

# BOOKS AND NOTIONS

OFFICIAL ORGAN

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PROMISES, like piecrusts, are made to be broken. A dozen times, deputations of booksellers, newsdealers and publishers have waited upon the Government at Ottawa and explained fully the disabilities under which they laboured under the present reading of the postal laws which places a premium upon direct subscriptions to foreign publications, and almost prohibits their sale by the trade.

Each time the Ministers have acknowledged the force of the arguments, agreed that a gross injustice was being done to the Canadian Newsdealers, but argued obstacles in the way of amendment.

The deputations showed how these difficulties could be overcome, and then each time received the promise that it would be made all right in a very short time.

This is the story of each deputation. They all returned full of hopes of a speedy deliverance for the trade from the postal bondage, and each time they were deceived. No change has been made, and it does not appear that any is contemplated. What are we to do next? The state of the case is as follows: - In our postal convention with the United States, agreed upon immediately after the adoption of the National Policy, a clause was inserted making all papers and periodicals going by mail "direct to the subscribers" free of duty. Here then was the reason in the first place for allowing direct subscribers the special privilege. We might object to such a clause in the treaty, if such an objection would be of any avail, but as it would not, the only way to give fair play to the newsdealer, who was directly injured by this law, was to allow his supplies of a similar character to come in force also. It was no more than justice.

This remedy was suggested to the Ministers and they acknowledged that it was but fair that the trade should be placed upon an equal footing with the rest of the people, and promised action in that direction, but, as I said before, the promises were words made

without any intention of fulfilment, and our deputations had their labour for their pains.

Under that postal convention the proposed remedy was the only one possible and should have been granted. The new treaty which was made last year contains no clause giving this special right to direct subscribers, thus the great difficulty in the way of justice to newsdealers was removed, and there should have been no delay in relieving the trade of the unequal dealing. The duty should either have been charged on all the foreign publications, whether going direct to the subscribers or to the dealers, or it should have been taken off both parties alike.

One of these courses should have been adopted if the Ministers had any desire to carry out their promises and give fair play, but matters remain just as they were. It is over eighteen months since that treaty was signed and there is no change yet. The plea is put forward that the matter is in dispute between the postal authorities on both sides, and that is why action has not been taken. How any serious dispute can arise in it is hard to see, as the last clause in the new treaty says distinctly that all former postal treaties are by this Act abrogated, thereby omitting the objectionable clause with all others.

Now we want fair play. The trade is quite satisfied to pay duties if the rest of the community does too. We are neither the wealthiest nor the strongest trade in Canada, but we are perfectly ready to bear our own share of the burden, but we do most decidedly object to carrying the whole load, and some means must be found to ease us of our burden.

Let each dealer make it his duty to interview the member for his constituency, explain the matter to him fully, show him the injustice of the present course, and press upon the desirability of (1) Writing to the department urging a change. (2) Press the case upon the Minister the next time he is in Ottawa. This is about the only course left open for us now, but if supplemented with promised action at the ballot-box it may be effective.

As we stated in a previous issue, the same trouble arose in the States, and on the matter being represented to the Government, the newsdealer was at once put on the same footing as the general public.