

(No. 107.)

Duke of BUCKINGHAM AND CHANDOS to Viscount MONCK.

MY LORD,

Downing Street, 4th June 1868.

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I DULY received the Address to the Queen from the House of Assembly of the Province of Nova Scotia, contained in your lordship's despatch, No. 42,* of the 14th of March, representing that they object to the measure of confederation by which the Province has been joined with Canada and New Brunswick, and praying that, so far as regards Nova Scotia, the Act of the Imperial Parliament effecting the union may be repealed.

I have also had an interview with Mr. Joseph Howe, Mr. William Annand, Mr. Troop, and Mr. Smith, being the deputation who were appointed by the Executive Council of Nova Scotia to visit this country in order to explain and support the representations offered against confederation.

I have the honour to inform you that I have laid the Address of the House of Assembly before the Queen, and that Her Majesty received with much satisfaction the assurances which it contains of their unabated loyalty and attachment to Her person and government. The Queen regrets to learn that any dissatisfaction should have been caused amongst her faithful subjects in Nova Scotia by the measure of Confederation adopted by the Imperial Parliament, and assented to by the Crown, but Her Majesty trusts that the objections which have been expressed may admit of removal.

I can assure your lordship that the subject of the Address has engaged the earnest consideration of Her Majesty's Confidential Advisers. They are well aware that the inhabitants of Nova Scotia have always been distinguished by a sentiment, honourable alike to the Colony and to this country, of attachment to the British Crown and Government, and they are anxious to promote the contentment of a people so justly entitled to consideration. But the magnitude of the interests at stake renders it a duty, not to shrink from examining fully the grounds of the complaints which have been adduced; and if it should prove that some of them are mistaken and others removable, I should indulge the hope that a different view of the subject will be ultimately taken.

The leading complaints appear to be reducible to two:—First, that confederation was accomplished without properly consulting the Province; and secondly, that the results may be prejudicial to some of its special interests.

Now as far as regards the second of these topics, Her Majesty's Government feel that they need only draw the attention of yourself and of your Government to the points raised in the Address relative to taxation, the regulation of trade and the fisheries, as they are confident that it will be equally the wish of your Government and of the Parliament of the Dominion to relax or modify any arrangements on those subjects which may prejudice the peculiar interests of Nova Scotia, and of the maritime portion of the Dominion. No doubt can be entertained that the Parliament of the Dominion will be fully alive to both the justice and the expediency of consulting all the various interests of the territory over which its jurisdiction extends.

With respect to the evidences of the opinion of the Province, I observe that Nova Scotia was on several occasions the first of the Provinces to move the project of confederation. In 1854 it was proposed in the Legislature of Nova Scotia. In 1857 it formed one of the topics entrusted to some delegates from the Government of Nova Scotia to Her Majesty's Government. The plan was moved in Canada in 1858, but being subsequently dropped, was revived in Nova Scotia in 1861; and made the subject, in 1862, of a Circular Address from Nova Scotia to all the other Provinces.

In 1864 delegates were appointed by the Government of Nova Scotia to attend the conference at Quebec that framed the scheme on which the Act of Confederation now in force is based. As soon as that scheme was unanimously adopted by the delegates from the several Provinces, the Secretary of State remarked that the project should be submitted to the several Legislatures. Prince Edward Island declined both in 1865 and 1866, and Newfoundland never adopted the proposal. But in 1866 both Houses of the Legislature in Nova Scotia, and both Houses of the Legislature in New Brunswick, passed resolutions (of which copies are annexed to this Despatch) requesting the Governor to name delegates to arrange with the Imperial Government a scheme of union, whilst Canada had previously passed similar resolutions, of which also copies are annexed. Such were the proceedings which attested to the Government of this country, on the highest authority, the wish of the Legislatures in those Provinces.

I am advised that the Act of Confederation was duly and lawfully passed by the Imperial Parliament.

It is objected that no previous appeal was made to the people in the Provinces; but this has not been thought necessary in parallel cases. There was none, for instance, in uniting the two Canadas in 1839, although much difference of opinion existed, and in