

# The Commercial

WINNIPEG, JANUARY 30, 1893.

## TARIFF MODIFICATIONS.

The general belief is that there will be some attempt to modify the tariff at the coming session of Parliament, by reducing duties upon some imports. There is certainly a growing public sentiment in favor of lower duties. Many who have supported the National Policy, as the high tariff policy is called, have of late come out in favor of a modification of the tariff in many respects. This has got to come sooner or later, and we cannot start too soon. We cannot jump from a high tariff policy to free trade at once. The change must be made carefully and gradually. The most uncompromising free traders recognize this. Therefore it is the more necessary that we should start at once in the work of reform, first by correcting the more glaring abuses of the present system. The public is ready for the adoption of a systematic and regular movement toward tariff reform. This is shown by the utterances of leading men who have on general principles supported the Conservative party. The Government press has of late also been more outspoken in intimating a desire for tariff modifications. The formation of trusts and combines in many lines of manufacture has also aroused many business men to demand a modification of the tariff. We have heard it advocated that the duty should at once be removed from any article or class of manufactures in which a combine exists among domestic manufacturers. At any rate, the feeling in favor of tariff modification is growing, and official utterances upon the tariff question have been eagerly watched for, with the hope of learning of a disposition to move in this direction.

What THE COMMERCIAL would like to refer to now, is the special needs of Manitoba and other portions of Western Canada, in regard to the tariff issue. If there is to be any modification of the tariff at the present session of Parliament, it is to be hoped the urgent claims of the west will not be overlooked. THE COMMERCIAL has more than once pointed out that the tariff places an unequal burden upon the West. Whatever benefit the high tariff may be to eastern manufacturing centres, it has no direct benefit to confer upon the West. We have few, if any protected manufacturers here. Our industry is farming, and the farmer is not protected by the tariff. He is the one above all others who has to bear a heavy portion of the burden of tariff taxation, and receives no protection in return. The farmers of Manitoba have to compete with the world. They have to sell largely on an export basis of prices, and the tariff is powerless to protect them, though it increases the cost of many articles which they are obliged to buy in order to carry on their farming operations. As the farmer is not protected by the tariff, a special effort should be made to modify the tariff in his interest.

Another reason why the tariff bears heavily upon the West, is owing to its geographical position. There are high freight rates to add to articles upon which the cost is already in-

creased by the tariff. On this account the West should have special consideration in any movement toward tariff reform. It is to be hoped our representatives at Ottawa will press the interests of the West when the tariff question comes up in Parliament.

## TRADE WITH THE REPUBLIC.

According to a telegraphic report from Ottawa last week Canada imported over \$33,000,000 worth of goods from the United States during the last fiscal year, chiefly manufactures and raw material, and exported to the United States \$39,000,000. This gives the enormous balance of \$14,000,000 in favor of the United States. Our trade with the United States has always been one-sided, the balance being invariably in favor of the republic. This is owing largely to the heavy duties imposed upon Canadian products imported into that country. Notwithstanding the fact that the balance was already in their favor, the present republican administration has taken extreme measures to further reduce imports from Canada. Every article of any importance imported from Canada, was singled out in the McKinley bill and made to bear enormous duties. It is nonsense to say that there was no intention to discriminate against Canada in framing the bill, as some republican politicians have claimed. The bill is there and speaks for itself. But in spite of the enormous duties placed upon everything imported from Canada, the administration has only been able to cut down such imports by about \$2,000,000, as compared with the previous year. This indicates that the people of the United States require much that we have to sell, and while the high duty injures us, it must also tell against the consumers over there.

It is to be hoped that the incoming administration will take a more moderate and liberal view of commercial and other international questions affecting this country and the republic. The policy of the present administration has been to hamper Canada in every way possible. A reversal of this policy will be most acceptable. It is unquestionably true that the encouragement of trade between the two countries, instead of the present policy of hampering it most unreasonably, would be in the best interests of the people on each side of the boundary. Trade between Canada and the United States is capable of vast expansion, to the mutual benefit of each country. A more liberal and enlightened trade policy would also lead to a more friendly disposition in other matters, and tend to general harmony between the two countries. The trade policy of the United States of recent years has been a barbarous policy, and it could not but produce evil consequences. An illiberal, selfish trade policy has found its counterpart in illiberal and selfish displays in other matters. We may look with confidence for a friendly and enlightened policy in all international questions to follow a similar policy in matters of trade and commerce, and only in this way can we look for improved relationship with our southern neighbors. The present narrow, selfish trade policy, forced upon us by the Washington administration, can only produce friction and unfriendliness all round.

## REGULATING THE RAILWAYS.

When the Interstate Commerce Act was first passed in the United States, there was an exceedingly strong feeling against the measure. Gradually, however, public opinion seems to have changed. The measure, from being regarded as an experiment, is now looked upon as a permanent institution, and a valuable one at that. There is of course still some hostility to the law, principally of a local nature in certain districts, but this opposition is not nearly so strong as it was formerly. Under the old order of things, certain cities and districts received special privileges from the railways, at the expense of other sections. Where these abuses have been corrected, the sections deprived of these special privileges will entertain more or less hostility against the measure. The popular voice now, however, seems to recognize the necessity for strict government control over the railways. Instead of urging a repeal of the Interstate Commerce Act, the principle of the measure is generally approved of, with the desire that it be rendered more practical and efficient by the adoption of such amendments as experience may point out are required. The national board of trade of the United States, in session at Washington, has adopted the following resolutions in regard to this act by a unanimous vote:—

*Resolved*, That the National Board of Trade hereby indorse and approve of the objects aimed at under the Inter-State Commerce enactment, with the recommendation that it be maintained in the statutes of the United States in the interest of the commerce of the entire country.

*Resolved*, That the National Board of Trade favor amendment to the law which will accomplish:

1. The giving of proper effect to the findings and orders of the Inter-State Commission;
2. Which will exempt, in conformity with provisions of the Constitution, witnesses from criminal penalties to the end that information as to the violations of the law may be made available in the courts;
3. As will make corporations indictable and subject to exemplary fines for all violations of the law committed by their officers or agents;
4. Such definitions of the terms of the act as may be necessary to bring within its terms all common carriers engaged in inter-state commerce, whether individuals, corporations or lines embracing a diversity of carriers;
5. Enforcement upon common carriers of strict accountability to the owner or consignee for the prompt delivery of property entrusted to the care of such common carriers for transportation by the imposing of a proper demurrage charge for delay beyond a reasonable time in the transportation of such property;
6. Freedom from unreasonable declaration of exemption in contracts for inter-state carriage.

It may therefore be regarded that this enactment, which at first was largely experimental and received a great deal of opposition, it is now regarded as a permanent and useful law. So far as the national board of trade is concerned, it will be observed by the resolutions quoted above, that the desire is to extend the scope of the act and make very strict provision for its enforcement. Clause 5, for instance, in the paragraphs quoted above, is an important one to shippers, as it proposes to make railways accountable for unreasonable delay of goods in transit.

The promoters of the interstate commerce