

Message

From His Excellency the Governor General on the subject of the Union of the Provinces.

TRANSMITTED 7TH DECEMBER, 1839.

C. POULETT THOMSON,

In pursuance of the intention expressed in his Speech from the Throne, the Governor General desires now to bring under the consideration of the House of Assembly, the subject of the Reunion of this Province with Lower Canada, recommended by Her Majesty in Her Gracious Message to both Houses of Parliament on the 3rd of May last.

For several years the condition of the Canadas has occupied a large portion of the attention of Parliament. That they should be contented and prosperous—that the ties which bind them to the Parent State should be strengthened—that their administration should be conducted in accordance with the wishes of the people, is the ardent desire of every British Statesman—and the experience of the last few years amply testifies that the Imperial Parliament has been sparing neither of the time it has devoted to the investigation of their affairs nor of the expenditure it has sanctioned for their protection.

The events which have marked the recent history of Lower Canada, are so familiar to the House of Assembly that it is unnecessary for the Governor-General further to allude to them. There, the Constitution is suspended, but the powers of the Government are inadequate to permit of the enactment of such permanent Laws as are required for the benefit of the People.

Within this Province the Finances are deranged—public improvements are suspended—private enterprize is checked—the tide of emigration, so essential to the prosperity of the country and to the British connection, has ceased to flow—while by many, the general system of Government is declared to be unsatisfactory.

After the most attentive and anxious consideration of the state of these Provinces and of the difficulties under which they respectively labour, Her Majesty's Advisers came to the conclusion, that by their Reunion alone could those difficulties be removed. During the last Session of the Imperial Legislature they indeed refrained from pressing immediate legislation, but their hesitation proceeded from no doubt as to the principle of the measure or its necessity. It arose solely from their desire to ascertain more fully the opinions of the Legislature of Upper Canada, and to collect information from which the details might be rendered more satisfactory to the people of both Provinces.

The time then is now arrived beyond which a settlement cannot be postponed. In Lower Canada it is indispensable to afford a safe and practicable return to a Constitutional Government, and so far as the feelings of the inhabitants can be there ascertained the measure of the Reunion meets with approbation.

In Upper Canada it is no less necessary to enable the Province to meet her Financial embarrassments and to proceed in the developement of her natural resources. There are evidently no means in this Province of fulfilling the pecuniary obligations which have been

contracted but by a great increase in the Local Revenues. But so long as Lower Canada remains under her present form of Government neither Province possesses any power over the only source from which that increase can be drawn. Nor even, were it possible to restore a Representative Constitution to Lower Canada, unaccompanied by the Union, would the position of this Province be much improved; since past experience has shewn the difficulty of procuring assent to any alteration of the customs Laws suggested from hence.

This Province has engaged in undertakings, which reflect the highest honour on the enterprize and industry of her inhabitants. The Public works which she has completed or commenced have been conceived in a spirit worthy of a successful result. But additional means are indispensable to avert the ruin of some, and secure the completion of others.—Nor will that alone suffice; Lower Canada holds the Key to all those improvements. Without her co-operation, the navigation for which nature has done so much, for which this Province has so deeply burthened itself, must remain incomplete, and a barrier be opposed to the developement of those great natural resources which the hand of Providence has so lavishly bestowed on this country.

With a view to remove all those difficulties;—to relieve the financial embarrassments of Upper Canada; to enable her to complete her Public Works; and develop her agricultural capabilities; —to restore Constitutional Government to Lower Canada; to establish a firm, impartial, and vigorous Government for both; and to unite the people within them in one common feeling of attachment to British Institutions and British Connexion, the Union is desired by Her Majesty's Government; and that measure alone, if based upon just principles, appears adequate to the occasion.

Those principles in the opinion of Her Majesty's advisers are; a just regard to the claims of either Province in adjusting the terms of the Union—the maintenance of the three Estates of the Provincial Legislature;—the settlement of a permanent Civil List for securing the independence of the Judges, and to the Executive Government that freedom of action which is necessary for the Public good;—and the establishment of a system of Local Government adapted to the wants of the people.

It was with great satisfaction then that Her Majesty's Government learnt that upon the question of the Union itself, the House of Assembly had pronounced their decided judgment during their last Session, and it will only remain for the Governor-General now to invite their assent to the terms upon which it is sought to be effected. Their decision was indeed accompanied by recommendations to which the Government could not agree, but the Governor General entertains no doubt that under the altered circumstances they will no more be renewed. It will be for the Imperial Parliament guided by their intimate knowledge of Constitutional Law, and, free from the bias of local feelings and interests, to arrange the details of the measure.

The first of the terms of Reunion, to which the Governor General desires the assent of the House of Assembly, is the equal Representation of each Province in the United Legislature. Considering the amount of the population of Lower Canada, this proposition might seem to place that Province in a less favourable position than Upper Canada. But, under the circumstances in which this Province is placed, with the increasing population to be expected from immigration and having regard to the Commercial and Agricultural enterprize of its inhabitants an equal apportionment of Representation appears desirable.

The second stipulation to be made is the grant of a sufficient Civil List. The propriety of rendering the Judicial Bench independent alike of the Executive and of the Legislature, and of furnishing the means of carrying on the indispensable services of the

Government, admits of no question and has been affirmed by the Parliament of Upper Canada in the Acts passed by them for effecting those objects. In determining the amount of the Civil List the House of Assembly may be assured that the Salaries and expenses to be paid from it will be calculated by Her Majesty's Government with a strict regard to economy and the state of the Provincial Finances.

Thirdly, the Governor General is prepared to recommend to Parliament, that so much of the existing debt of Upper Canada as has been contracted for Public Works of a general nature should, after the Union, be charged on the joint Revenue of the United Province. Adverting to the nature of the Works for which this debt was contracted, and the advantage which must result from them to Lower Canada, it is not unjust that that Province should bear a proportion of their expences.

On these principles the Governor General is of opinion that a Reunion of the two Provinces may be effected—equitable and satisfactory in its terms—and beneficial in its results to all classes. He submits them to the consideration of the House of Assembly in the full conviction of their importance, and in the hope that they will receive the assent of that house. Fortified by the expression of their opinion Her Majesty's Government and Parliament will be able at once to apply themselves to the full developement of the scheme, and to the consideration of the provisions by which it may be carried into effect with the greatest advantage to the people of both Provinces.

If in the course of their proceedings the House of Assembly should desire any information which it is in the power of the Governor-General to afford, they will find him ready and anxious to communicate with them frankly and fully, and to aid by all the means in his power that settlement on which he firmly believes that the future prosperity and advancement of these Colonies mainly depend.

5th SESS. 13th PART:

MESSAGE

From His Excellency the Governor-General, recommending an Union of the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada.

1000 COPIES.

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W. J. Coates, Printer.
