

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.