

# The Commercial

A Journal of Commerce, Industry and Finance, especially devoted to the interests of Western Canada, including that portion of Ontario west of Lake Superior, the Provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia and the Territories.

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*The Commercial certainly enjoys a very much larger circulation among the business community of the country between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast, than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. By a thorough system of personal solicitation, carried out annually, this journal has been placed upon the desk of the great majority of business men in the vast district designated above, and including northwestern Ontario, the provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia, and the territories of Assiniboia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.*

WINNIPEG, AUGUST 1, 1892.

## Legislative Interference with Trade.

As the parliamentary session draws to a close, it becomes possible to gain some idea of the direction which commercial legislation has taken.

A brief review of the headings of the Bills which appears upon the Orders of the House, show that both government measures and private bills indicate an increasing tendency to interfere and regulate the details of all stages of industrial production and commercial distribution. This legislative intervention and supervision takes place occasionally on behalf of the work people who are employed in the various manufacturing processes, or else for their social benefit and improvement. Measures tending in this direction have been introduced into the House under the respective titles of the Eight Hours Bill and the Mines (Eight Hours) Regulation Bill, the Housing of the Working Classes Bill, the Merchant Seamen's (Provisions) Bill, the Mining Accidents Insurance (Scotland) Bill, Old Age Provident Pensions Bill, the Outdoor Provident Relief Bill, Coal Mines Regulation and Amendment, Boilers Inspection and Regulation, and the Shop Hours Regulation Bills. The details of these measures are sufficiently indicated by the direction in which their framers are disposed to move on behalf of those whose positions they seek to improve. Under each and all of these proposals, financial charges of some kind, either as to cost of inspection or of rates, would fall upon the whole community, for the benefit and advantage of a particular section. This legislation is, therefore, distinctly of a socialistic character.

Another class of enactment is devised for the protection of the public, either against the omission of noxious vapors from factories, or against the selling of articles containing admixtures which the unsuspecting or ignorant pur-

chaser is not likely to detect. Under this class of measures is to be found the Alkali, etc., Works Bill, the Artificial Manures Adulteration Bill, the Beer Adulteration Bills, the Substitutes Bill, the Margarine Acts Amendment Bill, and the Sale of Food and Drugs Act Amendment Bill. These measures, if adopted, will also entail considerable expenditure in the way of inspection, whilst two of them at least, viz., the Artificial Manure Adulteration Bill and the Sale of Food and Drugs Act Amendment Bill, may occasionally lead to considerable expenditure and annoyance through disputes as to analytical contents of products. Increasing difficulties, also, in regard to the manufacturing of the various articles, which must arise in connection with the trades regulated under these Acts, must necessarily entail an increase in the cost of production.

Whilst it is thus sought to place additional liabilities on a number of the producing industries of the country, it is also sought to place the carrying and distributing trades in an increasing degree under the regulation of Parliament. A legislative maximum has been fixed for the rates which railways are empowered to charge for the carriage of the various classes of goods over their systems, and similar regulations are in course of consideration for the regulation of the canal traffic of the country. A bill is also before the House to modify the conditions under which return tickets shall be issued by railway companies; while further measures have been introduced to modify the liability of shipowners, to regulate the carriage of deck cargoes, to amend the Merchant Shipping Acts, and to establish the conditions under which merchant vessels should be provisioned.

The bills thus roughly classified, are a fair indication of the direction in which public opinion is traveling. There is a distinct indication of a leaning towards State Regulation of everything. As social existence becomes more complicated, as population concentrates more and more in particular centres, it is no doubt necessary to provide that one section of the community shall not be prejudiced by the action of the remainder. Theoretically, no doubt, it is desirable to place difficulties and penalties in the way of fraud and adulteration. But is it possible, or even desirable for the State to regulate everything? At present the State has charge of the postal and telegraphic systems, and this charge is now to be extended to some extent at least, to telephony, bankruptcy, patent laws, and trade marks are also under official supervision. Factory inspection is equally an official function. Our entire import trade is, under the Merchandise Marks Act, open to the supervision of the customs. Is it desirable or prudent to increase the already considerable number of Government employees, and to place additional branches of national activity under official supervision? If the principle be further adopted, where is it to stop? Is one half of the nation to be salaried and pensioned to watch over and regulate the other half? Will competition, which has now become so keenly international, permit of these indefinite additions to the cost of production? Will not over-restriction act as a kind of bounty in favor of foreign production? Is it not likely that the experience of the Merchandise Marks Act may possibly be renewed, and that an additional section of trade will be diverted into the hands of foreign traders, who will not be slow to assimilate it?

It is clear, both from the nature of the measures, and from such instances as the almost unopposed second reading of the Alkali Act that commercial associations are not sufficiently alive to the dangers to which they may be exposed by either amateur or official legislation. Government departments are naturally desirous of extending their influence and power. They are therefore constantly bringing in bills, or amending bills, not only at the commencement of, but often late on in, the session. It is to be feared that their suggestions are not always sufficiently closely watched, and that enactments occasionally slip through the House

which, if introduced early in the session, would meet with considerable opposition. The Alkali Bill is a good instance of these dangers. Brought in late in the session, it is an incomplete and hasty measure, dealing only partially with the matters it is supposed to regulate, and drafted apparently without consultation with those interested. The second reading was taken unexpectedly late at night, in presence almost exclusively of government supporters, and so traders find themselves pledged to a principle which they do not acknowledge.

It is sufficiently evident that some more efficient and elastic organization of the scattered elements of commercial representation in the House of Commons is necessary, and that steps should be taken by trading interests to present a more united and effective front in connection with Bills affecting them. We trust that some steps in this direction may be taken in the coming Parliament.—London, England, *Chamber of Commerce Journal*.

## British Shipping in 1891.

The returns regarding British merchant shipping and navigation for the year 1891 show a slight decline in the number of vessels, but an increase in the tonnage as compared with either of the two preceding years. There were in 1891, 17,243 vessels, of 8,343,541 tons and employing 240,480 persons, registered in the United Kingdom, as compared with 17,425 vessels, of 7,916,236 tons, and employing 236,108 men, in 1890. If the Isle of Man, Channel Islands and British possessions be included the total amounted to 36,055 vessels, of 9,961,574 tons, in 1891, as against 36,214 vessels, of 9,698,093 tons, in 1890, and 36,469 vessels, of 9,472,000 tons, in 1889. Of the vessels of the United Kingdom in 1891, 11,114 of 3,026,501 tons, employing 81,189 men, were sailing vessels, and 6,129, of 5,317,040 tons, employing 159,291 hands, were steam vessels, as compared with 11,570 sailing vessels, of 2,893,572 tons, employing 91,213 persons, and 5,855 steamers, of 5,024,764 tons, employing 151,890 hands, in 1890.

The entries and clearances, like the tonnage, for 1891 showed increases as compared with the preceding year. The vessels entered at ports of the United Kingdom during the year 1891 numbered 372,150, with an aggregate tonnage of 85,692,637 tons, as compared with 370,075 vessels, with an aggregate tonnage of 84,574,324 tons, in 1890. The vessels cleared in 1891 numbered 340,802, with an aggregate tonnage of 81,142,105 tons, as compared with 339,446 vessels, with an aggregate tonnage of 79,766,033 tons, in the preceding year. The foreign trade tonnage shows a slight, but only a slight, increase as compared with the preceding year, the clearances being 36,859,015 tons in 1891, as compared with 36,835,712 in the preceding year, and the clearances were 37,953,605 tons, as compared with 37,443,157 in 1890. A greater proportionate advance is noted in the coasting trade, which showed a total of 310,770 vessels, of 48,333,622 tons, entered in 1891, as against 307,240 vessels, of 47,738,612 tons, in 1890, and 278,600 vessels, of 43,188,500 tons, cleared in 1891, as compared with 276,270 vessels, of 42,317,876 tons, in 1890. London continues to hold the first place as regards the amount of tonnage entered and cleared, Liverpool coming second and Cardiff third. One feature disclosed by the shipping returns and upon which there has been considerable comment is the tendency to an increase of the foreign element among the crews of British ships.—*Bradstreets*.

British steamship Fingal has loaded a cargo of tea at Kobe for the C.P.R. Co. to ship at Vancouver.

F. G. Richards, jr., and Herbert Cuthbert, known as Richards & Cuthbert, real estate, etc., Victoria, has been dissolved. Cuthbert continues.