

Reasons for Ignoring the So-Called Referendum

By Twenty-Two Leading and Representative Citizens, Irrespective of Politics

To our fellow citizens in the Province of Manitoba:

Gentlemen:—Our attention having been called to the following letter which recently appeared in the public press we venture to address you in reference thereto. The letter is as follows:

Rev. E. J. Chegwin, City:

Winnipeg, Jan. 15, 1902.

Rev. and Dear Sir,—I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of yours of even date, asking an answer to the requests that were made to the government and legislature to-day, jointly, by the representatives of your body and those of the Ministerial association of the city. In reply beg to say that after carefully considering the statements made to-day by members of the Ministerial association and the Dominion Alliance, the government, after consulting with their supporters in caucus, still believe it is desirable that a referendum should be held, such referendum deciding the fate of the Act, the government pledging to the strict enforcement of the Act, so brought into force by the referendum. I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

(Sgd.) R. P. ROBLIN.

In view of the statements contained in the above letter, we the undersigned hereby enter our solemn protest against the proposed action of the Government as outlined in said letter and do hereby pledge ourselves should such action be taken, to abstain from voting either "yea" or "nay" in connection with the so-called referendum, and do hereby invite our fellow-citizens to adopt the same course for the following (amongst other) good and sufficient reasons:

1 We contend that the application of the proposed referendum is sub-

versive of the principles of representative and responsible government because,

(a) The Referendum introduces a new principle of legislation into our system of representative government, and is in itself so serious an innovation, as far as our provincial autonomy is concerned that (without pronouncing for or against the principle involved) it ought not in our opinion to be adopted, without the most careful consideration of which the present occasion does not admit. It is also upheld for inasmuch as a sufficient mandate on the subject in question has, in our opinion, been already given, but, if not so given, the constitution provides other well known modes of ascertaining the views of the electorate.

(b) No mandate for such a referendum has as yet been given by the people of this province.

(c) Even if correct in principle there is, as far as we are aware, no precedent, either under British or foreign systems of government, for its present proposed application to the enforcement of an act of the legislature, already assented to by the crown.

(d) Its proposed application would relieve the government of a responsibility which, under our representative system necessarily attaches to them in respect of all measures enacted during their administration, and more particularly in respect of a measure introduced by them and enacted, as in the present case, in fulfilment of a distinct pledge made to the electorate;

(e) Such application further involves an abdication (protanto) by the legislature of its legislative authority, inasmuch as it is proposed to make the Referendum decide the fate of the act which is to be brought into force or not, according to the result of the poll.