

opinion in favor of a scheme that the English Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade have been urging for years, and which is a Minister for Commerce and Agriculture in addition to the President of the Board of Trade, which is the title of the Minister specially charged with commercial questions. Nothing is more improbable than the creation of a new Imperial department, such as is contemplated by the resolution. We are not of opinion that it is desirable in the interest of the Colonies that there should be any Imperial interference with the action of our Parliament and Government, but if a case could be made out, there would be no difficulty whatever in confiding to the existing Board of Trade the discharge of any new duties that it might be desirable to impose on it.

The resolutions which have emanated from the conference have fully convinced us that this projected association would be likely to interfere in matters which are properly and necessarily under the control of the Parliament and Government of Canada. Even in days long since gone by, when there was necessarily considerable delay in communicating with the Imperial Government, such an association as that contemplated would not have been tolerated, and still less will it be so when our Government is able to give its advice in cases of emergency, not only from day to day, but from hour to hour. If it should be desirable to obtain any information from the other dependencies of the Empire, the Secretary of State for the Colonies is an infinitely better medium of communication than such a "Colonial Union" as is contemplated by the self-appointed delegates, who have rashly committed themselves to views which we feel assured will never be sanctioned by the Parliament of Canada.

#### CANAL TOLLS.

We have noticed with satisfaction that an Order in Council has been passed reducing the canal tolls, if not to the extent originally recommended by the Board of Trade, yet sufficiently to give an impetus to the St. Lawrence trade without materially affecting the canal revenue. We should have imagined that the policy of the Government would have given universal satisfaction, especially in the Province of Ontario, which is more interested than Quebec in the inland carrying trade. For a long time past the principle of exempting freight bound eastward and westward from double tolls in the Government canals has been adopted in regard to certain leading articles, such as grain and flour, coal and iron, and the principal change

made by the late Order in Council is to extend the principle to goods generally. The movement in favor of the reduction of tolls originated in Montreal in consequence of the removal by the Legislature of the State of New York of the tolls on all westward-bound freight on the Erie Canal. This was a direct attack on the St. Lawrence trade, and there was a general opinion among business men in Montreal, which was fully shared by those in Ontario who are interested in the carrying trade, that the Canadian Government ought to follow the example of our neighbors, and abolish all tolls on western-bound traffic. This, however, was a proposition to which the Government felt unable to agree, as it would have involved a serious loss of revenue. The Order in Council recently passed has, we have reason to believe, been the result of very careful investigation into the probable effect of the change, and if there should be an increase of traffic to the extent which is anticipated, the loss of revenue will be trifling, if indeed there be any. We observe that it is estimated by a contemporary at three thousand dollars, but if it should be double that amount, it would be infinitely better to make the sacrifice than to run the risk of diverting our inland traffic from the St. Lawrence to the State of New York. The new Order in Council provides as follows:

1st. That freight westward, bound from Montreal to Lake Erie, shall pay existing rates of toll on the St. Lawrence and pass free through the Welland. 2nd. That freight eastward, bound between Lake Erie and Montreal, shall pay existing rates of toll on the Welland Canal and pass free through the St. Lawrence Canal. 3rd. That freight consigned to any port west of the St. Lawrence canals may be re-shipped from said port and pass through the Welland Canal free of charge. 4th. That articles coming under class four shall, if in transit westward, pay twenty cents per ton for passage through the St. Lawrence canals, and be passed free through the Welland. If passing eastward they shall pay twenty cents per ton for passage through the Welland Canal and be passed free through the St. Lawrence. It may be mentioned that this class four is under the former tariff described as "all other articles not enumerated," and the tolls on the Welland Canal were forty cents, so that this is a reduction of the tolls to one-half. 5th. That goods not otherwise provided for under class three and four except coal, shall, if using the Welland Canal only in transit westward, pay fifteen cents per ton. Coal is to pay as at present twenty cents passing through the Welland Canal either way. 6th. Rye is to be charged the same as other grain. It is expected that the reductions thus made will be fully compensated for by the increased traffic through the canals resulting from the increased transportation business *via* the St. Lawrence for point west of the Welland Canal, and that therefore, the revenue will not in any way suffer as the result of these changes.

#### BOARD OF TRADE RETURNS.

An interesting table of the Board of Trade returns has been published in England, shewing the progress or decline in

manufactured exports and imports for the last twelve years, from 1869 to 1880, indicating a considerable increase in the the colonial trade, and decrease in the foreign trade. The averages are taken for periods of three years, 1869 to 1871, 1872 to 1874, 1875 to 1877, and 1878 to 1880. We shall give the exports to Continental Europe and the Colonies, which are divided into India and Ceylon, Australasia, British North America and British Possessions unenumerated:

CONTINENTAL EUROPE.			
1869-71	1872-74	1875-77	1878-80
£58,315,388	72,763,386	57,964,221	52,912,411
COLONIES GENERALLY.			
£33,321,689	43,624,101	45,232,856	44,948,061
CANADA SEPARATE.			
£4,173,599	6,052,190	5,610,622	4,413,560
UNITED STATES.			
£22,136,785	24,764,547	13,053,034	15,919,437

It is interesting to compare the exports to the United States and Canada in the various classes of goods, bearing in mind that the population of the latter is about one-twelfth that of the former. In wools the exports to the United States in the years 1878-80 were £566,863, and to Canada £488,393. In silk manufactures, the United States took £458,295, Canada £75,226. In cottons, the United States took £1,350,893, and Canada £628,921. In linens, the United States took £2,326,755, and Canada £441,595. The largest amount of any article shipped to the United States in 1880 was £3,374,010 in tin plates, and the next, £2,733,448 in linens, £2,278,916 in pig iron, £1,526,092 in railroad iron, and these four articles come to nearly one-half of the total exports to the United States from Great Britain. The exports to Canada in 1880 were in excess of 1878 and 1879, and also of 1869 and 1870, but less than in the intervening years of inflation. The exports to India have gone on steadily increasing, and are now almost thirty millions, nearly twenty-three millions of which consist of cotton yarn and manufactures. On the whole, the statistics may be considered satisfactory as regards the relative trade between the mother country and her dependencies as compared with that with foreigners.

#### THE FIRE INSURANCE ASSOCIATION.

The first general annual meeting of the shareholders of the Fire Insurance Association was held in London, England, on the 7th instant, and the figures placed before the meeting, although representing only the business of six months, were certainly such as to satisfy the most exacting. The balance sheet of the company shows a paid-up capital of \$1,000,000 practically,