

# THE BRITISH COLUMBIA COMMERCIAL JOURNAL

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D. M. CARLEY . . . . . EDITOR-IN-CHIEF.  
L. G. HENDERSON . . . . . BUSINESS MANAGER.  
Office No. 77 Johnson Street.

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## THE TARIFF AND B. C.

It will be remembered that, in the course of his long advocacy of the claims of Ireland, the great Irish Liberator, Daniel O'Connell, declared that the proper course for the people to pursue was to "agitate" and "agitate!" He was no advocate of dynamite or of agrarian outrage, and, to our mind, had his counsels been followed, the Irish problem would have been settled before this without many of those terrible records which have, since his time, been entered on the pages of history. We, in British Columbia, as members of the Canadian confederation, have grievances which ought to be redressed.

We don't talk dynamite, nor do we advocate secession; but we do say that our disabilities cry aloud for redress. Ours is, perhaps, the only province against which the Canadian tariff operates inimically—we might almost say disastrously. We are an importing rather than a producing community—that is as concerns the ordinary necessities of life. Everything we wear and a large proportion of what we eat is the product of other countries. Some of these can be had in the other provinces, but then the cost to us is, owing to the distance they have to be brought, much heavier than to the sister communities. Yet, on the top of this, and all for the benefit of what is termed Canadian industry, we are required to pay a heavy customs tax, whose outlay in no way benefits us. Indeed, we are grudging the few dollars that are allowed to come this way, and still the same levies are made without a moment's relaxation.

No one at Ottawa appears inclined to consider that our position is a peculiar and special one. The protection of native industries is of no avail in our case. In fact, it has the effect of augmenting our burdens, the consequence being that per head of population we are far and away the heaviest contributors to the customs revenue. We are not aware whether the members of the cabinet, who have under taken to investigate the tariff question, propose to come this way. They have visited Montreal and Toronto and taken the sense of the people there, especially from the point of view of the manufacturer. Will they come here and secure the opinions of an almost exclusively consuming community? That is what they ought to do. Cabinet ministers and Government officials flight as shy as possible of this province. They have no idea, we are convinced, of the peculiarities of our position; and they do not want to go into

the matter more than they are forced. While they may not absolutely refuse to listen to what British Columbia members may say in Parliament and in the offices of the different departments, they do nothing for us in this direction; but if it is proposed to readjust the tariff, the condition of things here must, in all fairness, and, we say, in all honesty, be taken into consideration.

The Board of Trade, being now in possession of most commodious and convenient quarters, ought to have and continue to have formal and informal discussions on this tariff question, and from them might were they only persistent—go forth a voice that would compel the people at Ottawa to hear and pay some attention to our complaints. The Board of Trade might be made much more efficient and effective than it now is, if its members met more frequently, both formally and informally, to discuss among other topics the really live question of the Dominion tariff as it affects British Columbia. In any case, that tariff has to be adjusted so as not to oppress us as it now does. We are not the milch cow on which the older provinces must continue to draw without stint and at the same time give us nothing in return.

## THE SEALING QUESTION.

There are several features of the sealing controversy which have lately been brought to the front, and as they are of special interest here it may be well to refer to them in detail. A few days since it was announced that the indemnity for the British Columbia sealers had been or was to be at once forwarded to Collector of Customs Milne, of Victoria, for distribution. We have not yet heard of its arrival nor of any special endeavor having been made to secure the further information conditional on its distribution. We have no fancy for these delays, particularly when it is apparent that they are to a greater or less extent due to official red tapeism. Ordinary business men cannot afford delays in the transaction of their affairs, and the hindrances frequently cast in their way by public officials for no other reason than that of an unserviceable routine, are such as cannot be tolerated with any degree of equanimity. All this involves loss and in the case of the sealers it has kept out of their possession moneys which should long ago have been in their hands to put out to the best advantage.

Then again, it may be remarked that Russia seems to have given up her supreme sovereignty of the seas, otherwise an arrangement would not have been made between her and Great Britain by which sealing is prohibited within ten miles of the Russian coast and within thirty miles of the Robbin Islands—the Russian rookeries. This must be felt to be rather hard on the United States, who, last year, as has previously been stated, worked up Captain de Levron, of Zabiaka fame, to seize a number of sealing schooners and imprison their captains and crews. Our neighbors, no doubt, thought it a great coup when, by means of emissaries wearing their naval uniform and attached to some of their police vessels, they furnished

the light-headed captain with charts and other information, and, as was charged, induced him to follow the course which he did. His action and that of the American authorities who utilized him as their tool needs but little further condemnation than that which is deducible from the agreement to which we have just referred, which, if support were previously wanting for claims for damages on the part of the aggrieved British subjects, is found in that very agreement and practical admission of wrong doing.

Here it may be well to again remark upon the inconvenient time at which it has been found convenient for Great Britain and the parties of the other part to determine upon the limits outside of which sealing may be safely prosecuted. The original *modus vivendi* was proclaimed long after the B. C. sealers had left for the North and were difficult, if not impossible, to reach. Its renewal was announced at a period of the year which was quite as inconvenient, and now this last convention comes at a time when all the sealers have long since been away and can only, as it were, be reached by accident. The officer commanding the Navy at Esquimalt has been notified of this agreement within the last three or four days, but he is not likely to reach Russian waters, nor are the other vessels belonging to the North Pacific squadron, while the notification which was sent on Monday to the British consuls in Japan may—but most probably will not—secure the due warning of the sealers.

Then another point which has recently arisen and is worthy of notice is the manifest abandonment before the Court of Arbitration of some of the American pretensions and the endeavor to repudiate liability for damages in the event of an adverse decision being rendered. The proceedings of the last two days of the arbitration have amply justified the apprehension expressed in these columns that, were the findings adverse to the United States, the latter would endeavor to wriggle out of all responsibility. What do we now find? That when Lord Hannen made a pointed observation, counsel for the Americans announced that after the arbitrators had settled the facts of the seizures the further questions of liability and the amount of damages must be settled by the two Governments.

Very naturally Lord Hannen interposed "then the whole arbitration is useless," American arbitrator Morgan replying that "it would be impossible even for the President of the United States to give guarantees regarding the result of further negotiations, as when such negotiations are completed they must be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the Senate in their favor." The American report from which the lines quoted are taken adds "This terminated the incident which evidently left a deep impression on all concerned." No doubt it did. The Americans were forced to show their hand, and the Board of Arbitrators must fully realize how they have been forced to take leading parts in a solemn farce intended by the Yankees to outwit the British.