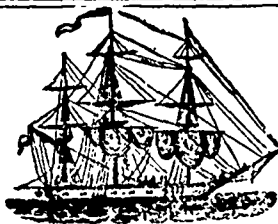


CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



FREE TRADE JOURNAL, AND WEEKLY COMMERCIAL NEWS.

Vol. I.]

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 8TH AUGUST, 1846.

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THE CANADIAN ECONOMIST.

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 8TH AUGUST, 1846.

PROGRESS OF PUBLIC OPINION.

Since entering on our career as public journalists, we have on all occasions endeavoured to rouse the public mind from its apparent state of torpidity; nor have our efforts, we rejoice to say, been altogether futile. If we have received little support in quarters where we had reason to expect the most cordial co-operation,—if our exertions in the cause we have undertaken have been treated with derision by those *soi-disant* leaders of public opinion who deem their peculiar province as public instructors to have been invaded by us,—we have not been discouraged by the lukewarm assistance of the one or the fiery opposition of the other. Deeply impressed with the importance and justice of the principle which we advocate,—relying on reason alone for their support,—seeking no selfish or sectional aggrandizement,—owning no party but our country,—we have persevered through good report and evil report, and will continue to do so until the standard of Free Trade shall surmount that of Protection.

We have said that we had reason to rejoice at the success of our endeavours. Every post brings us from some quarter or other the strongest expressions of approbation of our labours in the good cause. Amongst these pleasing acknowledgments of our services, there are none which we value more than those which our French Canadian fellow-subjects have so freely and so handsomely tendered us. We have, since Free Trade has formed so prominent a subject of discussion, ever looked forward to it as only possible to be attained by the united exertions of both races. Nay, more, we have ventured to indulge the hope that this unanimity will not terminate with the attainment of this one object, but will manifest itself on other great national questions, and long continue to bind as by a chain all classes of the community. Such a consummation is indeed devoutly to be wished, and would form an ample equivalent for all the evils and inconveniences which we may suffer from the sudden change in our commercial system.

Entertaining these sentiments, it was with peculiar gratification that we perused the very able articles in *La Merve* of the 27th ult. and *La Revue Canadienne* of the 31st ult. We cordially welcome these papers as fellow-labourers with us for commercial freedom, and we thank them for the circulation amongst their countrymen which, through the medium of their translation, they have given to the First Report of the Committee of the Free Trade Association.

The articles to which we have just alluded contrast powerfully both in style and matter with those of such of the English journals of this city as deigned to notice that Report. We except, of course, from this censure the *Pilot*, which has on numerous occasions, in articles characterized by the highest ability, rendered most essential service to the Free Trade movement. The *Times* informs its readers that the Report contains “nothing new,” and modestly hints

that it merely “illustrates” what he has said, no doubt much better, “a short time ago.” The *Gazette*,

“Willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike;
Just hunts a fault, and hesitates dislike.”

With a grave Burleigh-like shake of the head, the editor informs his readers that the concession of the Free Navigation of the St. Lawrence would involve many “important political consequences,” and must be demanded not by “a few individuals, however respectable,” but by “the Province as represented by the Legislature.”

We perfectly agree with the editor of the *Gazette* that the Provincial Legislature must be called on to urge on the Home Government to remove all restrictions on our commerce; but this does not supersede the exercise of private judgment, and the right of all classes of Her Majesty’s subjects making their petitions heard at the foot of her throne: nor will the Free Trade Association be deterred by any such innuendoes as those thrown out by the *Gazette* from exercising that right. If they have taken the initiative in this matter, it is because they beheld the Government, the constituted authorities, nay the press itself, supine and apparently indifferent to the critical circumstances in which the country is placed. It thus became the duty of the Free Trade Association to incite the public to a definite course of action, and this they have to a certain extent effected, notwithstanding the impediments which the editor of the *Gazette* and gentlemen who, like himself, appear to imagine that no good work can be done except through their instrumentality, would interpose. Let the editor of the *Gazette* (we know not if in this instance he is to be considered as the organ of the Provincial Executive) and others who think with him, see if they can turn the current of public opinion in an opposite direction. We invite them to do their utmost! The word has gone forth; the fiat of the public voice has been pronounced in favor of the cardinal points on which we insist, and we fancy it will require stronger influence and more weighty arguments than have yet been used, before the people of Canada will be contented to continue weighed down under the load imposed upon them by the British Navigation Laws. If the Legislature will do its duty, so much the better; but if not, the public will not be restrained by considerations of precedence from making the voice heard against the iniquity of being compelled to enter on a commercial conflict with their hands tied behind their backs. On this subject we feel too strongly to weigh our words in the courtly scales of official etiquette—we are not disposed to compliment away the rights and interests of a whole people!

We have never attempted to disguise the fact that great opposition is to be expected, on the part of the British Government, to the modification of her Navigation Laws which we so justly claim; but we rejoice to find the all but perfect unanimity of the public on the subject. In the district of Quebec the oracle is still dumb; but in every other part of Eastern Canada and throughout Canada West, if we may judge from the public prints, there is but one opinion, and that in favor of what we urge. Here each race, (witness the organs of the French Canadians,) each party, (see on the one hand the speech of Mr. MOFFATT, at the recent meeting of the subscribers to the Portland Railway; on the other the LETTER to EARL GREY, by a supporter of the ex-Ministers,) unite in calling for the modification of the British Navigation Laws, as the only means by which we can hope to flourish as a commercial country.

The question now is, and to it we earnestly invite the attention and consideration of our readers, how shall we give full efficacy to this remarkable agreement of opinion? The answer appears to us sufficiently plain: we must AGITATE—we must beset the Provincial and the Imperial Legislatures with petitions. The Free Trade Association has taken one step in advance, the Boards of Trade, it is to be hoped, will join in the movement,—every city, every village, every inhabitant, is interested in our success, and all should join to secure its attainment. Public meetings in every locality should be convened, petitions drawn up and numerously signed, and the claims of the whole people should be clearly and forcibly expressed. Against such a manifestation of public opinion we are convinced that the British Government would not contend, but would furnish another instance of their sincere desire to govern this colony “according to the well-understood wants and wishes of its inhabitants.”

We have done our duty as pioneers in this work—it is for the country now to do theirs, never losing sight of the maxim—

“Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera.”