

*To the Right Honorable Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies.*

SIR,—

We, Her Majesty's loyal subjects, the Commons of Newfoundland, in General Assembly convened, beg leave to address you on the subject of the Convention entered into on the 14th January last by Great Britain and France, in relation to the Fisheries of Newfoundland and the Labrador.

In 1853 the people of this colony had learned from unofficial sources that some negotiations were on foot between England and France on the subject of our Fisheries.

They were altogether ignorant as to what had been proposed on either side; but confident in the assurance that, without their knowledge, nothing would be done by the Imperial Government by which their rights could be lessened or their interests affected, they did nothing for their protection in this respect, beyond the repeated adoption of addresses protesting against further concessions to the French, and soliciting protection against their flagrant encroachments on our shores, and they were therefore wholly unprepared for the information received by the last mail, through His Excellency Governor Darling, that a Convention had been actually signed and ratified at London, by which, if it were carried into effect, the people of this Colony would be deprived of the most valuable of their fisheries, for the benefit of the subjects of France.

The surprise, anxiety and alarm which this news occasioned in this country, cannot be described. In some degree to allay the excitement which agitated the public mind, we thought it necessary immediately to pass a Resolution declaring our strong disapproval of its provisions, and subsequent discussion, enquiry and consideration, having fully confirmed the opinions we at first entertained, we now beg leave respectfully to submit the reasons which influence us in withholding our consent to this measure.

That our observations upon the present Convention may be better understood, it is necessary to take a short review of the history and of the present state and condition of our Fisheries.

The Treaty of Utrecht gave the French a concurrent right of fishery on the shores of Newfoundland, from Point Riche around the North-west