering of the poor. He did not believe that if the Road appropriations were increased to 5000*l.* the country would reap as much benefit as it would from an embargo, because if you allow the grain to go away, what public benefit do you accomplish by putting money into the pockets of the poor people for the express purpose of buying it. It was with very much reluctance he (Mr. Macintosh) advocated this measure. But he had given it due consideration, and he was convinced it would be the only effectual check to the calamity which pressed upon the country.

Mr. Clark had long since given this subject full consideration, and the more he thought of it, the more he was inclined to regard with disapprobation and distrust the policy of imposing restrictions upon trade for any purpose. Besides, he could not vote for an embargo in the face of a pledge already given by the House that no such measure would be adopted,—and also in direct violation of a standing rule of the House, which prohibits the discussion twice in one Session of the same question. The Legislature should keep faith with the commercial public, let the consequences be what they may—otherwise, all confidence would be lost in us, and much evil would result to the colony. It should be borne in mind, that the principal branch of trade in this Island—viz. ship-building—was fast declining, and that ere long agriculture will be the only resource of our population. Would it be wise or expedient, then, to close our ports, and risk the destruction of our only trade by fettering it? He thought it would not, and he would therefore rather support the amendment than Mr. Cole's resolution, even though an increase of taxation might be found necessary to make up the amount intended to be appropriated by the amendment.

SATURDAY, April 22.

HOUSE IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

GREEN'S WHARF, BEDEQUE.

Mr. Fraser submitted the following Resolution:—
Resolved, That the sum of £19 be granted, to defray the balance of a Contract for erecting a Slip, and making certain repairs—performed last Summer, on Green's Warf, Bedeque.

Mr. N. Conroy took this opportunity to complain, and not without some degree of warmth, that the Report in the *Advertiser* was calculated to injure him in the estimation of his constituents; because, although the Report, so far as it went, was sufficiently correct, it made no reference to, or mention of, what had been stated by him, on a previous occasion, with reference to the subject. Had the previous Debate been published, he would have had nothing to complain of; but he thought it was most unfair, most unjust, that any thing like *ex parte* statements of debates or discussions occurring in the House, should, through any newspaper, be given to the public; whether such statements might be furnished by a Reporter or a member of the House. At the time Mr. Fraser made the statement afterwards published in the *Advertiser*, he (Mr. C.) did not think it worth while to contradict him, as he had done so a day or two previous. Another feature of unfairness was also observable in the fact, that although the hon. member (Mr. Fraser) had attacked his colleague (Mr. Rae) as well as himself, yet no mention was made of it in the Report of which he complained.

The Hon. Speaker, and other hon. members, joined with Mr. Conroy, in a strong condemnation of so unfair a mode of reporting, by means of which the most faithful Representative might very easily be made to appear as the betrayer of his constituents' rights.

Mr. Fraser—The hon. member, (Mr. N. Conroy) seemed to be very sensitive on the subject of newspaper reports, as affecting himself; but he (Mr. F.) would advise the hon. member, if he meant to steer clear of blame, to act consistently, and upon the principles of justice. That he (Mr. F.) maintained, that the hon. member (Mr.