

1828
Huskinson

Copy of a Petition presented to the House of Commons, by Mr. HUSKISSON, June, 1828.

To the Honourable the Commons, &c.

The Humble Petition of the Undersigned, Merchants and others, connected with the Canadas,

SHEWETH,

THAT your Petitioners have perceived with alarm and deep regret the dissensions which have for many years prevailed in these provinces, and which are now so much matter of public notoriety, that your Petitioners deem it unnecessary to occupy the time of your Honourable House in their detail: neither is it the purpose of your Petitioners to blame the conduct of any Man or party of Men, in these provinces, and thus by recrimination aggravate the evil; but your Petitioners are actuated by the more laudable motive of calling the attention of your Honourable House to what appears to them the only effectual remedy for these unfortunate differences, in time to come.

That, in the honest conviction of your Petitioners, the Act of the 31st Geo. III. cap. 31, whereby the late Province of Quebec was divided into the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, has been the fruitful source of all the evils with which the Canadas have been and are now afflicted.

That this most impolitic measure was passed at the time, without being desired by the then few Inhabitants of what now constitutes the Province of Upper Canada, and in direct opposition to the wishes of the Inhabitants of what now constitutes the Province of Lower Canada, whether of French or British extraction, as clearly appears by the representation of their joint Agent, made at the bar of your Honourable House on the 23rd March, 1791.

That the baleful consequences of this measure were even then so clearly foreseen, and brought so fully before your Honourable House, that your Petitioners cannot describe what has actually occurred in more appropriate language than that used by the individual above alluded to, on that occasion:—in urging the continuance of the Province of Quebec undivided, he says, “There is one consideration of the utmost importance to the tranquillity of the people inhabiting all parts of that country, and which will alone, I hope, be sufficient to engage this Honourable House to reject the plan of a new Independent Government. I must beg to request that Honourable Members will recollect and attend to the Geographical situation of that Country, from which it will appear evident that no vessel of any kind can proceed further up the River Saint Lawrence than the City of Montreal, on account of rapids which are immediately above that town. Of course, as every article of necessity or luxury which the Inhabitants of the upper districts have occasion for, from Britain or any foreign Country, must come to them by the river St. Lawrence, they must be landed at or below Montreal, where they must be stored by the merchants of Quebec or Montreal until carriages or boats are provided to send them forward; likewise, that every article of produce that the people of these upper districts wish to export, must be sent in Boats to Montreal, or, perhaps to Quebec, for the purpose of being shipped for exportation; and that as well the articles of import as of export must, in passing through the lower country, become subject to the laws and regulations, duties and taxes, which may be imposed by the Legislature of the Lower Country. Now, supposing the division to take place, as it may be expected that the new Legislature of Quebec shall in due time provide a revenue towards the support of the Civil Government of that part of the Province, it is more than probable that whatever money is raised for that, or any other public purpose, will be done by duties payable upon importations:—it is therefore an object that deserves the most serious reflection of Honourable Members, to consider how far the people inhabiting the Upper Government will approve of, and be content to pay, duties on their importations or exportations, when the produce of those Taxes or duties is to be applied towards supporting the expenses of the Civil Government of the Lower Province, or for building public edifices, or otherwise improving or beautifying that part of the Country, or for the purpose of granting Bounties or Encouragements to promote Agriculture, or particular trades or manufactures, of which the people in the Upper Province, cannot from their situation, participate the advantages.

“It is impossible, Sir, if the Province of Quebec is divided, for the wisdom of Man to lay a plan for these objects that will not afford matter of dispute and create animosities between the Governments of the two Provinces, which in a few years may lead to the most serious consequences; this would be sowing the seed of dissensions and quarrels, which, however easy it may be to raise, it will be found exceedingly difficult to appease.”