

THE QUESTION OF TIMBER DUTIES INDEPENDENT OF COLONIAL INTERESTS

To the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland, and to all Reflecting Minds, who take an interest and enquire into the vast resources which contribute to maintain that Proud Ascendency which the British Empire has attained; these Letters are most respectfully addressed by the Author.

QUEBEC, 23d Sept. 1831.

Letter I.

It is really surprising in the present state of society, with all means of acquiring information, arising from the public discussion of matters relative to trade and finance, that any person the least conversant in the science of political economy, should for an instant be misled, by the fallacious reasoning of interested parties, and dabblers in theoretical opinions, some of them as absurd in their assertions, as they are unwarranted and destructive in their tendency to all authority both human and divine. In tracing the source of these new lights, it is amusing to find the affinity of reasoning that exists among this party, emanating with certain enlightened reviewers, is re-echoed in the House of Commons by Baltic Traders, and their partisans, and out of the House, by writings that possess much of Cobbett's style of reasoning, who in his late account of the British North American Colonies, boldly asserts that they possess neither freedom of Government, nor any soil worth cultivating, except a small strip of land bordering on the United States. This affinity of reasoning would lead one to suppose if the contrary were not known, that they were hired by foreigners, to traduce and revile Possessions, from whence Great Britain derives some of those powerful resources by which she is enabled to triumph over the machinations of her enemies.

This being the state of the question on the important subject, now under consideration, it is only necessary to put forth a few strong facts, which if duly weighed, must carry conviction to every mind not warped by interest, prejudice, vanity, or a determination to alter every thing, let the consequences arising therefrom be what they may; the present state of the North of Europe comes in most forcibly to shew the great danger of depending on foreign supplies alone instead of Colonial: dis-eases at present may threaten a suspension of trade, to such an extent as would of itself cause a rise, were the Colonial trade crippled or destroyed, that would be of greater loss to the British consumer, than the present duties:—And where would the British Empire find supplies were the present crisis to lead to a war with the principal Powers who supply Baltic Lumber? It is said "oh, it will be an easy matter to revive the Colonial Trade," this may do with those who have said that saw mills might easily be turned into grist mills, as by the same party of reasoning, it will I suppose be inferred, that grist mills may again be converted into saw mills! But really the question is of serious and national importance, and should not be treated with any levity of argument, otherwise it would be very amusing to sport with those made use of by many of these undisciplined pupils of the new school, without recurring to such weapons, let it be remembered, in spite of all assertions to the contrary; (for I find there are not wanting those who can make them without any foundation, whenever it suits their purpose) let it be remembered that it has taken at least twenty years to form this great Colonial Timber Trade, and if destroyed or materially depressed, how could supplies be obtained to meet the emergencies of the Empire, if obliged to return to the Colonies, what would they find there? a people ready to give up all those fine agricultural pursuits, which the great moralists of reform are so much inclined to cherish, at the expense of the present flourishing Timber Trade, and turn their attention again to the hazardous, demoralizing and unprofitable business which these writers make out the Timber trade to be; all for the sake of serving the parent State, who had by an act of the Imperial Parliament, withdrawing its pledges, broke up all their Lumbering Establishments and Saw Mills; and where would be the assurance if this were done once, that it would not be repeated after their turn had been served? but perhaps these economists infer that, as the Colonists have endured equal hardships, they will put up with any thing; and as to the shipowners, who have suffered the greatest sacrifices, owing to the changes arising from a war to a peace establishment, fraught with many plans detrimental to their interest, it cannot be of any vital importance if only 400 ships are thrown out of employ, this being the number that would suffer, as admitted by the advocates of the proposed change. And should an extra number of ships be again required for the Colonial Timber Trade, or transport service, the present owners if they are not all ruined, or others if they are, will gladly come forward and build ships, as they have had ample assurance of the value Parliament set upon such property, by the protection afforded to it after the late war.

Thus far the question relates to the difficulty of reviving a trade of such vast importance, and of simultaneously creating a commercial navy, if its true interests are, by mistaken notions of policy, "frustrated away in trying theoretical plans of political economy; just at a time when the shipping interests are beginning to revive and flourish, after many years of ruinous depression, which hundreds of families can at-

test. As to the Manufacturing interests, Towns and Lands, Property in the Empire, they would all feel proportionately depressed, when it is considered that a blow would be struck to a rising Trade in the North American Colonies, amounting in £6,000,000 of annual traffic, which within a few years be doubled, if the present scale of Lumber duties are left untouched; independent of the great relief afforded by emigration, which this trade so greatly tends to promote, which to Quebec alone up to this date, since the opening of the navigation, 47,000, add one-fifth for children not included in this return, is 56,400 souls; in four months and a-half. In this item there is a saving on emigration of at least £100,000 by reason of the low rate of passage which ships coming in ballast for Timber are induced to take—now when it is considered that every settler when domiciled in the Colonies, contributes twice as much towards the support of trade and manufactures, by producing raw materials of great bulk, taking in return manufactured goods, that employing ships on a long voyage, diffusing life and spirit to all he has left at home, therefore the landed interest of the Empire need not be apprehensive of any decay, should population and wealth leave their estates, as it will only invigorate and promote the health of those that remain, and cause a return of interest, by reason of the immense fleet that are, and will be employed, in conveying the produce of the colonies to the mother country and taking her manufactures in return.—If a doubt is entertained on this head, let the situation of most classes in the Colonies, be compared with the same class in the mother country, and it will be found that they consume more and afford greater supplies for the support of trade and navigation, than they possibly could if remaining in the parent state. Witness the efforts of a disabled pensioner of the navy sending down to Quebec 50,000 feet of better and larger red pine timber, than can now be produced in the Baltic, while a half-pay Captain will often send 3 to 400 barrels of flour, (superior in quality to any made in Great Britain or Ireland) another 1000 bushels of wheat.—But these enquiries are not necessary, the fact is that population is redundant in Great Britain and Ireland, and must spread, and where can it more efficaciously expand itself, than in the North American Colonies, when facts prove it will there render greater support to the Empire than if provided for in the mother country?

Is it possible under this view of the subject, that the confidence and faith, placed on a reliance and expectation of the fostering care of the State, under which many have come out, are daily arriving, and have been taught and led to expect from their infancy to look up to, as things almost sacred, is to be thus trifled with; and feelings which spread a glow of patriotic ardour hardly known to those who have never left home destroyed?—Witness the effect of such feelings as displayed during the late contest in defence of the Canadas when many sacrificed all they had in support of British interests.—Can it be possible that all this will be endangered, for the sake of promoting the interest of a few individuals trading to the Baltic; under the flimsy plea, of supplying timber and deals, at a lower rate than the consumer pays at present? it is again urged, the flimsy plea, that timber and deals would be lower, this to men conversant with the nature of trade, and a knowledge that must ensue if the North American Colonies are not supported in their competition, by protecting duties, is really childish.—That this protection is not too great is left for the shipping interest to prove to the satisfaction of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

All this is so evident that it hardly needs explanation, as it is well known, whenever such an extensive supply as the Colonies afford is withdrawn, there must be a rise even in the price of labour in making the extra quantities in the Baltic, independent of the quickness of traders to create one wherever there is a constant demand and no great competition—finally, would the owners of Baltic forests, Baltic mills, and Foreign ships, resident in England, be idle in grasping at, and making combination with foreign merchants to create a rise, if not greater at least equivalent to the present rates,—where then would be the gain?—Let these things be considered, and if the Imperial Parliament can be blindly deceived, by the specious arguments of certain reviewers, and would-be political economists, it will not be of much consequence to the North American Colonies, for it will be a proof that the happy ascendancy which the Empire possesses, is on the wane, and that she is no longer able to protect them.—If otherwise the question reverts to the head of the argument, and must be considered one of great national importance, independent of Colonial interests.

JAMES GEORGE.

Letter II.

It is highly satisfactory to the minds of those who reflect on the freedom enjoyed by all who live under the happy auspices of the British Constitution; that by the liberty of the Press, every subject has the power of expressing his sentiments. If there was not a cause, the present might be deemed intrusive, but as there is a cause, and one of the utmost interest, to call forth the exertions of every individual, possessing the least spark of patriotism, to urge public discussion, on the all-important subject, the timber duties. It is therefore, with less reluctance, I again presume, dilate on their relative importance to the prosperity, and even existence, of that proud ascendancy, which the British

Empire has attained. When, on a former occasion, a few hasty remarks were penned, it was satisfactory to learn that they were received in London, 24 days from the date of publication in this city, where the principles held forth in that letter were borne out by the united voice of 400 merchants and others, at a public meeting at the City of London Tavern, (vide their report published), as well as by the able, manly, and disinterested statements of Sir Howard Douglas, and many others, added to the decision of a majority of 46 members, in a very full house of the Commons of Great Britain. In making these few remarks on the present state of the question, I feel re-assured that the subject of the Timber Duties may be now considered as finally settled, in favour of the Colonies. I was going to say, but it is wrong, to view them only in this light, they are none other than a national question, aye, and a national question, of the greatest import to the vital strength and power of the British Empire; without pretending to ability, or having time, to dilate upon the lengthy statements which have followed the train of discussion laid down as the fundamental basis of these arguments, it is only necessary to remark, that they have been amply dilated, enlarged, and commented upon, with references and details, taken from official returns in Mr. Bliss's pamphlet; and by D. Anderson, in his *Importance of British America*, published in 1824,—a work although edited by a Canada Merchant, hardly known in Quebec, its title to a very few of our merchants, and is not to be found in our collections of books; such is the apathy with which any work or matter is generally received, when emanating from a prophet in his own country.—Confident of being borne out by those who reflect a little more than on exigencies of the present moment, it is satisfactory to comment upon the present state of the question; and it must be deemed certain, if our national affairs are not verging to their decline, which there is very reason to expect the contrary, seeing that under a patriot King, and a reforming ministry, Colonial affairs are about to be enquired into, and truth elicited; against which it were as vain to resist, as against the lightning's flash. But it will be asked why have the British Ministry been led into such egregious errors with respect to Colonial affairs? The answer is obvious, they found in the bureaux of their predecessors a mass of extravagant documents relative to Colonial expenditure, without much information regarding their vast improvable resources, with mighty schemes, and estimates of hundreds of thousands, nay millions of pounds, required to complete works that will not yield one farthing of interest, thus hampered, together with the all absorbing question of national reform in view, they were artfully misled by interested and uninformed individuals, whose selfishness or ignorance they had neither time nor opportunity to detect, and thereby led astray; (and who would not be under such circumstances,) for they doubted the stability of those who had manifestly brought the Colonies to the most unsettled state, and now forsooth stand forth their ablest champions. It is rather disheartening to reflect that almost all subjects of commercial improvement and trade, are in some degree connected with politics, and deter many from entering upon the subject, from that diffidence, which those untutored in affairs of state naturally feel, owing to the want of experience, so necessary to carry through discussions that take so wide a range; added to the risk they run of incurring the displeasure of men in power, whose influence it is well known can be made to reach the humblest walks in life. Trusting this digression will be pardoned, as it leads to the main question, how any Ministry could be so grossly deceived on a question of such vitality to the national resources of the Empire, and how can we expect any other than a total neglect of our claim to be heard? To this I reply the discussions have been read, have been urged, both publicly and privately, and the Ministry cannot! will not! bring forward this measure again! moreover if they do, they will forfeit public opinion, and lose their seals of office!

It was not my intention to have made any comment on the pamphlet published by certain gentlemen connected in opinion with the enlightened club of the Westminster Review; but when I find this enlightened junta, will not allow a governor, because he is a military man, any knowledge of the country he so ably governed for many years, to the satisfaction of all, when such men set themselves up to write about political economy, and what ought to influence the conduct of enlightened statesmen, going into details about the agricultural interests of Colonies, in a most plausible manner, because those Colonies are so far distant, that their modes of labour and means of clearing the woods are so far removed even from the towns in Canada, that very few living in those towns, are much acquainted with the manner of clearing new lands; (I of course speak of the educated classes,) it is absolutely necessary that some person, born, brought up, and living in this country, intimately acquainted with the habits and customs of both its new, and its old settlers, should tell them, that their reasoning is totally fallacious and unfounded in principle, because it is well known, that in clearing new land, unless a settler is possessed of the means of subsistence for 12 or 18 months, it is impossible for him to attempt making a settlement, even if he were to get the land for nothing, and he naturally must resort to labour for others, which labour, if it were not for the Lumber Trade, where would he get on, had he at Quebec, or other seaports, and last of all, near the land which he intends to clear in the neighbourhood of which, if there is not a lumbering establishment going on, he will often have to travel 20, or 30 miles to some town or farm to get work; not that he is immediately fit to undertake making Timber, or Staves, but he may be employed in various ways in some part of the work, and frequently take the place of a more active man on a settled farm, who will go to the Lumber business, and make money, by which means he will pay the hired emigrant, who thereby gets instruction; and a footing in the country, and becomes a useful settler. There are many who have by this means attained independence, writing, if not returning to their native country after clearing a farm, with £50 to £100 in cash, and inducing many families to emigrate under their protection—such are the advantages derived from the diffusion of labour alone, afforded by the Lumber Trade, not to speak of the capital it brings into the country, infusing life and vigour into all its operations, from the small dealer, to the most wealthy merchant and ship-builder—from the patch of the vegetable grower, to the greatest seignior and farmer of this country.

As to the progress of agriculture on new lands, it is really laughable to read the wise assertions of this junta, who talk of the use of the plough on new lands, as if it were not a palpable fact, that it is from five to seven years before it can be used with any effect—independent of their forgetting, that after clearing two to five acres, the poor man must either starve or work at something for hire until harvest, and after that, during the winter, where would he be, if it were not that the country is fully occupied in preparing 16 to 1700 cargoes of lumber, the bare idea of this, to any reflecting mind, who can at one view grasp the vast extent of labour this affords, must be convinced, that the lumber trade is of the greatest help to the emigrant, independent of all its other great and national advantages. As to the vague, unfounded, and unmeaning assertion of the junta, about raising grain, and turning saw mills into grist mills, they are too palpably absurd to require any comment. With respect to the moral influence of this trade, on which they lay so much stress, as to its being so much in the hands of American and not British subjects, these might formerly have been correct assertions, but at present are unfounded in fact.

If it were not evident that this pamphlet is purposely published, with a view to favour Baltic interests, I would take more pains to comment upon, and expose its glaring absurdities, but as I trust this is sufficiently obvious, the North American Colonies may rest satisfied, that the British Parliament will not sacrifice their interests, to favour the Northern Powers of Europe!!!

To those who regret that so unsound a measure of political economy, should have caused so much trouble and anxiety, both at home and abroad, the answer is simple, it has by this public discussion, brought forth and elicited, what was mainly required to be known, and must be appreciated, that the colonies, especially those in North America, are the brightest jewels in the British Crown, and only require fostering care, and judicious management, to render them efficacious in supporting its best interests and independence, for if under careless and injudicious management, it can be proved, they have contributed, in no small degree, to bear the British Empire through one of the most arduous struggles that a nation ever had to encounter, and whose ambitious opponent, during that struggle, admitted that ships, Colonies, and commerce, was all he required to ensure her subjection to his power.—Will it longer remain a doubt, to any reflecting mind, that under the present pressure of redundant population, and wealth, which the British Empire has attained, the same degree of ignorance, and want of capital, to improve these Colonies will remain; when it can so easily be proved, that under judicious management, they can be made not only capable to support any superabundant population, the British Empire has, or may acquire, but also profitably to employ, those resources of private capital, her subjects have realized; which in return, would yield a trade of such vast extent and profitable employment, as would defy the combinations of all Europe.

Many will say how is this to be done? The answer is, keep to the present scale of Timber duties—form judicious plans for emigration—encourage growth of hemp—by simply offering a fair price for it, (not only at one place 500 miles up the River St. Lawrence,) and do not restrict all schemes of improvement, to such as emanate from any particular class. The subject of this communication being of national importance, will I trust be a sufficient apology for any freedom of language with which it has been urged.

JAMES GEORGE.

Letter III.

Having examined the various statements and opinions respecting the policy of continuing the present scale of duties on lumber, imported from the Baltic to Great Britain and Ireland; it may perhaps be useful to call attention to a different view of the subject, than has hitherto been sufficiently noticed, namely that those duties do not operate more in favour of Colonial prosperity than they do, in fostering the shipping and trade of the mother country, on which the landed interest is well known so much depends. As this is admitted by all conversant in the vast resources which contribute to maintain the power and independence of the British Empire, it requires no comment. If there is any practical way of demon-

strating this principle, it is perhaps worth enquiring our interests to urge the detriment and loss that will ensue to our saw mills, and lumbering establishments; as it is very doubtful after the lavish expenditure of public money in the Canadas, whether the present Ministry of Great Britain would give any consideration to such a plea, should we have nothing better to urge against the saving of one million and a half of money, which the proposed alteration of those duties, it is said, will ensure to the revenue.—To counteract this erroneous impression which is fostered by want of due reflection, combined with Foreign and Baltic interests, should be our chief aim. Incompetent as I am, for this elaborate task owing to a want of knowledge in wielding the doughty pen of argument, perhaps a little arithmetical calculation will have more effect in convincing the enlightened statesmen of Great Britain, than any other attempt however eloquently penned, stating arithmetically these advantages it is to be hoped that a spirit of candour will allow for any inaccuracy in the amount of sums, not having official returns to refer to, provided the principle is made out.

The trade now employs from 12 to 1500 British ships. If altered, it would at least bring into competition, and consequently throw out of employ, or depreciate the value of 7 to 800 British ships, leaving a loss of 800 ships unemployed, independent of the depreciation of the general shipping interests. British seamen now employed, 20 to 25,000. Foreign seamen brought up and fostered in their stead, 1 to 10,000; thus endangering the prosperity of 20 to 25,000 of Britain's heroes, sons, and perhaps throwing them upon the public, to swell that tide of discontent which has of late sprung up in the manufacturing interest.

British subjects at home and in the colonies, fostered, fed, and employed in carrying on this trade, 300,000.—Foreigners benefited in their stead, it is futile to compute.

British capital invested and barely remunerated in this branch of trade, including freight, £3,000,000.

Foreign brought in and fostered in its stead, 2,000,000.

Probable loss by British capital being thrown out of employ, which could find no other mart, £1,000,000.

Loss on British Manufactures and Products raised in the Empire, that could not be made up in any other way, 1,000,000.

Profit to the colonies which would be thrown away to Foreigners, 500,000.

Advantages derived from the present scale of duties, £2,500,000.

Deduct Gain to the Empire by lowering the scale of Baltic duties, as estimated by the advocates for that measure, 1,500,000.

Annual loss to the Empire if any alteration is made, £1,000,000.

Independent of cherishing the North American Colonies, and holding the key over a country which, if properly managed, will ever keep Great Britain independent of all Foreign competition, in Lumber, Naval stores, and trade in general. It has been estimated by the most celebrated calculators that the countries subject to the British Empire, through which the river St. Lawrence and its tributary streams flow, together with parts adjacent to its land seas and lakes, is capable of maintaining in a healthy climate forty-five million inhabitants, attached by interest and other ties of a peculiar nature to Great Britain. What might not be accomplished if these advantages were duly appreciated and acted upon, with that knowledge and judgment possessed by the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain, whose reduction of population and unlimited wealth, only need for judicious direction, to accomplish the settlement of the finest country in the world. Without deranging any of the present plans for settling lands in Canada, a more extensive and national plan should be adopted, which would give immediate relief to the British Empire, and after a permanent arrangement, the Baltic need many other protecting duties might be taken off, and the British Isles rendered truly the wonder and admiration of the world.

Under this view of the subject, suppose the House-builder, Artizan, or Farmer, does actually pay 2s. for a foot of British colonial timber, which it is pretended by the advocates of the Baltic trade might be furnished from that quarter from 1s. to 1s. 6d. per foot, yet he will find more employment so doing by reason of the profits arising to him from Colonial trade; therefore it is the interest of the Empire and not that of the Colonies alone, that require for the present, this protection.—All which is humbly submitted by

JAMES GEORGE.

SLEIGHS & WAGGONS
THE subscriber has on hand a variety of Sleighs, Waggon, &c. of good workmanship, built of the best materials, which he will dispose of on moderate terms for cash or approved credit; he would also inform the public, that he intends carrying on the Carriage and Sleigh-making business in all its various branches. Purchasers who wish to be made after any model which they may require.

RICHARD DUNN.
Fredericton, November 9, 1831.
5 DUTCH PAPERS.
20,000 best Spanish Segars.
For sale low by
F. E. BECKWITH.
Jan 24/32.