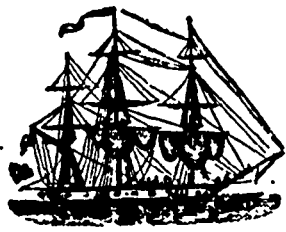


CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



FREE TRADE JOURNAL,
AND WEEKLY COMMERCIAL NEWS.

Vol. I.]

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 23RD JANUARY, 1847.

[No. 39.]

CONTENTS.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1.—Public Meeting—Niagara District. | 7.—Report of the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Rail-Road Company. |
| 2.—Rivalry of Cities.—Quebec & Montreal. | 8.—Copper Mine Speculations. |
| 3.—Free Navigation of the St. Lawrence. | 9.—Miscellaneous Articles. |
| 4.—The Quebec Gazette. | 10.—Intelligence—General and Local. |
| 5.—Tricks of Trade.—Fraud on Merchants. | 11.—The Markets. |
| 6.—What is to be done to secure the Western Trade. | 12.—Advertisements: |

THE CANADIAN ECONOMIST.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 23RD JANUARY, 1847.

PUBLIC MEETING—NIAGARA DISTRICT.

We last week made a passing allusion to the proceedings of a meeting held at Port Robinson, in the Niagara District, on the 7th ultimo, at which the following Petition was adopted:—

“TO THE HONOURABLE THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, IN PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

The Memorial of the Agriculturists in the District of Niagara Humbly Prays:

That your Honourable Body will continue to address Her Majesty's Government, to admit all articles the growth and produce of Canada into the markets of Britain free from duty, as an equivalent for the free admission of the productions of Britain into the markets of Canada.

That you will adopt such measures as will obtain the free admission of the products of Canada into the markets of the United States, for the free admission of their products into the markets of Britain and Canada.

That you will remove existing burdens on Agriculture, by a more equitable distribution of the Public Taxes.

Your Memorialists further pray that your Honourable Body will also repeal all Duties on Imports, as no part thereof are required, or appropriated for the support of the General Government of Great Britain, and remove every restriction on commerce, so soon as the exigencies of the public service will admit; and thereby enable the agriculturists of Canada to realize all the advantages they ought to possess as Colonists of Great Britain.

And, as in duty bound, will ever pray.”

A Report was made at the same meeting, which assigns the reasons on which the above Petition is founded.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to enter into any lengthened discussion of the various propositions of the above Petition, but it would, it appears to us, be a dereliction of duty to let such a document pass unquestioned. Of its paternity we presume there can be no doubt: it bears the impress of the hand of a Member who represents the section of the country where the meeting was held, and may be considered as an embodiment of the views which that gentleman expressed on the floor of the House of Assembly, in a speech in which he entered at great length into the future Ways and Means of the country. We remember that on that occasion there was a vast grouping of figures presented which led to no tangible result:

“A mighty maze, and yet without a plan.”

We are sorry to observe a similar incoherency in the Report presented and adopted at the Niagara meeting; and we cannot but deprecate the conduct of Members of Parliament—whose situation qualifies them to obtain the most ample information—in misleading those who do not possess similar advantages, by propounding political nostrums which they must know can never produce any beneficial result. We would characterize such conduct as nothing but “a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.”

Can any thing be more absurd and impracticable than this plan of this Member of the House of Assembly? In his seat in that Honourable House he votes the estimates of the expenditure of the

Province, amounting in round numbers to £500,000; we certainly hear from his lips an eulogium on the financial condition and management of our neighbours, but no system of retrenchment is proposed. To defray that expenditure, the necessity of which, in his estimation, his vote sufficiently proves, he votes the requisite supply—four fifths of that supply, say upwards of four hundred thousand pounds, being to be derived from imports alone: he then very coolly goes back to the constituency he represents, drafts a Report, and frames a Petition to the Legislature to take off the duty on all Imports! Whether this be done to catch popularity, not forgetting stray votes at the next election, we know not: but we do say that such conduct appears to us highly reprehensible, and were Honourable Members commonly to pursue such an *outré* course, the credit of the province would be irreparably injured.

But since upwards of £400,000 are to be struck from our revenue; how or where is that sum to be replaced? To elucidate this knotty point is quite beneath the genius of our heaven-born financier! He tells us, that Rhode Island, “and every intermediate State up to New York,” does without taxes on imports for their State Governments, and therefore our Government must do the same! All this may be satisfactory to the sages of the Niagara District, and may even in the estimation of the person who drew up the Report, be perfectly conclusive. But we ignorant persons in this uncivilized section of the country, who are not so enamoured of our neighbours over the line as to adopt implicitly every institution which is honoured with their sanction, but who prefer testing every system by its intrinsic merits, must still ask, What is there in the name of taxes on imports which makes it more odious than any other taxes? Our neighbours, whom we suppose the framer of the Niagara Report would consider good authority, do not participate in this horror of Import Duties, since the General Government imposes them with no unsparing hand; and we will just whisper in the ear of our friend a very sufficient reason why the State Governments do not commit a similar enormity: THE CONSTITUTION FORBIDS IT. In Article I, sec. 10, clause 2, the restriction will be found in these terms: “No State shall, without the consent of the Congress, lay any imposts or duties on imports or exports, except what may be absolutely necessary for executing its inspection laws; and the nett produce of all duties and imposts laid by any State on imports or exports, shall be for the use of the Treasury of the United States; and all such laws shall be subject to the revision and control of the Congress.”

Oh! but, says the Niagara Report, Free Trade and import duties are inconsistent! The absurdity of this assertion has been so often refuted, that we wonder at its reiteration. When we speak of freedom of trade, we do so in the same sense as we speak of that freedom which we ordinarily designate civil liberty: both are liable to be so far restrained by laws as is necessary and expedient for the general advantage of the public; and such a restraint is an infringement of liberty, only when applied to give one individual, or one class of individuals, a preference over others.

But we think we see a misty shadowing forth of some sources, from which, at some distant period of time, we are to derive the supplies to keep our Government machine in motion; since the Report asks, “Are not the internal resources of Canada, with her millions of acres of Public Lands, and Timber Duties, far greater than in any one of those States; are not her gigantic water communications equal to theirs, and capable of successful competition?” We are aware that the reputed framer of this Report has large views of the future revenue to be derived from our Public Works, and on this single point we are inclined to agree with him: but it must be some years before we can rely on any considerable revenue from such a source, and that even is contingent on our diverting a large amount of the produce from the Erie Canal to our waters, which we shall not effect if we impose heavy tolls. We think the framer of the Report would have done well to remember Mrs. GLASS' maxim, “First catch your hare, then cook it.”

We have already occupied too much of our paper with this visionary production, and shall only further remark, of the application to Britain, that it is unnecessary, since she has already taken all taxes off Canada produce, merely reserving nominal duties for statistical purposes; and, of the application to the United States, that it would be unavailing.