

CANADA.

No. 6.

No. 6.
 Governor
 Earl Cathcart
 to
 Earl Grey,
 16th Sept. 1846.

(No. 131.)

COPY of a DESPATCH from Governor the Earl CATHCART, K.C.B. to Earl GREY.
 My Lord, Government House, Montreal, 16th September 1846.

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith, at the request of the Toronto Board of Trade, a memorial to Her Majesty, which the memorialists are desirous of having laid at the foot of the throne, praying for the repeal of the Imperial differential duties on the imports of Canada, and of the Navigation Laws, so far as regards the River St. Lawrence, and the inland waters of Canada.

I have, &c.

(Signed) CATHCART.

Encl. in No. 6.

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TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

May it please Your Majesty,

The Petition of the Toronto Board of Trade,

Most humbly showeth,

That by the Provisions of the Navigation Laws of Your Majesty's kingdom, the carrying trade of the exports and imports of Canada to and from Great Britain and Ireland, or any British possession in Asia, Africa, or America, is confined to British ships; in consequence of which restriction serious loss and inconvenience are at present imposed upon the inhabitants of this province.

Your petitioners having carefully considered the operation of the said laws upon the commercial and agricultural interests of Canada, feel called on to state, that prior to the alterations in the Corn Laws of Your Majesty's kingdom effected in the last Session of Parliament, Your Majesty's subjects residing in Western Canada did not feel the disadvantages resulting to the colony from the monopoly of the carrying trade conferred on the owners of British ships by the Navigation Laws, as it was found that the prices of their agricultural exports generally equalled those which were observed to obtain in the contiguous sections of the neighbouring States of the republic of America, for the same products destined for shipment to the British market through the Atlantic seaports of the said States. Your petitioners cannot, however, conceal from Your Majesty the fact, that the protection generally supposed to have been enjoyed by the agriculturists of Canada, in consequence of the preference given to their products in the markets of Your Majesty's kingdom by the provisions of the late British Corn Laws, has not been fully realized by them; the exorbitant freights and heavy rates of insurance paid on shipments from the port of Montreal, added to other disadvantages connected with the navigation of the River St. Lawrence, having been found nearly adequate to neutralize the remission of duty intended by Your Majesty to operate in their favour.

Your petitioners have with much pain frequently had occasion to observe, that when the state of the British markets has been most propitious to the exports of Canadian wheat and flour, the combination of a few shipowners or their agents has completely blasted all their hopes, and intercepted the boon designed by Your Majesty's paternal Government for the benefit of Your Majesty's faithful subjects in the interior of the province, the rates of freight insisted upon having sometimes been as high as 7s. 6d. sterling per barrel of flour, and very frequently averaging 5s. to 6s. sterling; whilst at the same times freights have been obtained from the port of New York in vessels of a superior class as low as 1s. 6d., and seldom higher than 2s., and insurances at 50 to 80 per cent. less than by the St. Lawrence.

Your petitioners most humbly submit, that during the past months of the present shipping season, the position of the holders of flour and wheat in the port of Montreal has been most distressing. Large quantities of produce were forwarded to that city from the interior, where it had been purchased during the preceding winter at prices seriously enhanced by the exaggerated reports which reached Canada of the scarcity of bread-stuffs throughout Europe. On arrival it was found impossible to obtain shipment for it at less than 6s. sterling per barrel. The holders were threatened with insolvency alike from its shipment or its retention, and perceiving most distinctly that the chief cause of their difficulties was to be found in the present Navigation Laws of Your Majesty's kingdom, a feeling of deep dissatisfaction therewith has arisen in the minds of Your Majesty's Canadian subjects. The people of Canada now feel convinced that, deprived of that protection formerly extended to their products in Your Majesty's kingdom, by means of which the heavy burthens imposed on their trade by the Navigation Laws were neutralized, they must, in the event of these laws being continued in force, be reduced to a position much inferior to that of the people in the adjacent States of America, and they contemplate, with profound mortification,