Committee: Canadian Confederation

Assigned Character: Hector-Louis Langevin (Canada-East)

Delegate Name: Andrei Bocan

1. **Institutional Design and Regional Diversity**

The matter of institutional design and regional diversity is a very important one as we discuss the future of British North America. Indeed, British North America is composed of many groups with cultural and religious differences. The task at hand is no lesser than conciliating the diverse needs and requirements of all these groups: the political institutions of a United British North America, be they executive; legislative or judiciary, must respect the interests of all the provinces involved and must ensure the preservation of regional diversity.

Sir Hector-Louis Langevin est le solliciteur général pour la province du Canada. Il est aussi un membre de la “Great Coalition”[[1]](#footnote-1). Il est un des deux seuls Canadiens-Français, avec George-Étienne Cartier, qui représente le Canada Est[[2]](#footnote-2). En tant que délégué pour le Bas Canada, Hector-Louis Langevin est un ardent défenseur du peuple Canadien-Français. Since the Union in 1840, governing Canada has not been easy. It is now evident that uniting two groups of people, with a different language; a different religion and different interests, into one colony and under the same legislature was not a brilliant idea. The solution proposed to address this problem is the union of the British Colonies of North America[[3]](#footnote-3). This union would allow Lower Canada to have its own local legislature through which the province could gain more independence (that is, only in the case of a Federal Union). And, while Sir Langevin is in accord with the solution proposed, he deems it necessary to remind all his fellow delegates that the population of Lower-Canada is currently of over one million people, most of which are French-Canadians[[4]](#footnote-4). Furthermore, Sir Langevin expects that, with such a significant population, the interests of the French-Canadian people be taken in account during the process of designing the political institutions for a United British North America. Hector-Louis Langevin est de l’opinion que les institutions Législatives, Exécutives et Judiciaires d’une union des colonies Britanniques d’Amérique du Nord devraient être organisées de telle façon à respecter le caractère “unique” du Bas Canada, surtout quant à sa culture différente et à ses lois civiles.

Pour concilier les intérêts des Canadiens-Français avec ceux de la population des autres provinces, Sir Hector-Louis Langevin propose d’instaurer une Union Fédérale avec une Législature Fédérale et une Législature Locale. In the federal legislature, laws of a general matter, relevant to the country as a whole (such as military defence) would be discussed[[5]](#footnote-5). In the local legislature of each province, laws concerning local matters would be discussed (things such as education, religion, healthcare, etc.)[[6]](#footnote-6). With this system, each province could have full control over local matters: French Canadians , as mentioned before , would get a province of their own in which they would have a certain measure of independence. The same thing would be valid for all the other provinces under a federal union: each province would have full control over local issues.

1. **Canada – A Staple Economy?**

It would be unthinkable to address the future of British North America without mentioning its economy. It is especially important to consider Canada’s debt: the total debt of Canada-East and Canada-West in 1860 was of 50 million dollars[[7]](#footnote-7). The union of Canada and of the Maritime Colonies should provide for a way to repay this substantial debt. On the other hand, how the debt will be repaid and who should be responsible for repaying it remains to be determined. Ensuite, il faut considérer la situation de la Colonie de la Rivière-Rouge et ce qu’il faut en faire et finalement, comment assurer la liaison entre les colonies. Essentially, there must be a medium of transportation through which Canada could be linked to the Maritimes, however, it is not yet known what this medium shall be, who shall build it and how it shall be financed.

As a delegate for Canada-East, Sir Hector-Louis Langevin stands behind the interests of the French-Canadian population. Since, the passing of the Railway Loan Guarantee Act in 1849, the Province of Canada has known it’s first great Railway Boom: miles of railway in 1860 having increased to 1800 as opposed to only 66 in 1850[[8]](#footnote-8). Be that as it may, debt has been increasing in Canada since the beginning of the Railway Boom[[9]](#footnote-9). And now it must be decided who shall have to deal with the growing debt of Canada. Sir Hector-Louis Langevin urges that the outcome of this decision, whatever it may be, should be fair for French-Canadians: the debt accumulated by Canada is mostly due to Canada-West[[10]](#footnote-10). Quant à la Colonie de la Rivière-Rouge, l’annexion devrait, une fois de plus, prendre en Considération les intérêts des Canadiens-Français. Depuis 1840, des milliers de Canadiens-Français quittent la terre de leurs ancêtres pour aller trouver du travail dans le secteur industriel des États-Unis. Ce phénomène est principalement causé par la surpopulation et le manque de Terres Fertiles au Canada-Est[[11]](#footnote-11). Il est donc évident que les Canadiens-Français bénéficieraient de l’annexion de la Colonie de la Rivière-Rouge car il y aurait de nouvelles terres fertiles sur lesquelles s’établir. This is, however, only valid if French-Canadians would be allowed to establish themselves on that land.

The task of finding a balance between the interests of one group, and those of another, poses quite a problem. Nonetheless, Sir Hector-Louis Langevin would like to propose some solutions to the problems at hand. As pertains to the debt of Canada, a fraction of it should be reimbursed by the central government while the rest would be equally divided between Lower and Upper Canada. This ensures the satisfaction of both parties, Lower and Upper Canada. Quant à la Colonie de la Rivière-Rouge, son annexion amènerait de nouvelles terres fertiles sur lesquelles des colons Canadiens-Français et Canadiens-Anglais pourraient s’établir. Given this, annexation of the Red-River Colony should be considered in the midst of discussions for a Union of British North American colonies.

1. **Foreign Policy and Protecting our Borders**

As tensions between the Unionist North of the United States and Great Britain rise, rethinking the military protection of Canada’s borders and the colony’s foreign policy becomes more and more vital. Si les colonies Anglaises d’Amérique du Nord sont unies, leur statut et leur rôle au sein de l’Empire Britannique seraient tous deux affectés. L’union du Canada-Uni et des provinces Maritimes en un pays amènerait plus d’indépendance face à l’Angleterre. Comment cette union affecterait-elle le rôle du l’Amérique du Nord Britannique dans l’Empire ? Furthermore, England has expressed the desire to reduce its military spending in North America[[12]](#footnote-12), it is one of the main reasons for which the mother country desires a union of the colonies. How would Canada and the Maritimes adapt to such reduced spending given the fact that recent incidents have proved the need for an increased protection of the border[[13]](#footnote-13) with the United States of America? And finally, the question of relations with Aboriginal peoples is also of importance as these relations must be considered if British North America is to continue its expansion towards the west.

Même si Sir Hector-Louis Langevin se considère comme un partisan d’une union fédérale du Canada et des Maritimes, et malgré le fait qu’il considère ladite union comme étant le meilleur moyen de préserver l’identité Canadienne-Française, Hector-Louis Langevin affirme aussi que le Canada-Uni et les Maritimes devraient rester sous la protection de la Métropole et que si un nouveau pays venait à être créé par l’union des deux colonies mentionnées ci-dessus , ledit pays ne devrait pas être complètement indépendant de l’Angleterre. Sir Hector-Louis Langevin is fully aware of the threat posed by the Northern States of the U.S. Moreover, he considers that annexation of British North America by the United States would pose a serious threat to the survival of French-Canadian culture and traditions. And although this is an extreme case, defence of our borders with the U.S.A. must be reconsidered given the fact that Britain desires to decrease military spending in North America. And finally, the matter of relations with Aboriginal peoples: Sir Hector-Louis Langevin has always insisted that the central power of a Union of Canada and the Maritime provinces would have to protect the rights of the different ethnic groups which compose the great land of British North America, this includes aboriginal peoples.

Quant au rôle de l’Amérique du Nord Britannique au sein de l’Empire, il serait préférable que la colonie Britannique reste dans l’Empire Britannique et qu’elle supporte la métropole de temps en temps (notamment par un support militaire) . And how should Canada and the Maritime Province react to cuts in Military budget? Uniting the colonies would help since this would allow them to unite their military resources and work together to combat threats more easily than would’ve been possible if they were to be separate colonies. What about relations with Aboriginal Peoples? Relations with this Ethnic group must change: this minority must be respected and Aboriginal Communities should be allowed to preserve their land amidst colonization attempts by the British Colonies.

1. “Biography of Sir Hector-Louis Langevin”. (2003). In Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Retrieved from http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio.php?id\_nbr=6840 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “Charlottetown Conference”. (n.d.). In Canadian Encyclopedia, Retrieved from http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/charlottetown-conference/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. COUTURIER, Jacques-Paul. Un passé Composé : Le canada de 1850 à nos jours, Moncton, Les Éditions d’Acadie, (n.d.) , 418p. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “Province of Canada”. (n.d.). in Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia, Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Province\_of\_Canada#Population [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Canada Parliament, Parliamentary debates on the subject of the confederation of the British North American provinces, Québec, Hunter; Rose & co., (1865), p.373 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid, 373 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “Canadian Confederation: Provinces and Territories”. (2001). In Library and Archives Canada, Retrieved from https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/confederation/023001-3120-e.html [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. “Guarantee Act”. (2006). In The Canadian Encyclopedia, Retrieved from http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/guarantee-act/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. ‘’Upper Canada’’. (2006). In The Canadian Encyclopedia, Retrieved from http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/upper-canada/ [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. “French Canadian emigration to the United States 1840-1930”. (1999). In reading in Quebec History; Marianopolis College, Retrieved from http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/readings/leaving.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. “Charlottetown Conference”. (n.d.). In Canadian Encyclopedia, Retrieved from http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/charlottetown-conference/ [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. LACOURSIÈRE, Jacques. Histoire Populaire du Québec : 1841-1896, Québec, Éditions du Septentrion, (1996), P.135-7 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)