

protection equivalent to the difference of freight would at least be guaranteed to them, as even then they only meet the foreign producer in the home markets on equal terms.

That to a system of wise and judicious protection Your Majesty's empire is indebted for its proud attitude among the nations of the earth, and the present happy position of Your Majesty's colonial possessions is attributable mainly to the same source.

Wherefore your petitioners must humbly pray, that Your Majesty will not sanction the contemplated modifications in the Tariff on wood goods, and Your Majesty's petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

(144 Signatures.)

No. 14.

(No. 66.)

COPY of a DESPATCH from the Right Honourable W. E. GLADSTONE to  
Governor the Earl CATHCART K.C.B.

No. 14.  
Mr. Secretary  
Gladstone to  
Governor Earl  
Cathcart,  
18 May 1846.

My Lord,

Downing Street, 18 May 1846.

I HAVE to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's despatch, No. 40, of the 28th of April, transmitting to me a petition to Her Majesty from certain merchants and others, citizens of Quebec, praying that Her Majesty will not sanction the contemplated modification in the Tariff on wood goods.

I have laid this petition before Her Majesty, who has been pleased to receive it graciously, but it has not been in my power to advise Her Majesty to assent to its prayer, for the reasons which I shall proceed to state.

Her Majesty has invited the Parliament to adopt the proposal to which the petition refers.

The House of Commons will enter to-night on the consideration of the Customs Duties Bill, in which this proposal is included, at the advanced stage when the Bill is reported to the House from the Committee of the whole House, immediately before the engrossment and third reading. At such a stage it would, I believe, be most unusual for the House of Commons to reverse the decision which it has given on the occasions afforded by the various earlier stages of the Bill, and by the preliminary Committee, which is required, with respect to all questions of trade, and in which they ordinarily undergo the most searching examination. Thus, Her Majesty having recommended to Parliament a particular course, has had no reason, in the reception which Parliament has given to the recommendation, to adopt any alteration of it.

But I must not be understood as implying that this is the principal difficulty which obstructs a compliance with the prayer of the petitioners; there are others, including some of a higher order:—First, Her Majesty's Government do not doubt the very high respectability of the petitioners, and would be disposed, on general grounds, to attach great weight to their opinions; but Her Majesty's Government have found themselves obliged, on a great variety of occasions, to adopt and to adhere to proposals unacceptable to many of the parties immediately affected by them, notwithstanding their belief in the high integrity of those parties, and their perfect freedom from any consciousness of an interest that could warp the judgment; and Her Majesty's Government cannot but observe on the present occasion, that they do not find any reason to suppose, from the evidence before them, that the opinion of the petitioners with respect to the impending change in the timber duties, is shared by the people of Canada at large, or by their representatives, who, on the contrary, appear to have evinced their intention to abandon reliance upon the artificial advantages which protective laws may confer, and to place it upon the natural and permanent guarantees afforded by the resources of the province and the energy of its inhabitants.

Her Majesty's Government must seriously doubt whether, if the allegations of the petition were made good in their whole extent, with respect to the disadvantages entailed upon Canada by her distance from this country, by the dangers of the St. Lawrence, the suspension of its navigation during a portion of the year, and by the inferior quality of Canadian timber, that circumstance would have the effect of producing the conviction in this country that the measure now under discussion should be either qualified or abandoned, inasmuch as it would certainly show that the present system could only be continued at a very heavy cost to the nation.

But Her Majesty's Government do not share the belief of the petitioners in the existence and in the force of these disadvantages. They cannot forget the predictions,