

it had not been interrupted by the presence of the Canadian Minister. The Lower Provinces are all too ready of like importance for any to be willing to concede to one of them the priority which would be conferred on the head of such a combination, while the proposition was embarrassed also by the loss of local prestige, and the great practical inconvenience of leaving matters of a purely local character to be decided by a general government, where the circumstances could not be understood, and where special knowledge was required for their management. Under such constitution it is manifest that the local affairs of the several outlying Provinces would be neglected, and all these considerations doubtless had their weight in leading the Charlottetown Conference to abandon the design of a Legislative union of the three Lower Provinces. On the arrival of the Canadian Delegates the larger plan proposed by them attracted the favorable attention of the Conference, whose proceedings were then adjourned to Halifax, and subsequently to Quebec, where the whole matter was again carefully gone into, and after the most mature consideration of eighteen days, the Report now presented was agreed to. It proposes a constitution based as nearly as circumstances would permit, on the principles of the British constitution, and while of the Federal character, avoids the prominent causes of weakness and failure which the working of the American system has disclosed. It contemplates a General Government, and a Legislature of two Houses, the Upper nominated for life by the General Government and composed of 76 members, and the Lower House composed of 193 members, based on the principle of population, to be elected by the several Colonies forming parts of the Confederation. To this General Government and Legislature will be confided the larger powers now possessed by the several local Governments, conferring on it the amount of authority necessary for the due conservation and protection of the interests of the several communities whose guardianship it would assume. There was not in this arrangement, as had been represented for unworthy purposes, and to raise a cry amongst the unlettered and unwary, any selling of the interests of one Colony to another, but a proposal is made by which the several Colonies, on principles of honorable and equitable partnership, agree to concede a certain portion of the powers they severally possess, to a Central Authority in which they are fairly represented, and where the aggregate of these powers may be used with greatly increased efficacy for common purposes of public advantage. The Local Government would be retained, with smaller powers, having under its control the expenditure of eighty thousand pounds sterling per annum, and the management of peculiarly local affairs. The roads, public institutions, and other kindred matters would be in the hands of the Local Legislature; but the operations of the General Government would be entirely independent of the action of the Local Bodies. The modifications of the present Local Governmental machinery are left to the several Bodies themselves, to determine according to the peculiar circumstances of each Colony; but the necessity of reducing them, in one shape or another, to meet the altered condition of affairs, and lessen the expenses would not be a matter of question. The Report embodying the terms of this constitution was signed by his colleague and himself, in conjunction with the other members of the Conference. It had been said they had no authority to sign that document; but he disputed the ground of the assertion. The Colony was not bound by their act, and this was fully explained and understood at the Conference. The Report was sent paper without the signatures of the Delegates, but beyond that, said Mr. Shea, my hon Colleague and myself subscribed our hands in testimony of our approval of the terms and principles it embraces; and we are here ready to justify our act, and explain the reasons which brought our minds to this conclusion. It had been urged by some hon member, in thoughtless ignorance of the nature of the discussion, that the Conference should not have been held with closed doors. He (Mr. Shea) regretted that secrecy was a necessary condition of the deliberations of that Conference, for it would have been well had it been possible that the whole public of Britain North America were present, to be witnesses of the great ability displayed by the prominent statesmen of the sister provinces, their grasp of mind, and the singleness of purpose which animated their course, with the deep sense of responsibility felt by all who took part in these proceedings of high historic interest and grave importance. The spectacle would have done good to the people whose interests were at stake, and have frowned down the narrow minded and ignorant views we now see exhibited in certain quarters, of that work and the men who were its promoters. It is said by some that Canada seeks the alliance for her own purposes. No doubt some constitutional change had become necessary in Canada; and doubtless it was the exigency of their own circumstances that induced the movement they had now made. But how does this affect the question in our regard? It is neither impracticable to us or otherwise merely from the fact of its being desired by Canada; and we also, as well as they, will deal with it from a similar point of view, and carry out the principles which regulate trade and all the ordinary transactions of men. If a confederation of the provinces does not commend itself to the intelligent judgment of the people of these colonies, as a measure of progress, it will not avail Canada much that she stands in need of its accomplishment. But have other colonies no need? Are we in that paimy state at the present instant, or are our prospects so bright and our general condition so independent, that we may not find it good to inquire whether the necessity of Canada may not be our opportunity of escaping from the deprivations of our isolated and powerless state? It had been stated among the objections to this scheme, that we should be at the mercy of Canada, with our small representation of eight members in the General Assembly. Canada is regarded as a large mammoth state, intent only on devouring all its smaller associates. We do not find in the history of combinations like this, that the smaller states have causes of complaint from the exercise of undue influence on the part of the larger. It has never been found that the little state of Rhode Island suffers aggression at the hands of the American Union. If Canada had the power, it would not be her interest to pursue any unjust or injurious policy towards the lesser confederates. In our case we would desire to be our supplier of the greater part of what we consume, and this would give her a direct interest in our well-being and advancement. But would the power lie with Canada to tax or otherwise oppress us? Hon gentlemen seem to forget that Canada is two provinces, not much in accord in feeling, or sentiment, or interest. These provinces are separated by causes of the most abiding nature—differences of race, religion, language, tradition, and antagonism, which have now wrought the Government of the country to a dead lock, and which bar all prospect of their becoming a homogeneous people. In the Upper Province, the population is British and Protestant. In the Lower Province, French and Catholic; and it is remarkable how little the races have mingled, though living side by side for generations past. In the Lower Province you see the French character as distinctly preserved as in any part of old France, and they adhere to their institutions with even greater tenacity. No thing more unreasonable can be imagined than the combination of two Provinces so circumstanced, for any purpose of aggression on our rights, even if their sense of honor or uprightness could not be relied on, which he (Mr.

Shea) would be sorry to distrust. Between these Provinces—Upper Canada with her 92 members, and Lower Canada with 65—the 47 members from the Lower Provinces would necessarily, in any intelligent view of the case, exercise a power almost of commanding influence, and the common interest of the Lower Provinces would always join them together whenever the occasion was of adequate importance. The safety of our position in this respect will be easily understood by any one commonly observant of the working of the British Parliament, and the influence of even smaller relative combinations in affecting and controlling the decisions of that great body. There appeared to be much anxiety in this country as respects the taxation under the Confederation. He (Mr. Shea) was not then going into a particular discussion of that question, which would more properly come on when the resolutions were formally submitted; but he denied the statements that had been made as to the amount of the increase of our burthen, and would be prepared to show, at least, that if there was any increase under the change, the most full and intelligible equivalents would be given for it. That is not taxation, in the sense in which this cry is raised, where the Colony receives a value for the outlay. The taxation of Canada had been referred to as excessive, but when we saw what had been accomplished in that country, its Railways, Canals and other extended means of communication, adding to its wealth and population, and increasing the value of the labour of the people, he felt with how much reason we should rejoice, if, by means of increased taxation, we could be made to realize similar results. The mere cry of taxation can be made to serve the purpose of stirring up thoughtless public feeling; but no intelligent man will fail to see that taxation, well applied, is necessary to enhance the value of labour, by opening up the sources of a people's industry. But they had been told that by Confederation they would give up their liberties, in relinquishing their present rights of independent legislation, and various speeches and newspaper articles had been quoted in support of this view. Most of them had heard of Archbishop Connolly, of Halifax, who had recently written on this subject; and what are his opinions on this point? He says—"Confederation, instead of depriving us of the privilege of self-government, is the only practicable and reliable guarantee for its continuance."—I yield "to no man in my heartfelt appreciation of the blessings we all enjoy in this country, and I ask for nothing more than to be able to calculate on their continuance.—*Sed hoc opus hic labor est.*"—This is the difficulty, and I will say, with all candour, the only difficulty for us and all others who have everything to lose. No country situated as Nova Scotia is, with a vast area and a sparse population, can reasonably hope to maintain its independence for any considerable period. Unless we are to be a single exception and an anomaly in the history of nations, "some change must come, and come soon." This was the opinion of a gentleman of profound learning, and independently of what they knew of his greatness, the letter bespeaks the philosophic statesman and a mind stored with the treasures of historic lore, which could not fail to command respectful attention—it tells us of the tendencies of the age and great forces that are at work in the near vicinity of these Provinces, which warn us of the necessity of preparation, and to the local bodies, is it not through us, cannot, if we wish, separate ourselves from our neighbours and their destiny? It had been objected that the Federal Government had the power to tax property in this colony. But such was not the case. The power of direct taxation is reserved to the several Local Governments, and it cannot be imposed except by them. Exception was also taken to the fact, that our fish and oil were not secured against taxation by the General Government, while timber and coal were reserved. It will be observed that the Local Revenues are reserved for the use of each Province, and the provision made in the case is measured merely to preserve the duties on these articles for their legitimate purposes. In the former Colonies there was a direct impost called stampage, under which duties were collected on the ground, but this was found inconvenient, and a tax on the export was accordingly substituted. If this export duty were not protected from the operation of the General Government, and given to the local bodies, the latter would have been compelled to revert to the old plan of stampage; and the same applies to the case of Nova Scotia, from which the colony finds it more convenient to obtain its revenue by an export tax. 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