

Interprovincial Trade and Constitutional Rights

No. 6.

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE.

The commercial object of Confederation was the development of interprovincial trade. Under the strangling hand of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 that trade had fallen in 1866, when the treaty was abrogated by the United States, to \$2,000,000 per year, being less by half a million of dollars than the value of the trade in 1853. Since Confederation our yearly interprovincial trade has gone up by leaps and bounds, until now it is larger than either our export or our import trade, as the appended estimate by Mr. Johnson shows:

Trade of the two central provinces with the outer provinces.	\$150,000,000
Trade of the two central provinces with each other	115,000,000
Trade of the three Maritime provinces with each other ..	30,000,000
Trade of the Western provinces and territories with each other	20,000,000
Total	\$315,000,000
Or say, \$60 per head.	

All of which goes to show that Confederation is attaining its object, and that, as Mr. Johnson points out, it would be "letting out at the bung-hole and pouring in at the spigot to obtain reciprocal trade relations with the United States at the expense of our interprovincial trade."

But what is British Columbia's share in all this interprovincial trade, for which she is paying, as we have seen, a three-fold price? Under a compelling tariff her imports from the Eastern provinces are considerable. But imports will not make a market for her products or make a trade. A trade implies an interchange of products and commodities—an interprovincial give-and-take. With this interchange the interprovincial, next to the home market, is the best market, and, like the quality of mercy, blesteth him that gives and him that takes. The economic value and one of the objects of Confederation is to develop for each province a free market for its products and commodities in the other provinces. What, then, of British Columbia's exports to the other provinces? These consist chiefly of lumber, shingles, fish and fruit, to the Territories and the Eastern provinces, and goods to the Yukon. From a comparison of figures to be found in the reports of the various boards of trade and after allowances of every kind in its favor, this trade does not exceed \$3,000,000.

Thus, British Columbia being 3 per cent. of the whole population, pays 8 per cent. of the price of Confederation, and gets in return 1 per cent. of its trade benefits.

Or, taking all the figures from the statistics for last year, we find that all the provinces contributed to the Dominion the sum of \$36,197,340, of which British Columbia contributed \$2,945,331, or upwards of 8 per cent., and that all the provinces enjoyed the profits on an interprovincial

turn-over of \$315,000,000, the profits on \$3,000,000 of this only, or less than 1 per cent., going to British Columbia.

So that, whether we take the figures of the British Columbia government's case, covering, as they do, the whole period of her union experience, or whether we take the trade and navigation returns for 1905, we find that the other provinces are making from 8 to 9 times as much money out of the Confederation per head of their population as British Columbia is, and, conversely, that British Columbia is paying from 8 to 9 times as much for the trade benefits of Confederation as, compared with the other provinces, she ought to pay.

CONFEDERATION SENTIMENT.

These figures are in themselves eloquent of the incidences of a treaty with the Dominion entered into without full knowledge of the consequences on either side. They do not, however, constitute an arraignment of Confederation, because that has accomplished an ideal more important from a national point of view than the material disadvantages under which we labor as a province. Confederation has cemented a series of isolated communities stretching across the continent of North America and made Canada into a nation of which we, as British Columbians share a common pride. Confederation contributed to British Columbia, with the other provinces, many advantages, which it would not otherwise have possessed. It lifted the province out of the slough of despond at a time when its energies were stagnant and further development impracticable with the resources available. It opened up the country to a view of its own possibilities. Confederation has done all the parts of a great confederation, much; but for the advantages which came with it British Columbia paid a high price. The Dominion, fearful of the consequences of securing an asset, the value of which was doubtful, drove a hard bargain, and British Columbia, powerless to impose better terms, and to a large extent in darkness as to the future, accepted the terms offered with hopes for the best. No one was wise enough—how, indeed, could he have been—to foresee the result of the operations of the relations with the Federal government. Confederation was an experiment—a leap in the dark. It was the only alternative in sight, and from a national point of view—even from a provincial standpoint—no one regrets it.

The arrangement was entered into with confidence in the good faith of the Dominion, that if inequalities, injustices, or inequitable results arose out of it, these would be adjusted, as, indeed, they should be. The Federal compact is based primarily on the good not only of the whole, but of each component part. It is, therefore, incumbent upon the Dominion authorities to inquire into our conditions and the burdens and grievances incidental to our relations with Ottawa, and, in order