

deemed *scandalum magnatum* to doubt the qualification of a large portion of the members to grapple with economical questions. How few are there amongst them who can reasonably be supposed to have given to such subjects the consideration which they require! And even among the small number whose avocations may have led them to such studies, where are the men to be found possessed either of adequate ability or influence to introduce and carry such measures through the House? Let it not be supposed that ordinary capacity and steady business habits are sufficient to work out commercial reform in our Provincial Legislature. We grant the value of such qualifications, but something more is required,—to wit, intellect of the very highest order, joined to the most indomitable energy and determination. There are deep-rooted prejudices to overcome,—fallacies, almost universally believed, to be refuted,—and, above all, private and sectional interests to be encountered and exposed. This is the task which devolves on the Commercial Reformer; and we again ask, who is there to be found in the House of Assembly equal to it?

We shall probably resume the subject in our next.

### THE NEW COUNCIL OF THE BOARD OF TRADE.—WHAT ARE THEY?

It is asked on all sides, what are the predominant opinions of the new Council of the Board of Trade? They have now been in office a month, yet no document—no sign—has emanated from them to show whether they concur in the broad and comprehensive views so ably and systematically placed before the government and the country by their predecessors, or whether, on the other hand, they dissent in whole or in part from the commercial policy so promulgated. For ourselves, we confess, we find it difficult to form any very decided opinion respecting their views. We have made enquiries, but have elicited no satisfactory information. We are told that some of the more prominent members of the Council advocate the repeal of the duties on Pork, because it would benefit the lumber interest; but would let the differential duties, as a whole, remain in force, because their repeal might affect the import trade of this city! Others again, we are told, would let the navigation laws alone; but would claim from the mother country the remission of the public debt guaranteed by her—as a compensation for the withdrawal of protection. There are others who, we understand, hold different views, perhaps less selfish and contradictory, but what they are we have been unable to discover.

Having failed then to elicit anything to be relied upon, by personal inquiry, as to the sentiments of this new Council, we have turned for assistance and enlightenment to our contemporaries of the press. The Montreal correspondent of the *Cobourg Star*, we observe, sets them down as "Protectionists, headed by the *Montreal Gazette*;" and adds on his own behalf, "that the sensible part of the community [the Hon. Mr. McLean for instance] agree that it is our interest to keep up the navigation laws and the differential duties, for if we do not England will render us no further assistance,—will in effect throw us off for our ingratitude." Poor colonists, we certainly should be in a "sad pickle" according to the lugubrious forebodings of this correspondent of the *Cobourg Star*, were we to succeed in making the slightest approach to a reformed commercial system.

The next witness we call up is the *Commercial Advertiser* of Hamilton. He appears to be overjoyed at the election of a "Protectionist" Council; and exulting over the temporary check which Free Trade principles appear thereby to have received, he says,—

"This was no more than could have been foreseen when the subject was calmly and dispassionately considered. How any Canadian can be a Free-Trader, from love of the principle as applied to this country, puzzles us. It remained with the *Montreal Economist* and the Board of Trade to prove to the Colonists the advantages of it; and notwithstanding they performed their task with ability and ingenuity, they have failed to convince even the merchants of Montreal."

The third and last witness we shall cite is the *Hamilton Spectator*, he says:—

"The election of a Protectionist Council by this body has shaken the fabric of Canadian Free Trade to the very centre, in the city to which it owes its birth; and although the organ of the party threatens that he "will not relax his exertions" to advance their favorite scheme, he has been forced reluctantly to acknowledge that "the defeat of the Free Trade movement is a heavy blow and sore discouragement to the party." This is an important admission, and we hope it will have its due weight upon the minds of those

in the Western portion of the Province, who have allowed their better judgment to be obscured by the specious pleadings of the Free Traders of the metropolis; and their confident assertions as to the innedate and complete success of their policy. It is also important that this heavy blow has been struck at this particular time—on the eve of the meeting of Parliament, and before the collective wisdom of the land, or such of them as are favorable to the introduction of Free Trade measures, should have had an opportunity of triumphantly bringing forth the powerful influence of the Montreal Board of Trade to secure their passage through the popular branch of the Legislature. There is no doubt but that during the approaching Session of Parliament, some change will take place in the laws which have hitherto regulated the trade and commerce of Canada, and that an attempt will be made by the Free Trade party to procure the admission of American produce into Canada free of duty. They have made no secret of this attempt to destroy the remaining hopes of the farmer, not to render him as unable to cope with the grain-growing population of the Western States here, as he will be in England where his surplus produce is consumed. Upon the wisdom, sagacity, and well-known influence of the Montreal Board of Trade, these individuals depended for guidance and support, but the experience of the past year has taught that Board a lesson which they will not soon forget, and has dashed to pieces the hopes of their Free Trade admirers."

Summing up the evidence before us, we think there is but little room to doubt that the present Council are looked upon, by people at a distance, as "Protectionists"—in other words, that they are considered to be opposed to doing away with the differential duties—indifferent about agitating for a repeal or modification of the navigation laws,—and indifferent if not averse to rendering the navigation of the St. Lawrence free to foreign vessels. If any or all of these suppositions be true, then, we may well exclaim—prejudice and ignorance have triumphed over reason; and we may well apprehend that the effects of this untoward movement will be injurious if not fatal to the commerce and well-being of this country for years to come.

On minor points we care but little about the opinions of the present Council, and will leave them to keep such to themselves or not as they see fit; but as touching the broad principles of policy already adverted to we consider it will be in the last degree dangerous to allow the imputed views of this body—if the imputation be well founded—to go uncontradicted to the Legislature. Their course must therefore be closely watched—their opinions canvassed and discussed. We know not what place they will pursue to give effect to their opinions—whether that of openly promulgating them by reports, memorials or otherwise, or the more insidious policy of private communication with members of the government and the Legislature. Our eyes, however, will be upon them; and their omissions as well as their acts will be fearlessly and unceasingly exposed. This is no time for tampering with the best interests of the country. On the contrary, everything depends on timely and energetic action. The Council of the Board of Trade have much in their power and consequently a heavy responsibility hangs upon them. They were instrumental in ousting men from that Board who had promulgated a wise policy for the deliberate consideration and adoption of the country, and who were pledged by word and deed to see it carried into effect by legislative enactment. The present incumbents therefore are bound to act with equal vigor. If they adopt the policy of their predecessors, as we trust for the good of the country and their own credit they will do, then are they bound to take the same energetic steps which their predecessors contemplated to secure its ascendancy in the legislature. But, whatever be their policy we confess we have great misgivings as to their possessing the requisite energy and activity to give life and effect to their principles. We have already, for instance, alluded, but without effect to the necessity of petitioning the British Parliament at this juncture, while Ricardo's Select Committee is sitting, respecting the navigation laws: and we may now add that the free navigation of the St. Lawrence equally demanded their attention in this respect. The British Government have time and again been applied to without success; but the British Parliament have never yet, that we are aware of, been petitioned upon these vital questions. Such petitions should have been forwarded by last mail, and the whole question would thereby have been brought up before the British public, but we are informed that nothing of the kind was done or thought of. The Council should remember that time lost is not easily redeemed, and that if they are in favour of these reforms they should not neglect the opportunities that offer for bringing them about? Let them beware; a passive policy will never be tolerated. They must not only think, not only entertain opinions; they must also exert themselves in order to give those opinions due and prompt effect. Their conduct in this instance contrasts, we think, most unfavorably with that of their predecessors, and will doubtless tell against them when the day of reckoning comes about. All that day, we venture to predict their negligence,—their omissions, as well as their acts,—will be arrayed before them, and they will be judged accordingly.

We give them this friendly warning, in the hope that it will be the means of infusing a little more energy into their lifeless movements—of exciting a little more attention to those high interests which they have—we fear rashly—undertaken to develop and protect.