

To the Honourable the House of Commons of the
Dominion of Canada :

The petition of the undersigned members of
the Church of England, in the Parish (or
Mission) of

HUMBLY SHEWETH,

That your petitioners have been much
alarmed by the introduction into your Honour-
able House of a Bill to effect serious changes in
the Marriage Laws legalising the marriage of a
man with his deceased wife's sister, and of a
woman with her deceased husband's brother.
That your petitioners are persuaded that any
such interference with the table of prohibited
degrees will materially affect the welfare of the
community and the comfort and happiness of
many households in which persons connected
together by affinity have been accustomed to
regard each other in the same light as though
they were connected by the ties of consan-
guinity, and enjoy the same happy intercourse
as brothers and sisters without suspicion or
thought of evil.

Your petitioners believe that one of the mar-
riages to be legalised is expressly forbidden by
Holy Scripture, and that the prohibition of the
other is implied, and they cannot admit that
any authority, ecclesiastical or civil, is em-
powered to dispense with such a pro-
hibition.

That your petitioners especially object to the
proviso of the Bill making a distinction between
marriages where the parties are members of one
religious body, and other cases, as introducing
an element of confusion and uncertainty, and
they hold that all such marriages ought either
to be legal or illegal in every case, without
reference to the peculiarities of any Branch of
the Church.

That on behalf of the children who may be
deprived of their mother, your petitioners pray
that the present position of the surviving sister
with relation to the widower may not be alter-
ed, as such alteration must necessarily deprive
the motherless children of the loving care of the
aunt at the time when it would be most espe-
cially beneficial, and under the present law is
commonly enjoyed.

Finally, your petitioners submit that before
any alteration is made in the Marriage Laws,
ample opportunity should be afforded for the
full consideration of a subject in which all per-
sons are more or less interested, and for the
presentation of their objections by those who
are opposed to any change; that no such
opportunity has been afforded with respect to
the Bill now before your Honourable House,
and that for this as well as the other reasons
herein set forth it should be rejected.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let us show to this
House how the Protestant clergy stands.
On the one side we find the Bishops of
the Church of England being almost
unanimously against the Bill. Their
joint petition is in these terms:—

That your petitioners have heard with sur-
prise and alarm that a Bill has been introduced
into your Honourable House to legalise marriage
with the sister of a deceased wife, and also to

legalise the marriage of a woman with the
brother of her deceased husband.

Your petitioners submit, that many serious
evils would arise from thus tampering with the
fundamental law of marriage, which has de-
clared that the two become by marriage one
flesh, and with the immemorial custom founded
upon this law, that the prohibited degrees of
affinity and consanguinity should be identical.

Your petitioners further submit that there is
no more fruitful source of corruption of morals
in a State than laxity on the subject of mar-
riage; and they have great reason to fear that
if the proposed Bill should pass into an Act,
other cases of unlawful union will speedily
arise, which it will be difficult, if not impos-
sible, to reject; and that general immorality will be
promoted. For these and other grave reasons
which your petitioners forbear to urge, your
petitioners earnestly pray your Honourable
House not to consent that the proposed Bill
should become law, and your petitioners will
ever pray, etc.

JOHN FREDERICTON, Metropolitan of Canada;
H. Nova Scotia, J. T. Ontario, J. W.
Quebec, T. B. Niagara, W. B. Montreal,
A. Toronto.

These Bishops have further sent in their
respective petitions, in which the same
grounds are set forth more fully. The
Bishop of Huron has also forwarded his
individual protest. But against these
representations, not from the whole
clergy or laity of the Church of England,
not from this important branch of Chris-
tianity as a body, but from the Episcopate
of that Church only a large number
of favourable testimonials came from all
shades of the Protestant faith. It must not
be forgotten that the Presbytery of Lon-
don, Ontario, was sitting at the time of
the introduction of the Bill, and had this
religious body been against its provisions,
it would, no doubt, have petitioned
against it. True, the Presbytery of Mon-
treal has just asked Parliament to
delay its proceedings until the next annual
meeting of the General Assembly of the
Presbyterian Church of Canada, in June
next, but from the wording of the petition
one would suppose that the cause of their
action seems to be that portion of the
Bill which legalises marriage with the
widow of a brother. On the other hand,
we do not know who formed this Presby-
tery of Montreal; who were present at
the meeting where this petition was
decided upon; when the meeting was
held; and finally, we are not even told
that the petition was duly authorised.
We also find that the Ministerial Protes-
tant Association of Montreal, open to all
Protestant ministers, at a meeting where