

No. 5.
Rt. hon. C. Poulett
Thomson to Lord
John Russell,
1 November 1839.

So far as I can form an opinion, either from what I have heard from Sir John Colborne, or from what I have myself learnt since his departure from this country, there is no danger of any immediate disturbance of the public peace in this province, either by the disaffected within it, or by the sympathisers on the frontier. My presence in the Lower Province is not, therefore, requisite on that score. There are, undoubtedly, many objects of great importance in Lower Canada demanding my attention, but they are comparatively not of a pressing description; and however desirous I am of devoting my time to measures of improvement here, I still feel that I shall have the opportunity of doing so hereafter with as much effect as now, and probably with a better opportunity of fully maturing, with my Special Council, such ordinances as may be required.

The state of communication in this country makes it necessary that I should either proceed to Toronto within the time I have named, or defer my journey for a couple of months, there being no certainty of the road being passable during the interval which elapses between the breaking up of the summer roads and the establishment of the trainage. Were I therefore to defer my journey, for the purpose of devoting myself for a few weeks longer to the consideration of Lower Canada matters, I might endanger the possibility of arriving at Toronto before the end of January, a circumstance which, whether I consider the condition of both provinces, or the great importance of your Lordship and Her Majesty's Government being furnished with correct information upon the measures to be submitted to Parliament, could not but be highly prejudicial.

The information which I have received, and the various communications I have made it my business to have with all parties in the province, lead me also to believe that, so far as Lower Canada is concerned, a union with the Upper Province upon just and equitable principles is greatly desired by the vast majority of the intelligent of all parties, and I expect to have acquired, before my departure, sufficient information as to details, to be enabled to enter upon their consideration with a full knowledge of what is demanded here, if the opinion of the inhabitants of Upper Canada shall be equally in favour of the measure.

Upon these considerations I have come to the first determination which I have had the honour to state to your Lordship.

With regard to the second step, viz. calling together the Assembly, I have arrived at that conclusion only after considerable doubt and very serious and repeated deliberation; for although the opinion of Sir George Arthur, who strongly urged upon me the propriety of doing so, had justly much weight with me, I cannot but feel that the decision is one of great importance.

I should have been very desirous of ascertaining, by a personal residence of some time within the province, the state of public opinion there, before coming to any determination upon the subject. The time which much necessarily be employed for that purpose after my arrival there, three weeks hence, would, however, throw back the meeting of the Assembly, if I decided on calling it together, or that of a new Assembly, should I have found it expedient to adopt that course, for a very considerable time, and be the cause of serious delay, to which I am unwilling to expose myself. It appeared, therefore, to me necessary to decide either upon dissolving at once, or upon at once calling together the present Assembly.

There may be some arguments in favour of submitting the questions proposed by Her Majesty's Government respecting the future constitution of the province, to a new Assembly, summoned *ad hoc*. But there is little in the character of the present Assembly which should render it an improper tribunal to adjudge upon this particular matter; certainly nothing to justify me in appealing to the people, without in the first instance testing their sentiments. It is always in my power to make that appeal, without incurring much greater delay, if I should see reason to think that the present body does not fairly represent the popular mind upon the important subjects I shall have to bring before them, whilst I cannot but feel that it is highly desirable, in the state in which the province is represented to me to be, that no unnecessary excitement should be created; and it certainly cannot be said that a body of men who, in the course of a very short time, must necessarily be sent back to their constituents,