

Pall Mall Gazette was headed: The "Colonial Conference"—with the inverted commas as they are printed—a name not only entirely incorrect, but conveying a meaning very different from the term adopted by the committee. With equal accuracy the Conference has been criticised as if it had been the factious effort of a clique of returned colonists to create a mutiny when the sea was calm and the ship of Empire fairly bound. I would it were so—I would we were all as addled as they profess to think us! As a fact very few colonists were connected with the initiation of these meetings; the aim of them was far less ambitious than has been represented; they were projected not for agitation but for discussion—not to promote specific schemes but to give or gather information.*

Is it really necessary that I should meet the reflections made upon the programme of the Conference by friends or foes? No meetings on such questions so comprehensive in their range had before been projected, none certainly ever held. None so calculated to disarm the sort of objection urged against it could have been conceived. Yet such high-class journals as the *Daily News* and *Pall Mall Gazette* challenge us for worrying the public with needless outcries, while the *Standard* condemns us for not uttering sounds sufficiently defined and resolute. It may freely be admitted that as yet we are not in a position to organise a party to promote any specific scheme either of federalism or emigration. But is that a reason for silence? Again, exception has been taken to the variety of topics in the programme—to their relevancy, to their practical utility. It may be that in a tentative effort like this some errors were committed; but on the whole we may confidently leave this point to the opinion of the public, when the ensuing Address and the whole of the transactions are placed before it.

I should think that rarely was any honest effort, owned by its critics to be a somewhat enlightened one, so ignobly and viciously libelled as this. Of sneers we have had good store; of countervailing arguments but few. Feeble commonplaces, of the *laissez-faire* stamp, have been opposed to irrefutable facts; an alarm, too justly based and too strictly made good by proof, has been contemptuously ridiculed; the very breadth and elevation of our views is suggested as an evidence of the unpractical nature of our

* The twenty guarantors of the expenses of the Conference included Peers, sons of Peers, Members of Parliament, and English merchants.