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AND SEMI-WEEKLY INTELLIGENCER.

THIS IS TRUE LIBERTY WHEN FREE-BORN MEN—HAVING TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC—MAY SPEAK FREE.—MILTON'S EURIPIDES.

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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

SATURDAY, 27th April.

HOUSE IN COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS.—Mr. FRASER submitted the following resolution, which was agreed to without opposition.

Resolved, That the several rates and duties imposed and levied under the Act 12 Vic. C. 10, intitled "An Act for raising a Revenue" be amended and continued for one year from and after the first day of May next.

The House being resumed, the Resolution was reported, received, and adopted *nem. con.*

REVENUE BILL.—Mr. FRASER, Chairman of the Committee appointed to bring in a Bill in accordance with the foregoing Resolution, reported a Bill which was read a first and second time, and ordered to be committed.

HOUSE IN COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE UPON THE REVENUE BILL.—DUTY UPON FLOUR.—The first question which occasioned any discussion, was that which arose touching the propriety of imposing a duty upon imported flour. Mr. POPE said it was the duty of the House to protect the agricultural interests as far as possible; the farmers of P. E. Island were a large and influential body, and the promotion of their benefit ought always to be a paramount obligation upon the Assembly. The sale of flour was almost the only means by which they could raise money, and Charlottetown was their only cash market for that article. It would, therefore, he thought, be very unjust towards the Island farmers to admit either United States or Canadian flour duty-free, a measure which would, as far as the consumption of Charlottetown went, entirely exclude Island manufactured flour from that market. There was no reason to apprehend a scarcity or even a deficiency of flour in the Island this year; in many parts of the Island, the wheat crops last year were, he believed, abundant; and, from personal knowledge of the fact, he could say that in the western section of the Island they were very good.

Mr. SPEAKER said he quite agreed with the hon. member from Bedeque, that to admit foreign flour duty free would be an act of injustice to the Island farmers; because if such an advantage were held out to the United States and Canadian wheat growers, it would be quite impossible for our farmers to compete with them in the flour market of the Island. During the last two years, owing to unfavorable seasons and a failure of crops, our farmers, generally speaking, had been running into debt; and were they to be, in a manner, excluded from their only cash market for flour, by the admission of foreign flour duty free, the exclusion would actually deprive them of the only means whereby they could hope to make any provision for the payment of cash debts.

Mr. LONGWORTH, whilst admitting that, for the increase of our revenue, it might, perhaps, be well to impose a duty upon imported flour, equal to that paid upon flour imported into Nova Scotia, which he believed was about 1s. 3d. per barrel, said he was decidedly of opinion that a duty of 8s. 6d. per barrel—the duty which had been named—would be out of all reason, and would amount to little less than a prohibitory duty.

Mr. WHELAN proposed a duty of 6s. per barrel upon all flour imported into the Island.

Mr. YEO said there was plenty of flour in the country, and that, therefore, there could be no reason to apprehend a scarcity of it, either for consumption or in the market. Such being his opinion, he would vote for a duty upon all imported flour, as requisite for the protection of the agricultural interests. The duty which he would propose would be 5s. per barrel.

Mr. COLES said that if flour were admitted duty free from Canada, the Canadian exporters and the importers here would both be able to undersell our farmers in our own home market. He would not feel disposed to encourage exports of flour duty free from Canada, because there was no production of ours, either manufactured or otherwise, which the Canadians required; and, consequently, it was not in their power to reciprocate, on free trade principles, with this Colony. If any foreign flour were to be admitted duty free, he would much rather extend the privilege to the United States than to Canada; because the opening of trade, duty free, to the United States, might perhaps induce the Government of that country to reciprocate with us, by admitting our oats and potatoes duty free into their ports; and it would be impossible for our merchants and our farmers to find a better or more certain market for these articles of our Island produce, than that which would thereby be opened up to them. The neighbouring Provinces were turning their attention decidedly to the improvement of their agriculture; and they now either grew,

or would soon grow grain enough for their own internal demands. It was true that farmers and speculators had shipped considerable quantities of oats and potatoes to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in former years, and would, most probably, do so this year; but he believed the returns had not been, and neither would be, found encouraging.

Mr. POPE replied to the arguments of Mr. Coles, that the most effectual way to prevent a departure on the part of the United States from their protective duties system, as respects this Colony, would be to admit their exports duty free into this Island. If they wanted our oats and potatoes, it was for them, by a remission of the duty they had imposed upon them, to open a free trade to us in those or any other products of the Island which they might want; and as there was already placed upon our Statute Book an Act authorizing Free Trade with the United States, so soon as their Government shall be ready to reciprocate with the Colony on free trade principles, it would, on their doing so, be quite time enough to make exceptions from our own protective policy in favor of the United States flour, or any of their other articles of export required by us. To admit United States flour duty free would not benefit the people at large; for, except in unfavorable seasons, the farmers grew wheat enough for home consumption. The Canadian and United States flour, imported into the Island, was chiefly bought up by the Bakers, to whom it was sold at a credit of two or three months, and for the use of those superfine gentlemen in and about Charlottetown who were not satisfied with that manufactured in the Island. If foreign flour were to be admitted duty free, it would be requisite to impose a duty upon some other article of import, in lieu of that formerly laid upon flour; for it was certainly necessary to secure, if possible, a revenue sufficient to meet our annual expenditure. The quality of the flour manufactured in this Island was, he thought, quite good enough for the use of any individual in the Colony; but should any of the superfine gentlemen think nothing of the kind fit for their tables but the superfine flour of the United States or of Canada, he would say let them pay for it even if the duty were twice 8s. 6d. per barrel.

Mr. DAVIES said it would be impossible to build ships in this Colony, at as cheap a rate as they were built in Nova Scotia, unless we could have bread as cheap as it was in that Province. The House might as well impose a duty of 10s. a ton upon every vessel built in the Colony, as impose a duty of 8s. 6d. a barrel upon flour. He would oppose the imposition of any duty, however small, upon imported flour.

Mr. MONTGOMERY was in favor of a duty, both upon Canadian and United States flour, as a necessary protection to the interests of our farmers. He thought a duty of 6s. per barrel would answer the required ends, both as respected the protection of the revenue and the protection of the farmer.

Hon. Mr. PALMER thought a duty of 5s. per barrel would be quite high enough. In a country in which the wheat crop is, above all others, uncertain in its return, the Legislature ought not to prevent the importation of the article, when, perhaps the necessities of the country really called for it. Although it might be admitted that there was a sufficient supply in the market at present; yet no one could venture to say what might be the success of the present year's crop of wheat until next October. He had no desire to do what would injure the Island farmer in making market of his flour. The foreign article was rarely imported to such an extent as to do that; but it was to be remembered that, without a little competition in the business, there would be no stimulation to the Island manufacturer to improve the article. Let him see the necessity of improving it, and, in course of time, the Island flour would be so much improved that there would be no need to import a foreign article at all, at least so long as there should be wheat in the Island to grind. When our wheat crop was good, he saw no reason why flour of as good a quality as that brought from the United States could not be manufactured here; certainly it was acknowledged that our own was always considered the sweetest to the taste and the most wholesome for consumption. He was quite aware that, in the Free Trade Bill of Nova Scotia, flour was not placed amongst the exemptions. The duty laid upon it in that Province was, however, very trifling compared with what was proposed to be imposed here; and, whether or not, if that Province had not reciprocated in the article of flour with the other Colonies, the Legislature of this Colony ought not to follow so liberal an example. Although the Legislature should agree to admit Canadian flour duty free, and should, at the same time, impose a tax upon the United States article, still, he thought, a preference would be

given to the States flour, because it was always found to be of a better quality than the Canadian: it was generally sweeter and kept better.

Mr. SPEAKER ridiculed the idea which seemed to be entertained by an honorable member who had spoken to the question, that any thing that could be done by this Colony, on free trade principles, towards an encouragement or extension of the export trade of the United States, would be accounted, by the people of that country, a sufficient boon to induce them to depart with respect to us, from their protective policy to which they have so long adhered, in spite of all that has been advanced by the advocates of free trade, both amongst themselves and in other countries. When the people of the United States should change their policy in that respect and practically adopt free trade principles with respect to this Colony, it would, said the honorable Speaker, be soon enough for this Colony to practise the same towards them.

Mr. COLES was anxious to carry out as far as possible the principles of free trade, as their adoption had been recommended to the Legislature, and as they were about to be carried into practice by the neighbouring Provinces. If an importation of flour were needed, it would be most required by the poor man; therefore a duty of 5s. per barrel would be quite high enough; and, if there should be no scarcity, no great quantity would be imported: so that if it were for the purpose of protecting the farmer, he was of opinion that what he might lose at one time, he would have an opportunity to gain at another. A duty of 5s. might improve our revenue, and at the same time afford just protection to the interests of the farmer; but a duty of 8s. 6d. per barrel would amount to a prohibition of the import of the article, and could not, therefore, either improve the one or benefit the other. If it were agreed that the Colony should reciprocate with all the Provinces, it would, however, be of little use to impose any duty at all; and this he hoped would be the case, for, he believed, the present liberal and enlightened principles of free trade were fast gaining ground in every commercial country, and would be fully carried into operation in the neighbouring Provinces.

Mr. MOONEY would, at any time, be very unwilling to give his consent to a tax upon bread; for, most assuredly, if a man would work, he should eat. But, at the present time, he was most reluctant to consent to the imposition of any such tax, knowing as he did that, owing to the scarcity of hay and straw, the generality of our farmers had been obliged to keep their cattle alive by feeding them with grain, which, otherwise, would have been converted into bread for themselves; and, as since the snow was still upon the ground and the fields could not be expected to afford pasture for some weeks yet, to keep the cattle alive it would be necessary to continue feeding them, partially at least, with grain, so much longer; so that not only would many farmers be left without grain sufficient to supply them with bread until the coming harvest, but many would not, he feared, have sufficient left to sow the ground. There was, therefore, sufficient reason, he thought, to apprehend a scarcity again this year, and he feared an importation of flour from the States would be as much needed this year as in the two previous ones.

Mr. FRASER said that superfine flour was not consumed by the mass of the people. It was only those who were in easy circumstances, and who could, consequently, afford to pay for it, that made use of it; and the country could not afford to lose, for their sakes, so large a sum of money as the duty on imported superfine flour would amount to. It would be better to let in corn meal duty free, than to allow flour to be imported at so low a duty as was proposed. Five shillings per barrel was, he thought, a rate of duty quite as low as the House could at all be justified in imposing. It was well known that corn meal had been of more service in times of scarcity than superfine flour. He could not consent to let in Canadian flour duty free; because that would be an arrangement of which all the advantages would be on one side, for the Island had nothing to send to Canada in return.

Mr. DAVIES characterized the proposed tax as the most ridiculous and unjustifiable he had ever heard of. He believed there would be as great a scarcity of flour in the Island this year as ever had been experienced in it. The oats and the potatoes had been eaten up by the cattle; and flour would be absolutely necessary for the people to subsist upon. Impoverished as they already are, would it not then be most unfeeling, unjust, and cruel, said the honorable member, to place it beyond the reach of the generality of them, as would be done, most effectually, by imposing a duty upon the imported