

exceptions, as our own Franchise Act did, would be to allow each Province to adopt a franchise which suits her own population.

I have very little doubt, looking at the fact that we have at the head of our House probably the leading commercial lawyer in the country, and that we have amongst the latest additions to the House one of the leading commercial men of the country, that the measures which are promised us with regard to commercial law will be improvements upon the existing law, and I am quite satisfied to take those measures upon trust. Although I have not generally the utmost confidence in the Government, still I think on this particular subject we may rely with confidence on the prospect that they are going to do a good thing for us. There is this remark, suggested to me by those measures with respect to commerce, that while we are providing to facilitate commerce and make it easier and pleasanter, and while we are spending immense sums of money to improve certain ports in the country, notably the port of Montreal, and while, as I gather from a later part of the Speech, we propose to spend a very large sum to subsidize a line of steamers to promote commerce, it seems to be a fact that on the other hand we are building up a tariff which effectually walls out a large proportion of the commerce which we otherwise might have; and, unless rumor is at fault, it is proposed during the present Session to raise that wall still higher, so as to more effectually shut out commerce. It seems to me to be inconsistent, and almost childish, that while on the one hand we are taking steps to facilitate commerce, on the other we are taking effectual steps to prevent those facilities from being utilized.

With respect to the next paragraph of the Speech, as to ocean steam service, I have very considerable doubt. No doubt it is a very desirable thing that we should get our mails at the earliest possible date, and it is desirable that the mails and passengers should come altogether to our own ports; but it is barely possible that, while those are desirable things, we may pay rather more for them than they are worth to this country. When the measure foreshadowed in this paragraph of the Speech comes before us, I, for one, shall

consider myself at liberty to express opposition to it if I shall think that the price which this benefit is to cost more than counterbalances the benefit itself, and I trust that the Government will not leave out of sight, in dealing with the question, the interests of the existing lines, which have done so much to build up the commerce of this country.

In the same paragraph of the Speech reference is made to the best means of developing our trade and securing direct communication by steam with Australasia, the West Indies and South America. I hope that something more will come out of the measures that are indicated here than has come out of any previous steps taken in the same direction. As far back as 1866 commissioners were appointed by the various Provinces to go to the West Indies and South America with a view of attempting to develop trade between British North America and those regions. The commissioners had a very charming excursion, and they came back in good humor, very much pleased with themselves and what they had seen; but beyond that I am not aware—except that we had to pay a very nice bill for their excursion—that we have had any result from it. Then some two or three years ago a very prominent merchant of St. John was sent out on a similar errand to the West Indies. He made a very pleasant report, and enjoyed himself a good deal, I imagine; we paid the bill, and there the results terminated. A Halifax gentleman familiar with the West India business was sent out a year or two ago, and the experience was repeated in his case; and up to the present time there has been no result from those delegations. We had also some time ago delegates in this country from the West Indies, but no result came from their visit. I think hon. gentlemen should bear in mind that the West Indies and South America are not the unknown regions which a great many gentlemen seem to think. There has been a large trade between the lower Provinces of what is now the Dominion and the West Indies for something like one hundred years; and I fancy that the merchants in the lower Provinces understand that trade pretty well, and that they have been doing as much business as could conveniently and profitably be done under existing circumstances. I think that the alteration in the