

terests of the fishermen of this country. I can only say that I think that the course pursued by the Government at the last session of the Legislature—the great interest which they evinced in the protection of the fisheries, ought to have been sufficient to show the fallacy of the charges which have been brought against them. It will be in the recollection of the house that I moved for a special committee to inquire into the question of the fisheries. That committee was composed of the Attorney General, and a large number of leading men on both sides, and I had the honor, as chairman, of bringing in its report, which asserted, in the clearest and most emphatic manner, the rights of this Province to the fisheries, and recommended that every possible means should be taken for the purpose of protecting them from the encroachments of the American fishermen. The American Government had, by their own act, and without reference to their own fishermen, deprived them of the rights which for ten years they had enjoyed in our waters. The Government of this Province, therefore, emphatically committed themselves to the policy of excluding American fishermen at once from the waters belonging to this country. That report, submitted by myself, was adopted unanimously by the Legislature, and the Government immediately took action upon the subject, and addressed a despatch to the Governor General and the Lieutenant Governors of the other Provinces inviting their co-operation—a co-operation which appeared to be most essential in dealing with this question, inasmuch as the fishing grounds resorted to by the Americans do not exclusively belong to Nova Scotia, but are also within the territorial domain of Canada and New Brunswick. Our object in addressing this despatch, with which was enclosed the report of the committee of the Legislature, was for the purpose of devising with the other Provinces a system of protection by which American fishermen might be excluded from the fishing grounds of British North America. In order that no time might be lost in dealing with this question, the Government proposed that a member of the Canadian Cabinet should meet one of ourselves at Fredericton during the last Session of the Legislature there, for the purpose of taking such measures as would effectually accomplish the object which we had in view. I mention these facts to the house to show how far we were from being indifferent to the fishing interests of this country.

A perusal of the papers which I am about to lay on the table will show that the Imperial Government, at an early stage of this question formed the opinion that if the American fishermen were suddenly excluded from the privileges which they had enjoyed for so long a time, difficulties of a very serious character might arise between the United States and Great Britain, which would operate against the renewal of a treaty. This view was presented in a very strong manner, as will be seen by a Minute of Council from their Government in reply, embodied in these papers. It is impossible, I must

state, to bring the whole of this correspondence here, because certain portions of it were of a confidential character that precluded their being presented to the house. I will, however, call attention to a statement in the Canadian Minute of Council which shows that the Imperial Government had applied to the Canadian Ministry to allow American fishermen to fish in British American waters for the past year:

"It now has become necessary to consider the further steps to be taken, and the committee have given their best consideration to the suggestion in Mr. Cardwell's despatch—that for the current year no interference with American fishermen should take place—in view of the hope of a change of policy in the U. States on the question of Reciprocal Trade."

The Imperial Government were led to believe, from whatever source they got the information, that the peremptory exclusion of American fishermen from our waters would lead to such unpleasantness between the two countries as would prevent the accomplishment of a renewal of reciprocal trade between British America and the United States. This policy, it will be seen, did not originate with the Canadians, but was pressed upon them by the Imperial authorities, as is clearly shown by the clause that I have read. The Canadian Government went on to show the great interest that British America had in these fisheries, and the great importance of protecting them, and the inconvenience that would arise from any step that would seem an apparent concession to American fishermen, or would raise a doubt as to the entire right of British America to exclude the citizens of any other country from resorting to their fishing grounds. Yielding finally to the policy pressed upon them, they proposed as a compromise that, for one year only, a system of licensing American fishermen should be pursued. The Government of Canada drew up this Minute of Council, and sent it to the Imperial authorities, as embodying their views, and to show how far they were prepared to meet the wishes of the latter in relation to this question. The answer sent by the Government of Nova Scotia will show that so far from their at once yielding to the proposal thus made, they drew up a Minute of Council expressing in the strongest terms their great objection to any such policy being pursued. They pointed out, as will be seen, at considerable length, the serious objections they had to a system of licensing American fishermen. The same despatch which they had sent to the Governor General and the Lieut. Governors, was transmitted to her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies. We therefore placed the Imperial Government in a position to learn the views of this Legislature, and also the fact that we had called upon the other colonies to join us in carrying out these views. The answer of the Governor General contained the despatch of the Imperial Government on this subject, and in transmitting it he said that it was forwarded for the information of this Government, and that they would not reply to our previous proposal until they ascertained what were our own views on the question as it was then presented to us.