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1901-11-29

House of Representatives

Mr. Speaker

took the chair at 11 a.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS

TRANSCONTINENTAL RAILWAY SURVEYS

<page>8037</page>

Sir LANGDON BONYTHON

.- I recently asked the Prime Minister whether he had received any reports as to the preliminary surveys for the proposed railway between

Fort Augusta, in South Australia, and Kalgoorlie, in Western Australia. The Prime Minister stated that he had not received any such reports. I now desire to ask him when he expects to receive reports on the subject, and whether he has received the communication from the Premier of South Australia referred to in the press this morning.

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

- I observed in to-day's papers a telegram relating to yesterday's proceedings in the Legislative Assembly of South Australia, in which it is reported that the Premier of South Australia, Mr. Jenkins, stated that - If he does not receive a reply from Mr. Barton by to-morrow concerning the first section of the western Australian railway, he will telegraph to him again on the subject. The Premier in referring to the reply given to the question asked by Sir Langdon Bonython in the House of Representatives yesterday, said that, with all due respect to the Prime Minister, the report on the route of the railway from Port Augusta to Western Australia was telegraphed to Mr. Barton directly the surveyors returned, and documents were subsequently forwarded.

I do not think this can be an accurate report of the statement made by the Premier of South Australia. In response to inquiries made by me, the following replies were on the 20th instant received from the State Governments. From South Australia -

A full report, and plan of survey of route of proposed railway to Western Australia will be ready in a few weeks, when a copy will be forwarded.

And from Western Australia -

Report re survey for transcontinental railway is now in print, and copies will be forwarded immediately they are available;

It is apparent from these telegrams that it was impossible for a report to be sent to me. In consequence of instructions which I gave immediately I saw the statement in the press a further examination - one examination had already taken place - was made of the records in my office, with the result that the reply I gave on Wednesday in answer to the honorable member for South Australia, Sir Langdon Bonython's, question was confirmed. No trace appears of any telegram or other document from the Premier of South Australia, forwarding a report on a route for a railway from Port Augusta to Western Australia. In view of the letters from me to the Premiers of South Australia and Western Australia of 20th August the file has been kept open, but no reports from either State have come to hand. I may perhaps direct attention to the fact that in the telegrams from the Premier of South Australia already mentioned, and dated 20th November, no reference is made to any reports having been forwarded.

Mr POYNTON

- In asking the Prime Minister -

Whether any decision has been arrived at with regard to the matter mentioned in the following newspaper paragraph : -

The Premier stated that though he had telegraphed to Mr. Barton a week ago concerning the construction of the first section of the West Australian Railway, no reply had yet been received.

I may say that the Premier referred to is the Premier of South Australia, and the communication referred to a resolution of the South Australian Parliament.

Mr BARTON

- The answer to the honorable member's question is as follows : -

Admittedly, the construction of the line cannot be undertaken without the authority of the South Australian Parliament. On the same principle, the Commonwealth cannot take it over without consulting the Federal Parliament, and there has not yet been time to consider that policy, even in Cabinet by reason of the pressure of business. Yesterday, or the day before, I sent to the Premier of South Australia a telegram stating that the matter had been awaiting consideration in Cabinet, which has not yet been able to reach it by reason of numerous urgent questions.

INCREMENTS TO POSTAL OFFICIALS

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I desire to ask the Prime Minister, without notice, if he has received any definite information from the Postmaster-General relative to the increments of the postal officials about which I spoke to him the other day ?

Mr BARTON

- The matter is being made the subject of an official communication from the Treasurer to myself, and I will give all the information that is available as soon as I possibly can.

INLAND PARCELS POST FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA

<page>8038</page>

Mr MAHON

asked the Minister representing the Postmaster-General, upon notice -
Whether, in view of the fact that some inland mail contracts have several years to run, the Postmaster-General will negotiate with the contractors so as to facilitate the establishment in Western Australia of the inland parcel post system, and so extend to the people of that State a convenience enjoyed elsewhere ?

Minister (without portfolio)

Sir PHILIP FYSH

- The answer to the honorable member's question is as follows : -
The Postmaster-General will take an early opportunity of negotiating with the contractors in order to facilitate the establishment in Western Australia of the inland parcels post system, with a view to extending to the people of that State the convenience enjoyed elsewhere.

PARLIAMENTARY HEAD MESSENGER

Mr SPENCE

asked the Prime Minister, upon notice -

. Is it a Fact that the head of the messenger staff of the House is about to retire?

Is it a fact that his place is to be filled by an officer from the Victorian State House ?

Mr BARTON

- The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow : -
Before I can definitely answer this question, it will have to be the subject of communication between Mr. Speaker and myself.

PREFERENTIAL RAILWAY RATES

Mr THOMAS

asked the Attorney-General, upon notice -

Whether he is aware that the South Australian Government are charging preferential railway rates over their railways, viz., charging £1 17s. 7d. per ton from Adelaide to Broken Hill on South Australian bacon, and £5 14s. 5d. on Victorian, New South Wales, and New Zealand bacon over same distance ; and £1 17s. 7d. per ton on South Australian cheese, and £41 2s. per ton for same distance on Victorian, New South Wales, and New Zealand cheese. If so, is it legal, under the Constitution Act, for any Government within the Commonwealth to charge such preferential rates.

Attorney-General

Mr DEAKIN

- I have no knowledge as to the correctness or otherwise of the figures given by the honorable member, but, assuming them to be correct, they are astounding. The Constitution provides that, before the railway rates charged by any State can be dealt with, a law must be passed by the Commonwealth prohibiting preferences and discriminations in such rates, and it can only be enforced on the finding of the InterState Commission. Perhaps that circumstance may indicate to the honorable member the reason why the

Government have been anxious that a measure for the establishment of the Inter-State Commission should be assented to before this session closes. Until it is passed there will be no means provided for dealing with such cases as that to which the honorable member has called attention. I may add that my honorable colleague, the

Prime Minister, has placed himself in communication with the different State Governments in order to discover if it is possible to remove some or all of the existing anomalies even without the passage of such an Act, but the question addressed to me, of course, relates to the constitutional powers of the Commonwealth.

THE TARIFF

In Committee of Ways and Means : -

Consideration resumed from 28th November, 1901 (vide page 7960.)

Item 48 - Salt, n.e.i., per ton, 20s.

Special exemptions - Salt, brown rock, and manure.

<page>8039</page>

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- This is an article which is used in such a large number of industries that we ought to look upon the proposed duty to a very large extent from the point of view of the consumer. The rate of duty proposed is equivalent to from 100 to 125 per cent. ad valorem, and the freight and other charges that have to be paid in connexion with such a bulky article as salt, would bring the protection to the local salt producers up to 150 per cent. I venture to say that that is a very extreme figure, particularly when we consider the nature of the article. I know that there are different kinds of salt, some of which are of a very fine quality, and that it may be difficult to differentiate between the qualities without leaving loop-holes for fraud. I do not wish to offer any facilities in that direction. In New South Wales and in Queensland salt has been admitted free hitherto, but a duty of 20s. per ton was formerly charged in Victoria. I think even the most ardent protectionist will allow that in many of these matters our Victorian friends have taken a very extreme view. It is most difficult in framing a protectionist Tariff to deal justly with the large population of the Commonwealth. Immediately a protective duty is placed on one article there is a clamour for similar assistance on behalf of another industry, and it is often very difficult for the protectionist to so allocate the duties as to give fair protection all round. I am perfectly satisfied that a lower duty would yield a larger revenue. Only £19,600 is expected from this duty, and that I regard as absolutely ridiculous. I do not intend to move an amendment at this moment, because it is very questionable whether the duty should not be reduced to 5s. I leave it to others with fuller knowledge to further elaborate the subject, and ask honorable members to look at this question from the broad view of the Commonwealth interest.

Mr. SYDNEY

SMITH (Macquarie). In addition to this duty, which means about 60 per cent., the local producers have the further advantage of the freight on English salt, which in some cases represents nearly 100 per cent. It is true that salt is brought out as ballast, but that is only on very rare occasions. The effect of the duty will be to raise the price of the English salt, which is largely used by butter makers and bacon curers, and it is a very unwise thing to further harass those engaged in the dairying industry, which has a great future before it, in the way of exporting. America, Denmark, and other countries enjoy special advantages on account of their geographical position, Denmark monopolizing something like 45 per cent. of the import butter trade of Great Britain.

Mr Kennedy

- What proportion of English salt is used in the dairying industry ?

Mr SYDNEY SMITH

- It may be that in dairying a large proportion is not used, but the quantity used by bacon curers, stock-owners, and others is considerable. It may be admitted that the Australian product is a good article, but we should not create protection so as to give the local manufacturer a monopoly, and enable him to raise prices to the detriment of other industries. We ought to do all we possibly can to lessen the cost of production in order to put Australians in a position to compete for the trade of Great Britain, and other parts of the world. We are fast taking a position of importance in trade, but there is still a great deal to do ; and in the interests of the export trade in butter, hides, and meat the duty ought to be reduced. A large quantity of salt is used by pastoralists and settlers in order to keep their herds healthy, and a duty which

will amount to over 100 per cent, should not be imposed.

Sir William Lyne

- Is the honorable member aware that rock-salt, which is used for sheep and cattle, is on the free list ?

Mr SYDNEY SMITH

- I know that brown rock-salt is on the free list, but I am speaking of fine salt and white rock salt, which is largely used by stock-owners, and there is no doubt that sometimes the latter article is crushed up and sold in Australia, as of the higher quality. I move -

That the words "and on and after 30th November, 1901, 10s. " be added.

Treasurer

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- No doubt this is an important question affecting large industries. The State rates are not necessarily binding on us, but it is worth noting that in Victoria the duty was 20s., in South Australia 25s., in Tasmania 30s., in Western Australia 20s., while in Queensland and New South Wales salt was free. The imports into New South Wales in 1899 amounted to 28,000 tons, and into Queensland 20,000 tons, as against 7,000 tons imported into Victoria, 344 tons into South Australia, and 354 tons into Western Australia. The amount of revenue which we hope to derive at £1 per ton is nearly £20,000 ; so that it is evident that even with a large impost there will still be a considerable amount of importation. I do not know how much salt is used in connexion with the dairying industry, and as the honorable member for Macquarie did not reply to a question on this point, I take it that he is in a similar state of ignorance. From an outsider's point of view, however, I should not think very much salt is used in connexion with that particular industry.

Sir William McMillan

- There is an immense quantity used.

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- If so, the supply can be obtained from Australia, as is proved by the fact that Victoria imports only the small quantity I have mentioned. This would seem to show that what we are importing are the finer table salts. Brown rock-salt has been placed on the free list because it is used to a large extent in pastoral and similar industries.

Mr SYDNEY SMITH

- Why not extend that freedom to the dairying industry ?

<page>8040</page>

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- If we admit white rock-salt free, it will be imported and crushed to take the place of the local article. From the Melbourne Journal of Commerce, of 10th September, I find the following prices quoted, including the duty of 20s. per ton : - Higgins' Patent Dairy, £5 7s. 6d. ; Liverpool coarse, £3 5s., fine, £3 10s. ; " Black Horse," fine, £4 10s., coarse, £4 ; German, £2 15s. ; "Castle" South Australian, fine, £3 10s., coarse, £3 5s. No doubt this article varies very much in price. As to the natural protection which is so constantly referred to, I should say salt affords rather a bad example, seeing that it is sometimes brought out as ballast. Indeed, according to a letter I saw in a newspaper some time ago, that is frequently done.

Mr SYDNEY SMITH

- A business man cannot afford to wait until salt arrives in ballast.

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- But when it is so brought, salt can be landed very cheaply.

Mr Thomas

- Is not salt a good thing to get?

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- I propose we should get the good thing from Australia, and not import it from Germany, more especially seeing that Germany not only subsidizes the steamers, but gives a bonus on the salt.

Mr Thomas

- Then we get the advantage. If the Germans gave us salt for nothing, would we object ?

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- I would not take it. I would rather have the salt produced by our own people, and afford them an opportunity of earning money to spend amongst themselves. The dairy farmer must not expect to get everything, but should consider other people who consume his produce.

Sir Langdon Bonython

- In the last seven years 17,000 tons of salt have been imported into Melbourne, at an average cost of less than 9s. per ton.

Sir William McMillan

- That is not correct.

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- We have endeavoured to establish this industry in Victoria, and there are large salt works at Moolap, owned by a company who lease an area of Crown lands near Portarlington or Geelong. This company have spent large sums of money, and undoubtedly afford considerable employment, especially at certain periods of the year. South Australia turns out first-class salt, and has an advantage over Victoria in that in that State there are large natural deposits to draw from. This industry provides employment for a large number of people, and in South Australia the Castle Company alone disburses in wages no less than £17,000 a year. We hear a lot about the natural products of the country, and as to how we should assist them. Surely the production of salt should be regarded as a natural industry. On the grounds, therefore, that we can produce this article locally, and that it provides healthy employment to a large number of persons, we ought to give the industry sufficient protection to enable it to command a fair share of the home market. The rate proposed is not a prohibitive one, and I ask the committee to adopt it.

Mr A C GROOM

- I have been looking up Coghlan, and I find that the total number of hands employed in this industry is 179. Salt is an article of more general consumption than is any other which enters the country. There is about 30 lb. per head of it used annually throughout Australia.

Mr Kingston

- That must include manufacturers.

Mr A C GROOM

- No. The passage from Coghlan is headed " Food Supply and Cost of Living," and the writer says : - Considering the comparatively high rate of wages which prevails, food of all kinds is fairly cheap in Australasia, and articles of diet which in other countries are almost within the category of luxuries are largely used even by the poorer classes. The average quantities of the principal articles of common diet annually consumed in the various colonies are given below.

Then he goes on to state the quantity of salt used in each State. In New South Wales the consumption is set down at 42 lbs. per head, in Victoria at 40 lbs., in Queensland at 57.8 lbs., in South Australia at 27 lbs., in Western Australia at 17.8 lbs., in Tasmania at 18.3 lbs., and in New Zealand at 32 lbs. The average consumption per head for the whole of Australia is 30 lbs. The salt industry is really one of the primary industries of the Commonwealth, and ought not to require any protection. At the same time salt is an article upon which a fair revenue duty might be imposed. Therefore I think that the Government should consent to the proposal to levy a duty of 10s. per ton, which represents a protection of 25 per cent. upon it.

<page>8041</page>

Mr SAWERS

- I almost feel inclined to assist in placing salt upon the free list. It is one of those articles the production of which seems to require no protection. . The only reason why I am disposed to vote for the imposition of a small duty is because those who use the highly subsidized German steamers which come to Australia would otherwise enjoy an advantage over our local producers. I cannot agree with the remarks of the Treasurer, who practically says that for the sake of helping an industry in which a few hundred people are engaged he will act to the detriment of thousands of producers to whom salt is almost a necessity. To the pastoral industry salt is essential as an article of diet for sheep. In the richer districts where salt-bush flourishes it is not required for sheep, but in more elevated country, such as that of New England, where the natural grasses are somewhat sour, it is an absolute necessity to the pastoralists.

Mr Crouch

- That remark applies only to rock-salt, which is upon the free list.

Mr SAWERS

- It is an old idea that pastoralists use only rock-salt, but practical men of today use Liverpool salt. In the New England district I use a ton of Liverpool salt for every thousand sheep I have. It costs, as a rule, £4

or £5 a ton. I have long since abandoned the use of rock-salt, and use only Liverpool or Adelaide salt for my stock. I never use less than 2 lbs. per sheep each year. Yet the Treasurer says that he would not give the thousands who are engaged in pastoral pursuits the benefit of cheap salt, because of the few hundreds who are employed in the salt industry. I may also point out that although in New South Wales there has been no duty upon salt, Adelaide still has practically beaten the Liverpool article out of the market. I notice that brown rock-salt is placed upon the free list. Why not white rock salt ? Brown rock-salt, as a rule, is perfect rubbish, and the pastoralists prefer to use white rock-salt. I shall vote for the lowest duty proposed. I intend to move that the word " brown " be omitted from the list of special exemptions.

Mr. BATCHELOR

(South Australia).Some honorable members who call themselves protectionists, when a duty is proposed for the advantage of an industry which does not exist in the State which they represent, and upon an article in which they are interested, immediately become freetraders. I would point out that the sheep salt, of which the honorable member for New England spoke, can be obtained from Geelong in any quantity at 20s. per ton. He can also get South Australian salt at the same price, but if the local salt industry is crushed, as it will be if the duty upon salt is removed as certainly as if we were to pass a law prohibiting its manufacture here, he will not. be able to obtain salt so cheaply. Indeed, he will have to pay a good deal more than 20s. per ton for it if the amendment be carried. The honorable member for Wentworth said that the duty proposed represents 100 per cent. upon the value of the article, but in to-day's

Argus

I find the following : -

In salt, Black Horse and Higgins' Dairy are selling at £5 15s., Black Horse fine at £4 17s. 6d., and Castle, fine, at £3 5s. The Castle: works are now overtaking the demand. German fine is depressed at £2 15s. Coarse salt is quoted at £4 4s. for Black Horse, £3 15s. for Liverpool, and £35s. for Castle. Rock-salt is scarce, and is quoted at 75s. to 80s. according to parcel.

Then the Age says -

Rock-salt, firming, 70s. to 75s. quoted. German salt depressed and cheap; lots have been sold at 55s. Black Horse fine salt, 95s. to 97s. 6d. ; do. dairy, 1 15s. ; Castle fine salt, 65s.

The experiments conducted in South Australia during the last few years have resulted in the production there of salt for dairy purposes equal to the best imported article, although some dairies will continue to use Black Horse salt because of the world-wide reputation which it has acquired. That is shown by the estimate of revenue which the Treasurer expects to derive from this duty. Protection so far as salt is concerned has resulted in a reduction of price to the consumer.

Mr Page

- How does the honorable member account for the increase in the price of Castle salt in Queensland by 13s. 6d. per ton since 8th October?

<page>8042</page>

Mr BATCHELOR

- I admit that that is the result of the duty, but as a set-off I may mention that in Victoria the price of salt has been reduced by 10s. per ton. There has been no real difference in the duty so far as Victoria is concerned, but notwithstanding the continuance of the duty the price has been reduced as stated. It has been contended by some honorable members that the increase in price is always equivalent to the amount of duty, but in this case they have been proved to be at least 50 per cent out in their calculations. I admit that salt is of the very greatest importance to a great number of industries, and notwithstanding the importance of the salt industry to South Australia, I would not for one moment do anything that would permanently increase the price. But we know that nothing keeps down prices so much as competition, and the fact of our having a local salt-producing industry in Australia operates in that way. Where there is no local product prices are kept up to just as high a figure as the foreign manufacturer can obtain, but where he has to compete with a primary local industry he has to bring his prices down to a much lower rate. Prior to the imposition of the duty in South Australia £5 10s. and £6 per ton had to be paid for salt suitable for dairying purposes. But since we have produced our own salt the prices have been reduced to such an extent that all Australia can now procure salt, which is admittedly as good as the best imported, at £3 5s. or £3 1 0s. per ton. The salt industry affords one of the very best instances of the advantages of

judicious protection. The immediate result of the imposition of the duty has been to increase the price of salt in Queensland. Just as was the case in South Australia when protection was imposed, I admit that the immediate result of imposing duties is to increase the prices, but with competition amongst local producers prices come down to a reasonable level. I have a number of documents here, which show that freight on salt from Liverpool to Melbourne averages 9s. per ton. From 12,000 to 15,000 tons of salt have been introduced at that rate during the last few years.

Mr SYDNEY SMITH

- Is that fine salt ?

Mr BATCHELOR

- I do not know, but to the best of my belief it is good Liverpool and Cheshire salt, and not the cheap German article. The leader of the Opposition questions the accuracy of these figures as to freights, but I can assure him that the figures I have are absolutely beyond question, and that I have seen the bills of lading from which they were taken.

Mr SYDNEY SMITH

- The honorable member cannot tell us whether it is fine salt upon which these rates of freight were paid.

Mr BATCHELOR

-What does that matter 1 The question is as to the extent of the natural protection which is enjoyed by the local producer, who has to compete against these importations from abroad. As against the freight of 9s. per ton on imported salt, the freight on salt from Edithburgh, which is the nearest port to the chief salt lakes in South Australia, to Port Adelaide is 3s., and the freight from Port Adelaide to Melbourne is 5s. per ton.

Mr Watson

- 9s. cannot be the usual rate of freight from Liverpool to Melbourne.

Mr Thomson

- That could only have been charged for small lots.

Mr BATCHELOR

- On the contrary ; it was the rate at which several large lots were brought out here. The Silberhorn brought out 2,700 tons at 8s. 6d. per ton, less 2|- per cent. The BollockMyle brought out 1,850 tons at 8s. 6d. The Samoa brought out 1,740 tons at 9s. 6d. per ton, less 1\ per cent. The Loch Call-in brought out 2,820 tons at 10s., less 5 per cent. ; and the Earl of Hopetoun brought out 2,550 tons, at 10s. 6d., less 5 per cent. The introduction of these large quantities of salt must dislocate the local market, and it is in connexion with that aspect of the matter that freights have to be taken into consideration. The cost of conveying salt from Edithburgh to Melbourne is 8s., via Port Adelaide, or 7s. fid. per ton direct. The cost to Sydney is about the same ; to Brisbane, 10s.; and to Rockhampton, 12s. 6d. Therefore, the natural protection enjoyed by the local producer in the leading markets is only 1s. per ton. At Brisbane and Rockhampton the balance is the other way.

Mr Thomson

- The honorable member is omitting the charges which should be added to the freight.

Mr BATCHELOR

- The charges are about the same. On the English salt the charges are : - Freight, per ton, 8s. 6d.; insurance, 1d.; wharfage, 5s.; cartage from ship to store, 1s. 6d.; stacking, 8d.; total, 15s. 9d. The charges from Edithburgh via Port Adelaide to Melbourne are : - Freight, 8s.; insurance, 1d.; cartage, 1s. 6d.; wharfage, 5s.; stacking, 8d.; total, 15s. 3d.; so that there is only a difference of 6d. to the advantage of the local producer.

Mr Thomson

- The honorable member has omitted several items.

<page>8043</page>

Mr BATCHELOR

- The only charge to which imported salt is subject which does not also apply to local salt is for exchange, and the rate of exchange on one ton of salt would be a mere trifle. In South Australia, we have a number of large salt lakes, which were absolutely useless until we were able to convert the salt deposits into an article of commerce, and distribute it all over Australia. There are some 500 hands directly employed in the salt industry. The honorable member for Flinders stated that the number of men engaged was only

189, but that number are engaged in scraping salt only. Some £17,000 is paid in wages directly by one company. There are also over 100 men employed in carting who are not employees of the company.

Mr A C GROOM

- Those men are only indirectly employed.

Mr BATCHELOR

- They are engaged during the whole of the salt season.

Mr A C GROOM

- They are not engaged solely in carting salt.

Mr BATCHELOR

- The men are directly employed during the whole of the salt season in just the same way as shearers are engaged directly during the shearing season. This salt industry is run by the farmers, who are engaged in growing wheat when they are not occupied in salt making. These men are not engaged in exhausting employment in factories, but in a healthy primary industry, which is worth developing, and which enables them to remain on the land and carry on their farming occupation.

Mr V L SOLOMON

- Hear, hear !

Mr BATCHELOR

- There are 250 shareholders in the big company, and the leases of the lakes are cut up and held under mineral licences by the farmers of the district, work being carried out practically under a system of co-operation. The men engaged are to a large extent the owners of the leases, and care has been taken in South Australia that there shall be no monopoly. Some little time ago, when there seemed some clanger of monopoly, the holders were given a more permanent tenure than they had hitherto enjoyed. A cry has been raised about the amount of salt consumed by those engaged in dairying and by the population at large, and about the imposition of a duty causing an increase in the price. I have shown, however, that the development of the industry has had the effect of reducing the price, and that fair rates will be permanently maintained ; and I hope honorable members will pause before they reduce the duty. Any reduction would do serious and permanent injury to an industry which up to the present had not paid 1d. in dividends, all profits having gone in wages and experiments. If I thought the duty would increase the price, I should not be found taking my present stand.

Mr WATSON

- I am with honorable members who desire to encourage the salt industry, which is certainly one that ought to be regarded as natural to Australia.

The deposits in South Australia justify reasonable attempts to develop them, and the fact that the company there established have succeeded in supplying more than half the whole quantity of salt imported into New South Wales in open competition with the world, and, under similar conditions, have also exported very largely into Queensland, shows that there are possibilities in this industry. On the other hand, I cannot agree that a prohibitive duty should be imposed. The fact that South Australian manufacturers have been able to send so much salt into Queensland and New South Wales under a freetrade policy should point to the conclusion that, if they get a moderate protection, they ought to be able, practically, to capture the whole Australian market. I am not going to be a party to putting on duties which will enable prices to be raised to a high extent against consumers generally. In the Victorian market the South Australian company have an advantage of £1 per ton, and yet they have only reduced their selling price by 10s.

Sir George Turner

- The company have to pay freight and wharfage at Melbourne.

Mr WATSON

- So have their competitors, and the company had to pay freight and wharfage previously. Yet they are asking the consumer to pay 10s. extra, which is a high percentage on the price. I understand that in New South Wales the company have increased their price by 7s. 6d. per ton, and in Queensland by 13s. 6d. per ton. If this company were honest and fair-dealing they would be satisfied with the greater output which is called for by the practical prohibition of importations from outside. Though most of us are protectionists we are not prepared to deliver, bound hand and foot, the consumers of Australia into the hands of any set of men in any part of the Commonwealth. I do not care whether it be an industry in my own district or an

industry in any other district, I shall be no party to imposing what are practically prohibitive duties. I desire to see fair encouragement given to the local producer, and I am quite prepared to go as far as 20 per cent. or more in some particular cases.

Mr HUME COOK

- What does the duty average?

<page>8044</page>

Mr WATSON

- So far as I can see, a duty of 10s. represents about 20 per cent..

We have to take the original cost of the article ; but, in any case, we cannot draw a hard-and-fast line, and say that 20 per cent, or 25 per cent, is sufficient in all cases. In this industry we have to allow for the fact that, right up to the present time, in the free ports of New South Wales and Queensland the local producers have been able to more than hold their own. In arranging the amount of encouragement necessary, we should take that circumstance into consideration, and not put this industry on the same basis as a number of others which have not been able to hold their own, but which we hope to be able to bring into existence. The fact that these people have taken advantage of the duty of £1 per ton to raise prices unduly to the consumer should convince us of the unwisdom of placing upon salt a higher impost than 10s.

Mr CRUICKSHANK

- This is one of the industries from which we should have " revenue without destruction," a phrase which I do not think the Argus understands. A duty of 10s. is fully 20 per cent.; and as this is an article very largely consumed by small graziers, especially in the eastern division of New South Wales and in Queensland, I should like to see the industry encouraged. But we must not allow a duty to be imposed which will create a monopoly, with the result of making salt dearer to the consumer. Those who prefer to use imported salt should be given the opportunity of doing so on payment of a moderate duty. I have largely used the Adelaide salt myself, and find it very good. I believe it is produced at something like 25s. a ton, so that really a duty of 10s. would probably mean 30 per cent. That is quite enough protection, and I regard a duty of £1 as out of the question. I was very much amused on receiving from the Australian National League at Camperdown a circular stating that certain honorable members, who had been returned as moderate protectionists, were now assisting in imposing high duties. That satisfied me that the farming industry, as represented in those leagues in Victoria, confess that they have returned moderate protectionists to Parliament. To proceed on lines of moderate protection is, I feel, in the best interests of the farmer. Exorbitant rates are not required, and while we desire to encourage the industry, I think there ought to be a reduction of the duty in this case.

Mr E SOLOMON

- Salt is a commodity universally used, there scarcely being an article of food into which it does not enter. I desire to point out an error which the Treasurer has made in his statement of comparative duties. In Western Australia, instead of there being an all-round duty of 20s. per ton, rock salt is charged 5 per cent., which means about 1s. 6d. per ton on salt invoiced at 30s., while the duty on Liverpool table salt is 15 per cent., or 7s. 6d. per ton. Salt is manufactured on Rottnest Island, Western Australia, but that is by prison labour, the workers being aborigines who have been sent there for punishment. My idea is that the salt industry, like the manufacture of spirits and tobacco, should be under the immediate control of the Government. It is the poorer classes of the people who mostly use salt, consuming as they do large quantities of salt foods, so that the tax will bear more heavily on them than on the well-to-do. I hope that the Government will really consider this item, and reduce the duty to 12s., which will be fairer to the consumers, and, in my opinion, result in more revenue.

<page>8045</page>

Mr GLYNN

- I do not know whether the honorable member for South Australia, Mr. Batchelor, as a result of the figures he has given, is prepared to accept the duty of 10s. per ton. The honorable member gave us the maximum freight as against South Australia, but the freight to most of the States is much under the figure he quoted. The Opposition are quite prepared to accept a duty of 10s., though, personally, I would sooner see this item free. If the higher duty is retained, the Castle Company in a year or two will have practically a monopoly of the supply of Australia. Last year this matter was brought under the consideration of the

South Australian Parliament, in connexion with the Mining Bill, which provided for allowing the surrender of leases largely held by the Castle Company, and terminable on six months' notice, with a view to allowing an extension of 42 years. The cry was then raised that this was really giving an enormous monopoly. A few years previously an attempt had been made to subdivide the leases held by the company, and to enable the farmers - who I think are the scrapers of the salt - to get the principal benefit connected with the production. The result was that the Castle Company, acting with that instinct which is always to be found in such companies, bought out the farmers and made them shareholders, and so obtained the monopoly of the raw material. Complaint was made by the competing company, the Colonial Salt Company, that they were unable to get salt, and it is no wonder that they are unable to pay dividends, seeing that the other company has got hold of the whole of the deposit area. So strong was the feeling in the South Australian Parliament that the Castle Company were obtaining a monopoly, that the leader of the Opposition, although a number of his following represented the district interested, asked that the matter should be referred to a select committee. That proposal was not carried into effect, but the facts I have stated will give honorable members an idea of what the South Australian Parliament thought of the position. The Castle Company claimed that in a few years they would be able to turn out 90,000 or 1 00,000 tons annually, sufficient to meet the demands of the whole of Australia. At that time the output was about 30,000 tons per annum, and it was hoped under federation and with improved machinery to increase that to 60,000 tons, and eventually to the larger quantity sufficient for the needs of the Commonwealth. I believe that last year South Australia supplied more than half the consumption of Australia, besides which there was a considerable export to other countries. As a matter of fact, the total production in South Australia last year was equal to two-thirds of the consumption of Australia. If we protect salt much further we shall, within three or four years, practically hand over to one company the profits on the consumption of Australia. The honorable member for South Australia, Mr. Batchelor, has referred to the question of prices. If we take the prices of salt from the Sydney Trades Review of June 30, last year, and from the Melbourne Chamber of Commerce Journal, of -July 3, of the same year, we shall find that there was a difference between the cost of the article in the two States which was almost equivalent to the duty. In Sydney, where salt was admitted free, the price of the Black Horse brand was 48s. 6d. per ton; in Victoria, where there was a 20s. per ton duty operative, it ranged from 80s. to 85s., and in South Australia, with a maximum protection of 25s. per ton, it was 85s.

Mr Harper

- The market and freight conditions account for the difference.

Mr GLYNN

- They do not account for the fact that the price in South Australia was more than the price in Sydney with the duty added. If we go back to 1894, when there was a rate of 20s. per ton operating in New South Wales, we shall find that the price for the particular brand mentioned was £3 12s. 6d. per ton, whilst in 1898, when salt was admitted free of duty, the price was £2 7s. 6d. per ton. I do not know what more honorable members want to demonstrate the inexpediency of bolstering up one particular company. We are told that there are 500 men engaged in this industry in South Australia, but I would point out that that number is not directly employed in the industry. The number directly engaged was given by the honorable member for Flinders. What on earth has the carting, which is done by the farmers, to do with this duty? I fail to see how the statement made by the Commissioner of Crown Lands in South Australia in advocacy of the somewhat doubtful policy of extending the leases, that the industry employed 500 men, can upon analysis be maintained. I think that as a compromise honorable members ought to agree upon a reasonable protection being given to the industry. As a representative of South Australia I repudiate the need for any duty at all, although I know that a good many shareholders in the industry looked forward to "collaring" the markets of Australia under the protection which would be afforded by federation. That fact can be proved by reference to the South Australian Mansard. A fair concession to make would be the suggested duty of 10s. per ton.

<page>8046</page>

Mr BROWN

- The Ministry apparently support the high duty of 20s. per ton upon salt because of its protective incidence. But I wish to direct attention to the very large extent to which salt enters into consumption within the Commonwealth, and especially in connexion with the primary industries. I ask the committee to

consider whether it is reasonable that the thousands of people engaged in other industries should be penalized in the interest of the few who find employment in the salt industry. The figures quoted by the honorable member for Minders with reference to the consumption of this article occasioned very general surprise, but upon analysis I think it will be conceded that the statistics quoted are quite within reason. I need scarcely point out that salt is used largely in the dairying industry, in the preserving of meat and for stock. It has been urged that the requirements of stock would be met by placing rock salt upon the free list. But the pastoralist of to-day relies more upon ordinary salt than upon rock salt. The pastoralists use an immense amount of salt in order to secure for their stock immunity from fluke, worms, and many other diseases to which they are liable. So largely is this article imported into New South Wales that the Treasurer expects to derive a revenue from that State of £.10,000, which is more than half of his estimate for the whole of Australia. The honorable and learned member for South Australia, Mr. Glynn, has thrown a good deal of light upon this industry so far as his own State is concerned. His colleague, Mr. Batchelor, claimed that the industry was a primary one, and should therefore be encouraged. But judging by the utterances of the honorable and learned member for South Australia, Mr. Glynn, the people of that State regard it as a monopoly. If the committee assent to the highly protective duty proposed by the Government, the whole of the Commonwealth will look upon it from the same stand-point. I am disposed to agree with the suggestion of the honorable member for Fremantle, that this article enters into such general consumption that the Commonwealth cannot afford to allow its manufacture to become a monopoly. One way in which to obviate that danger and to prevent the necessity of State interference, is to allow of a reasonable amount of competition. The Queensland Chamber of Commerce recommends that a duty of 5s. per ton should be imposed, which they estimate would represent about 25 per cent., f.o.b. at Hong Kong. Considering that this article has hitherto been allowed to enter New South Wales and Queensland free of duty, and in view of the important part which it plays in connexion with the primary industries, it is only reasonable to ask that a duty of something like 25 per cent, should be imposed. I shall support the proposal to reduce the rate to 5s. per ton, and failing that I shall vote -with those who desire to fix it at 10s. per ton. It may be urged that under this Tariff the primary industries are protected, and that they should be prepared to concede something in return. But I would point out that our primary producers have to compete in the markets of the world, and that the protection which is afforded them by the Government is a mere sham and make-believe.

<page>8047</page>

Mr KENNEDY

- We are too prone to give special attention only to the immediate object before us, and deal with a proposal for protection from the point of view of the number of employes who may be engaged in the industry, and the advantage which may thus be derived from the duty. If, however, we applied this narrow argument to the whole of the industries in our midst, we should probably be reduced to the production of wool and minerals only. These matters must be viewed from a broad stand-point, and with a recognition of the fact that all our industries are interdependent. We have been told that we should get all our supplies in the cheapest markets, but honorable members who hold that view should, to be logical, also permit the employer to procure his labour in the cheapest possible markets. That I am sure they are not prepared to do, and, moreover, it is not desirable that they should be. I believe that, owing to the extended market which will now be open to salt manufacturers within the Commonwealth, they may be able to carry on successfully with a lower duty than has hitherto been collected. If the duty were fixed at 10s. per ton, the reduction would be equivalent to 50 per cent, upon the lowest existing rates, and I think that that would be too much. A duty of 15s. would be a fair thing, taking into account all the interests involved. The amount of salt used in connexion with dairying represents a very small factor in the expense of carrying on the industry. If we were to not only take the duty off salt, but give it to the dairyman absolutely free of cost, the money thus saved to him would not pay for one milk-can in each season. The actual cost of salt to the dairyman is only about 7d. per 100 lbs. of butter. I am engaged in dairying myself, and I say that it would be more to the benefit of the dairymen, particularly in New South Wales, if they were to improve their herds and thus increase their milk-producing capacity. They would then be able to ignore such small considerations as the price of the salt used in their butter. Any one who knows anything about pastoral pursuits is aware that the best salt for stock is the brown rock salt, which contains a considerable proportion of iron and sulphur. If the squatter uses other salt for his stock, as he

sometimes does, he has to also give them iron and sulphur in some other form. Brown rock salt is specially exempted from duty, and, therefore, the pastoralist will not be affected by this tax. By giving a little assistance to those engaged in saltproducing we shall encourage them, so that in a very short time they will produce all the salt that is required within the Commonwealth, and the consumer will derive the benefit of the reduced price resulting from the increased production. The freight charged for the conveyance of salt from the seaports to the various inland districts where it is required represents a far more serious item of expense than any judiciously imposed duty.

Mr KNOX

- Salt is an article of such universal consumption that I think the Treasurer may very well expect to derive some revenue from it. There is one way in which it is consumed to which no reference has yet been made, and that is in the treatment of tailings by the chlorination process. A large quantity of salt is used in the treatment of low-grade ores by that process, and in order that mining operations may be encouraged it would be well for the Treasurer to consider the desirability of reducing the duty on salt ' to 10s. per ton. One of the companies in which I am interested has taken 3,500 tons of salt per annum from the South Australian works, and it may be again necessary to continue to take a similar or even a larger quantity, if reasonable encouragement is offered to those engaged in mining.

Mr CROUCH

- In this matter I represent 120 workmen who will probably be thrown out of employment if the duty on salt is reduced to 10s. per ton. These men are receiving good wages at the Moolap Salt works near Geelong, and the committee should not lightly come to a decision which would operate to the prejudice of such a large body of men. We are told that the duty has had the effect of increasing the price of salt in New South Wales by 7s. 6d. per ton, and in Queensland by 13s. 6d. per ton, but when it is considered that these increases are not at all commensurate with the amount of the duty, it is clear that the consumer has not been called upon to pay so much as might have been demanded of him. It has been conclusively shown that one of the companies engaged in salt making in South Australia has lost- £4,000 in 3⁴ years, and that not one of the South Australian companies has paid a dividend. It is only fair that those who have invested their capital in this industry should receive some return for their money, and if we can assist them by imposing a duty on salt we should do so.

Mr Page

- They have free-trade throughout the Commonwealth now.

<page>8048</page>

Mr CROUCH

- The Moolap Company has been putting money into its business, year after year without getting any dividends, and it has been the same in South Australia. The honorable and learned member for South Australia, Mr. Glynn,, says it is possible to have a monopoly. Australia is an island, however, and everywhere on the Australian coast the establishment of a salt industry is possible. If free-trade is established in salt, or only a duty of 10s. per ton fixed in respect of it, the result will be that the industry will be wiped out in Australia. The effect will be similar to that which followed the introduction of German bounty-fed sugar into the West Indies. As Mr. Froude points out, in his work Oceana, sugar was the natural industry of the West Indies. In 1859, however, the Germans established bounty-fed sugar works, with the result that the West Indies sugar industry rapidly declined. ' In the same way the introduction of German bounty-fed salt into Australia will have the effect of destroying the salt industry here, and as soon as that, takes place the Germans will raise the prices. The process is already going on.. The Financial News of the 8th July last shows that a big trust is in the course of formation, with the object of stamping out all competition in salt. Under the heading of "The Salt Combine - The Formation of a Trust again Asserted to be an Accomplished Fact," it sets forth that -

There have been specific denials of the accuracy of cables on the part of the Salt Union of England ; but a New York correspondent informs us that the formation of a trust to control almost the entire salt output of the world has been definitely announced at the offices of the National Salt Company, located in the Standard Oil Buildings, No. 26 Broadway. The new company (he says) will embrace the Salt Union of England, the Canadian Salt Company, and the National Salt Company, under the title of the International Salt Company. The concern will also include the Saleina Espanola Spanish salt mines-, which were recently acquired by the Union Salt Company and incorporated under the laws of New Jersey. Standard

Oil Company interests, which own the majority of the stock of the National Salt Company, are behind the deal. This will be the first international combine ever formed. The consolidated company will control the salt output of every civilized country on the globe, with the exception of the salt mines in Russia. The capital will exceed 50,000,000 dollars. Prominent banking interests have agreed to take charge of the underwriting.

Then it goes on to say, after giving details of the operations of the different companies, that - The consolidated company will have an output of from 3,000,000 to 6,000,000 tons of salt a year. The combine will be one of the largest and most important ever formed. An official of the company says that the operating policy of the Standard Oil Company will be applied to the International Salt Company. Last year the earnings of the National Salt Company were 1,207,569 dollars, and the company paid 7 per cent, dividends upon the preferred and 0 per cent, upon the common stock. The Tariff of 1.00 dollars a ton on salt, it is said, is sufficient to permit of foreign competition, except at seaports ; but the freight rate on American salt is so much greater than on English salt, that the railway companies generally get the benefit of the Tariff protection.

Unless we look to our own salt manufacturers, and give them the reasonable protection of £1 per ton, what can we expect 1 The cheap rates that have been brought about by the establishment of Australian salt works will be done away with, and as soon as the industry has been crushed, the grazier - for whom the honorable member for Maranoa is so anxious to secure cheap salt - the farmer, and the chlorination worker, to whom the honorable member for Kooyong has referred, will have to pay any price that this International Salt Trust chooses to fix. Instead of being able to pay decent wages, the local salt manufacturers will have to pay those ruling in Germany, which are 1 5s. a week for men, or 2s. 6d. per day. I can hardly imagine any honorable member of the labour party voting against this duty, seeing that it is so necessary for the protection of the workers in the industry. It is said that a certain quality of salt is necessary for the use of dairy farmers. I have here the details of analyses of salt - produced in different parts of the world - by- Mr. A. N. Pearson, chemist attached to the Agricultural department of Victoria. The Moolap Company did not send samples to Mr. Pearson, but requested him to send some one down to select samples of salt from any of their stocks. This was done, and in April, 1901, Mr. Pearson furnished a report on -

Samples gathered by Mr. P. T. Scott, of laboratory staff, from bulk stocks at the company's works, Geelong

The report makes a comparison of the Victorian samples with Cheshire stored salt, St. Malo sea salt, St. Ube's sea salt, Strassfurt salt, and another sample of Cheshire salt. It shows that the proportion of sodium chloride - that is the pure salt - is 98.25 in one case, 96.00 in another, 89.04 in another, 98.76 in another, and 97.59 in yet another. The proportion in the salt from the Moolap works is 98.77. I am told it is the same in regard to the South Australian salt, the quantity of pure salt to be found in both cases being larger than that found in salt obtained from outside sources. A chemical in salt that is most destructive to butter making is calcium sulphate, and the analyses show that there is a larger proportion of this chemical in foreign salt than is to be found in the Victorian product. Mr. Pearson is known as one of the best agricultural chemists in Australia, and I shall be pleased to place his certificate at the disposal of honorable members. All that remains to be shown is that the prices given by the honorable member for South Australia, Mr. Batchelor, are in no sense fictitious. I have a circular issued and published last year, which gives the price of the Moolap Company's No. 1 salt 'at 22s. per ton, and that of its agricultural salt at 20s. per ton - the exact amount of the duty. If these people had desired to take advantage of the duty, would they have sold their salt at 20s. per ton 1 Would they not have to sell it at whatever price it costs to land German salt here, plus the amount of the duty. If German agricultural salt costs 25s. per ton to land here, they would have added the full amount of the duty, and sold at £2 per ton, if they had desired to take advantage of it. Prices may have gone up in Queensland and New South Wales, but we have to remember that this international trust will be able to decrease prices, and that it will then be impossible for the salt works of South Australia to carry on.

Mr Page

- Then it will be time enough to put on a duty.

<page>8049</page>

Mr CROUCH

-If the honorable member is in the House when that time comes, as I am sure he will be, and if he happens to be the Minister for Customs, no doubt he will propose it. "We have to legislate for a time that has yet to be faced. If I thought that the imposition of this duty would not mean the permanent cheapness of salt used by the farmer, the grazier, and the chlorination worker, I should not support" it. It is because I believe that it will mean permanent cheapness, and because I believe that Australia should be the home of a permanent population of workers, that I ask honorable members to vote for the full duty proposed.

Mr FULLER

- I sympathize with the honorable and learned member for Corio in his advocacy of this duty, owing to the fact that he has a salt industry in the constituency which he represents. I represent a constituency in which a very large quantity of salt is used, and I look at the matter from a different point of view. We are told that if we adopt this duty we shall obtain permanent cheapness. How is it that the prices have gone up in Queensland ? The object of those honorable members who are advocating these duties is to compel those who use salt in their industries to use the colonial article. Other things being equal, I should prefer the colonial to the imported article. In at least one great industry colonial salt is not equal to the imported ; and, as the representative of a constituency largely interested in dairying, I object to people being forced to use an article which is not so suitable for their requirements. In this Tariff everything is being done to put the farmer at a disadvantage, and here the dairyman, who depends on the prices in London and other parts of the world, is compelled to use salt which will not keep his butter in a state of preservation to enable him to compete with Denmark and other butter-producing countries. The honorable member for Kennedy has referred to this as a small matter, and no doubt 7d. in every 100 lbs. of butter may appear unimportant. But when we come to consider the millions of pounds of butter produced, not only for local consumption, but for export, we see that this 7d. becomes very serious, amounting to an export duty of thousands of pounds. I am very glad to see that the butter-box duty has been abolished, but I object to the farmer being penalized in connexion with his supply of salt. The honorable member for South Australia, Mr, Batchelor, told us that protection reduces prices; but the honorable member for New England, and the honorable member for Gwydir, had a very different tale to tell.. These two honorable members are perhaps the 'cutest pastoralists in Australasia, and the former said that if there be a duty, he will have to pay extra for his salt.

Mr Tudor

- The honorable member for New England states that he did not say that.

Mr FULLER

- I should be glad to hear that contradiction from the honorable member himself.

Mr Sawers

- I said that so far as I am personally concerned, I always use the Adelaide salt. I do not use any English salt.

Mr FULLER

- I understood the honorable member to say that the pastoralists were "not fools," and that he did not want to pay the extra price that would be caused by the duty. I myself would be in favour of admitting salt free of duty, but as I understand an arrangement has been entered into by the acting leader of the Opposition, I shall vote for the lower impost.

Mr. KINGSTON

(South Australia Minister for Trade and Customs. - It might be understood from the honorable member for Illawarra that the 7d. of which he spoke was the difference which would be occasioned by the duty. But that is the total value of the salt used, and there will be no difference to the disadvantage of the butter man, unless it be proved that the colonial salt will be charged for at a higher rate than that now charged for English salt.

Mr Fuller

- I also said that colonial salt is not so suitable for the dairyman's purpose.

<page>8050</page>

Mr KINGSTON

- The two points urged are that the colonial salt will be sold at a higher price, and that it is not equal in quality to English salt. I have in my hand the prices agreed to by the Merchant Salesmen's Association, and prevailing in Brisbane on the 24th October last. There are coarse salts and fine salts, and we find that

for "Black Horse "salt and Liverpool salt, which are both coarse, the price, for 10 tons and under 25 tons, was 77s. 6d. On the other hand " Eagle " salt which comes from South Australia, was under similar conditions sold at 57s. 6d. for 10 tons and under, showing a difference of 20s. in favour of the South Australian product.

Mr Page

- What were the prices before the 1st October ?

Mr KINGSTON

- I have not those prices here, but they would be of no advantage, for what we want to know chiefly is how prices stand under the new Tariff to-day, when there might be an attempt to make profits which later on, under more lively competition, would not be permitted. The honorable member' for New England is a good business man who rejected South Australian salt when it had not attained its present perfection, but now uses it in preference to the imported article.

Mr Fuller

- That is only in a particular industry.

Mr KINGSTON

- The honorable member for New England speaks with greater authority than if he were dealing with some other industry. Quoting from the same authority, I find that on October 24th., fine " Black Horse" salt, for 2 tons and under 10 tons, sold at 92s. 6d., whilst fine " Castle" salt from South Australia, for 10 tons and under 25 tons, sold at 65s., showing a difference of 27s. 6d. in favour of the South Australian product. I might quote German salt, which is cheaper than "Black Horse," though not cheaper than the South Australian salt.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Then South Australian salt can compete with the world?

Mr KINGSTON

- It can pretty well.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Why, then, is the duty wanted?

Mr KINGSTON

- Because we want fair play. We want a duty for the same reason that we advocate protection in regard to a great many other industries, viz., that there may be fair protection against conditions which obtain elsewhere. Those who have inquired into the subject must know that South Australian salt is as good for all purposes as salt produced in any part of the world.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- Has the right honorable gentlemen ever tried to sell South Australian salt?

<page>8051</page>

Mr KINGSTON

- If the honorable member did not make a success of the business, that was not the fault of the salt. Every care has been taken for the purpose of ascertaining whether the " Castle " salt is useful for all purposes, and I think honorable members generally will be inclined to attach a great deal of importance to the certificate of Mr. Parkinson, an analytical chemist of the Royal College of Chemistry, London, who says - The colour is good, as well as the quality, and it is free from grit or organic impurities; it is equal to the best Cheshire English salt, and suited for every domestic requirement.

This salt is practically exclusively used by a number of South Australian butter factories, and I think the butter of that State is of very fair quality. The certificate of the manager of the Clarendon Cheese and Butter Company, who own one of the best butter factories in South Australia, is as follows : -

I have very great pleasure in bearing testimony to the general excellence of your Castle brand salt, which undoubtedly possesses all the advantages claimed for it. I have used it for the last two years, and, therefore, have great pleasure in commending it to other cheese and butter factories in the colony.

Then I produce the certificate of the manager of the Adelaide Creamery, which is the largest in South Australia. It is shortly -

We prefer it to any other brand.

There are practically no imports of salt into South Australia, and I think I have established that the price is lower than that of the foreign article, while the quality is equal or better. I have proved that position from

the testimony of experts ; and I do not think any one in the Chamber desires in the slightest degree to sneer at the quality of South Australian butter. When they recollect that solely South Australian salt is used for the purpose of making it, I am sure honorable members will think that at least with regard to these two branches of the case, I have been able to sweep away some of the contentions of the other side. Of course I speak with the knowledge that the State from which I have the honour to come is particularly interested in this industry'; but at the same time I hope the Government have shown, in connexion with the whole Tariff, that they do not wish to deal out different treatment to one State from that which is dealt out to another, and that their desire is to do whatever they can for the purpose of encouraging any industry which may be thought to be native to a "State. South Australia undoubtedly does feel strongly upon a matter of this sort. I am sorry that the honorable and learned member for South Australia, Mr. Glynn, spoke as he did, suggesting that there were some people who were inclined to vote for federation on -account of the hopes which they entertained in regard to the extension of the salt industry. I think that in connexion with -all matters - federation and everything else - each man, to a considerable extent, studies how they are likely to affect himself. Although I do not believe that the remark of the honorable and learned member is justified, it gives the committee some idea of the importance which is attached to this industry in the State from which I come. But the industry is not confined to South Australia. We have it in Western Australia and in Victoria, and there is no doubt that salt could also be produced to -advantage in other portions of the Commonwealth. But I claim that when we know a good article can be turned out from a particular State, we should be very careful in coming to a conclusion as to whether we ought not to deal with it upon protective principles. In this connexion I venture to consider that federation has broadened our views. We now find that there are many industries in the other States which can fairly claim greater liberality of treatment than we might previously have been inclined to grant offhand. I ask that the salt industry should be accorded fair treatment equally with other industries. Even in Western Australia there is a local factory. In this connexion, surely representatives of Western Australia will not vote to deny the other States that protection which under the special provisions of the Constitution relating to the graduated scale of duties, their own State "will retain for five years. Let us go a little further. I ask the people of Queensland what has been the attitude of the Government throughout the Tariff discussion? Have we ventured to suggest that simply because an industry belongs to one State alone it should be accorded no protection ? Nothing of the sort. We regard the sugar industry, for example, as one of great importance, and have done whatever we could for it. I appeal to honorable members generally to extend the same protection to the rest of Australia in connexion with the salt industry as they will, no doubt, properly extend to Queensland and New South Wales in the matter of sugar. We simply wish to do a fair thing. We have made a certain proposal, which we believe is not at all unfair. At the same time, for the purpose of meeting honorable members generally, we are prepared to consent to a reduction of the duty from 20s. to 15s. per ton, and we hope and expect that the committee will see their way to accord us that. There is another matter to which I should like to refer. Honorable members have heard me speak more than once of the propriety of preventing the consumers' interests being sacrificed by combinations of manufacturers or producers. All these arguments confirm us in the idea which we have previously expressed -that it would be a proper thing in connexion with our Customs Act to introduce a provision similar to that which is contained in the Canadian Customs Act, giving power when the existence of a combination is established as a matter of fact, to the detriment of the consumers, to relax the import duty so as to prevent the continuance of such a combination. I think, under all the circumstances, that treatment should be accorded to the native industries of the various States similar to that which has already been given in many cases, and I believe that honorable members generally will be disposed to take that view.

<page>8052</page>

Mr TUDOR

- The principal object which I have in view in the framing of this Tariff is to see that the workers obtain fair conditions. We all know that England is the principal exporter of salt to the Commonwealth. I know what are the conditions of the workers in the Cheshire district where most of the salt comes from. The wages paid are only 6d. an hour, and the men are required to work 60 hours per week. As honorable members are aware, Northwich is the head centre of that district. I well remember reading an article in the Manchester Sunday Chronicle, written by the present proprietor of one of the finest journals in England,

namely, the Clarion. It set forth the conditions of the workers in the salt trade there, when they were worse than they are to-day. It was a melancholy picture. It has been urged that a duty of 20s. per ton upon salt is prohibitive. How can such an argument have any force when, with a similar duty operating last year, Victoria imported 7,498 tons? I admit that the consumption of salt enters largely into the chlorination process, and that is the principal reason why some honorable members are anxious that the duty should be kept as low as possible. I was pointing out that last year, despite the operation of a duty of 20s. per ton, Victoria imported one-third of the quantity of salt which was used in this State. With a rate of only 15s. per ton, operating even with the wider market afforded by the Commonwealth, I doubt whether the industry here would be able to succeed. Something has been said in regard to the price paid by the consumer. The additional price which the consumer will have to pay for the amount of protection which the Government propose to bestow upon this industry would be one twelfth of a penny per lb. Considering the amount of salt consumed in every working man's house, it is difficult to prove that such a duty would cause him any great injury. The electors whom I represent are prepared to pay that additional amount, just as they are prepared to pay more for the manufacture of sugar under fair conditions. One honorable member pointed out that the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce has declared that a duty of 5s. per ton would constitute an ample protection. The Brisbane Chamber of Commerce say nothing about the sugar duties, because they do not approve of the action of this Parliament in connexion with the industry. The increased price of salt in Queensland, since the introduction of this Tariff, has not gone into the pockets of the manufacturers, but has been retained by the various merchants who have had salt to sell. We have had plenty of instances quoted in this State where the prices of goods have been increased, and the duties, so far from having been raised, have been decreased. It is far better that we should submit to a small tax in order to permit of the salt we require being locally produced, under conditions which will afford good employment to our people, than that we should send our money to England or elsewhere, where men are employed under conditions of which we cannot approve.

<page>8053</page>

Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- I do not believe that the abolition of this duty would injure the salt-producing industry, or operate prejudicially to labour. In Queensland, where there has been no duty on salt, the total imports in 1899 were valued at £36,378, of which £10,164 worth was imported from South Australia. I can remember when I was the first; not many years ago, to negotiate with the South Australian salt manufacturers for the purchase of a large quantity of their product for Queensland, and if, without any protection their imports into Queensland have increased from an occasional cargo of 250 tons to virtually one-third of the salt imported into that State, how can it be argued that they will suffer from the abolition of the duty? Still I think we should act fairly towards all the States, and I will support a duty of 10s. per ton. South Australia has a right to be considered, and I quite indorse the statement of the Minister for Trade and Customs that in the framing of the Tariff he has endeavoured to act justly and fairly towards all the States. The statement has been made that the South Australian salt works are not returning any profits. The statement of one company which I have seen shows that they started with 8,000' shares- I suppose the stock must have been watered, as the capital is shown as £16,000. The total amount of salt sold last year was valued at only £1,440, showing that they had not sold the quantity of salt necessary to enable them to pay a dividend. I assume that the £1,440 is the net result of the salt sales because the wages do not appear on the other side of the balance-sheet. The total expenses were £640, and the company has thus derived a profit of £800 on a capital of £16,000. However, if a company runs on with its expenses and does not attempt to sell its salt, it cannot expect to make large profits. A great deal depends upon management, and the quality of the salt produced, and in some cases no amount of duty would enable a salt works to pay dividends. We have been told that the South Australian salt is as good as any other, but if the Minister for Trade and Customs had tried to sell the local product as against imported salt he would tell a different story. I admit that whilst a very large trade can be developed in South Australian salt, it is only suitable for particular purposes. The better classes of salt must be imported from England, and if a duty of £1 per ton is imposed, meat works, which use the superior kinds of salt, will be penalized to that extent. I should like to see the manufacture of local salt reach such a stage that we could do without imported salt altogether. The local article has improved wonderfully since the works were first opened, and I shall only be too glad to see it succeed to a still greater extent. That is the reason why I am willing to

support a duty of 10s. per ton.

Mr FOWLER

- I do not think I am unfair to the Government in saying that their attitude in connexion with this duty reminds one somewhat of the position of Clive in the Indian Treasury vault they are actually amazed at their own moderation. They have been unnecessarily modest in regard to this duty. I must thank the Minister for Trade and Customs for having reminded the committee that he has dealt fairly with all 'the States in connexion with the Tariff proposals-; but I am afraid that Western Australia has been left out of consideration. We have very extensive deposits of salt, where the article can be shovelled up without any trouble ; but unfortunately the industry has been languishing. I have, however, been so very much struck by the arguments adduced by honorable members on the other side of the chamber that I have at last realized that this industry is a very important one, and as far as Western Australia is concerned, I wish to make a proposal to the Government. The duty on sugar has been referred to, and if the Minister for Trade and Customs will only extend to the "salt industry the same treatment as he has meted out to the sugar industry, and place an insignificant duty of £6 per ton on salt, I will support him. If he will also consider the great danger of native labour being introduced into the salt industry in Western Australia, and give an additional £2 per ton bonus to those who produce salt by means of white labour, I feel sure the industry in Western Australia will progress enormously, and reach a tremendous development. I hope that in view of the great importance of this industry to the Commonwealth my suggestions will be seriously considered. I am further emboldened to make these proposals because I have been continuously reminded by honorable members opposite that an increase of duty really means a reduction of prices, and therefore I presume that the imposition of a duty such as I suggest would be hailed with delight by consumers. If, however, as sometimes happens, the theory of the protectionist should not exactly be borne out in practice, and the price of salt were raised, the consumer should be thoroughly satisfied with the reflection that by paying slightly enhanced prices he would be placing the Commonwealth in the proud position of being able, not only to supply its own requirements, but to export large quantities of salt to other parts of the world at a much lower figure than would be charged for it locally. I hope the suggestion I have made will meet with the serious consideration of the Government.

<page>8054</page>

Mr PATERSON

- I congratulate the Minister for Trade and Customs on the consideration he has given to this subject, and thank him for the information he has afforded to the committee. There is no honorable member who has had more practical experience of the use of salt in connexion with the meat industry than I have had.' I have tried the South Australian salt, and I am very happy to be assured that a great improvement has taken place in its preparation and manufacture, because up to eighteen months ago, although we were very desirous of using Adelaide salt, we could not utilize it for any purpose, except curing hides. If it be true that the salt is now prepared in such a way that it is quite equal to the English product, I am very pleased, indeed, to hear it. In that case I do not think it will require to be protected. I am anxious to see that no injury is done to the meat industry, which is even more important than the salt industry. One meat works uses as much salt every day as a city of 100,000 inhabitants, and a duty of £1 per ton on salt would be particularly oppressive to Queensland, where there are so many meat works. At the same time, I sympathize with the desire of the Government to help native industries where assistance can be given without inflicting injustice, and I would, therefore, support a duty of 10s. per ton. Any higher duty would be outrageous. It would mean that some of the meat works would have to pay more than £1,000 a year duty on salt. Queensland has been a protectionist State, and yet she has recognised the necessity for admitting salt free of duty. The South Australian salt is used entirely for the curing of hides ; the fine salt alone is used for the curing of meat, which requires a great amount of care. Reference has been made to the question of dividends, and it is said that the salt industries of South Australia have not paid any, therefore they have made no money. I can sympathize with them, because I was connected with a company which made enormous profits, but did not declare any dividends. That is a matter for the directors to decide. Independently of that question, however, I think it is unjust to Queensland to propose to tax its meat industry to this extent. I think a duty of 10s. is quite enough. If that will not be sufficient to protect these salt works, they are not worth protecting.

Mr. JOSEPH

COOK (Parramatta). As usual we have had long speeches on this item from the other side. I beg to protest against this waste of time on the part of Government supporters. It is necessary that we should make this protest now, otherwise we shall be accused of wasting time, and later on asked to bear the pains and penalties. I want to remind the Government that it is their own supporters, and particularly Ministers themselves, who are "stone-walling." The most provincial note I have ever heard in this Chamber was struck to-day by the Minister for Trade and Customs. He made a speech, begging for consideration for his own State. He said, practically - "You have sugar looked after in Queensland, and I want a

quid pro quo

for South Australia in the shape of a stiff duty on salt."

Mr V L SOLOMON

- The most sensible speech which the Minister has made.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Here is another honorable member from South Australia interjecting. It is wonderful how provincial we are in our ideas when we come to consider various interests, and particularly vested interests throughout Australia. As we have no great salt industry in New South Wales, I wish to make a few remarks from purely a federal stand-point, eschewing all the provincialism to which the Minister has given utterance. The Minister himself proved that the South Australian salt did not require any duty. He strongly emphasized the point that the price was lower in South Australia than outside, while the quality was equal to that produced in any part of the world. As proof of the general success of the salt industry in South Australia, he said there was no importation of salt into that State. Does not that prove that salt can be produced there without the aid of a stimulating duty imposed on the rest of the Commonwealth, and falling especially heavily upon the great sister State of Queensland? We were told by the honorable member for Yarra that this duty was necessary in order to provide fair working conditions for those employed in the industry, and he went on to draw a harrowing picture as usual of the condition of the salt workers in Northwich, in England. I happen to have lived near that place, and, therefore, I am able to reply that the people engaged in winning salt in Northwich are as well off as those in South Australia.

Mr Batchelor

- Rubbish.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The honorable member knows nothing about the place. The man who is ignorant of the subject under discussion generally cries out "Rubbish!"

Mr Batchelor

- I was quoting the honorable member.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The men in Norwich are as well paid as those in South Australia, where the salt-scrapers are paid 6s. per day.

Mr V L SOLOMON

- Do they get 6s. a day for that work in Norwich?

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- They receive 5s. a day for the work, and that is worth more to them there than is 6s; per day in South Australia. The whole of the people of the Commonwealth are to be taxed to this extent in order to find employment for about 200 people.

Mr Batchelor

- That is another quotation.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- That is the number of employes given by Coghlan. With the tricks that he usually plays in his arguments, the honorable member for South Australia, Mr. Batchelor, has told us that there are 500 people engaged in the industry in South Australia. He knows that a number of farmers occasionally employ some of their hands to win a little salt in order to help them in connexion with their ordinary pursuits, and he includes them in his figures. I am referring to the number constantly employed.

Mr V L SOLOMON

- The industry is a very valuable one, even if a number of men connected with it are only casually

employed.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- 300 out of the 500 are only employed casually. I am simply supplying the honorable member for South Australia's omissions.

Mr Batchelor

- I stated that fact myself, so that the honorable member is not supplying any omission on my part.

<page>8055</page>

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The honorable member said that there were 500 employed in this industry. According to Coghlan, to be exact, there are only 190. Let us say that there are 200, and dividing that number by the amount of revenue which the Government anticipate from this source, we find how much this salt is going to cost the country. I am as anxious as any one could be to afford means of employment for the people j but I am' going to chase this hoary old fallacy that obtains throughout Victoria, and show that a bugbear is sought to be imposed upon th'e working man of Victoria. They are led to believe every day in the. week that they cannot live except by the aid of protective duties. I say that in all these cases the labour element in the making up of this product as a marketable commodity is one of the least. When I hear that this industry is going to die, and that that industry is going to die, I think it is my duty to show how the difference between labour here and elsewhere affects the price.

Mr Kingston

- The honorable member should tell us about the men he saw dying in free-trade England.

Mr Mauger

- Yes, tell us about that.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- However clearly I might prove my case I could not drive it into the honorable member's silly cranium.

The CHAIRMAN

- Order ! The honorable member must withdraw that remark.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I withdraw. But will you take notice, Mr. Chairman, of these silly interruptions 1 The honorable member for South Australia, Mr. Batchelor, the honorable member for Melbourne Ports, and the honorable member for Laanecoorie are all interrupting me.

The CHAIRMAN

- I have asked honor, able members all over the chamber to preserve order.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- You do not ask them, first, Mr. Chairman. You always interrupt me first.

The CHAIRMAN

- I shall not brook this any longer. I have cautioned the honorable member on several occasions, and I now name him for disregarding the authority of the Chair.

Mr Barton

- I hope this is an incident which need not go any further.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- The Chairman has "been wanting to do this for a long while.

Mr Barton

- No one can join in debate in this Chamber without knowing that, particularly on fiscal questions, there are sources of irritation to both sides. We all of us are apt to say a little more than we ought to say ; and I would say to the honorable member for Parramatta in all good faith, that if he has said more than in his calmer moments he would think completely justifiable, he will recollect that there is certainly no derogation from any one's personal dignity in confessing a temporary lapse of that kind. In addition to that, I would urge upon the honorable member that, having himself held the responsibilities of office, he will see that it is well that we should all join to support the dignity of the Chair, and not to detract from it. I feel sure that I will have the sympathy of honorable members in what I say, and that the honorable member will recognise it, and save me from the necessity, which I revolt against, of having to follow up. what the Chairman has said. .

Mr Kingston

- There was an interjection of mine, which, I believe, annoyed the honorable member for Parramatta, and I desire to withdraw it.

Mr Salmon

- I desire to express my deep regret that the observation I made as to the difference between wages here and in the old country should have caused the honorable member for Parramatta any disturbance, and it is with great pleasure that I withdraw that observation, in the hope that this matter will go no further.

The CHAIRMAN

- I have repeatedly asked honorable members not to make interjections, which always lead to disorder. When the Minister and the honorable member for Laanecoorie interjected, I called out "Order!", which was an intimation to them to refrain. What I take exception to is that, on several occasions, the honorable member for Parramatta has charged me with acting partially in the chair - of giving favour to one member, or one set of members over another. That I distinctly deny, and on a previous occasion I informed the honorable member that I will not brook such charges. I withdraw the naming on this occasion, but I intimate, not only to the honorable member for Parramatta, but to all honorable members, that it is not only the dignity of the Chair that has to be upheld, but the dignity of this Chamber, which I ask honorable members to assist in maintaining.

Mr Barton

- As the naming has been withdrawn, I think I can indicate to the honorable member for Parramatta an easy way in which he may preserve the authority of the Chair, and himself lose no dignity.

<page>8056</page>

Sir William McMillan

- After this incident, which we may regard as practically ended, honorable members, if they wish to close the sitting as soon as possible, might refrain from anything in the way of irritating interjections. I know that the honorable member for Parramatta will see his way to end the incident by apologizing to the Chairman, who seems to have been hurt at some remark made.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I am very willing to withdraw, and I did withdraw, but, in the interests of debate, I simply asked the Chairman to take notice of the irritating remarks made on the other side. I venture to say that if the Chairman would look at the other side a little more closely than he does, there would be less trouble. I hope I am not mistaken, but there were three honorable members on the other side who conjointly made what I regard as insulting interjections, which I am not disposed to allow without resentment. I am always willing to uphold the respect due to the Chair, and would be the last to cause trouble. I withdraw any remarks I may have made in the heat of the moment, and apologize to the committee.

Mr. BATCHELOR

(South Australia). Statements have been made, and not denied, which I believe are causing honorable members to vote against a reduction of this duty. Under the circumstances, I should not be doing my duty to my constituents or to myself if I did not refute those statements even at this late hour. It has been said that the price of South Australian salt has been raised in Queensland and New South Wales. This fact was pointed to as proof of special iniquity on the part of the local company; and one honorable member has told me that, but for this action of the company in raising prices in Queensland, he should have voted for the 20s. duty. But it ought to be pointed out that the company referred to have not raised their prices; but, that it is the merchants who have raised the price of the salt which they hold. That increase of prices cannot be attributed to the manufacturer.

Mr Brown

- That does not get over the fact that prices have been raised.

Mr BATCHELOR

- But the contention was that it was this monopolist company which had raised prices.

Mr Fowler

- It does not matter to the consumer who raises the prices.

Mr BATCHELOR

- Can a free-trader be fair? Honorable members have determined to vote for a reduction of the duty on an allegation that this is a grab-all company, as shown by the increase of prices, but, as a matter of fact, the prices of the company remain as before. The Colonial Salt Refining Company has suffered nothing

but loss for some years, and this duty is really necessary to enable the industry to be carried on and pay decent wages to the employes. It ought to be mentioned that since the introduction of the Tariff one company has increased wages, carters receiving 3d. per ton more than previously, so that this, at any rate, is not a case of the manufacturer "collaring all."

Mr. SAWERS

(New England).- I think the Treasurer might explain why it is proposed to admit brown rock-salt free, and put a duty on white rock-salt.

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- Brown rocksalt was put on the free list because it is largely used by pastoralists. We should have been glad to also put white rock-salt on the free list, but that is impossible, because it would be brought in largely, and crushed and sold in competition with the local article and with the English salt which pays duty. Under the circumstances, I regret that we cannot go further, and I should be glad if the honorable member would not persist with his suggested amendment.

<page>8057</page>

Mr SAWERS

-I do not intend to proceed with the amendment which I suggested.

Question - that the words proposed to be added be so added - put.

The committee divided -

Ayes 32

Noes 26

Majority 6

In division -

Mr Kennedy

- I am desirous of supporting a duty of 15s, and I should like to know whether, in the event of 10s. being fixed by this division, there will be an opportunity of increasing the amount to 15s.

Sir George Turner

- Yes.

Mr A McLEAN

- It is on that under standing we are voting.

The CHAIRMAN

- According to the usual parliamentary rule which I shall follow on this occasion, when an amendment is proposed and adopted, any further amendment can only be to reduce.

Mr Sawers

- Perhaps it would be better to put the question of 15s. to the committee first.

The CHAIRMAN

- It is impossible for a Chairman to submit a motion which has not been presented to him. There is' no amendment before me to reduce this duty to 15s., but there is an amendment in favour of 10s., which was put in the form " That the proposed words be added." If the honorable member for Moira and others vote with the ayes, they declare that the words, which fix the duty at 10s., shall be added.

Sir George Turner

- If the division be in favour of a duty of £1, an amendment to reduce it to 15s. may be moved subsequently.

Mr KENNEDY

- A little confusion occurred owing to the fact that a number of honorable members were under the impression that after a duty of 10s. had been carried a duty of 15s. might be proposed. In order to test the feeling of the committee, I move -

That the words "and on and after 1st December, 1901, 15s." be added to the duty as amended.

Mr Sawers

- I rise to a point of order. Inasmuch as the original duty of 20s. per ton proposed by the Government has been reduced upon division to 10s. per ton, I submit that no amendment can now be entertained for increasing the amount.

Mr McDonald

- I do not think that the practice which we have adopted precludes the amendment being moved ; but I

certainly think it will place the committee in a very embarrassing position. If the honorable member moves that on and after the 1st December the duty upon salt shall be 15s. per ton, and his proposal is defeated, another honorable member cannot be prevented from moving that it be 15s. 6d. per ton, and thus it would be impossible to arrive at finality. At the same time I would "point out that, under the practice which has been adopted all through the discussion upon this Tariff, that course can be followed. To my mind the honorable member is technically in order in submitting his amendment; but I can see that, if he persists in it, very grave irregularities will arise.

Mr Salmon

- I really think that there is nothing in the standing orders or in parliamentary practice to prevent the amendment of the honorable member being moved, and if it is pressed I shall certainly vote for it. At the same time I hope that if any understanding has been arrived at, the honorable member will not cause a breach of that understanding.

<page>8058</page>

Sir William McMillan

- I think that the honorable member for Moira is technically right ; but I would point out that there has been an agreement amongst us as to the course of procedure which should be adopted in order to facilitate public business. How can the honorable member expect to win when the committee have just decided by a vote to fix the duty upon this article at 10s. per ton? Surely that decision negatives a proposal to fix the rate at 15s. per ton. To discuss the matter would be only to waste time. If the honorable member for Moira presses his amendment, he is breaking the understanding which has

Mr Piesse

- I voted in favour of fixing the duty at 10s. per ton upon the understanding that I should have a subsequent opportunity of voting for a rate of 15s. per ton, which is the rate I wished to see imposed.

Mr Batchelor

- I would point out that the object of taking divisions is to ascertain the feeling of the committee. Many honorable members will be denied an opportunity of declaring the amount of duty which they think ought to be imposed upon salt, unless they are allowed to vote for a rate of 15s. per ton.

Mr Kingston

- I rise for the purpose of asking the honorable member for Moira not to press his amendment. It is not that we are wanting in sympathy with it, but I think that the course proposed would establish a mischievous precedent. It is much better that we should have an honorable understanding as to the course which is to be followed in such circumstances. I therefore ask the honorable member to withdraw the amendment.

Mr McColl

- I think that where a reduction in the amount of any particular duty is involved in an amendment - as in the case of the proposal to reduce the rate upon salt from 20s. per ton to 10s. per . ton -it is advisable that the Chairman should ask. if any honorable member desires to move for an intermediate duty. In the present instance a number of those who thought that 20s. was too high and 10s. too low are precluded from voting for an intermediate duty.

Mr McDonald

- The proper course to be followed by those who desired the imposition of a duty of 15s. per ton was to negative the amendment for a 10s. per ton rate, and subsequently to move for a duty of. 15s. per ton. As matters stand, the committee have already decided that the rate shall be 10s. per ton. and we cannot get away from that decision.

Mr Kennedy

- I had no knowledge that any understanding had been arrived at. At the same time I have no wish to disturb the good feeling which prevails. I realize the position in which some honorable members are placed, and I now recognise that the better course for me to have followed would have been to endeavour to amend the amendment by fixing the rate at 15s. per

Mr A McLEAN

-I was one of those who voted with the intention of subsequently supporting a proposal for a duty of 15s. per ton. But, as a clear majority have voted for the 10s. per ton duty, I do not think that we should disturb their decision by pressing for a 15s. rate, although the amendment proposed is technically in order.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Item, as amended) agreed to.

Item 49 - Seed, canary, hemp, , and rape, ad valorem; 15 per cent.

Mr HARPER

- I suggest to the Minister for Trade and Customs, as a matter of convenience and practice, that, instead of an ad valorem duty, a fixed duty of, say, 1s. or 2s. per cental should be imposed upon these articles. My reasons are that the prices fluctuate very considerable, and it is very inconvenient to have a percentage duty. It would be much better to have a low fixed duty.

Mr PIESSE

- Rape seed is used extensively in Tasmania in sowing fodder crops for the purpose of fattening sheep, and there ought to be a clear understanding that rape seed introduced for agricultural or pastoral purposes shall be free of duty in the same way as other agricultural seeds. I move-

That the word "rape" be omitted.

<page>8059</page>

Mr A McLEAN

- I agree with the honorable member who has just spoken that rape is one of the most useful crops that can be grown, and if other agricultural seed is to be introduced free, rape should be placed in the same category.

Mr. KENNEDY

(Moir).- It would be a very difficult matter to distinguish between rape seed introduced as food for birds, and that introduced for agricultural purposes. Rape is a very useful crop, and is sown extensively for fattening sheep. I have some knowledge of the Subject, and I say that we should be exporters' of rape seed to a very considerable extent; Even in the drier districts of Victoria and in southern Riverina, the plant seeds very freely, and four or five years after a crop is sown, unless it is eaten right out, any one can collect from a small pasture enough seed to sow hundreds of acres. I have done this on my own property. In those portions of Victoria where the climate is mild, sufficient rape seed could be produced to flood the markets of the world.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I suggest that these seeds should be made subject to a duty of 2s. per cental, and be admitted free for agricultural purposes.

Sir George Turner

- It will be impossible for the Customs authorities to make any distinction. If the honorable member reduces his proposal to 1s. 6d. per cental, I will consent to the alteration of the duty.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- Very well.

Mr. WINTER

COOKE (Wannon). Every facility should be given for the introduction of new seeds for agricultural and horticultural purposes, and we should avoid imposing duties which would have a discouraging effect upon importation. It is very often found of great advantage to secure agricultural seeds from New Zealand, and these and other seeds of superior quality should be placed within the reach of our agriculturists at as small a price as possible.

Mr KINGSTON

- I understand we can produce rape seed in any quantity, and under these circumstances it will be the duty of the Government to adhere to their proposal.

Mr. PIESSE

(Tasmania).- The Minister might be consistent. Rape seed is used for the same purpose as turnip seed, which is admitted without the payment of duty, and the same reasons for exemption from duty apply in both cases.

Mr. A. C. Groom. - The case would be met if words were inserted exempting from the operation of the duty " seeds introduced for agricultural purposes."

Mr THOMSON

- Rape seed is used for a variety of purposes, and the Customs authorities would not be able to distinguish the seed intended for agricultural purposes from that proposed to be devoted to other

purposes. There is not the same difficulty in regard to turnip seed, as that is used for one purpose only.

Mr FULLER

- I should like to know whether such seeds as cauliflower seeds and peas are admitted free of duty.

Mr Kingston

- They are both free.

Amendment negatived.

Amendment by (Sir William McMillan) agreed to -

That the words " and on and after 30th November, 1901, per cental,1s.6d." be added.

Item, as amended, agreed to.

Item 50 (Soap) postponed.

Item 51, Spices, viz : -

Unground n.e.i. including green ginger per lb., 2d.

Ground n.e.i., per lb., 4d.

Agreed to.

Item 52 (Starch) postponed.

Item 53 - Straw, per ton, 5s.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I should like to appeal to the Government in regard to this item. The total quantity of straw that we imported into New South Wales in twelve months was only £187 in value. Why put this item in the Tariff?

Sir George Turner

- The committee have already determined that hay and chaff shall be included, and straw is put in at a lower rate.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I think the committee have done very foolishly. This is the most extreme of farces, and for the sake of our own common sense, it should not be persisted in. However, I do not want to press the matter.

Mr G B EDWARDS

- Is it true that a duty is being charged on the straw in which crockery, and such goods arriving from outside the Commonwealth, are packed?

Mr Kingston

- Not to my knowledge.

Item agreed to.

Item 54 - Table waters, aerated or mineral, and preparations packed for household use for the production thereof, including sparklets ; also ale, porter, and other beer, cider, and perry containing less than 2 per cent. of proof spirit, ad valorem, 20 per cent.

Mr WATSON

- I do not know whether the attention of the Minister for Trade and Customs has been drawn to the fact, but I understand that the department is charging on returned empty bottles - that is to say, on bottles which are shipped full from one port of the Commonwealth to another and returned to the makers for the purpose of being refilled. If it is being done, I am sure it must be a mistake.

<page>8060</page>

Mr KINGSTON

- I can assure the honorable member that it is not so. I have inquired into the matter, and there is only the one charge under the bookkeeping section.

Mr HUGHES

- I am given to understand that returned empty bottles are charged for every time.

Mr Kingston

- That is not the rule at head quarters.

Mr HUGHES

- Do I understand the Minister to say that when duty has once been paid upon a bottle coming into the Commonwealth, no further charge is made ?

Sir George Turner

- Bottles are dealt with as a separate item.

Mr HUGHES

- How is an aerated water manufacturer, who exports bottles of aerated waters from New South Wales to Tasmania, for example, going to carry on his business, if his empty bottles are not to be returned free of duty ?

Sir George Turner

- The first time that these bottles enter the Commonwealth they are liable to taxation, but when travelling between any States in the Commonwealth they are not liable to pay duty.

Mr HUGHES

- I am not taking any exception to the duty on aerated waters, but is it right to penalize the local manufacturer? Every time he exports his bottles of lemonade, or other drinks, from New South Wales to Tasmania he is charged duty on the bottles which are returned.

Mr Barton

- If that is being done it is an entire mistake.

Mr HUGHES

- It is generally understood amongst the trade that this duty ought not to be charged.

Mr Kingston

- The decision that has been given is as follows -

Empties returned if not entirely of Australian origin, dutiable ; but when duty has been paid once under the Federal Tariff, may be transferred from State to State, free of duty thereafter.

Mr HUGHES

- That is a very satisfactory explanation, but it is totally at variance with what is going on. I trust that the Minister will see that that regulation is adhered to. Time after time the duty is charged upon these bottles. One of the largest firms of aerated water manufacturers in New South Wales find that they are continually being charged duty on bottles passing between the States, because of the fact that they have been made in foreign countries. They have no wish to employ foreign-made bottles, but they are compelled to do so. As to the duty on aerated waters, I have an invoice here showing that on eight dozen bottles at 1s. 6d. each, which represents 1 2s., and one case valued at 2s., making a total of 14s., the amount of duty charged is 6s. 2d., made up as follows : -

On four dozen bottles at 2s., and one case valued at 1s. 6d., the duty is made up as follows : -

Sir George Turner

- That was under the old practice of charging duty according to the cubic contents.

Mr HUGHES

- How long has that practice been abolished? I know it has been followed.

Sir George Turner

- For a fortnight. If the honorable member will let me have the invoice I will have the matter investigated.

Mr HUGHES

- The duty is no longer" collected on the cubic 'contents 1

Sir George Turner

- No.

Mr HUGHES

- Then what would the duty be now on say eight dozen bottles at 1s. 6d., and case 2s ?

Sir George Turner

- All bottles are charged 20 per cent, under glassware.

Mr THOMSON

- I intended to bring this matter up when dealing with the duty on glassware. From the statement made by the Minister, it appears that the department can go on charging every time the bottles pass from State to State, if they were imported prior to the imposition of the Federal Tariff. That is absurd. I know that the charge has been made, and it must have been made under some misapprehension of this sort. Now that the Minister's attention has been called to it, no doubt he will see that the matter is put right. The duty has been charged not in one case only, but in several instances as the bottles passed from State to State.

Mr KINGSTON

- Under the two years' provision, if a bottle comes into a State, duty has to be paid upon it under the Federal Tariff once only.

Mr Thomson

- But how can the officers tell whether it has been brought in before or not?

<page>8061</page>

Mr KINGSTON

- There is a difficulty in dealing with many articles, but we have to do our best to construe the law, and we are doing it. The rule is that we do not charge twice. The goods are dutiable, but when the duty has been paid once under the federal Tariff the article may be transferred from State to State free of duty thereafter.

Mr Watson

- Does that apply to returned " empties "?

Mr KINGSTON

- Yes, that is the decision included amongst a number of others issued on the 4th of this month.

Mr. THOMSON

(North Sydney).- That is the legal position, but the officers seem to say to themselves : - " How do we know whether these bottles have paid duty before or not."

Mr Kingston

- They have to be reasonable men.

Mr THOMSON

- It is difficult to prove that duty has been paid on them, because the same bottles may not be used every time. The Custom-house officers require proof that they have paid duty. That being impossible in every case, these officers should" exercise a reasonable amount of common sense.

Mr. HENRY

WILLIS (Robertson).Would this apply to Zetz Spa Waters and Schweppes Waters. If bottles admitted free into New South Wales before the imposition of the Federal Tariff are taken away by the mail steamers and brought back again, in that case has duty to be paid, the Federal Tariff having been passed in the meantime ?

Sir William McMillan

- I think that matter can be disposed of when we come to the division glassware. In the meantime inquiries can be made.

Mr. L.

E. GROOM (Darling Downs).The chemists of Brisbane have suggested that medicinal water's should be included in this item, instead of being classified with medicines. Many aerated waters are really mineral waters.

Sir George Turner

- If they are imported for medicinal purposes they must bear the duty relating to medicines.

Item agreed to.

Item 55 (Tea) postponed.

Item 56 - Wine, unfermented, per gallon, 3s.

Agreed to.

Mr KINGSTON

- On Monday, after dealing with the postponed items, preserved milk and soap, we propose to deal with division 5, commencing with apparel. The other postponed items in division 4 we propose to consider after dealing with division 6a.

Progress reported.

ADJOURNMENT

Refreshment Expenses of New South Wales Troops. - Chambers of Commerce and the Tariff. - Victorian.

Fifth Contingent. - Pairs.

Motion (by Mr. Barton) proposed -

That the House do now adjourn.

Mr FULLER

- It has been brought under my notice that, when the New South Wales troops came to Melbourne in April last for the Commonwealth celebrations, expenses were incurred at railway refreshment rooms in New South Wales, the accounts for which have never been settled. I believe the troops were supplied under the orders of Mr. Richardson, of the Railway department of New South Wales, on behalf of either the Government of that State or of the Federal Government. It is a matter that should be inquired into, seeing

that, amongst others, the caterer at Moss vale has had an account for £174 unpaid up to the present time. I do not know whether the Federal Government or the New South Wales Government are responsible.

Minister for Defence

Sir JOHN FORREST

. - The arrangement made was that the Federal Government had to pay the salaries and allowances of the troops, while the State Government of Victoria had to provide hospitality while in Melbourne. Each State had to provide for the transport and expenses of the troops through its own State, where there are rail-ways. In the case of New South Wales, a claim was made by the Railways Commissioners for the carriage and entertainment of the Queensland troops, who passed through, and that claim has, I believe, been met, though it was no part of the arrangement which was entered into by the Federal Government. I do not remember the particular account referred to by the honorable member for Illawarra, but I should advise the Mossvale caterer to apply to his own Government for payment.

Mr Fuller

- I understand that he has already done so.

Sir JOHN FORREST

- Similar claims might be made by all the other States in connexion with the entertainment of their troops. It seems to me that the New South Wales Government owe the money, and ought to pay it.

Mr WILKS

- On grievance day I brought under notice disputed accounts between the Treasurer of New South Wales and the Treasurer of the Commonwealth, and I believe the account referred to by the honorable member for Illawarra is amongst those to which I then drew attention. I agree with the Minister for Defence that each State should provide for the refreshment of its own troops when on the journey to Melbourne, and I regard this as possibly a mere misunderstanding between the two Treasurers. I should now like to ask the Minister for Trade and Customs whether he is prepared to lay on the table the report drawn up by the Associated Chambers of Commerce in Sydney, and forwarded, with a suggested Tariff, through the Minister for Home Affairs to the Federal Government. The same report has been asked for in another place, but has not yet been produced.

Mr. KINGSTON

(South Australia-

Minister for Trade and Customs). - There was some official report drawn up at a joint meeting of the Chambers of Commerce, and I shall be happy to lay it on the table.

Mr CROUCH

- I have received the following letter in reference to the Fifth Victorian Contingent : -

Dear Sir,-

In reference to the fifth contingent I beg to inform you that my son, Saddler Fred Brearley, 1,318, A Company Fifth V.M.R., has not communicated with me or any of my family since the beginning of July, when he said that he had been put under arrest and sent to Middleberg for trial, for surrendering (with another man) to the Boers, the third man being shot in his attempt to get away and dying two days after from the wound. I have since heard, through another man writing to his friends, that he had been sentenced to two years imprisonment, but I cannot get any farther information as to what has become of him. Previous to this he used to write every mail, so that his silence since has caused me a great deal of anxiety, Hoping that the agitation you have started will have the effect of clearing up a lot of the mystery surrounding the unfortunate fifth contingent.

In consequence of some previous statements I made, a great deal of agitation has been caused amongst parents who have not heard from their sons in Africa for some time past; and as my action then had the effect of bringing about some sort of inquiry, I think it desirable to place this letter before the House. This is another case where the rights of Australian citizens are being sacrificed by the Imperial authorities, who, although they have drawn men from Australia, refuse information to our Defence department. The state of things disclosed in the letter is; I think, disgraceful, and I would like the immediate attention of the Minister for Defence to the matter.

Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- I should like to know whether it is not possible to have such questions as this sifted in the department

rather than brought up here on bald statements such as we have heard.

Sir John Forrest

- People will not write to the department, but only to Members of Parliament.

Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- I regard this as a waste of the time of the House.

Mr Crouch

- It is the only way to make the matter public.

Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- It is a cheap form of advertisement for the honorable member.

Mr KNOX

- You are aware, Mr. Speaker, that there is a process in this House by means of which, when an honorable member desires to be absent from a sitting; arrangements may be made by which a pair may be effected. I have paired during the last two days with an honorable, distinguished, and learned member, and I am very anxious that the pair-book of the House shall be placed in such a position that the pairs may be properly recorded. I am one of those who only care to be judged by my concrete acts in this House, and not by constantly speaking on the floor; but I am particularly desirous, as such important votes have been given here within the last few days, that the votes which I virtually gave by pairing may be recorded.

<page>8063</page>

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

. - I have listened, with my colleague the Minister for Defence, to the complaint made by the honorable and learned " member for Corio. I would recommend him, in order that he may get more close attention to his request - and I would recommend other honorable members also in all such cases - to write letters to the department. Honorable members get better attention by taking that course, and get their requirements recorded in the files of the department, which is a much safer way of securing attention than by letting the complaints lie loose in the pages of Hansard. With regard to the case mentioned, I wish to say that the Government are not in the habit of sending cables to England at the Government expense to inquire as to the whereabouts or the health of various members of the contingents. . We have done it in special cases, but the circumstances have to be very special before we do it. Now that the cable rates have been reduced to those who cable from Adelaide there is less reason why the Government should do it.

Mr Crouch

- In the previous case the father paid the expense of the cable to the department, but he did not get an answer for three weeks, and could not get the information from the Defence department.

Mr BARTON

- I am aware that an answer is likely to be received more promptly by cabling through the authorities, but cables of this kind cannot, except in special cases, be allowed to be a burden on the public purse.

Mr SPEAKER

- I wish to say a word with reference to the matter alluded to by the honorable member for Kooyong. Of course it is understood by honorable members that pairs are not officially recognised, and cannot be in any way recorded on our Votes and Proceedings, but I have no doubt that the fact that the honorable member has called attention to his pair (drill give due prominence to it.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

<page>8064</page>

16:45:00

House adjourned 4.45 p.m.