

[Copy.]
No. 87.

Downing Street, 26th November, 1858.

SIR,

I have on a former occasion acknowledged your despatch, No 118, of the 9th September, accompanied by a minute of a Committee of the Executive Council of Canada, proposing that Her Majesty's Government should authorize a meeting of Delegates, to discuss the expediency, and the conditions of a Federal Union of the British North American Provinces. By this name I understand to be meant an arrangement for establishing a Common Legislation in the Provinces, upon matters of common concern. I have since received a letter on the same question, dated the 25th of October, from those Members of your Executive Council, who have recently visited England; and I have to inform you that the proposal has received from Her Majesty's Government, the careful consideration which its importance demands.

The question however, is one which involves not merely the interests of the important Province of Canada and its relations towards the Empire, but also the position and welfare of the other North American Provinces. The Government of one of them has afforded some indication that it deems the question of a Legislative Union of some or all of the Colonies, as equally deserving of consideration. With this exception Her Majesty's Government have received no expression whatever of the sentiments which may be entertained by the Governments of the Lower Provinces. We think that we should be wanting in proper consideration for those Governments, if we were to authorize, without any previous knowledge of their views, a meeting of Delegates from the Executive Councils, and thus to commit them to a preliminary step towards the settlement of a momentous question of which they have not yet signified their assent to the principle.

A communication in terms corresponding with the present despatch, will be addressed to the Governors of the other Provinces, in order to place them, and their responsible Advisers in full possession of the actual state of the question.

I have, &c.,

(Signed,) E. B. LYTTON,

The Right Honorable,
Sir E. Head, Baronet,
&c., &c., &c.

(Copy.)

Quebec, 9th September, 1858.

SIR,

I have the honor to transmit for Your Excellency's information the enclosed Copy of a minute of the Executive Council of Canada, approved