

Petitions re-
ferred:
François La-
roche.

Resolved, That the Petition of *François Laroché* of the Parish of *St. Augustin*, in the County of *Portneuf*, be referred to a Select Committee, composed of Mr. *Laurin*, the Honourable Mr. Attorney General *Smith*, Mr. *Leslie*, Mr. *Chabot*, Mr. *Guillet*, and Mr. *Methot*, to examine the contents thereof, and to report thereon with all convenient speed; with power to send for persons, papers, and records.

P. Bussière
and others.

Resolved, That the Petition of *Pierre Bussière* and others, of the parishes of *St. Henri* and *St. Isidore*, in the County of *Dorchester*, be referred to a Select Committee, composed of Mr. *Laurin*, the Honourable Mr. *Daly*, Mr. Solicitor General *Taschereau*, Mr. *Boutillier*, Mr. *Desautel*, and Mr. *Methot*, to examine the contents thereof, and to report thereon with all convenient speed; with power to send for persons, papers, and records.

Despatch from
Colonial Secre-
tary.

The Honourable Mr. Attorney General *Draper*, one of Her Majesty's Executive Council, laid before the House, by command of His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, the following copy of a Despatch from the Colonial Secretary to His Excellency:—

(Copy.)

No. 32.

DOWNING STREET,
3d March, 1846.

MY LORD,

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your Despatch of the 28th of January, No. 7, relating to the expected changes in the British Corn Law, deprecating such changes generally in the interest of *Canada*, and at the same time urging that if there be a determination on the part of Parliament to adopt them, it is much to be desired that they should not take immediate effect.

The interests of *Canada* have occupied the place to which they are justly entitled, in the deliberations of Her Majesty's Government upon this important subject, and upon others which are akin to it. At the same time, I need hardly point out to Your Lordship, that there are matters in which considerations, immediately connected with the supply of food for the people of this country, and with the employment of its population, must be paramount.

Both in respect to Corn and in respect to Timber, Her Majesty's Government have determined to propose, and to use whatever influence they may possess, for the purpose of carrying through Parliament the proposal, that the alterations about to be made should be gradual; and among the motives which have led them to this determination, has been the belief that this delay would be acceptable, and would also be advantageous to the people of *Canada*.

In order to supply you with some further evidence of their desire to consult Colonial wishes and interests in discharging their public duties, I have to direct your attention to a Schedule hereto annexed, which exhibits the duties now chargeable upon articles of Agricultural Produce when imported from the British Dominions abroad, and the changes which it is intended to make in favour of the Colonial Trade, by the immediate abolition or reduction of these duties.

I trust that *Canada* may largely avail herself of the advantages which are thus (for I venture to anticipate the favourable judgment of Parliament upon these propositions about to be submitted to it on the part of the Crown,) about to be placed within her reach. The desire of Her Majesty's Government is, that the Trade in *Canada* may in all respects approach as nearly to perfect freedom, as the dispositions of its inhabitants, and the exigencies of the Public Revenue there, may permit. And, in evidence of that desire, I may advert to my Despatch No. 19, of the 3rd of

February, relating to the Provincial duty on the importation of Wheat, and may again apprise you, that it is not the intention of Her Majesty's Government to check any disposition which *Canada* may manifest, should such be the case, for the repeal of that duty by the interposition of the Prerogative.

Further, with regard to Corn, I have much satisfaction in reflecting, that if *Canada* will have to enter into competition with the Western States of *America*, and to engage in this rivalry, when no longer covered by any protective duty, at least she will not be called to make the effort without some advantages on her side; among them I reckon her light taxation,—the assistance she has received from British credit and funds in the construction and improvement of her internal communications,—her more regular and steady course of trade with this country,—her low tariff, so favourable to improvement, and on that account powerfully tending to encourage her reciprocal commerce outwards,—some advantage in the point of proximity, as compared with the most Westerly States of the *Union*, which are also her most formidable rivals in cheapness of production; and lastly, the means of carriage without transshipments by the *St. Lawrence*, which cannot be had by the way of the *Eric Canal*. She will likewise have this in her favour, that her Corn Trade will have become a settled one of some standing, with all its arrangements made and in full operation, while any regular commerce in that article from the *United States* must be a new creation, and must go through the processes attending its self-adjustment, to circumstances as yet untried.

And if it be true that *New York* offers some advantages, as compared with *Montreal*, particularly in regard to the rate of insurance, on the other hand, I consider that the shipping of British *North America* has many advantages over that of the *United States*, in the competition for freights, as it is constructed at far less expense, and is, I must assume, navigated with equal vigour and equal economy.

It is beyond doubt that *Canada* has felt a very invigorating influence from the augmented facility of access to the British Market, which she has enjoyed since the Act of 1843, and that it has perceptibly stimulated the extension of her Agriculture; but the average prices of Wheat, during the years 1843, 1844 and 1845, have been only 50s. 10d., 51s. 3d. and 50s. 1d. respectively.

Not presuming to anticipate, within any very close limits, what are likely to be the ruling prices of this Grain, after a perfect freedom of Trade shall have been established, I yet venture to think, that the most competent persons are not generally of opinion that they will exhibit any reduction which shall place them greatly below the rates I have just cited, and as I trust we may look forward to some diminution in the cost of conveyance, between the place of growth or grinding, and *Montreal*, I cannot participate in the apprehensions of those who conceive that the measure, now under consideration, will involve ruin, or any thing approaching to it, to the Trade in Canadian Corn and Flour.

I trust, therefore, that the Agricultural Population of *Canada* will look forward without fear, to a change, of which it is probable that the effects will be far less violent, either for good, or for the partial evils which may accompany such good, than many, prompted either by their hopes or their fears, have been forward to anticipate.

I now pass to the question of Timber, which is of great moment with reference to the Trade of *Canada*, although it has not the same interest as the subject of Corn, for the mass of the Population.

I have much satisfaction in drawing Your Lordship's attention to the fact, that the Colonial Timber Trade prospers under the operation of those changes in the Law, which were enacted in 1842, and which