

the work of reform so tedious and perilous, there are prejudices in favour of old laws and customs which are not less inveterate, and scarcely less difficult to be dealt with. In short, whether it be from the desire to imitate, or the love of opposition, it is certain that there is a class of persons in this country, as in England, who stick out for protection, and that the abuses the Free-Traders complain of will not be yielded without a struggle.

It follows from this, that *politically* the influence of these parties will be felt; to what extent, the future will show. It is probable that the next political struggle will turn mainly on this question, and that Free Trade and Protection will be the rallying cries of the two parties. But how will this assort with old distinctions? Will it square with the present political standard of parties? Will it not confuse and confound old political calculations? Where will it place the present leaders? How will it affect their followers? These are questions which naturally suggest themselves, and of the practical solution of which a vast deal depends.

Much as we have striven to place Free Trade out of the category of ordinary political questions, the time is approaching when we hope to see it exercise a great and salutary influence on the country. It is so much more intelligible than any other question that has ever been proposed, that it is impossible good should not come out of its agitation. Instead of dealing with merely speculative questions of Government, it goes at once to the very root of a nation's prosperity, and enquires how the social condition of the people may be best improved. It descends from the imaginary to the practical, and uses the most common terms to convey the most important truths. It is a question every man may judge of for himself, by the simple aid of common sense—a question of figures and reason, respecting which none can be ignorant if they choose to enquire.

Now, can any thing be suggested in which the Colony has so great an interest as this question? Is there any other question on which such safe guides can be found?—any which may be taken up with so little fear of personal animosity, and with so little risk in the carrying out?

We sincerely believe not. On too many other questions, Canadian opinion has been in opposition to the wishes of the mother country; in this, it only follows the course the mother country has pointed out. We are in the rear, not in advance. Up to the present time, we have only *talked* of Free Trade, and have done nothing. Very soon the opportunity will be presented us, and it will be then seen whether we have profited by the example which the mother country has set us. We shall soon have to deal practically with our commercial affairs, as England has dealt with hers, and it is a great thing to learn whether our public men are equal to the task. Is there a majority in our Legislature to claim an alteration in the Navigation Laws, so that we may be allowed to avail ourselves of the spirit of enterprise of other countries in the conveyance of inward and outward freights? Shall we have a thorough revision of the Tariff, in accordance with the invitation held out to us by the Parent State? Will there be more disposition manifested by those who have hitherto been called Liberals to get rid of the Agricultural duties, and so let public considerations arise above the question of mere political party influence?

These, we repeat, are important questions, and we trust that the public on all occasions will keep them before those who solicit their suffrages. If it is a matter of importance to know what are the opinions of a Member of Parliament on questions of education and local government, can it be less important to know his opinions on a subject which involves the very commercial existence of the country? Let the first questions then be, "Are you in favour of unrestricted commerce?"—"Do you desire the Free Navigation of the St Lawrence?"—"Are you opposed to the existence of the Navigation Laws?" On the answers to these questions let the determination of the voter, as to whether the candidate is a proper person to represent the country in Parliament, mainly depend.

THE 'MONTREAL PILOT' AND THE NAVIGATION LAWS.

The following is an extract from a very able article which appeared in the *Montreal Pilot* of the 10th instant, in answer to some views expressed by the Editor of the *Montreal Gazette*, on the subject of the Navigation Laws:—

"The *Gazette* admits that it would be a boon to us if England were to abrogate the Navigation Laws in our favour (and of course in favour of our fellow-subjects in other colonies). He has great doubts of the wisdom of these laws, thinks that 'commercially they are totally indefensible.' Now really it appears to us passing strange that a Canadian journalist holding such opinions, should refuse to join in

demanding the boon which is sought for by the great majority of his fellow subjects. It must be obvious to every one that the *shipping interest* in England will make good use of the articles of the Protectionist papers in Canada to shew that there is a division of opinion in our community, that many influential papers, including the Ministerial organ, think our demand a very unreasonable one, and moreover of little importance. But the *Gazette* says, "probably they are considered a necessity for Britain herself." So were the penal laws against the Roman Catholics, so were the Test and Corporation acts, the Corn Laws, and Slavery. All these obsolete laws were vindicated on the plea of "political necessity." The *Gazette*, however, know that such men as Cobden and Bright do not defend the Navigation Laws. In arguing the question, our contemporary constantly refers to the interests of Britain and the interests of Canada, as if all people in those countries were agreed on the subject. So in like manner Mr. Thorne and other protectionists cry out, Why do not the Canadians build ships of their own? We have never been able to see what difference it would make to the Canadian farmer whether Canadian or British shipowners should benefit by high freights. The craft used by the forwarders are all Canadian built, and yet we hear complaints enough from the agricultural interests of the forwarding charges. The true way of considering the question is as British subjects *equally interested* with the mass of the people of Great Britain and Ireland in sweeping away a monopoly which is injurious to all. The *Gazette* argues in the following extract (the italics are our own) that British consumers will suffer from this monopoly, because if the restrictions add to the cost of freight in her ports, it will be paid by them:—

"When we have no favour at home we must then find, in competition with all the producing countries of the world, the best market we can find among all the consuming countries in the world. If then, Britain continues any restrictions which add to the freight of her purchases, they will add to the cost in her own ports, and be paid by her own consumers; not by the seller, who can take his produce to wherever he can meet with more favourable terms, if he is not indemnified by the higher price for the higher charge of freight. This is a fundamental axiom of political economy, the very basis of the whole doctrine of Free-trade."

"So far as this is a good argument, it strengthens our position that English consumers will join us in our demand for the removal of this monopoly. Heretofore they have been engaged with grievance of a still graver character. But the argument that the consumer pays everything is a very false one when applied to commodities, the supply of which depends in a great degree upon causes over which human beings have no control. In the case of manufactured goods, the consumer must, as a general rule, pay all the charges attending their production and transport, such as labour in manufacturing, freight, &c. &c. If these charges be not paid with a fair profit on his capital, the manufacturer will seek other modes of investing it. The country where manufactures can be carried on cheapest would naturally monopolize the supply under a free trade system. But the supply of corn depends in a great degree upon Providence.

"The farmer cannot tell until harvest time, nor even then, whether he will be sufficiently remunerated for his labour, and when the time for selling arrives, he must take the market price, whether it be remunerative or not. He occupies a widely different position from the manufacturer, and he will go on labouring, provided the soil and climate are favourable, trusting to Providence that his crops will be good, and the demand proportionate. Under a free trade system, the large markets will, of course, be regulated by the comparative demand and supply throughout the world. But let us consider how, under that system, particular countries may be affected by Navigation Laws. Flour, with reference to the general demand and supply, may be worth 30s. per barrel in the London market, and merchants will give corresponding prices at Odessa, Dantzic, New York, and Montreal, taking into consideration all the charges, the principal of which is freight. On whom, then, would the charge of an increased freight, caused by Navigation Laws, fall?—on the consumer in England or the producer (suppose in Canada)? Surely the *Gazette* must admit that it would fall on the producer, unless all were equally exposed to the influence of those laws,—in which case, it would probably fall on both. We need not, however, argue on a point which will at once be admitted by every practical man. Let the *Gazette* ask the shippers of breadstuffs if they are never induced to give a higher price by an offer of cheap freight, and whether they are not often deterred from shipping by high freights. We do not contend that consumers are uninterested in the rates of freight: on the contrary, every thing calculated to bring the producer and consumer nearer together, is of benefit to both. It is no argument to tell us, as the *Gazette* does, to carry your flour elsewhere than England 'if you are not indemnified by the higher price for the higher charge for freight.' England, we hope, will long continue to afford us our best market: when she ceases to do so, there will soon be an end to our connexion with her. It is, however, a poor argument to tell us that because English consumers pay Canadian producers the highest price for flour, therefore both parties are to pay extra freights to English shipowners."