

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, FEBRUARY 5, 1894.

TRADE WITH THE CONTINENT.

The National Board of Trade of the United States, which has been in session at Washington recently, took up the question of trade relationship with Canada. The board adopted a resolution to memorialize Congress to take such action in connection with the new tariff enactments as will secure the largest possible extent of trade with the continent. The board seems to entertain a somewhat peculiar idea as to the best plan of obtaining extended trade with Canada. A suggestion was adopted to the effect that the new tariff act shall not become operative, so far as Canada is concerned, except by proclamation of the President, issued only under the following conditions:

"When it is duly certified to the President of the United States that the Government of the Dominion of Canada has declared a desire to enter into such commercial agreements with the United States as will result in a material reduction of the duties now existing against the admission into Canada of the products and manufactures of the United States, he shall appoint three commissioners to meet those who may be designated to represent the Government of Canada, to consider the most desirable manner in which to accomplish a larger exchange of the products and manufactures of the two countries. If the results of the deliberations of these commissioners should be an agreement and a report satisfactory to the Secretary of the Treasury that by a material reduction of duties or by the putting upon the free list of the Canadian tariff a list of manufactures and products of the United States which, in his opinion, would afford an equal advantage to the United States, as the operation of this bill would afford to Canada, and he should so report to the President, and on being furnished by an undertaking by the Canadian Government that these recommendations will be recommended to the Parliament of Canada for enactment, the President shall then issue his proclamation making this act operative, without any reservation in relation to Canadian importations. It shall be the further duty of the commissioners so appointed to ascertain upon what terms the entire freedom of commercial intercourse between the two countries can best be secured, and said commission shall report to the President, who shall lay his report before Congress."

The adoption of this resolution by the National Board of Trade of the United States (supposedly a body composed of business men) is somewhat of a surprise. The idea evidently is that the new measure of tariff revision now before Congress will be of considerable benefit to Canada, by increasing our market in the United States, and that something should be exacted from Canada before the act is endorsed. It would certainly look like a small thing for Congress to pass a tariff reform measure which would apply to all the world but their nearest neighbor. There is no probability, however, that Congress will endorse this narrow view of the case. Canada is already by far the best customer of the Republic, and our tariff is more favorably to the United States than their tariff is to us. THE COMMERCIAL has pointed out more than once that the average rate of duty

which we collect on imports from Great Britain, is considerably higher than the average duty collected on imports from the United States. The idea no doubt still prevails in the United States, as would appear from the resolution of the National Board of Trade, that Canada is commercially dependent upon the republic, and that consequently important concessions could be squeezed from us by temporarily withholding the operation of the revised tariff bill, so far as this country is concerned.

The resolution of the National Board of Trade regarding the withholding of the operation of the new tariff act so far as Canada is concerned, smacks strongly of the Blaine reciprocity features of the McKinley bill, which provided for retaliatory tariff measures against certain countries, under certain circumstances. The Democratic administration has condemned strongly these features of the McKinley bill, and the administration cannot adopt a measure precisely the same in principle toward Canada without greatly stultifying itself. We therefore believe that the resolution of the National Board will not meet with a response from Congress.

The resolution of the Board, however, if acted upon, would we believe have the effect of hindering rather than promoting trade between the two countries. In the first place it would resemble coercion, and as a people we do not like that kind of medicine. We must have the liberty of managing our own tariff affairs. This is a principle which must not for a moment be overlooked. We are bent upon revising our own tariff at the present time, and any advantages which Canada may derive from the proposed new tariff measure in the United States, will undoubtedly be reciprocated. To withhold any reductions in the United States tariff from Canada, while applying them to other countries, would not appear to be a wise way to encourage greater freedom of trade between the two countries. If the members of the National Board of Trade will take the trouble to study up the figures, they will see that our tariff is much more liberal than theirs. This fact they do not appear to be aware of, or they would not urge the adoption of a policy designed to squeeze concessions from us, in return for any advantages we may derive from their new tariff measure. Anyway, the products which we have to sell to the United States are mostly raw materials, and the republic will gain quite as much proportionately as we do in being able to secure their raw materials so cheaply and conveniently. The United States tariff is not being revised for the benefit of Canada; but for the people of the United States.

The National Board of Trade of the United States seems also to entertain some lingering ideas in favor of commercial union for the continent, as will be seen from the closing words of the resolution regarding Canada and the new tariff, which, however, we will pass over for the present without comment.

The Dominion finance minister has received a memorial from a representative of the Ontario milling interests, urging that the duty upon flour be continued at the present rate, seventy-five cents per barrel.

CIVIC GOVERNMENT.

There is no public question of greater importance than that of civic government. It is a thoroughly recognized, though lamentable fact, that all over this continent municipal government is carried on in a shamefully loose and unsatisfactory way. This is true of the larger towns and cities, as well as of villages and rural municipalities. Huge frauds have frequently been perpetrated by civic officials in United States cities, and it is doubtful if the situation in Canada is much better. Embezzling, swindling and jobbery has been a feature of municipal government in many places. Even where direct robbery has not been perpetrated, large sums have been squandered in nearly all cities, through incompetence, looseness and neglect. It is impossible to get the best men to take hold of the municipal government under the system which prevails in this country and in the United States; and really when we look the situation squarely in the face, and consider the plan of civic government generally adopted, we cannot but wonder at the unsatisfactory results everywhere apparent. We could not expect men busy with affairs of commerce, and men of high talent, to devote their time to civic government, under the plan usually followed of conducting municipal affairs. Any large mercantile, industrial or financial concern, conducted in the same loose, hap-hazard way in which our cities are managed, would soon collapse. Radical reforms are needed. A movement to reform the system of civic government should be conducted on a basis that will result in drawing men of ability to the head of affairs. The attainment of this result should be kept constantly in view in undertaking any changes in our municipal system.

The question of civic government has assumed such recognized importance in the United States, that a national convention has been held at Philadelphia to consider the whole subject. The report of the convention will no doubt form interesting reading when it comes to hand in extended form. At present only meagre telegraphic references to the convention have been published. One despatch states that before adjourning the conference placed itself on record on the question of separating municipal politics from national politics, by adopting the following resolution: "Resolved, that in the opinion of this conference, it is vital to the attainment of good municipal government that national politics should be divorced from city elections and the administration of city affairs." This is certainly a sound statement, though it is one which it is difficult to get men to act upon in many cities. It was reported a short time ago that, in a speech at Toronto, a federal minister advised the people of that city to introduce national party politics into their municipal affairs, and that he was hooted for the suggestion, and very properly so. Party politics are not introduced into municipal elections so much in Canada as in the republic, and to that extent we are ahead of the United States, though we have much reason also to strive for reforms in our system of civic government.