

LETTER

ADDRESSED TO

The EARL OF CARNARVON by Mr. JOSEPH HOWE, Mr. WILLIAM ANNAND, and Mr. HUGH McDONALD, stating their OBJECTIONS to the PROPOSED SCHEME of UNION of the BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN PROVINCES.

London, 25 Saville Row, January 19, 1867.

As we learn by the newspapers that the Delegates sent hither from Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick have agreed upon a plan of Confederation, and as we know that they are framing the draft of a bill, which they intend to ask Her Majesty's Ministers to carry through Parliament at the approaching Session, the undersigned cheerfully avail themselves of the permission, kindly given by your Lordship, to place before Her Majesty's Government the views of those they represent. Referring to the credentials named in the margin, and to the addresses, petitions, and pamphlets to be found in the Appendix, they would premise with all respect, that though it might for some reasons have been convenient to have had before them the resolutions of the Conference, or a draft of the bill, as their opposition is based upon the general policy of the measure, and on the mode of proceeding recommended, irrespective of mere details, they are content to discuss the subject without them. The undersigned assume that the scheme prepared at Quebec in 1864, has not been materially changed, and that it is intended to ask Her Majesty's Government to bind some or all the Provinces to accept a modification of that scheme by an arbitrary Act of Parliament; before a measure thus prepared in London has been submitted to the people, or even to the Legislatures of the Provinces, whose rights, revenues, and allegiance it is so seriously to affect; and before the local institutions, under which the inhabitants of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick are expected to live, when their constitutions are thus overthrown, have been constructed.

Credentials

The undersigned will be only too happy to learn that they are in error upon either of these points, that intercourse with Her Majesty's Ministers, or the strength of enlightened public opinion in the Mother Country, has induced the Delegates to abandon a policy until of late openly avowed; but in the meantime, they must argue upon what they have reason to believe are the true aspects and proportions of this question, as it is about to be presented for the consideration of the Responsible Advisers of the Crown. The magnitude of the interests involved will enforce a somewhat elaborate discussion, but the undersigned will endeavour to simplify the inquiry as much as possible by arranging their observations under separate heads.

Lord Bacon tells us that "it is not good to try experiments in States except the necessity be urgent and the utility evident; and well to beware that it be the reformation that draweth on the change, and not the desire of change that pretendeth the reformation." In this case is the necessity urgent? Here are four self-governed and contented Provinces, prosperous beyond all precedent. They possess within themselves the legislative powers necessary to affect changes, however fundamental, and the assent of the Crown is alone required to give effect to their legislation. Have they passed any laws that have been negatived, and if they have not, why should the Imperial Parliament be invoked to step in and do for them what they can so readily do for themselves? Would Parliament assume jurisdiction over Bristol in a matter affecting that city's rights and revenues in a case where "the necessity" was neither "urgent," nor "the utility evident," if it could be shown that the municipal powers were sufficient to effect the change? What would the Cabinet say to half-a-dozen aldermen who came here to ask them to pass a measure which had never been submitted to the Common Council, and upon which the aldermen themselves were afraid to test the opinions of the electors?

In this case two of the Provinces have voted the measure down with unmistakable unanimity, scouted, and trampled it under their feet; a third only asks to be allowed the