

their property nor take up their abode in a land in which the Settler is continually liable to be involved in the troubles attending a struggle for the possession of a government able and willing to protect persons and property and secure to the community the blessings of civil and religious freedom.

In laying their complaints, year after year, before your Honorable House, the people of Upper Canada have constantly appealed to facts, and earnestly requested that an early investigation might take place, always reposing, as in duty bound, the fullest confidence in the wisdom and magnanimity of Parliament. And your Petitioner, for the several reasons hereinbefore set forth, humbly prays your Honorable House to cause an enquiry to be instituted into the condition of the Province, so that justice may be done, and relief extended to its much injured inhabitants.

W. L. MACKENZIE

2 Poland Street, February 21st, 1833

The Humble PETITION of WILLIAM L. MACKENZIE, Printer; Member representing the County of York, in the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada; (and deputed to this Country as the Agent for the Petitioners to the King and Parliament, praying for a Redress of Grievances:)

THAT between the months of June, 1831, and April, 1832, the people of Upper Canada, having full confidence in the gracious disposition of His Majesty early to hearken to the just complaints of his subjects throughout his widely extended dominions, met together in their respective towns and counties for the purpose of petitioning His Majesty on the State of the Province, and of laying their grievances at the foot of the Throne.

At upwards of a hundred general Meetings of the Landowners and other Inhabitants of the districts, counties, towns, and townships into which Upper Canada is divided, Memorials to His Majesty were adopted, and subscribed by between twenty and thirty thousand persons, a considerable majority, as there is reason to believe, of the whole male adult population. And it was a request of the Memorialists, unanimously made at all their Meetings, that your Petitioner should proceed to England in charge of their Memorials, and endeavour to obtain a favourable answer.

That your Petitioner was the Reader of a Memorial to your Honorable House, agreed upon last year, and subscribed by ten thousand of the Landowners and other Inhabitants of Upper Canada, praying that an Enquiry might be instituted into the State of the Colony and relief extended—and said Memorial was presented by one of the representatives for Middlesex a short time before the close of the last Session, but the investigation prayed for was not gone into.

That your Petitioner was introduced to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the occasion of presenting the Addresses from Upper Canada, last July, and has had the honor to obtain several audiences of His Lordship, and been permitted to address many communications on the State of the Province to the Colonial Office; but that he has not been able to perceive during a stay of nearly nine months in England, that the Memorialists, of whom your Petitioner is one, are likely to be benefited, or existing abuses lessened, by any efficient measure of reform proceeding from the Colonial Office. He fears that he has been unable to convince the Secretary of State that there are any grievances worthy the attention of the Government.

That your Petitioner is a Member of the Central Committee of Friends of Civil and Religious Liberty, who forwarded the Memorial of ten thousand of the Freeholders of Upper Canada to one of the Representatives for Middlesex for presentation in your Honorable House, in 1831. The Petition was ordered to be printed, but there has been no enquiry. The Memorialists have requested your Petitioner to endeavour to obtain the attention of Parliament to the prayer of their Memorial.

That your Petitioner was a Member of the Provincial Committee who forwarded to one of the present Representatives for Middlesex for presentation in your Honorable House in 1828, the Memorial of eight thousand of the Inhabitants of Upper Canada, stating their grievances; and that he has been required to act as their agent.

² That about five thousand Inhabitants of the County of York, of whom your Petitioner was one, transmitted Petitions for redress of grievances, for presentation in the Houses of Lords and Commons in 1829, but because of some informality in the wording the Legislature would not receive or listen to them.

That the recommendations made by the Select Committee of your Honorable House, to whom was referred, in 1928, the consideration of the state of the Civil Government of the Canadas, have not been complied with as far as Upper Canada is concerned. On the contrary, the abuses then complained of have greatly increased, and are increasing, with perfect impunity to the wrong doers. The attention of the Province is anxiously turned towards the deliberations of Parliament, in the confident expectation that your Honorable House will at length favourably listen to our humble prayers, cause enquiry to be made, and grant relief.

An opinion is very generally entertained in Upper Canada—and, as your Petitioner believes, with good reason—that wherever the Government or its officers have an opportunity to injure in their business or prospects in life those persons whose names are attached to petitions calling the attention of His Majesty or your Honorable House to the misconduct which prevails in the Colonial administration, or who take a prominent part with the complainants, they seldom fail to use it. It is well known that for years together the right of the people to meet together and petition for redress of grievances was suspended, at the request of Sir P. Maitland, now governing Nova Scotia and residing in England; it was made a criminal act for any number of the Landowners to assemble together to petition the King, within the limits of Upper Canada; and the royal grants of public lands to Canadians, bestowed as the reward of their bravery in defence of the Province in time of war, were rescinded by General Maitland because they ventured to meet and petition Parliament for a redress of grievances, in time of peace!

Petitioning England, and sending Agents to London from year to year, is attended with much difficulty, trouble, and expense to a people 1000 miles distant from the supreme authority—and it is a duty at all times unpleasant to have to complain of the conduct of others. Although, however, the act of petitioning is unpleasant, the right is nevertheless dear to British subjects; and I humbly request permission to recapitulate some of the grievances felt by the inhabitants of Upper Canada which have been embodied in their Memorials to the King, Parliament, and to the Lieutenant Governor and Provincial Legislature. Having been honored with the confidence of the Landowners, in whom is the right of suffrage, so far as to be five times successively chosen to serve as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the most populous Shire in the Canadas, that in which is the Seat of the Government of the Upper Province—having been unanimously elected last November while absent in this country endeavouring to obtain the attention of the Colonial Department to the Petitions of the Freholders, I may reasonably be supposed to speak their sentiments.

For pardon to the Virginians, and for recognition, I may reasonably be supposed to speak their sentiments. I have been much, and with effect, in London, now the United States of America, had adopted these present federal institutions, and yet was passed in the Parliament of Great Britain dividing the Province of Quebec into two; establishing a splendid and very expensive system of Monarchical Government in an infant country, among a few agricultural settlers scattered over many hundred miles of a wilderness frontier; providing for the creation of hereditary titles of honor, and establishing legislative bodies over whose proceedings the people could exercise no control; the representatives of an imaginary aristocracy, in a portion of the American Continent in which no class of persons possessed of large fortunes, and an illustrious name or ancient lineage, were to be met with.

As there are no materials in Upper Canada out of which to form an influential order of hereditary legislators, the whole authority of the State, civil and military, has usually been concentrated in the person of the officer commanding the forces, acting under such instructions as he may have received from time to time from the Colonial Office or the Horse Guards.

The heads of departments in this country who thus exercise an influence over the internal Government of the Colony, cannot be the most fit to judge concerning the wants and wishes of a country they never saw. They must depend on their Agents.—And thus it is, that while in the adjoining States the chief magistrates are freely elected by the people from among their ablest and most patriotic statesmen, the colonists are under the necessity of submitting to the mandates of a person bred in the army, a stranger to their feelings, prejudices, manners and customs, ignorant of the country he is sent out to govern, having no permanent interest

Affected by
Majesty from
Upper Canada

Petition to the
House of Com-
mons, 1832.

Applications to
the Colonial
Office.

Petition to the
House of Commons
1831.

Presented at the 1992

Page 1 of 1

Committee neglected.

Dilemma of Petitioning

The Quebec Act

Government of
Upper Canada

Bridgewater, Printer, South Molton Street, London

National Archives of Canada
Archives nationales du Canada