nations. He admits that an extension of Russian settlements might affect the trading question; but the plain meaning is that right of fishing existed prior to and independent of the convention, and continued to exist after that instrument had lost its force by the effluxion of time."

We present this answer of a previous American Secretary as a conclusive reply to the contentions of the American Secretary of to-day.

If it be said that a seal is not a fish, we may recall the fact that long ago the United States had asserted the right to take seals in any part of the world.

THE EXPORT CATTLE TRADE.

It is known to our readers that Mr. Samuel Plimsoll, whose philanthropic efforts in former years in another field are well known, is now promoting before the Imperial Parliament a bill prohibiting among other things, the landing of live cattle at British ports, because of the suffering they were said to undergo on the passage across the Atlantic. The chairman of the Parliamentary committee appointed to consider this bill wrote to the Governor-General of Canada asking the views of the Canadian Government upon the bill. The Government accordingly instituted an enquiry, being represented for the purpose by Mr. William Smith, Deputy Minister of Marine. This enquiry was begun at Montreal on Monday last, and Mr. Plimsoll was present.

The various representatives of steamship lines out of Montreal gave testimony as to their arrangements and to the generally favorable record of their steamers as successful cattle carriers. But information of a different tenor has been furnished to Mr. Plimsoll, in the shape of a letter from Mr. A. J. Thompson. That gentleman considers that the exportation of live cattle can be carried on with perfect safety and without any cruelty if the proper space is allowed the animals, which is eight feet long by two feet eight inches wide. "I proved this by accompanying a shipment myself, and landed the cattle without bruises or soreness. For the months from May to September the trade can be carried on as safely as if the cattle were in their own stables, and with as little cruelty." But in order to show where the cruelty and difficulties come in of late years, Mr. Thompson goes on to say: "It used to be that an exporter could take his space from the agents of the ship company—8 feet by 2 feet 8 inches. He could and did insist on getting full space. Then all went right; the cattle landed in good condition and sold for full prices. But things have changed for the worse, both for the cattle and the exporters. The agents let their steamers to men who are not exporters, in many cases at high rates of freight, with the understanding that they may put in all the extra cattle they can. This freight is farmed out to exporters in Ontario, who by the aid of the inspectors, who should see that the cattle have the room required by the Government regulations, seem to ignore all rule. The cattle are packed like herrings in a barrel. I have known cases where agents charged freight for one-half of the extra cattle crowded on board."

It is this farming-out system, it would appear, that is responsible for most of the objections that are raised against the transport of live cattle across the ocean. One can easily comprehend the cruel effect of such crowding as then ensues. Mr. Thompson describes one such scene: "The cattle are loaded on the steamers in Montreal while they are taking on other cargo, for instance grain, the poor beasts standing in the smoke and dust for hours before sailing, the hot sun pouring down on them; and very often at the last moment fifty or sixty head of cattle are rushed on board, heads and tails, and the steamer sails probably with not half enough stalls to store the cattle in." Well may he declare that until these proceedings are stopped there will be no safety or profit to the exporters, and it is a cause of great cruelty and shrinkage to the cattle. Mr. Thompson claims that from September 1st to the close of navigation no cattle should be allowed to be carried on the spar deck of any ship that has not got iron covers, and in winter such conveyance should be prohibited altogether. Mr. Thompson declares that he is by no means opposed to the export of live cattle. "I simply put these statements before you in hopes through your influence our Government will remedy the existing evils. I repeat that what I say can be proved by the exporters of Ontario, who export at leat 80 per cent. of the cattle."

These are serious statements, and will doubtless receive the attention that is due from the Commission of Enquiry. Mr. McLennan referred, we observe, to the unfitness of the men often sent over in charge of cattle on the voyage, and we have ourselves heard of cases in which utterly unfit men were sent, which is a grave injustice to the steamship people, who are apt to be blamed for the negligence of others. On the other hand, Mr. Bickerdike gave testimony as to the loss of cattle by suffocation on board the steamer "Straits of Magellan," and Mr. Thompson complains of the character of the fodder supplied to cattle on the voyage. The enquiry is proceeding. and we shall have further comment to make on the evidence adduced. A letter on the subject appears elsewhere.

THE FAILURE LIST.

The liabilities of traders who failed in Canada during the year 1890 approach eighteen millions of dollars, which exceeds by several millions those of the average of the last nine years, and the number is the highest for ten years. The number of failures is put down by Dun, Wiman & Co. at 1,828, with liabilities of $17,858,000, the largest amount since 1884. Bradstreet's agency makes the number about the same, viz., 1,826, and the liabilities only $12,282,-000. The number and amount in former years is stated by Dun's agency as follows:—

Year.	Number.	Amount Liabilities.
1882	787	$ 8,587,000
1883	1,379	15,872,000
1884	1,308	18,939,000
1885	1,247	8,743,000
1886	1,233	10,171,000
1887	1,366	16,070,000
1888	1,667	13,974,000
1889	1,747	14,528,000
1890	1,828	17,858,000

Our readers will note the steady increase since 1885; it deserves to attract attention and ought to help to limit credit. The average liabilities per failure are a trifle under ten thousand dollars, which is one-fourth more than in the previous year, and confirms the general estimate that there are more small or moderate failures in proportion.

By provinces the record is interesting, especially when compared with the previous year or two. A comparison follows:

	1890.		1889.	
Province.	No.	Amt. Liabs.	No.	Amt. Liabs.
Ontario	901	$6,801,338	868	$6,334,990
Quebec..............	617	8,721,817	651	6,856,105
Nova Scotia	122	685,824	78	469,234
New Brunswick	84	998,847	65	388,958
P. E. Island........	8	51,103	9	55,681
British Columbia..	50	199,635	87	173 004
Manitoba	46	399,453	39	250 912
Total..........	1828	$17,858,017	1747	$14,528,884

Thus every province except Prince Edward Island shows an increase in amount, if not in number, of mercantile failures. The evil of over-trading is wide spread amongst us. Until it is curbed these disasters will go on.

THE QUEBEC MINING TAX.

A royalty in favor of the Crown is the form of tax which the Quebec Government proposes to put on mines. The tax would extend to almost every conceivable form of mine, and the amount of the tax on gold and silver is 2½ per cent of the gross weight, while California, when it has had a similar tax, has satisfied itself by one per cent. on the value of these metals. It remains to be seen whether mines of the precious metal would pay for working in Quebec even in the absence of a tax. Two and a-half per cent. is almost certain to doom the mines to sterility. A crown royalty is really less excusable than a municipal tax, because it is exceptional. As an experiment in the region of direct taxes, it will possess peculiar interest; the measure shows that there is one interest on which the Government ventures to levy a direct tax. But objections against the selection are numerous. The choice is arbitrary, the tax is unequal, and is put on an industry in the first stage of development, which it will have a strong tendency to nip in the bud. If direct taxes have become a necessity, in Quebec, which we cannot venture to deny, they should be general. Agriculture is at present more stable and certain than mining, whatever the future may reveal. But the farmers are many and the miners are few, and it looks as if to this circumstance was owing the selection of the one for direct taxation and the escape of the other.

—The *Railway Review* is informed that the committee having the matter in charge have issued a call for the third annual convention of railroad commissioners to be held in Washington, at the rooms of the Inter-State Commerce Commission, on March 3, 1891. The list of subjects to be brought before the convention has not as yet been received, but will be published hereafter.