

# PAPERS

RELATIVE TO

## PROPOSED COLONIAL CONFERENCE IN LONDON.

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PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, BY COMMAND OF  
HIS EXCELLENCY.

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WELLINGTON

—  
1870.



## PAPERS RELATIVE TO PROPOSED COLONIAL CONFERENCE IN LONDON.

### No. 1.

Copy of a Letter from Messrs. J. A. YOUL, H. SEWELL, and H. BLAINE, to the Hon. W. Fox.

Royal Colonial Society's Rooms, Palace Hotel, Westminster,

August 13th, 1869.

SIR,—

At a meeting of influential Colonists in England, held at the Colonial Society's Rooms on the 4th instant, it was Resolved,—

That a Committee be appointed with the view (amongst other things) of communicating with the different Colonial Governments, in reference to the present state of relations between the Mother Country and her Colonies.

The occasion which gave rise to the above meeting was, the announcement of a policy by the Home Government towards her Colonies (applied to the particular case of New Zealand), which appeared to demand consideration from all persons interested in the welfare of the Colonies, and in the maintenance of the connection between them and the Mother Country.

The policy so announced appears to be this: that (except to the extent of partial protection in case of foreign war with civilized Powers) the Mother Country recognizes no responsibility for their welfare or safety, nor any obligation to help them even in circumstances of great danger and pressing need. It would be out of place here to discuss the wisdom or equity of such a policy, which seems to point as an ulterior result to a severance of the connection between the Colonies and the Mother Country, perhaps hurriedly and in an unfriendly spirit, disastrous alike to the Mother Country and the Colonies.

To the Colonies themselves the disclosure of such a policy opens a new view of the relations of the Mother Country towards them, and each Colony will necessarily regard it as bearing on its own interests and future destinies; but all alike are concerned in endeavouring to avert, if possible, so great an evil, but they have no means of acting on or influencing the counsels of the Imperial Government.

It appears to the meeting, in these circumstances, that steps should be taken, if possible, to bring the different Colonial Governments, those in particular in which Responsible Government has been established, into conference with each other upon a matter so grave and of common interest.

It cannot but be admitted that the interests of the Colonies in relation to the Mother Country are not adequately secured under the present system of administration of Colonial affairs.

The constitution of the Colonial Office is ill adapted for carrying on friendly intercourse with Colonial Governments or representing their wants and wishes; whilst the attention of the British Parliament is absorbed in affairs of immediate concern to the Mother Country.

Various suggestions have been made for remedying the evils pointed out, as, for example, to obtain representation for the Colonies in Parliament; to constitute an Imperial Congress, charged with special functions, in which the Colonies should take part; to place those Colonies in which Responsible Government has been established upon the footing of foreign Governments as regards diplomatic intercourse; to place the administration of Colonial affairs under the management of a Board constructed somewhat upon the model of the India Board. To some of these plans objections may be made; other plans may be suggested. We do not take on ourselves to discuss them; our object is, if possible, to make arrangements by which the Colonies themselves, through properly authorized representatives, may meet and confer upon them, with the view of urging on the Imperial Government, with the weight due to the combined opinion, such changes in the present administration of Colonial affairs as may appear desirable.

To further this object it has been suggested that a Conference of Colonial Representatives, duly authorized by the respective Governments of those Colonies in which Responsible Government has been established, should be held in London. As the Imperial Parliament will meet, probably, in February next, it is thought the proposed Conference may conveniently be held about that time.

Our object in addressing you is, to submit the foregoing suggestions for the consideration of your Government; and (should you concur in them) to invite you to instruct one or more persons to represent your Government at the proposed Conference, with authority to concur in recommending measures for the consideration of the Imperial Government.

It will give the Committee, on whose behalf we write, pleasure to be instrumental in any way in promoting an object which they feel to be of deep concern to the welfare of the Colonies. We shall be glad to receive from you a reply at your earliest convenience, accompanied with any intimation of your views upon the subject with which you may favour us.

We remain, &c.,

JAMES A. YOUL, HENRY SEWELL, H. BLAINE,	}	Honorary Secretaries.
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The Hon. W. Fox, Colonial Secretary, Wellington, New Zealand.

## No. 2.

Copy of a Letter from the Hon. W. GISBORNE to Messrs. J. A. YOUL, H. SEWELL, and H. BLAINE.

Colonial Secretary's Office,

Wellington, 27th November, 1869.

GENTLEMEN,—

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular letter of the 13th of August last, communicating the resolution passed at a meeting of influential Colonists in England, in reference to the present state of relations between the Mother Country and her Colonies, and inviting this Government to send one or more persons to a proposed Conference, to be held in February next, of Colonial Representatives in London, to consider that subject, and to concur in recommending measures in reference thereto for the consideration of the Imperial Government.

The New Zealand Government have considered your letter with that care and attention which its importance demands, and they are of opinion that, for the reasons which I shall presently state, they would not be justified in authorizing persons to represent this Colony at the proposed Conference.

It is obvious that the questions on which the Conference will have to deliberate, and in reference to which they are expected to recommend measures to the Imperial Government, not only concern the whole Empire, but most directly affect the existing Constitutional Government of each Colony, and its relation to the Parent State. Under these circumstances there are two conditions, the preliminary fulfilment of which is essential to any prospect of useful deliberation on the part of the Conference, or of any practical result from their proceedings.

One condition is, that the members of the Conference should be appointed under the express authority of the Legislature of the Colony which they are to represent; and the other condition is, that there should be on the part of the Colonies concerned, a general agreement that such a Conference should be held.

The first condition in the case of this Colony cannot be fulfilled, as your proposal did not reach this Government until shortly after the prorogation of the Assembly, and as the Conference is proposed to be held in February next. Nor is there any probability of the fulfilment of the second condition, as from recent accounts both Victoria and New South Wales are understood to be averse to such a Conference.

Commissioners are about to proceed to England with a view to the settlement of certain questions between the Imperial Government and this Colony, and their mission is specially sanctioned by the Legislature; but they have no authority to represent the Colony for the purpose contemplated in your letter, and the Executive have no power to confer on them any such authority.

I have, &c.,

W. GISBORNE.

Messrs. J. A. Youl, H. Sewell, and H. Blaine,  
Palace Hotel, Westminster, London.

## No. 3.

Copy of a letter from Messrs. J. A. YOUL, H. SEWELL, and H. BLAINE, to the Hon. W. GISBORNE.

SIR,—

London, 23rd December, 1869.

On the 13th August last, we addressed a circular letter to you with reference to the present relations between Great Britain and her Colonies.

The object of such circular was to suggest the meeting of a Conference of Colonial Delegates in London, in February next, with the view of recommending to Her Majesty's Government, measures for improving the administration of Colonial affairs.

Since then it has been ascertained that Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies has addressed letters to the various Colonial Governors, recommending them not to send delegates to such Conference.

The Committee take for granted that the Colonial Governments will act in accordance with such recommendation, and that the proposed conference will not meet. Indeed, such a meeting would be fruitless, after an intimation on the part of Her Majesty's Government of a refusal to co-operate with it.

On the 15th instant a deputation waited upon Lord Granville, for the purpose of ascertaining from His Lordship whether, having thus stopped the proposed Conference, he would himself originate some plan in another form for effecting the desired object. We refer you to the report which appeared in the principal London papers (and which is stated to have been authorized), of the proceedings of the deputation.

We must state that the proceedings were imperfectly reported, and on one material point are calculated to convey an erroneous impression. The object of the deputation was clearly stated to His Lordship as being, not to discuss the general question of the Colonial policy of Her Majesty's Government, or the alleged grievances of particular Colonies, but to ascertain whether the Government would assist in bringing together a conference of Colonial Delegates, properly authorized by their respective Governments, to take counsel with the Imperial Government, in the present unsettled state of affairs. Consistently with this object, the deputation abstained from touching upon questions calculated to open discussion upon those points which it was thought desirable to avoid. Lord Granville's reply embraced a wider range. His Lordship alleges two objections to the proposed Conference—

First. That he does not think it would be agreeable to the Colonies.

Secondly. That it would not accomplish the object proposed.

His Lordship grounds his first objection on the fact, which he assumes, that the respective Colonial Governments have not responded to the invitation, and have not indicated an intention to send Delegates to the proposed Conference. So far as we are at present aware, there is no sufficient ground for His Lordship's assumption. From the replies hitherto received, the matter appears to be under the consideration of the principal Colonial Governments who were addressed. But it is obvious that Lord Granville's communication must exercise an important influence on their determination.

His Lordship grounds his second objection on reasons which do not appear to carry weight.

First, he refers to a proposal of Lord Grey, who, while strongly disapproving of the present Colonial policy of Her Majesty's Government, suggests that, in any change of system, limitations should be placed upon the present powers of the self-governing Colonies. Of this proposal Lord Granville disapproves.

Whatever may be Lord Grey's views on the subject, His Lordship will no doubt himself take occasion to explain them; but we must remark that no proposal of this kind has emanated from any body of Colonists in England. Should any such suggestions be made, it would seem clear that the fitting body to consider them would be a Conference of Colonial Representatives, authorized by their respective Governments, and not, as Lord Granville assumes, the Secretary of State, acting upon his own, probably erroneous, impressions.

Secondly, Lord Granville states that "he has been informed that there exists considerable jealousy in the Colonies, of Colonists in this country;" a proposition which he supports by stating, as an additional fact, that "most of the principal Colonies have here either permanent or temporary agents."

We must observe that, so far as we are aware, no Colonial Government has at the present time an agent in this country authorized to deal with political questions, such as those referred to in our circular. Lord Granville's remarks justly apply to the present Colonial Office system, under which irresponsible and unauthorized persons have undue facilities for obtaining the ear of the Colonial Office, but it is of equal force as showing that there is no reluctance on the part of Colonial Governments to appoint authorized agents to represent them in this country. This was the ground on which the proposal was made for a Conference of Agents duly authorized by the respective Colonial Governments, instructed and empowered to deal with questions referred to them.

Thirdly, His Lordship is of opinion that the interference of Colonial Representatives in affairs relating to other Colonies besides those in which they are immediately interested, "would be unsatisfactory to the Colonies themselves, would embarrass the Minister, and diminish his responsibility."

So far as we may presume to offer an opinion upon a question which properly belongs to the Colonial Governments themselves, we are inclined to adopt His Lordship's view, but this would not constitute an objection to a plan under which the various Colonial Governments might communicate with the Imperial Government, through authorized agents, acting each on behalf of his own particular Colony in matters of purely local concern, and collectively in reference to matters affecting common interests.

The consideration of such a plan would properly belong to a Conference of Colonial Representatives in concert with Her Majesty's Government.

As applied to the appointment of such a Conference, Lord Granville's objection is obviously futile.

Fourthly, Lord Granville declares his opinion that the proper mode of communicating with the self-governing Colonies is "through the Secretary of State and Colonial Governors to the Colonial Governments."

We understand by this that his Lordship is opposed to our mode of conducting official intercourse between the Imperial and Colonial Governments, except through the present channels; a proposition which his Lordship illustrates by referring to the case of the transfer of the Hudson's Bay Settlement to the dominion of Canada, in reference to which his Lordship points out that "the transaction was one of great difficulty, and that the dominion of Canada sent over two of her statesmen to negotiate it."

Transactions of difficulty are constantly occurring between Colonial Governments and the "Home authorities," and the course pursued in the case in question points clearly to the desirableness of establishing some general system of communication founded on a like principle.

It seems indeed scarcely necessary to point out that, if Great Britain desires to preserve a paramount authority over the Colonies, measures must be taken for enabling them to impress their views and wishes upon the Imperial Government, and the British Parliament and public, better than those which at present exist. Nor can we imagine any better mode of considering plans for that object, than such a Conference as was proposed.

We have noticed, we believe, all the objections raised by Lord Granville to the course proposed in our former circular. We turn to the broader questions raised by his Lordship's speech, but which were intentionally avoided by the deputation.

His Lordship refers with great complacency to the satisfactory relations between the Colonies and the Imperial Government, and "the general confidence which they are believed to place in the Colonial Office." He denies, in fact, that the relations between the Imperial Government and the Colonies are unsatisfactory, or that any occasion exists for disturbing them, or changing in any way the present system of administration.

We trust that we may be pardoned for remarking that such an impression on his Lordship's mind appears to constitute in itself a cogent argument in favour of some change of system, by which the Colonial Office may be better informed as to the real state of Colonial affairs, and the temper of the Colonial mind.

His Lordship does indeed refer to New Zealand as an exceptional case, as if general principles of policy affecting one Colony had no bearing upon others, and as if it were possible for the Imperial Government to adopt a policy calculated to detach one Colony from the Empire, without shaking the whole Colonial fabric.

But it is notorious that a general feeling of disquiet exists in various other Colonies, particularly those from which it is intended to withdraw military and naval protection. The relations of the Federated Provinces of the North American dominions are in an unsettled state; open rebellion exists in one of them; whilst in this country complaints are made of the present depression of trade, as attributable to Colonial tariffs over which the Colonial Office cannot exercise any influence; and the poorer classes of England are clamouring for schemes of emigration, which would be greatly

assisted by combined action between the Colonial and Imperial Governments, but which seem hopeless under the present system of Colonial administration.

In such a state of affairs, the assembling together of a body of duly authorized representatives of the various Colonies, empowered to take counsel with each other and with the Imperial Government, appears to us an object not unworthy a British statesman.

But if proof were needed of the expediency of such a measure, it is supplied by Lord Granville's own address.

The great question which at present troubles the minds of persons interested in Colonial affairs, is the indication, on the part of Her Majesty's Government, of an intention to promote the separation of the Colonies from the Empire. We need not refer to the various circumstances which have occasioned this general apprehension, which is not relieved by Lord Granville's address.

It is true that His Lordship says, in qualified terms, that "he shall be exceedingly sorry to see England lose all her Colonies;" but it is clear that he contemplates a change of relations between them tending in that direction, and which, unless carefully guarded, must end in that result.

In the concluding part of his address, his Lordship, referring to an interview with a New Zealand Colonist, exhibits in a startling form the principles of Colonial policy now formally adopted. These principles are applied to the special case of New Zealand. We do not intend to refer to the circumstances of that Colony, but we desire to draw your attention to the course of Imperial action towards it, as involving principles governing all the Colonies under like circumstances.

New Zealand is involved in war with the Natives, and is threatened with great apparent danger. She appeals to the Home Government for help, to the extent at least of allowing a British regiment, actually in the Colony, to remain there for a time, the Colony offering to pay for it, upon any terms which the Imperial Government may demand. That the dangers are not imaginary, seems to be admitted by the Imperial Government itself, as one of the arguments by which the removal of the regiment is justified is the expediency of opening the eyes of the Colonists to a full sense of them.

The application is rejected by the Imperial Government, disclaiming all further concern in the internal affairs of the Colony, all responsibility for the safety of its inhabitants, and all obligation to extend to them aid or protection in any form.

On the other hand the Imperial Government announces, that if the Colony desires to abandon its allegiance to the Crown, or even to annex itself to a foreign State, however imprudent such a step may be, no forcible measures will be used to hinder that course of action.

To use Lord Granville's words, "He will be exceedingly sorry to see England deprived of all her Colonies, but this country will never attempt to retain them by brute force." In other words, the Colony is free to go. Indeed, with the refusal of protection, the right to seek aid from foreign powers seems to be a necessary privilege.

Such a view of the relations between the mother country and her Colonies may or may not be just and wise. It is beyond a doubt that, if not entirely new, it is now, at least, for the first time, formally announced and practically acted upon. The reciprocal ties of protection and allegiance which have hitherto proved the basis of the relations between the mother country and the Colonies are thus practically dissolved, and the connection, if any is still to exist, must be placed upon some new, and, as yet, undefined basis.

The consequences of this change are momentous, as affecting not merely the interests of the Colonies in relation to the mother country, but *inter se*. Upon what conditions, and in what form is this right of secession to be exercised? Is it to be with or without the authority of Parliament? Will a declaration of independence on the part of a Colony, *ipso facto*, absolve Her Majesty's subjects from their allegiance and the penal consequences of a breach of that allegiance? Is such secession to be permitted to any Colony at its pleasure, without regard to the interests of other Colonies adjacent, and forming part of the same group? May New Zealand, for instance, detach itself from the neighbouring Colonies of Australia, or Victoria establish an independent republic on the borders of New South Wales? One instance of this kind has occurred in South Africa, in the case of the Orange River sovereignty. Is that precedent to be established as a rule?

Again, is it intended to throw upon the Colonies the whole cost and responsibility of naval and military self-defence in the case of foreign wars in which they may become involved by their connection with the mother country? Or to what extent, and under what conditions may they look for help?

These unsettled questions surely demand the attention of Colonial Governments.

Considerations of the above nature induced us to address to you our former letter suggesting a conference in London of Colonial representatives.

The grounds on which that suggestion was based appear to us as greatly strengthened by Lord Granville's speech. We can only add our regret, that for the present, at least, the object appears to be unattainable.

We have, &c.,

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary,  
Wellington, New Zealand.

JAMES A. YOUL, }  
HENRY SEWELL, } Honorary Secretaries.  
H. BLAINE, }