

side it has been made clear that they would regard any majority for confederation, however small, as binding and that, if the decision were solely for them, they would arrange for confederation, even though the majority were as small as one. But they recognize that, confederation being two-sided, the ultimate word must be with Canada and if Canada decides that a majority is too small to justify acceptance of Newfoundland into confederation, they could not but acquiesce in that decision.

5. Other important points which have come out in the discussions are these:

(a) The Commissioner of Justice of Newfoundland has expressed the personal opinion that if the majority is very small and there is thus a sharp but evenly balanced division of opinion, it would not be wise to base upon it an irrevocable constitutional change.

(b) In view of the strength of feeling on this question in the island and of the concentration in the Avalon Peninsula of the supporters of responsible Government there is in the view of the Governor and the Commissioner for Justice, real danger of civil disorders if it were announced that, notwithstanding the smallness of the majority, confederation would at once be proceeded with.

(c) The Commonwealth Relations Office will ask the Governor and Commission to send immediately after the poll a reasoned appreciation of the position which would be communicated also to the Canadian Government for their information.

(d) If there is a very small majority for confederation and if confederation does not take place, the United Kingdom Government will restore responsible Government. There will, in the United Kingdom view, be no other course open to them.

6. The United Kingdom representatives think it most important that there should, if possible, be a measure of understanding on this question between the Canadian and United Kingdom Governments before the poll takes place, since if matters were allowed to slide and there were long delays between the poll and a final decision due to the necessity for exchange of views then, there would be danger of a very unsettled situation in the island. It is for this reason that they are instructing their High Commissioner in Ottawa to discuss the matter with you shortly.

7. I am giving the Commonwealth Relations Office a copy of this telegram and you may wish to give a copy to Clutterbuck. Ends.

615.

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*Extraits d'une dépêche du haut commissaire par intérim à Terre-Neuve
au secrétaire d'État aux Affaires extérieures*

*Extracts from Despatch from Acting High Commissioner in Newfoundland
to Secretary of State for External Affairs*

DESPATCH 321

St. John's, July 2, 1948