

Art. 9th

The corporation to have power to publish any rules and regulations not requiring the sanction of law, which they may make from time to time, by virtue of their charter, for the benefit of trade, in order that the same may be publickly known throughout the province.

Council Office
3rd April 1777

a copy.

J. WILLIAMS.

PETITION OF MERCHANTS FOR REPEAL OF QUEBEC ACT.¹

To The Right Honorable Lord George Germain, One of His Majesty's
Principal Secretaries of State, &c &c &c

The Petition of the Merchants & such Inhabitants of the Province of
Quebec as are at present in London — Sheweth,

That his Majesty's British subjects in that extensive Colony apprehending the inconveniences which have since really arisen from the operation of an act of Parliament passed in the Year 1774 for establishing the Government of the Province of Quebec, did in the same year Petition his Majesty, and both Houses of Parliament, that it might be repealed or at least amended.²

We beg leave to inform your Lordship, that from the reduction of Canada till May 1775 when the above mentioned act took place, the inhabitants as well Canadians as English lived with great satisfaction in the enjoyment of their liberty and Property under the Protection of the English Government, and that they received the new regulations contained in the act with surprize, and reluctance ; for they saw themselves at once deprived of that inestimable privilege of the English constitution, that grand Bulwark against Injustice and Oppression, the trial by Juries, and of the benefit of the Commercial Laws of England, so wisely calculated to promote a spirit of Trade and Industry and so generally known and understood ; instead of which they found themselves obliged to have recourse to the Laws of Canada scarcely, if at all, understood by any Person in the Province, and consisting chiefly of occasional Mandates issued, from time to time, by the French Governors. In consequence of this subjection to the arbitrary command of their superiors, many of the Canadians have been ordered out upon the public Service, without any pay or emolument whatever, and upon refusal have been thrown into prison under a Military Guard.³ It cannot be wondered at if under such circumstances, Discontents, and even Dissatisfaction to his Majesty's Government should have crept in.

¹ Canadian Archives, Haldimand Papers, B 43, p. 13.

² Referring to the petitions of Nov. 12th, 1774, See pp. 589-592.

³ Referring to the restoration of the French feudal system under the Quebec Act, and the consequent exaction of corvées and other compulsory services. See notes 1 and 2, p. 677. See also Burgoyne to Carleton, as to enforcing corvées; Q 13, p. 212. See also Finlay's Motion in Council on the complaints of the peasants, Minutes of Leg. Council, Vol. D., p. 41.