

# Supplement to the Newfoundlander.

ST. JOHN'S, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1831.

## Parliamentary Intelligence.

### EQUALIZATION OF THE DUTIES ON FOREIGN WINE.

In the House of Commons, on Monday the 11th July, a Motion was made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, having for its object the equalization of the duties on Portugal and French Wines, whereby there would be a difference of 1s. 9d. per gallon in favour of the French, and of 8d. per gallon against the Portugal wines—equalizing all at 5s. 6d. per gallon, from 1833.

Mr. ROBINSON.—In replying to the speech of my noble friend, I must entreat the attention of the House to a few observations on this subject, which is of the highest possible importance to the commerce of this country. If the Committee will favour me with its attention, I will not go into great detail, but will endeavour to confine my observations in as brief a compass as possible. The first point adverted to by the noble lord was, whether the proposition that he submitted to the House was consistent with the existing treaties, and more especially with the spirit of the Methuen treaty? I shall not object to the interpretation that the noble lord attached to this; not because I entertain the same opinion with him on the subject, but because I wish to leave this part of the discussion to those members who I know are more competent than myself to enter into the merits of the case. I will, however, go thus far, and, without hesitation, declare that this measure is inconsistent with sound policy, as regards our relations with foreign powers. I shall now confine my remarks to the consequences which are likely to result in a commercial point of view, from carrying this measure into operation; and I am convinced that I shall be able to show that it would prove highly injurious. I must beg hon. members not to be led away by the statements of the noble lord, nor by the merely speculative theories that they may hear, but that they will give their dispassionate attention to the serious and forcible objections that I think the subject presents to us.

The noble lord said that he would not inquire into the probable conduct of the Portuguese government on the introduction of this new policy, but he added, that it was not probable that that government would shut their markets against our produce. This may be the case, but I must tell the noble lord, that before he made his proposition he ought to have considered well what would be the probable result of an equalization of duties on English and other manufactures in the Portuguese market. I know that it has repeatedly been stated, and especially by an hon. friend of mine last session, whose absence I regret, that the Methuen treaty was most unfavourable to this country, and that infractions of it have continually been made on the part of Portugal. Admitting this to be the case, I am satisfied that the present measure will, if carried into effect, lead to consequences more injurious than any which the noble lord in his budget of last session brought under the notice of the legislature. The noble lord was induced to abandon the other propositions that he submitted to the House, from a sense of their impolicy, on the consequences that were likely to flow from them being shown to him; and I do hope that he will be induced to adopt the same course on the present occasion. The noble lord called on us to look to the advantages likely to be derived from a more intimate commercial intercourse between two powerful nations like France and England; and he dwelt on the wisdom of cultivating a good understanding with France, expressing also his regret that the trade between the two countries had hitherto been so small, attributing this to the restrictive system, which all must regret. The noble lord, however, ought to have profited by past experience, and to have examined into the real facts of the case.

The House will recollect that in 1825 the duty on French wines was reduced to 7s. 3d. per gallon, and it was then said that this would lead to a great commercial intercourse with France, and that large quantities of our manufactures would be exported to that country. Now, will the House believe that the noble lord, in bringing forward his statement, entirely overlooked the fact, that so far from our exports having increased to that country, they have on the contrary materially diminished? I admit, with the noble lord, that our imports from France have increased, and that those imports have been increased in consequence of a reduction of duties, but in what way has this operated on our commerce? It appears from the returns on the table that our imports from France have increased from 1,500,000l. to 3,150,000l. With this great increase in the imports, the exports have greatly decreased, for before the alteration they amounted to 1,124,000l., and since the reduction of the duties they have fallen to 643,000l. I trust that hon. gentlemen will not overlook this fact, and I think that before the noble lord called upon the House to agree to his proposition because it would lead to an increase of the trade with France, he ought to have examined the public papers, and seen what was the result of the former measure, introduced with the same view. I must tell the noble lord, and all who agree with him in advocating the doctrine that the exports from our country depend on the imports from another, that this is a most fallacious doctrine; for the greatness of the imports has no sort of effect whatever, except in facilitating the exports or making returns from one country to another. The merchants who import wines and silks from France do not export goods in return.

[A slight laugh from an hon. member.]  
Mr. ROBINSON.—The right hon. member may smile, but he will, on inquiry, find this to be the case. I repeat, that those persons who import the

wines and silks from France, do not deal in those articles that are exported to that country, and double the quantity of the goods might be imported from France without an increase of exports in exchange. The exports depend on the state of the foreign markets, and hitherto the English manufactures have been virtually excluded from the French markets. With respect to the question of Portugal—and I do not mean to introduce any observations on the political relations with that country—as there are many hon. members much more capable than I am of discussing subjects of that nature—so that I shall confine myself to our commercial relations.—I speak not now of the government of Don Miguel, nor shall I allude to that of Louis Philippe, but I contend that it is evident that the trade between this country and Portugal for the last two centuries has been more to our advantage than that which has been carried on with any other nation in the world. Our exports to Portugal have, on the average, been 2,500,000l., while our imports have not exceeded 500,000l. It should be remembered that we supply Portugal with nearly all the manufactured goods that she consumes—that she has always been our faithful ally, and, on important occasions, has rendered us the most essential service.

The noble lord said that he did not know what line of policy Portugal would pursue, but it is the duty of the government and the House to consider what may be the probable consequences should Portugal make reprisals on our trade. It is possible that the government of Don Miguel, being under the influence of this country, may feel some difficulty in doing so; but should a constitutional government be formed in that kingdom, I am sure that the earliest opportunity would be taken to make reprisals, and thus we shall hazard our valuable export trade with Portugal for the chance of obtaining a commercial intercourse with France. The policy of the French government has always been to exclude our manufactures—the policy of Portugal to encourage the use of our produce as much as possible: the noble lord, however, by this proposition, encourages the import of articles from the former country, and endeavours to prohibit intercourse with the latter, by taxing those articles that are produced there. The wine-trade is one of the most important branches of our trade with Portugal, and yet the Noble Lord will hazard the whole of this branch of our commerce, and the loss of our exports, for the sake of a possible increase of the revenue to the amount of 180,000l. I do not object to the Noble Lord making the wine-trade an affair of revenue, but I think he was bound to treat all parties as on an equal footing, and not to give the preference to the French. I would ask, is there anything in the state of France, that induces him to make a reduction in the duties on wines from that country to the amount of 1s. 9d. per gallon? I confess I see no ground why the drinkers of Port, Madeira, and Sherry should be called upon to pay an additional price for the wine, that the consumers of Claret, Burgundy, and Champagne may be benefited.

Instead of checking our exports or running any risk of doing so, it is the duty of Government to do what it can to preserve existing markets, and find new ones for the produce of our manufactures. I call upon the representatives of Ireland to oppose the proposition of the Noble Lord, as I consider that this measure will materially affect the exports from that country. At present considerable quantities of butter, and other articles, are sent from Ireland to Portugal, and if our commercial intercourse with the latter country is unhappily broken off, our fellow-subjects will find some difficulty in finding other vents for their produce. I think there is hardly a Member of this House who would not agree with me that in the present situation of Ireland it is highly inexpedient that anything should be done to lessen her exports. I would ask, are all these important advantages to be put to such a risk for the mere chance of an increased trade with France? We have had experience of lowering the duties on French wines in 1825, and surely from the failure of that attempt there is nothing to induce us to make further sacrifices. I tell the Noble Lord that every principle of sound commercial policy calls upon him to adhere to the present scale of duties, and not to hazard so much in support of a merely speculative opinion. At any rate, no concession should be made until we are sure of some return, and until a treaty of reciprocity has been entered into. All the countries in whose behalf we have made concessions have met those concessions with restrictions; therefore, this should operate as a warning. While we have been pursuing the line of conduct that we have, America, and nearly all the other countries in the world, have been uninfluenced by our concessions, and have increased the restrictions and held out every inducement to the encouragement of their domestic manufactures and produce. The trade of this country with Portugal is of greater extent than that carried on with France, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Prussia, and surely we ought not to risk this without some compensation.

I address the House as a member of a large commercial city; and, as a mercantile man myself, I protest against hazarding the important trade to Portugal. I repeat once more, I cannot understand upon what ground the Noble Lord proceeds in thus proposing to equalize the duties on wine. It is with extreme regret that I offer any opposition to his Majesty's Government, for there are many of their measures which have my most cordial support, but I trust that the Noble Lord will be induced to abandon these harsh measures, which, if carried into effect, I am satisfied would do incalculable mischief. At any rate, I hope he will allow himself time for the examination of the probable consequences, and not hasten his resolutions through the Committee. The Noble Lord alluded to me as being peculiarly interested in the trade of Newfoundland. I admit this to be the case, and I regret that he should have introduced a measure calculated to do so much injury to that colony.

Is he aware, that no fish is sold in the Portuguese markets but the produce of our colonial fisheries? He stated that we had to compete in the Italian markets with the foreign fish-seller, and that, therefore, we could do so in the Portuguese market; but if this were done, it would materially reduce the profits of the Newfoundland fish-dealer, as the price would be lowered by competing with the Norwegian, American, and French merchants. This measure, therefore, may lead to the ultimate ruin of the colony of Newfoundland.

What does the Noble Lord think of the whole of the Newfoundland trade with Portugal? There are at present no less than 150 square-rigged vessels from Newfoundland to Portugal every year. But, Sir, if the Noble Lord succeeds in this plan, he will throw the whole of these out of employment. Any trade he may open with France will be carried on, for the greater part, in French vessels; so that we shall have an important part of our shipping trade destroyed—and for what? In order that the clubs at the West end of the town may drink their Champagne a shilling a bottle cheaper; for the reduction will not be more than that. These are the only persons who will be benefited by the measure;—and have they sought for this? By no means; nor will they thank the government for it. Neither will it have the effect of materially reducing the consumption of Port, which will be chiefly drunk as before; and what does the Noble Lord expect to gain by it?—180,000l. I am aware that he wants that amount, and more. Now, I would suggest to the Noble Lord that, instead of this, he should place an additional duty of 8d. a gallon on wine of all kinds, and he will have an increase of 220,000l., without risking the loss of the whole of our trade with Portugal. I repeat, that no party in the country has asked for this plan of the Noble Lord's, and no one will thank him for it. If the Noble Lord thinks that it will increase the trade with France, he will, I believe find himself mistaken. If the Noble Lord, amongst his many other avocations at the Treasury, can find time to look at the returns of the importation of French wines after the reduction of the duty in 1824, he will find that the effect in the course of a few years was not an increase of consumption. Certainly, after the reduction of the duty in 1824, the importation of wine from that country increased to 762,000 gallons; but in 1829 it was only 474,000 gallons; in 1830, only 408,000 gallons; and up to January 1831, it was but 337,000 gallons.

This will show that, notwithstanding all the encouragement given to French wine, there is no disposition on the part of the country to give up the consumption of Port. In fact, the consumption of French wines—I mean, of course, of that description of wines which comes to our market—cannot well be increased. We already consume four-fifths of the good vintage of France. We may get an increase of the small wines, but they are not the wines which would suit us. I repeat, that France has not the means of giving any very material increase to her good vintage, so as to supply the consumption of this country—assuming that Port was given up. We have heard much said of our Port and of poisonous Cape wines. These are hard names; it is possible that such remarks may create a prejudice against these wines in some quarters, but I very much doubt whether the Noble Lord will be able to drive the Northamptonshire farmers from the use of Port, to which he knows they are partial, by such means. I speak on this subject from a conviction, which, as a man well acquainted with commercial affairs, I feel that the effect of the Noble Lord's plan will be greatly injurious to our shipping interests; and will be destructive to the whole of our trade with Portugal. I am not disposed to press further on the attention of the Committee, for whose patient indulgence I am greatly indebted.

I would now beg briefly to recapitulate the arguments I have urged to the Noble Lord on this subject. I have shown that we have encouraged France to export to this country her wines, silks, gloves, and other articles, to the value of three millions, while our exports to that country have fallen off from a million and a half to about 600,000l.; and yet for such a return to our encouragement of French trade we are to give up the whole of our direct trade with Portugal, besides that at present carried on between Newfoundland and that country. Let us consider that we have already an active competition in the fish trade, in Norway, which has already got the supply of Spain, on the Biscay coast, and great part of the coast of Catalonia, and would be ready to avail herself of the advantage such a measure as this would present, of taking the whole of the fish trade with Portugal; and if Portugal should come under the dominion of the Queen Donna Maria, there can be little doubt that we shall lose the whole of the Newfoundland trade with that country. But one of the noble lord's arguments is, that he wants the 180,000l. which this change is to produce. I know he does, and very probably will want much more, as the state of his financial plans will show; but I say, here is a plan by which you may have 220,000l. instead of 180,000l., by laying a small increase on all wines. In this no very sensible increase will be made to the burdens of the public; and there will be no risk of losing any part of our foreign trade. I have shown the noble lord that no complaints have been made of the duty on French wines; and that even if there were, the drinkers of those wines are few compared with the consumers of Portuguese wines; and that they are of a class who can afford to pay a high price for them.

I am aware, however, that it is difficult to make the noble lord, and those who think with him, enter into this view of the subject. The noble lord is imbued with liberal opinions, as they are called; and is determined to set upon those commercial principles of free intercourse. But it appears to me that the best kind of liberality is that which should teach us to be liberal to our own fellow-subjects—which

should induce us to consult their interest rather than that of France or any other country. Would France give us the advantages which we must lose in Portugal if we adopt the noble lord's plan? On the contrary, is there not every reason to believe that she will still adhere to that prohibitive policy by which our produce is almost excluded from her markets? But the noble lord said—and the assertion was cheered by those around him—that the course which he proposes will have the effect of preventing war between this country and France. Good God! is it possible that we—but, Sir, I will not look at such a strange suggestion in an invidious light, or take the line of argument I was about to enter upon; I will take a ground to which the noble lord cannot object. It is said that these two great nations ought to throw their arms open to each other. I admit that it would be wise and politic that they should do so; but has France answered to the overtures we have already made for this purpose?—has she opened her ports to our produce, as we have done to hers? I say she has done nothing of the kind; but, on the contrary, she still evinces a fixed determination to adhere to her prohibitive system.

Then, Sir, I must contend that all the noble lord's arguments, as to two nations opening their arms to each other, do not apply in this case. I contend that we have a right to complain of France—that after we have reduced the duty on her wines, and other articles of her produce, she has increased the duty on ours, or, at all events, she has relaxed nothing of her restrictive system. I do hope, therefore, that the noble lord will not press this change at present. As an addition to our revenue, I have shown that it will not be productive, for we shall lose in one way more than we can gain in another by it. Let him, therefore, not press a change of which any advantage on one hand is more than doubtful, while the disadvantages on the other is certain. We have quite enough to do in the important matters already before us, without entering into such hazardous changes of our commercial relations with other countries. The noble lord has proposed some important changes in his budget, which have been already abandoned; and it is very probable, that after having proceeded some length with this measure, we shall also hear of its being abandoned; but I will not advert further to the budget; I am far from believing that he would have brought forward such measures had he been left to his own excellent judgment. But without entering into that subject, I would again most earnestly press upon the noble lord to postpone this matter, at least till next year.—France, it is probable, will be in a more settled state by that time. Perhaps Portugal, also, may be in a situation in which our negotiations with her may be carried on with greater prospect of bringing matters to a more favourable result. At all events, the chances of being able to effect the change with less risk, will be greater in the next year than at present. If, however, the noble lord should persevere, I feel it my duty to state that I shall give the measure my most decided opposition.

Mr. CRESSETT PELHAM.—Sir, I consider that the present is a very ill chosen period for any alteration in our wine duties—more particularly an alteration which will have the effect of giving an advantage to our ancient enemy and now powerful rival—to our own prejudice and that of our ancient allies. We have already done too much in this way in the encouragement of the produce of other countries, without obtaining any corresponding advantage for our own; I object also to a measure which will have the effect of raising the duty on wines. We some time ago thought it expedient to reduce some of those duties; and I contend that if we now attempt to raise them, we shall only satisfy our own proceedings. I shall therefore feel it my duty to oppose the proposition.

## FRANCE.

The election of the President of the Chamber of Deputies took place on Monday se'night, and M. Girod, the ministerial candidate, was appointed, the numbers being for M. Girod 181; for M. Lafitte 176. In consequence of the smallness of this majority, and of the ministerial candidate for the office of Vice-President being at the bottom of the list, M. Casimir Perrier conceived that he had not sufficient influence in the Chamber to carry on his administration, and he and his colleagues tendered their resignations, which were accepted by the King. On the receipt of the news from Belgium, however, M. Perrier consented to remain in office for a time, and the general impression seems to be, that by making concessions to the war party with respect to Belgium and Holland, he will continue at the head of affairs.

On Wednesday and Thursday se'night Paris was again the scene of popular commotion. A correspondent of the *Globe* says,—"We have had some scenes in Paris on each of the last two evenings. Crowds collected round the pavilions in the Garden of the Palais Royal, at which the journals are lent, in order to ascertain the latest news, and then to resolve themselves, as on all former occasions, of excitement, into clubs or groups. Poland—devoted Poland—was the theme of all. 'Our Ministers have betrayed the Poles—betrayed us!' 'Poland for ever!' 'War with Russia!' 'Death to the Russians!' 'Down with the Ministers!' 'To the Palais!' were the commentaries and the exclamations of the readers, and they ran down the garden, and into the courtyard of the Palais, to entertain the King with a repetition of them."—*Liverpool paper*, Aug. 12.