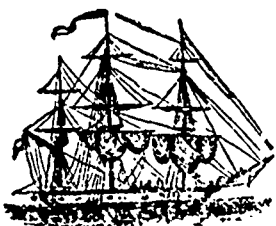


CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



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MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 5TH DECEMBER, 1846.

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NAVIGATION LAWS.

The *Montreal Gazette* continues his quasi defence of the British Navigation Laws against our attacks upon them, and we are glad to observe that the tone and temper with which he treats his subject are wonderfully improved. To what cause we are to attribute this manifest change we shall not stop to enquire; it is sufficient to notice the fact. It will certainly greatly facilitate the arriving at a correct conclusion on this question, that the reasons on both sides should be fairly stated, without any admixture of topics, growing out of the private piques or jealousies of the writers, on either side. To the country at large the differences of the editors of the *Gazette* and the "ECONOMIST" are of little consequence, but the question itself under discussion is all important: it involves, according to our view, nothing less than our future commercial existence; and the continuance of our connection with Great Britain as a loyal and attached Colony.

The *Gazette* apparently demurs to this conclusion, and treats our argument as though it was founded on the desire to withdraw from the protection of the mother country, instead of being, as it manifestly is, stated with a view to avert such an evil. Every attentive reader of the "ECONOMIST" must admit that, since the commencement of our career, the plain and obvious tendency of our writings has been more strongly to cement that connection which now subsists between this Province and Great Britain. Whilst other papers—and some even of those which have arrogated to themselves the titles of being *par excellence* British,—have denounced the new policy which Great Britain has adopted in her colonial relations—have held out the threat of separation from the mother country as the natural and unavoidable consequences of that policy—have advocated repudiation of our public debt to Great Britain, as a just return for her alleged breach of faith in withdrawing her protection from our products in her markets,—we have, to the best of our abilities, defended her policy as being founded on sound commercial principles: and whilst we could not but admit, that their sudden introduction might, and probably would, be attended with some temporary derangement of our trade, we have acquiesced in that "partial evil," believing that it would produce "universal good." We have done more: instead of foolishly seeking to counteract the policy of the British Government, we have sought to give effect to it, by adopting it in all its integrity. The British Ministry have freely admitted, that the withdrawal, by them, of protection from our products, will justify on our part the removal of any preference in our markets of British or foreign produce. We adopt this admission in its integrity, and with all its consequences, and we claim its application, alike to shipping as to manufactures: and we ask, what is there which places the one in a different category from the other? Are the greatness and prosperity of Britain based exclusively on the shipping interest, and do they not rest equally on the other great national interests? Are her ship-owners so weak as to need protection,

and her manufactures and agriculturalists so powerful as to be able to contend against the world? These are questions which press upon every reflecting mind, and we believe the result which must inevitably flow from their consideration, is, that the monopoly which British shipping at present enjoys is destined, ere long, to share the same fate with those of the British manufacturer and agriculturist.

Already significant symptoms of this approaching emancipation have manifested themselves in Great Britain: the chamber of commerce of Manchester, have memorialized the treasury on the impolitic character of the British Navigation Laws,—and in Jamaica also, a vigorous demonstration has been made against them—and there can be little doubt that, ere long, there will be but one cry throughout the British dominions, that of REPEAL.

We take the merit to ourselves of being—what the *Montreal Gazette* reproaches us with—the "leaders of the movement" in the "agitation" of the question in this Province; and we rejoice that the public attention has been directed to it, in a great measure through our instrumentality. The advocates for the repeal of the British Navigation Laws are also much indebted to the editor of the *Montreal Gazette*,—and the few influential writers who have coincided with him—for the valuable assistance which they have rendered in the admissions which the weakness of their cause has constrained them to make.

The editor of the *Montreal Gazette* in particular, who, as we last week observed, in the outset of the discussion characterized our demand for a modification of the British Navigation Laws, as "PREPOSTEROUS, UNREASONABLE, and ABSURD," subsequently admitted that he had great doubts of their wisdom; has at last discovered that "commercially speaking they are totally indefensible," and that "there can be no objection to the inhabitants of this colony petitioning as British subjects for their repeal." Thus then, the indefensible character of the British Navigation Laws in a commercial point of view, and our right to urge for their repeal, being admitted in the most unqualified manner, by the most able and at the same time the bitterest of our opponents, the controversy between us is narrowed down to the following questions:—

1st. Do the Navigation Laws press so heavily on the commerce of this country, as to justify us in making a special claim on the British Government for their repeal?

2nd. Are those laws so immutable in their nature, and so intimately interwoven in the national policy of Great Britain, as to render their repeal or modification highly improbable, and, as a consequence, any action on our part futile and unavailing?

The first question has been so fully discussed in our columns, during the last six months, that it would be a waste of labour to enter upon it again at any length. We shall confine ourselves to a recapitulation of the case which we contend we have made out, against the operation of the Navigation Laws in this country.

We have demonstrated that the main source on which we have to rely, for our future commercial prosperity,—for the maintenance of our public credit, by the payment of the interest on the public debt, and for the gradual liquidation of that debt,—is the rendering available to the largest extent of the improvements of our internal navigation;—that the alterations in the commercial policy of Great Britain have caused the competition between our canals and those of the United States to become so close as to render the utmost economy in the transport of produce through our waters a matter of necessity;—and that to insure the economy, it is expedient to do away with restrictions of every kind, and to grant every facility to foreign as well as British capitalists to invest their funds in our carrying trade. We have shown that the legal impediments in the way of foreign vessels conveying our products to the British dominions, have frequently been the means of enhancing freights in Canada to an exorbitant degree; and that this enhancement,—when the small medium of protection which we now enjoy in the British markets shall have been withdrawn,—will have the natural tendency frequently of driving even our own produce from our own to foreign canals. We have shown that the restriction on the foreigner operates to a high degree as an inducement to use his own canals in preference to ours, both for the exportation and the importation of his produce; and that we are, by this suicidal policy, increasing the