

IF NOT MARITIME UNION, WHAT?

By REGINALD V. HARRIS

DURING the last five years, the subject of the union of the three Maritime Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, has been so frequently mentioned that it looks as if it had come to stay. Probably the beginning in recent years was the discussion of the matter by the Maritime Board of Trade at Charlottetown on August 20th, 1903, although no action was taken, and the subject was deferred for future consideration.

Probably the next discussion took place at Yarmouth in August, 1905, when the Maritime Board of Trade unanimously passed a resolution to the effect that the time had arrived for the union of the three provinces.

At the meeting of the Board at Amherst in the following year the subject was again discussed and the resolution reaffirmed.

The question has been the subject of debate in the debating and literary societies of leading educational institutions of the province on at least two occasions in recent years, and prominent gentlemen from Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa, addressing the Canadian Clubs and educational societies in our principal towns, have repeatedly urged political union as an absolute necessity and their advocacy everywhere has met with general approval.

All these public references have resulted in journalistic comment, and, generally, in editorial commendation.

Probably the last public reference to the union was that of the Hon. J. Douglas Hazen, the Premier of New Brunswick. Speaking in August, 1908, at the ceremonies in connection with the celebration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of representative government in Nova Scotia, he said:

"In the march of progress, the Maritime Provinces must not stand still. Nearly a century and a quarter have passed since New Brunswick parted company from Nova Scotia and set up housekeeping for itself. It has advanced as Nova Scotia has, but would not the advance in both provinces be more rapid and the progress greater if, in the Councils of the Dominion, the Lower Provinces could speak as one province and with one united voice? With the rapidly increasing population of the western provinces, the representations of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island in the Federal Parliament will be reduced to an extent that we cannot at present estimate and we will not be worthy of those who have gone before us and who have laid broad and deep the foundations of Canada's greatness unless we sink all our political differences and demand with one voice that a limit shall be fixed beyond which there shall be no further decrease in our representation. Would not that demand be more powerful and attract more attention if made by a United Acadia?"—a statement which was received with significant applause.

THE SITUATION EXPLAINED.

WHAT is the situation in the Maritime Provinces?

Here are the facts: The area is 50,000 square miles—an area which cannot be increased by extension of boundaries as in the case of every other province of Canada, and which is only two-thirds of the present area of Manitoba, the next smallest province in the Dominion.

The resources of the provinces are the shipping, fisheries, lumbering, mining and agriculture, and all are capable of extensive development. Our mercantile marine of forty and fifty years ago is only a memory.

Turning to the population, the situation may be indicated by stating that it has been estimated, and I believe accurately, that if the population of the Maritime Provinces had increased since 1881 at the same rate as the rest of Canada has increased, we would now have a population in these provinces of about 1,200,000, instead of say 900,000; that is, we have lost 300,000 people or one-quarter of our population. At first this exodus was to the New England States; now it is principally to the Canadian West.

Think what 300,000 people would mean to these provinces; imagine a city the size of Toronto in our midst; or imagine six centres the size of St. John or Halifax; 300,000 is three times the present population of Prince Edward Island. What a market there would be for our farmers right here in these provinces!

Throughout the Maritime Provinces the inroad on our young manhood made by the harvest excursions advertised and carried out on behalf of Western Canada, is a reason for meditation. The

very flower of our people, attracted by the cheap fares, go west for the harvest and not half of them come back when it is over. Their going is just that much loss to these provinces and the development of these provinces.

Our representation depends on the number of our people; to-day the number of representatives from these provinces in the House of Commons is 35; the number of representatives from the West (British Columbia and Yukon, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) is 35; in 1895 the representation was 39 for these provinces and 15 for the West. If in the short space of thirteen years the Maritime Provinces have lost four members, and the West has gained twenty, what may we expect at the end of the next thirteen years, if a united effort is not made!

VALUE OF UNITED EFFORT.

NOW what would keep our population in these provinces? Development of our resources. What would bring back our wandering sons? Development of our resources. What would bring immigration to these provinces? Development of our resources. "In the march of progress, the Maritime Provinces must not stand still." Our resources need development and need it badly—development of our fields, forests and mines; agriculture, manufactures, industries, commerce. A united effort would stimulate development and such an effort cannot be made while separated. I believe that political union would greatly stimulate the development of all the resources of these provinces.

Let us examine the proposal a little further. Our interests, it is unnecessary to say, are identical. We have no diversity of nationality. No marked peculiarities or differences in our institutions and laws. No recognition of particular religious institutions. The laws of all and the institutions of all are English and very similar; our interests lie in our maritime commerce, our mines, our manufacturing, our fisheries, and in our agriculture. And it seems to me that these interests are sufficiently identical to justify the taking of some steps towards union. Union would mean better provincial credit in the money markets of the world; it would mean that our public revenues would go farther and do more than at present; it would mean that public works of importance could be undertaken which cannot now be considered; the substitution of one legislature for the three existing legislatures alone would result in an annual saving to the people of these provinces of about \$150,000; the governmental methods and administrative systems and policies throughout the new province would become uniform particularly with regard to the judiciary, agriculture, immigration, education, railways, taxation, crown lands, mining and other matters. All general legislation would be uniform; excessive legislation would not occur; the policy of the party in power would have better criticism because it would have the criticism of the legislators of three provinces; the legislation would be better legislation; the political atmosphere would be healthier; we should all know the public men of one section of the province in every other section; the Maritime Provinces need the advantage of a larger field. The thoughts of our public men would be larger thoughts. With the union would come the obliteration of local and sectional jealousies and the elimination of petty discords and the weakening of irritating influences.

This is merely a recital or enumeration of several arguments, each of which might be elaborated, but let us turn for a moment to the first argument advanced—that union of the three provinces would result in their further development.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT.

THE people of these provinces, it is said, lack "commercial courage." The feeling of unity should assist in restoring "commercial confidence." A united effort would stimulate development and such an effort cannot be made while separated. The Dominion Government almost ignores these provinces, the West gets whatever it asks for; no portion whatever of the immense immigration into Canada finds its resting place within the Maritime Provinces.

A considerable portion of the revenue contributed by the provinces is expended in bonusing and advertising the western end of the Dominion, which constantly drains the Maritime Provinces of many of their very best people—thus with the expenditure of their own money, the younger generation on whom the development of these provinces

must depend, is induced to follow the immigrants westward.

I believe that political union would greatly stimulate the development of the resources of the province. I believe that thereby their commercial status would be elevated. Being more prosperous as a community, they would attract more settlers, retain their population and hold their own. They would become of more importance in the eyes of the nation; they would not be ignored; their resources would be investigated and developed and that is what they need.

Union, I believe, would bring this about. It certainly could not result in anything else but a united effort towards greater development.

Union would give each province an interest in the resources, development and prosperity of the other two. Prince Edward Island would benefit by its joint interest with the other two provinces, in the mineral wealth of Nova Scotia and the forest wealth of New Brunswick. Similarly the agricultural possibilities and development of Prince Edward Island would be shared by the people of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to the mutual advantage and benefit of all. The development of export shipping, or shipbuilding, or fisheries, or other maritime industries by any section of the three provinces would undoubtedly benefit other sections of the provinces. And so, with immigration, manufacturing and other matters. It would be one for all, and all for one.

THE EXTERNAL INFLUENCE.

TURNING from the arguments in favour of union from the standpoint of internal affairs to those from the standpoint of external relations, the chief argument which will occur to the reader is the larger influence which we would exercise in federal affairs as a result of consolidation. Increased power and might would be given to the Maritime Provinces; their position would be elevated; their influence would be felt because they would be united. They should exert a larger influence upon national life. They would be of more bulk and importance, able to vie with their inland sister provinces. Looking at this from the point of view of a citizen of Eastern Canada, this would counterbalance to some extent the preponderant increasing influence of other provinces.

Then there is to be considered the practical result of such a change. I mean the strengthening of the present bond of feeling and interest between Eastern Canada and the rest of the provinces. A great and powerful community, self reliant, independent, progressive, established in this part of the Dominion would be a means of strengthening and perpetuating the bonds of national interest. There would be a fuller national life, a widening of national thought, a reciprocity of rights and obligations and a feeling of increased national strength.

THE QUESTION OF TERMS.

AN examination of the arguments against the union, advanced by opponents, when examined will be found to be derived from anxiety over possible terms of union. Where will the capital be? How many representatives will Prince Edward Island have in the new legislature? How many will Nova Scotia have? How many will New Brunswick have? What will the sessional indemnity be? And perhaps many other details.

This problem of "terms" can and will be solved. If the discordant interests of the old American colonies could be harmonised into a united nation, if the states of the German Empire, with all their divergent interests and discordant sentiments could be welded into a united power and become so strong as in the opinion of many to be a menace to the ascendancy of Great Britain, if these Canadian provinces from Atlantic to Pacific can be made one united nation, why do you say that the union of the Maritime Provinces is impossible and impracticable?

In conclusion, I ask, why should we remain separated? Is this policy of separation in the best interests of these provinces? There is a vast difference between the separation that is weakness and the union that is strength. These provinces have problems of their own, and they need not look for counsel or assistance in solving them to their inland sister provinces. They must solve them themselves, and they can do that best united. If not union, what? It is time to forget all sectional jealousies and petty discords and get into line; unite and work.