

Island, until the formal notice was given of the Customs Act to which you object.

I have, however, no fear as to the ability of the Colony to meet its present and probable prospective indebtedness; but this should not be left to chance. The reduction in the cost of living, which I will show you, must take place at Cariboo will make your labours more profitable, and thousands are now approaching our Southern Boundary to work our newly discovered gold fields, and share temporarily at least in the public burdens.

You see that I do not assent to the main propositions contained in your address, therefore, I will not follow you into details. I know that the immediate operation of the new Customs law is disagreeable; its benefits not yet within your reach.

You have selected the article of Beans specially for comment; an article bulky but of small intrinsic value. Compare the price of beans at New Westminster and Williams Creek, and see what makes them dear at the latter place. It is the transport, not the tax. If all the beans for future consumption were to be stored in Victoria, introduced at the highest duty, and no improvement were made in the communications the difference of price would be infinitesimal and utterly inappreciable in the Miner's daily meals. But we look for direct importation, which would, before the season is over, reduce the price of all articles in Cariboo to a lower standard than yet seen there. With moderate charges, telegraphic communication, and a road completed, as I anticipate, through from New Westminster to Williams Creek, the Northern Mines will present more attractions to the fortunate holders of claims than they will have yet done.

I will only notice one other remark in your petition. You say "a reasonable notice for the enforcement of such a measure" (the Customs Ordinance) "is customary in other countries, as it is equitable and fair." You may perhaps not be aware that when the Chancellor of the Exchequer's financial statement is made in the House of Commons, an order is at once given for the enforcement of any alteration of duties he may suggest, in anticipation of an Act of Parliament for the purpose. However in the instance of the British Columbian Customs Ordinance there was elaborate notice given. The principles were adopted by the Legislative Council on the 18th February, 1864, before I reached the Colony. I stated on the 28th April, that I should consider the question in the recess. On the 12th December, I gave notice that a measure of the kind would be introduced. On the 12th of January I distinctly stated the Bill to be that of last year. No approaching measure could well have had more thorough ventilation.

And now that it has passed it must be allowed to be to a certain degree tentative. You and I differ widely as to its merits. Let us give it a fair trial, and before the next Session I shall be prepared to receive (I hope, personally, on Williams Creek) with every respect, your more experienced opinion. Depend upon it the last thing the Government of this Colony would desire to do, is to discourage the Miners from developing its resources, or allow any large body of our population to lapse into a state of political discontent.

The Standing Orders which I framed for the adoption of the Legislative Council, provided that no petition shall be presented without an endorsement stating that it is "perfectly respectful and deserving of presentation." I am half inclined to doubt whether the terms "unjust and inequitable" applied to recent Legislation can come within this definition, but I have no doubt that respect for the presenter and to the petitioners, whom the Governor is willing to consider as, to a certain extent, representing the Miners of Cariboo, will secure for it an indulgent reception, when I lay the petition together with a copy of this letter before the House.

I have, &c.,

(Signed)

FREDERICK SEYMOUR.

Messrs. J. F. Pascoe, S. Hodge,

Hugh Gartland, and the other signers of the Victoria petition.

APPENDIX E.

BRITISH COLUMBIA.

FREDERICK SEYMOUR.

PROCLAMATION

By His Excellency FREDERICK SEYMOUR, Governor of British Columbia and its Dependencies, &c.
To all to whom these presents shall come; Greeting.

WHEREAS, it is expedient for the protection of the Revenue, to apportion by Proclamation, the net amounts proceeding from fines and forfeitures, recovered under "The Gold Export Duty Ordinance, 1865," among the persons more immediately instrumental in procuring the same;