

at all except on conditions that were virtually prohibitory. The United States had not then passed the Draw back or Bonding Act, allowing Canadian produce and foreign merchandise to pass through in bond. Hence, the Upper Canada trade was confined to the single route of the St. Lawrence, at all seasons, and under whatever circumstances. The exports of our neighbors sent to Britain were not admitted there at the same rate of duties as from Canada; but even that boon was about to be lost to us.

Such was the position of affairs when the discussion of the changes in the commercial policy of the empire, inaugurated by Sir Robert Peel, had commenced, whereby corn and food-stuffs of all kinds were to be admitted free into the United Kingdom, and the navigation laws so altered as to allow merchants full liberty in the employment of either foreign or British shipping. This would create an entire revolution in trade; and here in Canada, in the other colonies, and in Britain as well, the innovation was generally deemed fraught with disaster.

Under these circumstances a number of persons, most of them young men engaged in business, met together in this city to consider the subject. A large majority of them rejoiced in the change that was about to be effected. They organized themselves into an association, of which they elected me President. We issued an address to the people of Canada on the situation, and did much to instil the belief that although at first there would be suffering and loss from the new order of things, yet that the result would be favorable to all. At the first meeting of the Association it was resolved that we should have an organ of our own, advocating free trade principles, and the *Canadian Economist* was started. All of us wrote more or less in the paper, but I may state here that Mr. George Elder only contributed