

Council saw no reason to change its opinion of previous years, *i. e.*, that the Bill introduced was unsatisfactory and should be opposed. The Bill was afterwards withdrawn, the Government subsequently appointing a Commission, to enquire into the inequalities of railway rates, which has held sittings in various cities, and will meet here on 12th January; members of the Board being requested to appear before it and state their views.

CUSTOMS' LAWS.

The necessity for changes in the Dominion Customs laws, especially as regards appraisements, the arbitrary enforcement of certain clauses in the Act, and in dealing with frauds upon the revenue, has been brought several times to the attention of the Council, but representation to Government has so far been confined to urging that a thorough investigation should be held wherever irregularities existed.

BILLS OF LADING.

It will be remembered, as stated in last year's report of your Council, that the London Chamber of Commerce, after correspondence on this subject with several English, Colonial, Continental and American commercial bodies, was drafting a form of Bill of Lading which was to be circulated to the whole of the Chambers of Commerce of the Empire and America, with a view of obtaining its general adoption. It seems, however, that the London Chamber, afterwards decided that the only practicable solution of the question was to seek the aid of legislation, not to lay down a hard and fast form of Bill of Lading, from which no deviation should be permitted, but to settle the general principles of shipowners' liability as carriers. Such a bill was accordingly drafted and will be presented to the Imperial Parliament at first available opportunity. Its leading provisions are:—exemption of shipowner from liability for loss or damage to cargo shipped, except when caused by lack of ordinary and reasonable care on the part of himself, his master, crew or servants, the onus of proving that such damage or loss was not occasioned by want of such ordinary and reasonable care shall rest with the shipowner,—shipowner's liability not to terminate until delivery to the consignee is effected;—shipowner cannot be exonerated from obligation properly to man and equip his ship, and to render it seaworthy; Bills of Lading to specify exact voyage to be made and ports to be called at, and if goods are discharged at wrong port of call or carried beyond their destination, they shall remain until proper