

Tax on Imported Magazines.

The Petition to the Government.

THE following is the petition presented to the Minister of Finance last month anent the question of a tax on imported magazines coming in bulk from the United States

To the Honorable the Minister of Finance.
The Petition of the Undersigned Newsdealers
Humbly Sheweth,—

1. Your petitioners are booksellers and newsdealers carrying on business throughout the Dominion of Canada, and claim to represent the views of the trade in reference to the matters hereinafter set forth.

2. Your petitioners are advised that The Manufacturers' Association have applied to have a duty of 20 per cent. ad valorem imposed on newspapers, magazines and periodicals sent into Canada in bulk by freight or express.

3. Your petitioners would most respectfully submit that any such proposed change would not only prejudicially affect the revenue of the country, be a burden to the reading community, and seriously injure the interests of your petitioners' trade, but would also be of no benefit to the printing and publishing trade of Canada, in whose interest the said application is being made.

4. Your petitioners submit that the preceding allegation is justified for the reasons hereinafter set forth.

REVENUE.

5. The imposition of such a duty on newspapers, magazines and periodicals when brought into Canada by dealers in bulk by freight or otherwise, while permitting the private individual, by direct subscription to the United States publishers and dealers, to receive the same publication free of duty through the mails, would result in the rapid transference of the bulk of this trade from the Canadian dealers to the publishers and dealers in the United States.

6. The Canadian Government would not only receive no revenue from newspapers, magazines and periodicals mailed from the United States to direct subscribers, but would actually sustain a loss by being compelled to carry such publications free of charge through the mails and, in many instances, deliver them by letter carriers from door to door, all of which would be for the benefit of the publishers and dealers in the United States, whereas at present the great bulk of this matter is brought into Canada by freight without expense to the Canadian Government and distributed by the Canadian dealers through the Canadian mails without loss or charge to the Government.

7. The revenue that the Canadian Government might derive from such a duty would, by reason of the transference of the trade from the Canadian dealers to the publishers and dealers in the United States, rapidly diminish, and the loss of revenue occasioned to the Post Office Department, by reason of having to carry this matter, when mailed from the United States, free of charge, as above indicated, could not

possibly be compensated for by any duty that might be collected.

8. If for revenue purposes or other reasons your Government consider it proper to impose a duty, why not impose that duty without discriminating between the Canadian dealers and direct subscribers, so as to apply to such publications whether imported in bulk or by single copies to subscribers direct? In other words, why discriminate against Canadian dealers in favor of the publishers and dealers in the United States?

THE CANADIAN READING PUBLIC.

9. A duty imposed only on copies coming in to dealers in bulk would mean a tax on the poor man's newspaper and magazine, because he is compelled to buy by the single copy. He cannot afford, like his more fortunate neighbor, the rich man, to pay 12 months in advance and get it in free.

10. The reading public generally, by reason of this trade being transferred to the publishers and dealers in the United States, would not have that free opportunity of selecting reading matter they now possess by reason of such publications being spread on the counters of all Canadian dealers throughout the country for their inspection and selection, as is now the case under existing conditions.

11. If the imposition of this duty would result in the printing and publishing of such periodicals in Canada, as claimed by the Manufacturers' Association, which your petitioners do not admit, and disprove, as hereinafter set forth, it would mean a large increase in the cost of publication, and consequently an increase in cost to the public who make use of such publications.

THE CANADIAN DEALERS.

12. Canadian dealers are now supplying large numbers of subscribers with such publications, for which they have, in nearly every case, been paid yearly subscriptions in advance. If such a duty as is now asked for were imposed, it would mean a heavy loss and a great hardship to the Canadian dealers, by reason of the consequent advance of price on the articles they are now under contract to deliver. To minimize that loss they would be compelled to transfer such subscriptions to publishers and dealers in the United States for the balance of the subscription year, which could not fail but work a hardship on the dealers here.

13. The profits derived from the sales of such publications by Canadian dealers are an important factor in their income. The imposition of such a duty as is proposed would deprive them of this trade, and would seriously affect the Canadian dealers' profits from the sale of the articles in themselves, and transfer their profits to the United States publishers and dealers. It would also seriously affect their general sales, by reason of not being able to have on their counters these various publications for sale so as to attract the reading public to their stores and through this medium be enabled to dispose of other commodities.

14. Public libraries, reading rooms and others would be compelled to send their subscriptions to United States publishers and agents, to avoid the increase of costs occasioned by the imposition of the duty. All this business would therefore be lost to Canadian dealers.

THE PRINTING AND PUBLISHING TRADE.

15. The United States publisher has a constituency of 70,000,000 people in his own country, and consequently is enabled to publish correspondingly large editions. The cost of setting, electrotyping and printing, and of production generally, of such publications is reduced to the lowest possible sum by reason of such large editions. The Canadian market, on the other hand, has a population of about 5,000,000 to supply, and would only require in the most popular publications comparatively small editions. If the setting, electrotyping, printing, etc., were done in Canada for such small editions, it would inevitably mean that the selling price here of the Canadian editions would at least be double of that charged for the similar editions in the United States.

16. Where the profits on Canadian editions would be comparatively small, it is not at all likely that the United States publishers would care to assume the responsibility and risk of publishing here. The additional profit that would accrue to the United States publishers by sale through direct subscriptions would more than offset their loss through any falling off in the number of copies sold through the trade.

Your petitioners feel confident that it is not the intention of your Government to inflict such an injustice upon the Canadian trade and the Canadian reader as is asked for by the Manufacturers' Association.

Your petitioners would most respectfully ask that the trade be put upon the same basis as the private individual. The imposition of such a duty would be of no financial benefit to the revenue, inimicable to the interests of the Canadian reading public, injurious to the existing trade carried on by Canadian dealers, and of no advantage to the Canadian publisher and printer.

Your petitioners would therefore most humbly pray.

There were about 150 signatures to the above petition, which is now in the hands of the Minister of Finance. As time was of importance, it was found impossible to reach the trade in the Northwest, but the Toronto firms who signed included Warwick Bros. & Rutter, W. Tyrrel & Co., Bain Book and Stationery Co., Harold A. Wilson & Co., John P. McKenna, Toronto News Co., Winniffrith Bros., H. E. Coles, J. Dobson, J. H. Perrin, F. J. Roy, S. Wallace, H. P. Withers, J. Willis and fully 50 others. In Hamilton, Messrs. R. Duncan & Co., A. C. Turnbull, J. B. Gay, F. C. McIlroy, G. J. McArthur, W. T. Lancefield, J. G. Cloke and others signed. In Ottawa, Messrs. Hope, Jarvis, Thorburn, Ogilvie, etc.; in Montreal, Messrs. Drysdale, Foster Brown, Montreal News Co., Picken, Chapman, Henderson, Renouf, etc.; Messrs. Mallagh, of Brantford, Nelles, of Guelph, and other Western Ontario dealers, as well as representative dealers in Halifax, St. John, Charlottetown, Moncton and Quebec all signed.