

14th Annual Meeting Newfoundland Board of Trade.

History of Commerce For Past Year Reviewed -- Two Principles Enunciated By Speakers.

The members of the Board of Trade held their 14th annual meeting in the Association's Rooms at 3 o'clock yesterday afternoon, and a large gathering of members was present. As the business of the community is a very important one at this time, much interest was centred in the Board's annual report, which is a comprehensive review of trade conditions for the year. The President, Mr. A. E. Hickman, occupied the Chair and after the minutes and financial statement had been read and adopted, he moved the adoption of the annual report of the Council, and spoke in part as follows:

PRESIDENT HICKMAN'S ADDRESS.

Mr. Hickman, before discussing the Report, referred to the untimely death of Mr. Charles Duder and paid tribute to his work on the Council. Mr. Duder took the keenest interest in trade matters, was always very careful in judging his fellow men, was generous, wholehearted and charitable—a man whom the community could ill afford to lose.

In moving the adoption of the Annual Report Mr. Hickman said, the year had been one which can hardly be described. There had been the necessity for continuous agitation on the part of the Council to try to help steer along the ship of state and beseech those in charge of our affairs to keep her off the shoals but not put her into deep water.

CUSTOMS TARIFF.

Referring to the Tariff Commission he said, it is not within their Province to make any adjustment whatsoever in the Tariff but simply to make recommendations to the Government of any changes which might help the Tariff to bear more evenly on the different classes of people without in any way affecting the Tariff as a whole. The Council had assisted in bringing before them the representatives of the different branches of the trade to give evidence. It had been recommended to them very strongly that the present system of computing duties on imported goods is obnoxious. The payment of duties at the port value of Exchange on British and Continental goods is grossly unfair and must be changed. Not so very long ago when Sterling exchange was lower, the duties paid the Government on some British goods reached 80 per cent of the invoice value. The system prevents all imports from Continental Countries as in many cases the duty exceeds the cost many times. Those countries to which we are looking to purchase our sea products should have importations of their goods made as easily as possible. Spain, Italy, Portugal and Greece all produce and manufacture articles which we need in the country and now that the conversion of their currency into sterling is very much against them, we should not be prevented from

purchasing their commodities. During his trip to the Continent last year, he visited many industrial plants and brought home many samples of laundry soap and other manufactured articles which compared in quality with the best of our market and which could be sold cheaper if the levying of the import duty at this end was properly adjusted. Mr. Hickman explained that it was difficult to get the Government to take seriously recommendations from the Council of the Board of Trade. As this body is non-political in its functions, it should be the helper and adviser of all Governments whether Liberal or Tory.

SALT AND CURE OF FISH.

A large percentage of last season's Shore Cured Codfish was Madeira quality and what is known as salt burned. This was caused through the fish being too heavily salted which fault cannot be attributed to the curers of fish. It was due to the lack of interest on the part of the supplier in the fishermen. Not many years ago the grade of fishery salt used almost entirely was what is known as "Cadiz" Salt. During recent years most of the importations have been from Torreveja and Santa Pola. The latter salt is very much cheaper per ton than the Cadiz salt and is at the same time very much stronger. The Torreveja salt is recommended for fish of Labrador Cure but not for Shore Cure unless the curer knows the grade of salt he is using. Fishermen follow out the same system and use the same amount of salt in the curing as when Cadiz salt was supplied to them, and a great number are not aware there are different grades and strengths of salt. Every supplier of salt should be careful to let every purchaser know the grade of salt he is supplying and endeavour to teach those who do not know the difference. A little thought will produce better fish, better value for our fish, and better income for our fishermen.

RAILWAY SITUATION — WEST COAST SERVICE — LOCAL FREIGHT RATES.

During the past year the Railway service had given very good satisfaction under the management of Mr. Morgan. Many complaints of the inefficient service on the West Coast had come before the Council. The S.S. "Glencoe" plying between Port aux Basques and Argentia seems to have been inadequate for that service. On investigation it had been found that there is not sufficient traffic on the West Coast for the two services, the S.S. "Portia" of the Coastal Service, and the S.S. "Glencoe" of the Railway Service.

EXPORT TAX ON FISH AND OIL.

The Government had seen fit to take the advice of the Council and abolish the Export Tax on Codfish. At the beginning of the year, it was

reduced. Toward the end of the year, it was removed altogether. The Government should go farther still and remove the Export Tax from Cod Oil and other sea products to encourage the industry.

JOINDER FISHERY.

It had been intimated to the Council that contrary to the law illegal packing of lobsters had been going on the past fall. There was, however, no proof of this. The extending of the date for packing in 1921 proved very detrimental to the fishery and any real benefit which might have been derived was more than out-balanced by the loss on production of the past year.

DELEGATION OF FISHERMEN.

During the marketing of Codfish in St. John's the past fall, a delegation of fishermen came to St. John's with the object of getting better prices for their fish. The actual value of Labrador Fish at that time as a commercial commodity was not over four dollars per quintal. The Exporters, however, agreed to advance the price to \$4.30 per quintal to help the fishermen to pay their bills and get sufficient means to live during the winter. Fortunately, a Spanish concern here advanced the price to \$4.50 and bought the surplus stocks which relieved the situation. The merchants were all glad to see someone ready to give \$4.50 cash. These delegations of fishermen seem to be costly ventures for the Government. One delegation two or three years ago induced the Government to buy fish which cost the Colony about half a million dollars, and the delegation of last fall was influential in having the Export Tax removed and a promise given to refund the Export Tax already paid. People as a rule treat delegates of the kind as a mere delegation of harmless fishermen but get results.

It is regrettable that we have not a Government that can confine itself to the administration of the country's affairs without interfering in any way with commercial pursuits. During the course of meeting between the Fish Exporters and the Fishermen, it was clearly shown that the Government had no statistics of our fisheries in any Department. It is most necessary to have statistics of our catch to govern us in purchasing stocks of fish to be shipped during the winter.

OUTRIGHT SALES.

There had been much controversy over co-operative marketing and outright sales. A scheme was outlined by Mr. A. B. Morine, K.C., which appeared unworkable. There is no doubt about it, outright sales is the proper way to do the fish business, but the question is how can it be accomplished. Mr. Hickman believed that a very large percentage of our catch could be sold for cash, if the buyers were sure they were getting what they expect and were paying for. If we had a proper standardization of fish carried out in an efficient manner by a capable head free from political influence, it would mean far greater returns for our fish. The administration of this would have to be drastic and all shipments would have to go from not more than three or four clearing Houses in the whole country; the standardization would have to begin when the fish is landed at St. John's or other clearing station. It would not prevent merchants from buying fish in Outports or paying any price they wish, but on arrival of that fish at St. John's it would be discharged into store under the standard cull and go out to market under the standard. It would be a hardship to the fish dealers at first but it can be done and done thoroughly.

ANGLO SPANISH COMMERCIAL TREATY.

The Council desire to draw attention to the Commercial Treaty between United Kingdom and Spain which was signed at Madrid on the 31st day of October and which came into operation on the 6th day of November. The reduction in the rates which has been secured as a result of the Treaty will be welcomed by all, as Newfoundland being a British Colony can enjoy the benefits of the Treaty with the consent of the Newfoundland Government. The Anglo Spanish Treaty is the result of protracted negotiations following on the revision of the pre-war Spanish Customs Tariff. The revision of Spanish Tariff was to take place in 1917 but on account of the war, it was postponed, but in November 1920 the duty on a large number of articles was increased by Royal Order. A member of the British Board of Trade visited Madrid in April 1921 in order to discuss with the Spanish authorities the effect on the commercial relations of the two countries. A comprehensive statement of the British view was also prepared and submitted to the Spanish Government. The new Treaty is for a period of three years and thereafter until the expiration from the date on which any party denounces it. As regards the treatment of Spanish goods in the United Kingdom, these are accorded complete most favoured nation treatment. Further, no Customs Duty or import prohibition (except in time of war) may be imposed on Iron Ore, Cork and Cork Discs, Grapes, Walnuts, Hazel Nuts, Almond Nuts, shelled and unshelled, Onions, Oranges, Olive Oil, Preserved Vegetables, Bananas and Tomatoes, and the duties of Wine, Brandy and Raisins may not be increased beyond

the present rates. Although no statement could be obtained by the Council of the Board of Trade from the Prime Minister on the effect of the Tariff under the Anglo Spanish Commercial Treaty, it is taken for granted that Newfoundland is included under the same terms and that many articles should now be imported free of duty.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Hickman read a list of the many other matters that had been discussed by the Council during the year.

MR. W. S. MONROE SECONDS ADOPTION OF REPORT.

Mr. W. S. Monroe, Director of the Monroe Export Company in seconding spoke as follows:—

There was very little time given us, said Mr. Monroe, to consider the report but there were a few points he would like to refer to:

He did not suppose there was anything more important in the report than the reference to "Reduced Taxation." As matters stand at the present the general importer is not reporting, or if he is, he is putting his goods in Bond; the independent fisherman is advising his fellow fisherman not to fit out for the fishery and in the third place, supplying merchants are refusing to give twines for traps, etc., which is necessary for the proper carrying out of the fishery. He did not think the Incoming Council had anything more important to do than the obtaining of a decisive answer to this matter. The export duty on Codfish had been cancelled and the Government had decided to make it retroactive. The Customs Department, however, were unable to find a means to bring it back to the fishermen concerned. It was hoped that they would be able to find a way, as the fishermen were looking for the 10c per quintal which was due them. He was glad to see reference made to a Committee to deal with the matter of Jamaica, duties. A prominent Jamaica merchant had told him that there was not the slightest reason why, if properly represented, Newfoundland should not be on the same basis as Canada. Arrangements should be easily made to get the duty, \$1.00 a quintal off, and every month that passes with no arrangement, meant losses to the trade and all concerned. Attention was drawn in the report to Exchange and also the Portside Tariff through which we suffered considerable losses on our sales to American ports. But there was only brief reference to the fact that we had reduced duties in Spain. He would like to point out that some adverse criticism at our meeting last spring the Government took exception to the remarks made and there was a strong feeling between the Government and the Board of Trade. The Prime Minister went to Spain to get a treaty effected and he succeeded in doing so, a matter of three or four shillings per quintal and the Prime Minister and the Government were entitled to the credit. His opinion was that the Board of Trade was useless if it could not work in harmony with the Government and the Government loses by not having the advice of the merchants. No Government had made any real use of the Board of Trade. He had much pleasure in seconding the adoption of the annual report.

MR. W. A. MUNN ADVOCATES FISHERY SCHOOLS.

Mr. W. A. Munn, congratulated the Council on its splendid report, and was of opinion that while it was clear and concise on many points, we must be more emphatic in our remedies. If we must do anything, we have to get down to rock bottom, and it was the duty of the Council of the Board of Trade to see to it that every remedy was taken advantage of. He had read with great interest, Mr. Gosling's splendid letter on political economy. They had touched the right note, and it was up to the Government and the Board by studying the right methods to improve conditions. Looking forward we must see what will benefit the fishermen as a whole and Mr. Munn advocated the establishing of fishery schools the same as in Norway, Denmark and Iceland, where young men are taught the best methods to cure codfish, the best methods of marketing, etc. Experts being appointed to conduct the schools. By this means the young men of these countries are being given every assistance, and he believed similar schools here would be a benefit. Mr. Munn was of opinion that the Talqual system of the last two years had not improved the cure of fish, and it was necessary now to teach the younger generation and by

WEST INDIES AGREEMENT.

President Hickman, in order to set straight some points raised by Mr. Monroe, regarding the West Indies agreement, said:—

This is an agreement entered into between Canada and some of the West India Islands whereby Canada enjoys a preferential tariff on her products and manufactures. They have a preference over us in Jamaica of about thirty-five cents a barrel on Herring and about 35c per quintal on Codfish. Newfoundland Herring shipped to the West Indies go into Jamaica under the Canadian Tariff if the shipper declares that 25 per cent of the labour is Canadian. Jamaica is one of our principal West India markets, in which we have to suffer the great disadvantage outlined in the report. The Agreement as now in force between Canada and the West Indies could not be adopted by us as we could not give the facilities that Canada has given in the way of subsidized steamers to ply on the West Indies routes, but the Council believe an agreement with the West India Islands can be made which would put our products on an equal with Canada's. If we are prepared to give preferential tariff to West India products, we could put almost everything that comes from Jamaica on the Free List without affecting the tariff as there is very little imported. Fruits are exceedingly cheap there and it would be to our advantage to get cheap fruits. A few years ago he met a Jamaica plantation owner who told him he had chosen a way that year eleven hundred barrels of oranges for want of a market. Jamaica Rum is good they say, it would be no drawback to put that on the Free List, as it would really make no difference to the Revenue whether the Controller's Department paid an import duty to the Finance Department or collected the amount of the Import Tariff in profits. He said it was an important matter, and the Council had written the Minister of Fisheries some time ago when it

THIS MEANS THE NEW METHODS WOULD BE THEIR OWN, COULD BE OBTAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE BOARD OF TRADE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE EFFECT OF THE TARIFF UNDER THE ANGLO SPANISH COMMERCIAL TREATY, IT IS TAKEN FOR GRANTED THAT NEWFOUNDLAND IS INCLUDED UNDER THE SAME TERMS AND THAT MANY ARTICLES SHOULD NOW BE IMPORTED FREE OF DUTY.

MR. W. G. GOSLING SPEAKS ON ANNUAL REPORT.

Mr. Gosling supported Mr. Monroe's remarks about the necessity of the Government working with the Board of Trade. For some extraordinary reason each Government did not appear to work in sympathy with the Board. This was deplorable and the Government should recognize the Board was here to assist them. He was reminded by the minutes of some remarks as to the assignment of Book Debts. He understood this was taken up by the Board and no decision could be obtained. He did not like to say too much about the condition of credit in this country at the present time, but he thought it was one of the matters the Council would have to look to very carefully, and do all it could to support credit. The amount of credit given in this country was enormous and the amount given by the Banks was only about one third of that given commercially. All assignments of Book Debts should be registered, just like the registration of Companies, a system that was largely existing in Canada. The Bank managers, he knew, would support anything the Board could do. On page 7 (of the annual report) was noted the failure to obtain statistics of the Codfishery. He often thought of the efforts made to get these statistics during thirteen years and now, after that time, the Board had to frame a resolution such as that. For a long time the Board could not get reports of any sort. When we did get them everybody knew they were not correct, but it was always hoped to get them more and more correct. For some years they were nearly correct and the returns from the Labrador fishery were approximate. Last year 35 per cent of the credit did not report at all. It was absurd for us to talk about fixing prices until we knew what we had to sell. He trusted the Board would succeed with the Government on that matter, and obtain proper statistics of our own fish. Regarding standardization of fish, that was the only thing that he had been able to think of to help us. We cannot prevent our customers and the consumption of our products and the only means we have to take the standardization and inspection, and he hoped the members of the Board would devote their chief attention to this matter during the coming year. Page 35 of the report gave the value of exports from Newfoundland. The first item was "Products of the Fisheries, \$14,500,000. Putting the other fishery products of approximately two millions, leaves \$12,500,000 as the value of dried cod. Dried fish shipped for the same year were 1,500,000 cwt., which leaves an average value of \$8.00 a quintal. He was sorry to hear that was not correct as his fish had realized \$8.00 a quintal for all our fish exported during the year. He did not know what the Customs could do to supply correct figures and thought the Board should discuss the matter with Mr. LeMessurier because it was important. The "Products of Mines" showed an export value of \$1.30 a ton. The ore was certainly worth more than \$1.30, but perhaps this means the amount spent in labour under the Canadian Tariff if the shipper declares that 25 per cent of the labour is Canadian. Jamaica is one of our principal West India markets, in which we have to suffer the great disadvantage outlined in the report. The Agreement as now in force between Canada and the West Indies could not be adopted by us as we could not give the facilities that Canada has given in the way of subsidized steamers to ply on the West Indies routes, but the Council believe an agreement with the West India Islands can be made which would put our products on an equal with Canada's. If we are prepared to give preferential tariff to West India products, we could put almost everything that comes from Jamaica on the Free List without affecting the tariff as there is very little imported. Fruits are exceedingly cheap there and it would be to our advantage to get cheap fruits. A few years ago he met a Jamaica plantation owner who told him he had chosen a way that year eleven hundred barrels of oranges for want of a market. Jamaica Rum is good they say, it would be no drawback to put that on the Free List, as it would really make no difference to the Revenue whether the Controller's Department paid an import duty to the Finance Department or collected the amount of the Import Tariff in profits. He said it was an important matter, and the Council had written the Minister of Fisheries some time ago when it

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The President then announced that the election of officers for the vacancies for the ensuing term resulted as follows:—

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Mr. Gosling supported Mr. Monroe's remarks about the necessity of the Government working with the Board of Trade. For some extraordinary reason each Government did not appear to work in sympathy with the Board. This was deplorable and the Government should recognize the Board was here to assist them. He was reminded by the minutes of some remarks as to the assignment of Book Debts. He understood this was taken up by the Board and no decision could be obtained. He did not like to say too much about the condition of credit in this country at the present time, but he thought it was one of the matters the Council would have to look to very carefully, and do all it could to support credit. The amount of credit given in this country was enormous and the amount given by the Banks was only about one third of that given commercially. All assignments of Book Debts should be registered, just like the registration of Companies, a system that was largely existing in Canada. The Bank managers, he knew, would support anything the Board could do. On page 7 (of the annual report) was noted the failure to obtain statistics of the Codfishery. He often thought of the efforts made to get these statistics during thirteen years and now, after that time, the Board had to frame a resolution such as that. For a long time the Board could not get reports of any sort. When we did get them everybody knew they were not correct, but it was always hoped to get them more and more correct. For some years they were nearly correct and the returns from the Labrador fishery were approximate. Last year 35 per cent of the credit did not report at all. It was absurd for us to talk about fixing prices until we knew what we had to sell. He trusted the Board would succeed with the Government on that matter, and obtain proper statistics of our own fish. Regarding standardization of fish, that was the only thing that he had been able to think of to help us. We cannot prevent our customers and the consumption of our products and the only means we have to take the standardization and inspection, and he hoped the members of the Board would devote their chief attention to this matter during the coming year. Page 35 of the report gave the value of exports from Newfoundland. The first item was "Products of the Fisheries, \$14,500,000. Putting the other fishery products of approximately two millions, leaves \$12,500,000 as the value of dried cod. Dried fish shipped for the same year were 1,500,000 cwt., which leaves an average value of \$8.00 a quintal. He was sorry to hear that was not correct as his fish had realized \$8.00 a quintal for all our fish exported during the year. He did not know what the Customs could do to supply correct figures and thought the Board should discuss the matter with Mr. LeMessurier because it was important. The "Products of Mines" showed an export value of \$1.30 a ton. The ore was certainly worth more than \$1.30, but perhaps this means the amount spent in labour under the Canadian Tariff if the shipper declares that 25 per cent of the labour is Canadian. Jamaica is one of our principal West India markets, in which we have to suffer the great disadvantage outlined in the report. The Agreement as now in force between Canada and the West Indies could not be adopted by us as we could not give the facilities that Canada has given in the way of subsidized steamers to ply on the West Indies routes, but the Council believe an agreement with the West India Islands can be made which would put our products on an equal with Canada's. If we are prepared to give preferential tariff to West India products, we could put almost everything that comes from Jamaica on the Free List without affecting the tariff as there is very little imported. Fruits are exceedingly cheap there and it would be to our advantage to get cheap fruits. A few years ago he met a Jamaica plantation owner who told him he had chosen a way that year eleven hundred barrels of oranges for want of a market. Jamaica Rum is good they say, it would be no drawback to put that on the Free List, as it would really make no difference to the Revenue whether the Controller's Department paid an import duty to the Finance Department or collected the amount of the Import Tariff in profits. He said it was an important matter, and the Council had written the Minister of Fisheries some time ago when it

was brought up, in the hope that he would use his influence in the matter, but they had received no reply. Since then a long letter was drafted to the Prime Minister placing the position before him for his consideration. The Prime Minister, who went to Madrid in connection with this matter, has not since his return given any report concerning the agreement to the Board, and the only information available was contained in private letters from England. The motion for the adoption of the report was then put to the meeting and was unanimously adopted.

The President then announced that the election of officers for the vacancies for the ensuing term resulted as follows:—

President—L. C. Outerbridge.
2nd Vice-President—Hon. T. Cook.
Committee—Messrs. W. A. Thompson, E. A. Bowring, T. H. Carter, W. A. Munn.

On motion of Mr. William White, seconded by Mr. H. E. Cowan, a hearty vote of thanks was accorded the outgoing officers for their work during their term of office. The following are the officers of the Board for 1923:—

President—L. C. Outerbridge.
1st Vice-President—Hon. F. H. Steer.
2nd Vice-President—Hon. Tasker Cook.
Committee—Messrs. H. C. Ayre, W. R. Gooble, J. C. Pratt, D. M. Baird, A. G. Ross, J. W. N. Johnson, E. A. Bowring, W. A. Thompson, T. H. Carter, W. A. Munn.

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