



# CANADIAN ECONOMIST.

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## CONTENTS.

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|---|---|
| 1.—The Post Office.                                     | 6.—Project of connecting Halifax and Quebec by Railway. |
| 2.—Free Trade and the 'Hamilton Commercial Advertiser.' | 7.—The Cost of Raising Wheat.                           |
| 3.—The Montreal Herald's Advocacy of Free Trade.        | 8.—Miscellaneous Articles.                              |
| 4.—Hop Mr. Moore on Free Trade and Protection.          | 9.—Intelligence—General and Local.                      |
| 4.—The Usury Laws.                                      | 10.—The Markets.  |
|   | 11.—Advertisements:                                     |

## THE CANADIAN ECONOMIST.

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### THE POST OFFICE.

Our esteemed contributor having brought his papers upon the question of the Post Office to an end, it behoves us now to take the matter up, and make, what divines call, a practical application of the subject.

There is no institution in this colony, as is universally admitted, so replete and rank with abuses as that now under review. The rates of postage charged are preposterous and oppressive, having, at the present day, no parallel in any country in the world enjoying the benefit of self-government through representative institutions.

The internal organization of the department, is offensive to common sense and the rights of industry.

Let us look for a moment into its recesses, and what do we behold? An individual at its head irresponsible to any authority whatever in the Province, yet drawing from its resources a salary of upwards of £3,000 a year, and which a few years ago is said to have nearly equalled that of the Governor General. Are the duties of the office of such a nature as to require transcendent talent and ability? Nothing of the kind. The duties might be performed by any man of plain education, business habits and good character. Yet, the present incumbent whose abilities we by no means mean to disparage, has been maintained in his situation with emolument enough to pay the salaries of nearly all the judges of the Court of Queen's Bench of this District; and that too in spite of the well known dissatisfaction of the public at large—in spite of remonstrances from various public bodies—and finally in spite of the unqualified remonstrance of our local legislature. Can anything more be required to prove the rottenness of a system which makes a purely Canadian department responsible only to an officer residing in London, some 3,300 miles off, and who has ever appeared to be totally uninfluenced by "the well understood wishes" of the Canadian people?

Let us however guard ourselves against being misapprehended. Let it be clearly understood that we are attacking by these strictures, not Mr. Stayner, for whom we entertain the highest respect, but that faulty system which has secured him so long in the enjoyment of emoluments which the country has repeatedly condemned. We repeat, it is the system which maintains such an abuse and not the individual who is lucky enough to profit from it, against which our strictures are directed.

The system is faulty in every respect in which it can be viewed. The first officer, as we have seen, is overpaid to an extent that justifies our harshest animadversion; but on the other hand, it is just as faulty, but in the opposite extreme, towards the humbler officers of the department. The first officer is pampered to a degree which at first sight appears hardly credible; while, on the other hand, the system scarcely affords a decent livelihood to any officer under the rank of a Post Master in a leading city. We

may cite a case in illustration of this that happened but a short time since in this city.

A most deserving officer in the Department, the only one in fact who for years past has held his situation and given satisfaction to the public, has recently had presented to him a purse of some £200 or more, which was spontaneously contributed by our mercantile fellow-citizens as a token of esteem for his marked civility on the one hand, and of censure to the head of the department for misplaced economy on the other. Such a commentary on the abuses of the Department is as strong a practical censure as the public could administer, and we trust it will not be without wholesome effects. In a word, let the enormous emoluments of the Provincial head of the Department, the Deputy Post Master General, be cut down to £1000 a year, as has been once if not oftener recommended by our Local Legislature, and let the surplus be cut up in order to increase the salaries of the humbler officers whose station in society, in a pecuniary sense, should be at least respectable.

The next point we shall advert to is, whether the department should remain as it is now a strictly imperial department, or whether, on the contrary, it would not be more advisable to make it strictly local and subject accordingly to the supervision and control of our local legislature. We, for our own parts, incline strongly to the latter opinion, although we are prepared to admit that there is much to be said in favor of its remaining part and parcel, as it is now, of the Imperial Department in Saint Martin's-le-Grand. But, still, after a careful review of all that can be said on both sides of the question we incline to be as we have already said, in favor of its being made a strictly local institution, and subject to the control of our local legislature alone.

If, however, it remain an imperial department, it shall do so, with our consent on one condition alone, and that is, that we be allowed to enjoy, along with our fellow subjects in the mother country, the full benefit of the penny system of postage. Nothing less than that, we conceive, should induce this country to consent to its remaining an imperial department; and not even that should be considered a sufficient concession unless it be accompanied with the understanding that new offices will be opened wherever and whenever they may be asked for by competent local authority. We advocate along with the Herald, (who we believe may claim the honor of having been the first who advanced this doctrine) the introduction in this colony of the penny system of postage. But we go a step further than our contemporary. We would wish the system applied to newspapers as well as letters, while we believe our contemporary seemed desirous of limiting it to letters alone. For the sake, however, of unity and uniformity we dare say, he would agree with us that it would be as well to have the whole system introduced in all its integrity.

Perhaps, also, in the course of time we might be inclined to ask for the application of the penny system to the steam-packet service as well as the land service. This idea may perhaps startle some of our readers, but stranger things, broached only a few years since, have already been carried into practice with the most unbounded success. Take the penny system itself, as applied to the United Kingdom, for an example. When that idea was first broached it was considered impracticable. But nevertheless it was tried and has succeeded almost beyond belief. And why should the same principle not be applied to the steam-packet service with success? It is now a settled maxim in the public mind in the mother country, that the Post Office should not be looked upon as a source of revenue, but simply as a great public convenience—and hence we contend that as it now affords a surplus, that surplus should be employed to extend the benefits of the penny system to all the colonies, as well as to the packet service, if it be found sufficient for that purpose; and in the meantime it might be tried on a limited scale. For instance, let it be tried this very year in Canada, or in all the British American Colonies; and if there still be a surplus of revenue left, let it then be applied to other colonies; and finally, if a surplus still continues, let the system be made complete by applying to the steam-packet service likewise.

We shall return to this subject in our next.