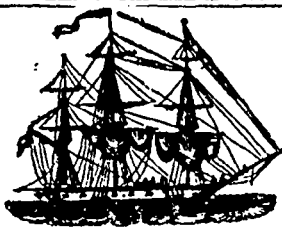


# CANADIAN ECONOMIST.



## FREE TRADE JOURNAL, AND WEEKLY COMMERCIAL NEWS.

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MONTREAL, SATURDAY, 26TH SEPTEMBER, 1846.

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## THE CANADIAN ECONOMIST.

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### BRITISH NAVIGATION LAWS.

We think that every one who reads attentively the signs of the times in England, in their best expounder, the public press, will come to the conclusion that the knell of the Navigation Laws is tolled. A year or two of struggle, a few party conflicts in the Imperial Parliament, and this giant monopoly, like the others which have been overthrown, will be consigned to the tomb of the Capulets.

It may be that from this colony the first blow will be struck: because it is here that the evils which flow from those laws are most seriously felt; because here the contest is not of one class against another within the colony, but a contest for commercial existence against a most formidable foreign rival. It is this fact that gives to the question of Free Trade in shipping here an aspect altogether different from that which it assumes in Britain; and it is this which entitles us to demand from her, almost as a right, its concession.

Those arguments, which in the mother country are used in favour of the Navigation Laws, founded on the policy of employing British ships and British seamen in order to rear up a naval force adequate to protect the country in times of danger, have little or no application here. Were it essential, or even conducive to the greatness of Britain, that she should continue to enjoy a monopoly of the carrying trade between this country and her shores, our feelings of patriotism might induce us to make a heavy sacrifice for such an object. We might even submit, contrary to the first principles of the British constitution, to be thus indirectly taxed without being represented.

But the question is altogether different: it is not simply, Shall British or foreign vessels be employed to carry colonial produce to Britain? No such alternative is open to us; the question being, Shall our produce, and that of the Western States intended for shipment to Britain, be brought down through British waters to Montreal or Quebec, or shall it be sent through the American waters to New York? Looking at the subject in this point of view, it is manifestly one comparatively of little importance to Britain, whilst to us it is one, commercially speaking, of life and death.

Whether the Navigation Laws be repealed or not, it will be utterly impossible to continue to the British owners the monopoly of the transportation of our produce; since if, by our restrictions, the foreigner be prevented from competing with him in the St. Lawrence, those restrictions will be the means of diverting our produce to the American canals, and the rates of freight from New York will thus regulate the freights from Canada. Thus in any case the British shipowner will be exposed to competition; and it signifies little to him, whether that competition be direct, as it will if foreign and British vessels meet on our waters, or indirect, if the St. Lawrence be still closed against foreign ships.

But how all-important to this province is it to encourage, not only the inhabitants of Canada, but those of the Western States, to ship their produce via the St. Lawrence! The fact must never be lost sight of, that at the time when a large amount of protection was accorded to colonial produce in Britain, and when fo-

reign produce manufactured in Canada became colonial, a heavy debt was incurred for the construction of canals for the transportation of that produce; and that the continuance of that protection was relied on as the means of paying the interest, and gradually liquidating the principal of that debt. Now, no sooner are these canals nearly completed, than protection of every kind is withdrawn from us, and we are not only left to compete with our enterprising neighbours, but in point of fact actual advantages are given by Britain to foreigners over our own subjects. The advantages we allude to are obvious, and cannot be denied: thus, in 1849, a foreigner desirous of sending his grain or other agricultural produce to Britain, will have the option of sending it by a foreign craft to Montreal, thence to be forwarded in a barge to Quebec, to be transhipped in a foreign vessel to Britain; or a colonist will have the option of sending his produce by foreign craft to New York, through foreign vessels, to be also transhipped in a foreign vessel to Britain; whilst if he choose to ship his produce through the British waters, he will be restricted to British vessels through the whole of the route! The produce, whether colonial or foreign, which will have gone through these various channels, will all, on its arrival in Britain, being free of duty, be placed on the same footing.

It is thus apparent that the British Navigation Laws, in their present state, give to foreigners sending their produce through our waters, a preference over colonists, and hold out a bonus to colonists to send their produce through a foreign country, instead of through their own waters.

We again ask our readers whether this anomalous state of things is to be permitted to exist, and whether it is not befitting the inhabitants of this country to appeal to the parent state for its removal?

### MONTREAL GAZETTE.

We are not surprised to observe that the strictures in our last on the articles which have recently appeared in the *Montreal Gazette* on the subject of the British Navigation Laws, have excited the ire of the Editor. We can assure him that the labour of answering him was not so great as he seems to imagine, the only difficulty being to find the few grains of wheat interspersed amongst his bushels of chaff. As our paper comes out but once a week, we cannot well see how our answer could have appeared earlier; a portion of the remarks on which we commented not having appeared when our former number went to press. Had we, however, wanted a high authority for delay, we needed none other than his own example, since he has apparently for the last two months been in a state of parturition of these very articles on the Navigation Laws: and we may truly say of his offspring, *nascitur ridiculus mus*.

The Editor, it appears, finds it much easier to accuse us of conceit than to answer our arguments, and he probably acts wisely in adopting that course. At the same time, he must permit us to draw the inference, that he is incapable of defending the positions he formerly assumed. Like honest Jack Falstaff when called on for his reasons, he exclaims, "Give you a reason on compulsion! If reasons were as plenty as blackberries, I would give no man a reason upon compulsion, I."

Although the Editor is rather backward with his arguments, he is by no means so with his insinuations; and he has on various occasions attempted a fling at the *Economist* as though it advocated doctrines subversive of our connection with, and just subordination to, the mother country. We defy him to lay his finger, not on a single article, but even on a single passage, having such a tendency. No! we take pride in asserting, what every page of our columns abundantly proves, that our feelings are truly British, and that our aim in the advocacy of all the measures which we have supported, has been to cement and perpetuate those ties which unite our interest with that of Great Britain.

Need we refer to particular articles in proof of our assertion? We will only instance Nos. 4 and 5 of this journal, in which the subject of "FREE TRADE AND BRITISH CONNECTION" is discussed,