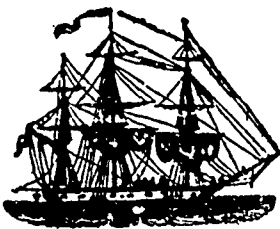


CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



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MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 27TH MARCH, 1847.

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MONTREAL BOARD OF TRADE AND EXECUTIVE INACTION.

In another column will be found a Memorial presented on the 19th instant, by the Board of Trade to His Excellency the Governor General, praying for the immediate action of the Provincial Legislature in effecting the necessary adaptation of our fiscal system to that of the mother country.

The mercantile community owe the Montreal Board of Trade their warmest acknowledgments for the zeal and ability with which they have—especially during the present year,—performed the arduous duties which have devolved upon them. We rejoice to observe, that they have again strongly urged on the Government those grievances which weigh down our commerce: the British Navigation Laws, the Imperial Differential Duties, the Duties levied on Agricultural Produce, and the Restrictions maintained against foreign vessels navigating the St. Lawrence.

The other suggestions contained in the Memorial are entitled to,—and we would fain hope will receive,—the attention of our government, whensoever we may be fortunate enough to possess one. It is, indeed, a stigma on the character of the rulers of this country that it should have been deemed necessary by the mercantile body to present a memorial, expressive of apprehension that their interests "may be seriously endangered by ill-timed apathy, or unwise legislation."

When we look at the composition of the Montreal Board of Trade,—the majority of whom are well known to be favorable to the general policy of the present ministry,—we cannot but feel satisfied that the by no means indirect censure conveyed in the latter part of their memorial, is not the mere ebullition of party, but the deliberate—and surely we may say the reluctant—language of deep conviction. We honor them for their frankness; and we trust it may serve as a lesson to all men in power—to whatsoever party they may belong—to convince them, that they will not be allowed to trifle with the best interests of the country, by neglecting or deferring wise and wholesome legislation, on account of their miserable difficulties amongst themselves, or their delays in completing their ministerial arrangements.

It is well known, we are leagued with no party but that of the country at large: we seek to overturn no ministry,—indeed we showed ourselves the best friends of the present, when so early as the 9th of January last, we warned them of the danger of Executive inaction,—but we tell them, that they are rousing a spirit which they will find it difficult to allay; that many whom they have hitherto ranked amongst their firmest friends, express the greatest dissatisfaction. This wholesome truth may never reach their ears through that portion of the press which ordinarily supports them,—and we suppose that they would give little credit to it if enunciated by their opponents,—but it is, nevertheless, not to be slighted. We have no hesitation in asserting that there is not a single person engaged in commerce, who does not suffer more or less from the uncertainty which prevails as to the intentions of government. Who with any degree of safety has been able to order, either from Britain or from foreign markets, such

goods as would be materially affected in value by a repeal of the Differential Duties? Take the articles of bastard sugar, window glass, and numerous other articles; who can calculate with anything like certainty the price at which it would be safe to import them? It is well known—and ministers ought to be, if they are not already, aware of the fact—that parties, in want of such articles of merchandize, are putting off their purchases until the course which the government will adopt is made known. And does not the same uncertainty exist as to the repeal of the agricultural duties? Is it not the duty of the government to declare its intentions on the subject? Those who have travelled through the Western States this winter concur in stating that the uncertainty which exists as to our future fiscal regulations is one great means of diverting provisions and flour to the American canals, which, if those agricultural duties were repealed, would come down the St. Lawrence. Now that the protection accorded to our produce in Britain is withdrawn, there is no inducement to send foreign wheat to Canadian mills to be ground, and neither foreign flour nor provisions will come through our waters to be subjected to all the cumbrous and retarding forms of our custom-house machinery.

Nor is this all we have to apprehend:—from the suspension of the British Navigation Laws there is every reason to dread that a large portion of our own flour, provisions, and other products will go through foreign canals to foreign ports of shipment, in preference to Quebec or Montreal! We are in fact, from the restrictions imposed on the navigation of the St. Lawrence, actually giving a bonus to the employment of foreign canals in preference to our own:—for instance, foreign craft can enter any of our ports in Canada West, and take a cargo of Canadian produce to an American port, but not to one of our own ports; so that when, as there will undoubtedly be next season, there is a pressure of produce, and a deficiency of British craft to carry it, the only vent for such of the produce of Canada West as may be required to be promptly shipped, will be the ports of the United States. Again, the restriction on foreign vessels coming up the St. Lawrence to Montreal—and indeed the British Navigation Laws generally—will operate as a strong incentive to both the people of the United States and of Canada West to send their produce to foreign, in preference to Canadian, ports.

It is impossible in the compass of the present article to do more than touch on some of the difficulties which beset us,—and we have in several previous numbers of our journal adverted to them more fully,—but sufficient has been stated, to show the urgent necessity that existed for the assembling of our Provincial Parliament long before this time. The Free Trade measures of the British Parliament, which necessitated the reforms we urge, were passed nine months since; and had our legislature been called at the proper season, we have no doubt that its members would have made such urgent remonstrances as would have prevented the Imperial parliament from committing the manifest injustice of maintaining those restrictions on our trade which they have removed from their own people.

In a former number, we alluded to the fact of the apparent indisposition which has existed since the union, on the part of the provincial ministers, to meet our parliament; and which is evidenced by their putting off its assembling to nearly the latest possible day which the letter of the Union Act permits,—the spirit evidently is that the sessions should be annual. We now give the respective dates of the commencement of the five Sessions of the Parliaments of United Canada:—

1st Session,	14th June, 1841.
2d do	8th September, 1842.
3rd do	28th do 1843.
4th do	23rd November, 1844.
5th do	20th March, 1846.

The sixth Session will now probably not be held until the month of June next; indeed, however desirous the ministry may be to defer the assembling of parliament, it is not possible legally to do so beyond the 8th of that month.

We may therefore infer that at that time the legislature will have assembled, and we sincerely hope that the ministry,—of whomsoever it may be composed,—will make up for the delay,