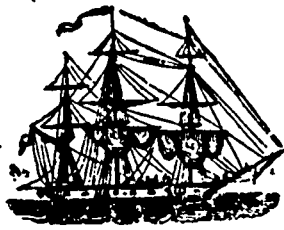


CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



FREE TRADE JOURNAL, AND WEEKLY COMMERCIAL NEWS.

Vol. 1.]

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 30TH JANUARY, 1847.

[No. 40.]

CONTENTS.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1.—State of the Colony.—Arrival of Lord Elgin. | 7.—Statement of Imports at St. Johns. |
| 2.—The Provincial Tariff. | 8.—The Welland Canal. |
| 3.—The Cobourg Star. | 9.—Miscellaneous Articles. |
| 4.—Free Navigation of the St. Lawrence. | 10.—Intelligence—General and Local. |
| 5.—Emigration. | 11.—The Markets. |
| 6.—The Quebec Gazette. | 12.—Advertisements: |

THE CANADIAN ECONOMIST.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 30TH JANUARY, 1847.

STATE OF THE COLONY—ARRIVAL OF LORD ELGIN.

The intelligence brought by the *Libernia*, which has been received this week, is of importance to the colony. The still further rise which has taken place in the price of bread-stuffs proves the wisdom of those who foresaw the crisis, and who provided for it, as far as was possible, by having recourse to Free Trade measures. What would have been the situation of England if her statesmen had neglected to take these steps; and what will be our situation by and by, if our statesmen do not do something to improve our condition? These are questions which must command our attention. Next to joy at the danger the mother country has escaped, a desire to improve our own condition ought to prevail, and stimulate us to action. If we wanted proof of our commercial helplessness, and the necessity of strong exertions, we find it furnished to our cost at the present moment. Owing to the shortness of time allowed for produce to find its way from the rich granaries of the West, a very large portion is unable to be shipped in the fall, and has to remain stored away during the winter, at a heavy expense, considerable risk, and, as it frequently happens, serious loss to the owner. Instead of being able to take advantage of a rise which may occur in the markets at home, the party who holds a thousand barrels of flour in store at Kingston or Hamilton, must fold his arms on his breast, and look quietly on, whilst that advantage passes away. If the evil could not be avoided, his vexation would not be so great; but how often does it not happen that the delay which thus takes a large sum out of his pocket has been solely caused by the want of the means to convey his produce to a shipping port in the Fall? The difficulty of finding buyers at the moment—the high price of freights—or some other reason connected with the internal voyage, has operated as an obstacle, and in the meantime the winter has set in, and the chances of the market are lost for the year.

Hundreds of cases of this kind occur, and yet there is no doubt that a vast amount of the evil might and would be avoided, if proper steps were only pursued. If the navigation laws were repealed, and the St. Lawrence thrown open to competition, who can doubt that a much larger amount of produce would be shipped home than at present? The high rates which now keep back supplies, and furnish additional profit to the warehousemen and insurance offices, would then cease to be felt, and with the increased facilities afforded, the length of the Fall, and the period for shipping by the gulf, would be virtually extended. The completion of the Portland Railway (about which so much apathy exists) would afford us an access to the ocean during the whole of the year, and, with the changes we have referred to, give a new and more promising feature to our trade. But nothing less than this can effect it. Private enterprise, such as is now manifested at Toronto, may, it is true, do something, but can never be relied on in the same way with a free and unrestricted trade. The object of all such companies is to make as much profit as they can, and if they spare themselves, they will take care in the end to lay the burthen on others. However pleased, therefore, we may be to see their efforts, we look upon them as a poor exchange for that which we claim, and would much rather have the public

mind directed to getting rid of the burthens altogether, than in devising measures to render those burthens a little less irksome.

The arrival of a new Governor General furnishes a good opportunity to urge our demands. Lord Elgin comes out here, we are satisfied, to do all the good he believes to be in his power; but necessarily ignorant of much of what is required. He will suffer the disadvantage of falling into the hands of men who have not shewn themselves very solicitous about our commercial interests, and who either lack the energy or the talent to take up the great work of the day. He will have to meet a parliament in which there is a lamentable absence of men well versed in modern political science; and what is worse than all—he will find himself immediately surrounded by a pack of official loungers, greedy place hunters, pampered sinecurists, and unprincipled parliament men, who, whilst they profess great devotion, seek only their own selfish ends, and care neither for him nor the country. What, we would ask, has the commercial intelligence of the province to expect at such hands? Surrounded by such a group, how much chance is there of a fair representation of the solid wants and wishes of the colony reaching his ears? The ministry may wish well—we think it likely they do—but what encouragement have they given us to think they will act well? Will they have the courage to lead public opinion in the house, and urge those changes they know to be necessary for the commercial prosperity of the country? Will they dare to risk the favor of some of their friends—the scurrilous abuse of a portion of the press—the clamor of an interested party—in order to give relief to the trade, and open the resources of the colony? If they do, we promise them they shall have our support; if they do not, how can we, or any other man who wishes well to his country, support them?

It will probably be said, as a kind of defence, that, in respect to the particular measures to which we refer, the ministry have not the power to control them: that those measures are of imperial legislation, and can only be altered by the vote and consent of the imperial authorities. We allow that they have not the power of control; but they have certainly the power of influence. The British Government have a right to know the opinion of the Canadian people on these questions, and the sooner they know it the better. A resolution emanating from the provincial ministry, to the effect that it is the opinion of the people of the colony that the navigation laws are injurious to their interests and unjust in their operation, would have a strong effect upon the mind of the imperial parliament, and strengthen a feeling which already exists in that quarter. We do not ask our own ministry to do impossibilities; we do not even expect them to be very energetic in a course at present so new to them; but we do expect them to do something, to make some sign, some demonstration that they are not quite dead to the spirit of the age.

It must be remembered, too, that if, in respect to these particular measures, our provincial ministry can exercise no immediate control, there are measures of a similar nature, and of no small importance, over which they can exercise control.—The provincial duty of 3s. a quarter on wheat,—the agricultural act, imposing a duty on cattle, &c.,—and the long list of differential duties—are all subjects within their powers, and on which they can and should take action. Will they meet parliament prepared to show the necessity of these reforms—to revise the tariff—point out how our canals can be made more productive, and our trade more prosperous, sure, and extensive?

We confess that when we consider these things, we almost fear for Lord Elgin, lest he should allow the silence of his ministers to deceive him as to the real state of the country. Constitutionally, we allow, he may escape censure through his advisers and the parliament; but we are assuming that he is desirous of earning laurels in Canada, and not passing like a *roi faneant* indolently through the scene he has been chosen to play so important a part in. If so, he will at once call upon his ministry to place themselves at the head of the new movement, and cut boldly through the difficulties which impede our commerce; and by so doing he will earn the best title he can ever expect to gain to the lasting gratitude of the Canadian people.