

1stly, That as Canada now enjoys but a remnant of protection in England, she should be released from any restrictions for the benefit of the British ship-owner.

2ndly, That without the free navigation of the St. Lawrence, and a repeal of the navigation laws, so far as the British colonies are concerned, there is reason to apprehend that New York will become the great emporium of the trade of Canada, and that thus a unity of interests, commercial and political, will be created with the United States.

3rdly, That in such an event, the repeal of those laws cannot materially injure the British ship-owner; the question simply being whether the competition for the trade shall take place in the harbours of the United States or in the river St. Lawrence.

Lastly, that the repeal of these laws will have a tendency to perpetuate, and not to destroy the relations that exist betwixt Canada and the mother country.

Wherefore your memorialists humbly pray, that your Honourable House will be pleased to take the subject into your favourable consideration, and to grant such relief in the premises as in your wisdom may seem meet.

And your memorialists as in duty bound will ever pray.

PETER MCGILL, President of the Montreal Board of Trade.

Frederick A. Willson, Secretary,
Montreal, 26th May, 1848.

To the Honourable The LORDS SPIRITUAL and TEMPORAL of GREAT BRITAIN and IRELAND,
in Parliament assembled.

The Memorial of the Montreal Board of Trade,

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

THAT the British Navigation Laws, and the laws affecting the navigation of the St. Lawrence are, under the system of free trade adopted by the Imperial Government, felt to be peculiarly burdensome and detrimental to the interests of this Colony.

That during the continuance of the former colonial system, when the products of Canada were largely protected in the markets of Great Britain, the privileges conceded by the navigation laws to the shipping interest were not made a subject of complaint by the colonists, but now that the Imperial Government seem to regard the former colonial system as detrimental to the general interests of the empire, and to have resolved on a course of commercial policy whereby a very small measure of protection is left to the colony, justice would seem to require that the restrictions imposed by these laws should at once be removed.

That the general effect of these laws has undoubtedly been to enhance the cost of freight on the imports and exports of Canada; to fetter the intercolonial and foreign trade; and to restrain the traffic on the St. Lawrence—disadvantages, however, which were fully compensated under the former fostering commercial policy of England.

That in consequence of the change in that policy the longer duration of these laws will jeopardize the trade of the St. Lawrence, and render it very doubtful whether that river will continue to be the great highway for the commerce of Canada; and, should this apprehension be realized, it is manifest to your memorialists that a commercial union of a most intimate character will be produced between the United States and this colony, the inevitable result of which would be to dissolve the ties which connect her with the mother country, a consummation your memorialists would deeply deplore.

That this apprehension of the diversion of the trade from the St. Lawrence is not based on vague and unsubstantial grounds will abundantly appear from the following considerations:—For a considerable time past New York has been gradually attracting Canadian commerce. The favourable position of that city as a shipping port, and the comparatively low rates of freights and insurance which there prevail on shipments to England, give her a great advantage over the ports of the St. Lawrence; and should the Bill now before Congress become law, which provides for the repeal of the duties on Canadian produce, it can hardly be doubted that unless the most decisive measures be taken to render the St. Lawrence route the cheaper and more desirable of the two, the great bulk of the exports of Canada will find their way *via* Oswego and Buffalo, to New York, for shipment to Great Britain; on the other hand, the removal of the Canadian differential duties, or, in other words, the equalization of duties on goods, whether imported by sea, or across the frontier from the United States, consequent on the change in the commercial policy of England, has had the effect of driving the Canadian merchant to New York for his purchases of commodities, instead of to Montreal, whither it has been his practice heretofore to resort; this effect being accelerated and increased by the judicious legislation of the American Congress, which is leaving no stone unturned to attract and secure so rich a prize as the commerce of Canada.

That on these, and other grounds, your memorialists have no hesitation in expressing it as their decided conviction that unless the protective system be again resorted to, or some other remedial measures be devised, New York must inevitably become the great emporium of Canadian business, and as a certain consequence that the traffic of the St. Lawrence will be, to a great extent, destroyed.

That amongst the most prominent of these remedial measures would appear to your memorialists to be, the throwing open the St. Lawrence to the flags of all nations, and the repealing of those sections of the British Navigation Act which apply to the British possessions.

That a salutary competition would be thereby insured on its waters; sea-going freights would be reduced to the level of such freights at New York, making allowance for the differ-