

The correspondence with New Brunswick was more successful. In St. John's a Colonial Association had been formed somewhat similar in character to the League. It received the overtures of the committee most favorably and appointed delegates to represent the Association at the proposed conference. As there appeared but little prospect of favorable reply from the other colonies by the sea, the committee decided to go on with the conference with the Colonial Association alone.

From the very outset the conference was doomed to failure. It was a weak, unrepresentative body without influence or prestige. The delegates met at a most inopportune moment. The citizens of Montreal had just been thrown into a high state of excitement over the appearance of the annexation manifesto. As a natural consequence the proceedings of the convention attracted but little public attention. The delegates were ill-equipped for their mission. The representatives of the Colonial Association were not authorized to act definitely, but only to ascertain the views of the League and to report back to the Association. The committee of the League were not prepared with any specific plan of proceeding and had nothing definite to submit. All that the delegates could do was to talk over in the most general way, the questions of the expediency of a union and the best form of a constitution for the provinces in case they should unite.

It was the unanimous opinion of the conference that a union was desirable, especially as a means of increasing the influence of the colonies at Westminster, of overcoming the ascendancy of the French and of securing an extension of the powers of self-government. The delegates of the League were opposed to a federal union on account of the great expense of such a complex system of government, but the New Brunswick representatives refused to "recommend a legislative union unless Canada would consent that the lower colonies should have sufficient influence in one House, the legislative council, to enable them at all times to interpose an effectual check on all measures which tended in any way to their detriment! The committee recognized that the proposition of the Maritime delegates was a reasonable one "that Canada ought not to and would not oppose." There was a great difference of opinion among the delegates in respect to the details