

Weekly Colonist

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23RD, 1889.

THE TARIFF.

There has been quite a number of deputations in Ottawa whose business it was to persuade the Finance Minister to make changes in the tariff. They all, of course, had the good of the Dominion in view, but their welfare is to be promoted by extending to each deputation some particular favor. The gentlemen were not selfish, they had no axes to grind at the public expense. They were all disinterested patriots, who took the long journey to Ottawa for the sole purpose of benefiting their fellow citizens. Last year Sir Charles Tupper made the hearts of these patriots sad by announcing at a very early day that he did not intend to make any change in the tariff, and they knew that when Sir Charles once makes up his mind it is not easy to persuade him to change it. That announcement had quite a salutary effect on business. Merchants do not feel easy when they know that about the 1st of March important changes, which will perhaps affect them seriously, may be made in the tariff. The uncertainty has an unpleasant influence upon them, and whether the apprehended changes are made or not, a derangement of their business is certain to take place. One of the great factors in the successful transaction of mercantile business is stability. When a merchant knows that he has nothing to fear from governmental interference, he goes to work with confidence and completes the transactions which, at the time, appear to afford him a fair prospect of profit. But if he has reason to expect that extensive changes will be made in the tariff, he does not feel himself warranted in running any risks. He cannot sell but that the change may affect the very commodity he is dealing in, and that change may be so great as to completely alter the nature of the transaction in which he desires to engage. He does not know where the blow may fall, and he consequently refrains from doing what, if this element of uncertainty were eliminated, might be a successful stroke of business. This annual uncertainty is felt most unpleasantly by all who are engaged in foreign trade, and it is, therefore, the duty of Government, having once revised the tariff, afterwards to make as few changes as possible. We have no means of knowing what influence the numerous deputations have had on the new Minister of Finance. But we do not think that he will be inclined to make any very important changes. He is a prudent man, and will be most likely disposed to let well enough alone. We are confirmed in this belief by the tone of an article which appeared in the Montreal Gazette of the 11th inst. The article begins in the principal commercial city of the Dominion is, we suspect, intended to foreshadow the course which the Government intends to pursue. It says: "Stability of business conditions is regarded on all hands as of the first importance to the continuity of commercial success. This is a fact thoroughly recognized and which the Government should not fail to keep in mind. It was especially evident last year by the reception of the early public intimation that during the current session there would be no changes made in the customs duties. A doubtful element was at once removed from the trade situation, and merchants were able to proceed with their business plans for a year ahead. It would have been well if that intimation had been made to cover the period of the present Parliament at least, instead of the single session. It is not to be pretended that the tariff is perfect, but it might not be disadvantageous to afford, but it is held with strong reason, that all interests being considered, it is better that it should remain permanent in all its essential particulars, rather than that the probability of its annual change should constitute a continuous disturbing element in the commercial situation. The Government could not well make a more satisfactory announcement than that it fully recognizes this principle, which would at once relieve business men of a cause of anxiety, and ministers of the pressure of delegations looking for special consideration. The Gazette would, we think, express these ideas in this way: it were pretty sure that it is the intention of the Government to pursue the course it favors. That journal has not been in the habit of offering the Government advice which it has reason to believe will be disregarded. It is much more probable that it takes this attitude because those who inspire it know that what it modestly gives in the shape of advice is really the determination of the Ministry. Mr. Foster, however, has not seen fit to give the country the assurance which Sir Charles Tupper did last year in the plainest terms. If it is, as we suspect, not his intention to make important changes in the tariff, he would have done well to have followed his experienced predecessor's example."

THE ESTIMATES.

We have received a copy of the Estimates for the fiscal year ending 30th June, 1890. We have not been able to examine them closely, but a hasty look through them reveals the fact that there is to be a slight decrease in the expenditure. The expenditure for the current year was estimated at \$36,739,237, the total for next year is \$35,410,380, being a decrease of \$1,328,857. The greater part of this reduction is in public works chargeable to income, which of itself is a little over a million dollars. The estimate for public buildings has been cut down \$377,000, that for harbor and river improvements has been lessened by \$236,000. There is \$40,000 less to be expended on the telegraphs next year than there has been during the current year, \$40,000 on experimental farms, and \$70,000 on roads and bridges. Some items of expenditure do not appear on this year's estimates because the work for which they were intended to provide have been finished. This has been the case as regards the winter steamer for Prince Edward Island, \$183,000, and the equipment for the new printing bureau, \$165,000. There is an anticipated increase in the expense of operating the government railways of \$263,000, and there is an addition of \$45,000 as interest on the public debt. The expenditure on capital account

next year is to be \$3,235,607. The considerable sum of \$2,417,267 of the above amount is to go towards the redemption of the public debt. The principal expenditure under this head is to be for railways and canals. The estimate for these works is \$6,301,340. There are \$400,000 for public works and \$100,000 on Dominion lands. A very large sum is to be spent next year on canals, amounting in all to \$4,690,000. The new Sault Ste Marie Canal is to take \$1,300,000 of the Cornwall Canal which will be remembered gave way last fall just when it was most wanted, \$1,200,000. The Williamsburg Canal is to get \$800,000 and the canal between lakes St. Louis and St. Francis \$600,000. The sum of two and a half millions is to be expended in the improvement of the part of the canal system of the Dominion that lies between Montreal and Kingston. The Government will endeavor to stimulate the trade between Eastern Canada and South America by granting a subsidy of \$60,000 to a line of steamships, which is to run between Halifax and San Juan and the West Indies and South America. At the same time the failure of the substitution policy in another direction is admitted by withdrawing the subsidy of \$50,000 offered to a line of steamers running between France and Quebec, and another of \$30,000 for a line line between Canada and Antwerp.

British Columbia does not appear to be very generally dealt with in the Estimates. We notice that the sum of \$4,000 placed on the Estimates last year for barracks in British Columbia has been withdrawn. The only item for public buildings in this province is \$3,000 for repairs and improvements. For harbors and rivers there are for 1889-90: Cowichan River..... \$1,000 Fraser River..... 400 Nanaimo (Removal of Nichol Rock)..... 400 River Sooke..... 300 Golden..... 200 General Repairs of Harbor and Rivers..... 2,000 \$3,300

There is also an appropriation of \$15,000 for dredging. The sum voted for this province last year was \$64,500 against \$24,300 this year. There is, however, a new item for steam service between San Francisco and Victoria of \$17,640. There is also an increase in the estimate for the expenses of the Sir James Douglas for \$1,000. Nothing has been appropriated for the coast survey, which is so badly needed; and nothing for lighting and buoying the northern coast and channels, so urgently required for the safe navigation of the waters of that part of the province. The omission of an appropriation for completing the barracks for Battery C is difficult to understand. It is to be hoped that the sum necessary to give that corps the accommodation which it so much requires will appear in the supplementary estimates.

THE TREATY-MAKING POWER. The following is the resolution which Sir Richard Cartwright moved, and which was discussed in Parliament two days ago: "Resolved, that it has become a matter of extreme importance to the well being of the people of the Dominion that the Government and Parliament of Canada should acquire the power of negotiating commercial treaties with foreign States. That an honorable member of the Government and Parliament of Canada, subject to the prior consent or subsequent approval of the Parliament of Canada, signified by Act."

It must seem to every one that reads this resolution carefully that the power to ratify should go with the power to negotiate. What would be the use of Canada's negotiating a treaty with the Emperor of Brazil, if it possessed no power to put the treaty in force? But the power to enforce must go with the power to negotiate. It is not to be supposed that Canada does not possess that power. It would be unable to enforce the provisions of any treaty it might make. The nation with which it was made might treat Canada with sovereign contempt and might, whenever it suited its purpose, regard the treaty as so much waste paper. How was Canada to help herself if a power she negotiated a treaty with openly disregarded its provisions? It is a humiliating thing to say in this age of the world, but if a country wants to respect its agreements with other nations it must have at its command a sufficient amount of organized brute force to make itself feared. But Canada has no army and does not intend to have an army. She has no fleet and does not feel herself rich enough to build and maintain a navy. What is the good then of Canada's desiring to exercise the powers and privileges of independence when she is not prepared to take upon herself the burdens and the responsibilities of independence? Besides Canada has all that she really needs just now in the way of negotiating treaties with foreign powers. In any matter in which her interests are directly concerned she is not only asked but required by the Mother Country to take a prominent and influential part. In the recent treaties with the United States Canada did her full share of negotiating, and she had the privilege of ratifying or refusing to sanction those parts of the treaties in which she had a direct interest. Sir Charles Tupper was empowered to treat with the Spanish Government, and make the best bargain he could with that Canada. And when the commercial interests of the Dominion require a special agreement with any other nation, Great Britain, we have no doubts, will do all in its power to further such negotiations as may be necessary. If Sir Richard Cartwright wants independence for Canada why does he not agitate for it under its proper name? There is nothing to hinder him, and it would be much more logical for him to do this than to ask for virtual independence under the color of applying for the power of negotiating commercial treaties.

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE.

Third Session of the Fifth Parliament.

TENTH DAY.

MONDAY, Feb. 18, 1889. The Speaker took the chair at 2:15 p. m. Prayers were read by Rev. P. McF. Macleod.

REPORTS.

The standing order committee presented their report, stating that all the requirements had been complied with in the petitions for private bills for the Synod of British Columbia, the Vancouver street railway company, the Cowichan water works company, and the Westminster and Vancouver short line railway company. The committee recommended that the time for presenting petitions for private bills be extended until March 14th, and the time for receiving petitions be extended until March 14th. Report received and adopted.

Mr. Baker moved the second reading of this bill, and the standing order was amended to extend the time for presenting and receiving petitions for private bills. Mr. Semlin urged the importance of passing this bill as soon as possible, and suspending them only when it was absolutely necessary. When the people knew the time set for receiving the petitions, they should manage to put them in at the proper time.

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