

“right not to allow the Committee to be postponed beyond the time originally fixed for the opening of its proceedings.

“On the part of the Crown, I should have no objection to the offer of the Commission as you propose, and I think you may with perfect propriety act upon the resumption that the Members of the Committee will accept the charge confided to them.”

“The Government has stretched its legal conscience and encouraged Parliament, though not without warning, to exceed its legitimate powers in order to facilitate this enquiry. The obstacle now interposed is one with which you have no concern, and beyond your control. You propose to obviate the difficulty by the only means in your power,—but a means both legitimate and effectual. No one can doubt that for the purpose for which the Committee was originally constituted, its conversion into a Commission can make no practical difference. As a Commission it will take evidence, and as a Committee it will report upon that evidence to the House. It would be unreasonable to allege that in discharging this double function, and in acquiring in addition to the powers delegated to it by Parliament, a technical authority at the hands of the Crown to take evidence on oath, it abates one tittle of its constitutional independence.”

Thus authorized, Sir *John* communicated with Mr. Cameron in the following letter :—

“MONTREAL, July 2nd, 1873.

“Sir,—As the Act which would have enabled the Committee, now sitting in Montreal, of which you are Chairman, to examine witnesses on oath, has been disallowed, as being beyond the competence of the Canadian Parliament, I desire to renew to you as Chairman of the Committee the offer made by me on the part of the Government on the floor of the House of Commons, to issue a Royal Commission addressed to the gentlemen forming the Committee which would confer upon them all the powers given to the Committee by the House of Commons, including the examination of witnesses under oath, and the power to send for persons, papers and records, and containing the same provisions as to the votes of the Members of the Committee and yourself as Chairman, as was ordered by the House. The acceptance of this Commission will enable this Committee to proceed with the enquiry, and the examination of witnesses on oath without any important delay. I shall cause a copy of this letter to be sent to each Member of your Committee.

“I have the honor to be,

“Your obdt. servant,

“J. A. MACDONALD.

“To Hon. J. H. Cameron, &c., &c.

“P.S.—The Commission will contain a clause enjoining the Commissioners to report to the Speaker of the House of Commons.

“(Signed) J. A. MACDONALD.”

The majority of the Committee are understood to have been willing to return a favorable reply to this proposal had their colleagues assented, but neither Mr. *Dorion* nor Mr. *Blake* considered themselves at liberty to accept the arrangement, and stated their reasons in the following terms :—

“To the Right Honourable Sir John A. Macdonald.

“SIR,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 2nd inst., received this morning, enclosing a copy of a letter addressed by you to the Hon. J. H. Cameron, Chairman of the Special Committee of the House of Commons, now sitting in Montreal, in which you state that, as the Act which would have enabled the Committee to examine witnesses under oath had been disallowed, as being beyond the competence of