

What I have written is intended to explain to you the reason why, even now, I have nothing decisive to inform you of, upon a business which has nevertheless much occupied me. Things are nevertheless in progress, and though I can hardly say what will be the final result of an undertaking in which I take deep interest,—I am happy to inform you, that the few persons with whom I have had any communication on the subject, see matters quite in the same point of view as I do, and are disposed to lend their aid in removing the difficulties in the way of an arrangement which they seem sincerely to desire. I have received promises of support and I have been written to, that it was right to assist me. Things are therefore in progress, and in a little while I hope to be able to tell you more. But whatever be the result, I promise you that I will be sincere, and that I will let you know the obstacles which may have prevented success.

Men's minds here, moreover, appear to be much better disposed, and there is no doubt that a change or re-action is gradually taking place, from which I hope much for the arrangement and realization of our plan. If, as I believe the new Solicitor-General succeeds in his election, this success will have a good effect and will be a proof of the re-action of which I have spoken.

I must close my communication for to-day,—and will write to you as soon as I have anything worth while to tell you.

In the meantime be assured that I will not lose sight of the matter—and that I am, with much esteem and the highest consideration,

Dear Sir,

Your very devoted servant,

ED. CARON.

(From the Hon. L. H. Lafontaine to the Hon. R. E. Caron.)

MONTREAL, 10th Sept. 1845.

TRANSLATION.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I hasten to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 8th instant, as well as that which accompanied it. These letters only arrived late yesterday afternoon. According to your wish I have communicated them to our friend Morin. In replying to your communication, I answer only for myself, and I do so, as I should have done, had my name not been mixed up in your conversation with Mr. Draper. Although the nature and the object of the conversations, in so far as I am concerned, would justify me in abstaining from the expression of any opinion, yet, in accordance with your wish, I think it due to the friendship which I feel for you, to express my opinion frankly, but only on those points of your letter to which I think myself called on to answer. I should observe at first, that

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I infer from the tenor of your letter, although not stated in express terms, that you are of opinion that in the circumstances of the country, the majority of each Province should govern respectively, in the sense that we attach to that idea—that is to say, that Upper Canada should be represented in the administration of the day, by men possessing the confidence of the political party in that section of the province which has the majority in the House of Assembly, and that it should be the same for Lower Canada. Now, if this is your opinion, it appears to me that it furnishes you with the means of offering to Mr. Draper, “strong and irresistible” reasons in support of any advice given in harmony with this opinion. These reasons naturally present themselves, without there being any occasion to offer them in detail.

The present administration so far as regards U. C., is formed on this principle, but as regards L. C., its formation rests on an opposite principle. Why this distinction between the two sections of the province? Is there not in this fact alone a manifestation of injustice, if not of oppression? The course taken by Mr. Draper, to obtain the results which he desires, appears to me to be unconstitutional. No one is responsible for the step owing to which you write me; you are not charged to recognize either in whole or even in part the administration of which he is a member; you assume no responsibility. It was this which at first made me hesitate to give you my opinion. Had it been otherwise you would have had a right to demand of a friend that he should give you his advice upon what you would have to do, and in such a case I would have deemed it my duty to reply to your appeal without omitting any part of your demands, and without fear of compromising any one. If then I answer you on some points, you must understand that it is not without some hesitation. What is proposed to you is a repudiation of the principle of responsibility in so far as applies to Lower Canada. Since Mr. Draper admits that the Lower Canadian section of the ministry does not represent Lower Canada, why maintain it? Why according to your principles not form a new administration for Lower Canada with the aid of some one constitutionally charged to do so? An administration thus formed would be strong with the influence that the support of the majority of our representatives would give it, and would make that influence legitimately prevail in the Council, and in return would give to the country all the guarantee which necessarily results from the controul which public opinion would exercise over it. It would be then and then only that you could flatter yourselves with having in an administration, to make use of your own terms, persons disposed to and capable of sustaining our interests.

But it is said to you—We only wish to *join to us* some Canadians and French Canadians. From that moment, those who enter the Ministry enter it not in consequence of a constitutional right, nor by the action of the opinion of their countrymen, but only by favour, by the good pleasure of a Governor. From that moment as we learn by experience, they are without influence—they are no longer free agents; they are only instruments in the hands of the Governor, to do evil as to do good. If they have any capacity or talent, they make them serve sooner or later, to throw

division among us. On the one hand, they soon cease to feel the salutary check of the opinion of their fellow citizens; on the other side they accustom themselves only to consult their personal interests, and often even their passions. They obey only the arbitrary will of a Governor. Do you wish that I should cite you examples? Here they are:—Mr. Dominique Mondelet thought without doubt to be useful to his countrymen, when under Lord Aylmer, he accepted a place in the Executive Council. We have seen him almost immediately denying his past life and afterwards voting for the suspension of Judges Panet and Bedard, and acting himself as Advocate before that illegal tribunal, the Court Martial? Yet he was called to the Council as a French Canadian. It was under this title that at a later and sufficiently memorable epoch, we have seen Messrs. Debartzch, Heney, Quesnel, Louis Panet, take their seats in the Executive Council. They doubtless thought they would be able to promote there the interests of their fellow countrymen. They ended by voting there for the suspension of our representative Constitution. In later times we have seen Messrs. Viger and Papineau enter the Council by the same door. They have said, like the others that they could be useful there to their fellow countrymen of French origin. Yet one of their first acts committed in broad day was to give us for Speaker a person that we may doubtless esteem, but who does not understand a single word of our language, and to oppose a French Canadian speaking both languages equally, although unanimously called by *their* grateful countrymen to that high office. We complain, and especially you of the District of Quebec, of the unjust division of the public monies during last session. To whom do we owe it? Under whose auspices has this division been made? Let Messrs. Viger and Papineau answer. And yet all these persons appealed to the fact of their being French Canadians as a reason for their accepting office. All of them had names better known than that of Mr. Tachereau, who, like them, only enters into the administration under the same title, and by the same door, with the best desire in the world, doubtless, to do good. The same fate awaits him. A little more division among the Canadians, with all its unfortunate effects; this is all we have to expect from a system which a Quebec journal has just sanctioned in broad day, and which I cannot describe otherwise than as a system of “office seekers.”

I am I confess to you, yet to learn what good this system can produce. If there were two names that under this system it could be hoped would exercise some influence in the Council, if there were two names to which an administration owed some gratitude for their having joined it, as French Canadians, those two names were certainly those of Viger and Papineau—and yet now you learn from Mr. Draper that His Excellency is ready to give them their *congé*!! Is this in order to form a new administration for Lower Canada? Oh no! It is only to make a patchwork [*replaturage*] of an administration that Mr. Draper confesses does not represent Lower Canada, and that it is wished to reform, substituting for the names of Viger and Papineau two other French Canadian names, by the aid of which it would be hoped no doubt to create amongst us a little more division than has been created by the first named. Since it is then proposed to give the *congé* to Messrs. Viger and Papineau, why not also give the *congé* to

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Messrs. Daly and Smith? Is it because the latter represent Lower Canada more than the former? Messrs. Viger and Papineau might at least invoke the past in their favour, whilst the others have nothing but the present, and I leave you to judge what that is. Poor Mr. Viger! If this is the treatment destined for him, treatment which it is said they are ready to administer to him, I am not surprised to see, so to speak, that the officers of the Government only speak of him with derision. Two men thus placed, thus treated, can they exercise a great influence over the deliberations of the Council, and cause the interests of their countrymen to be respected there? If that influence is nothing, as must be presumed, after the avowal of Mr. Draper, how can Mr. Taschereau who only follows in their wake, and to whom moreover the door of the Council is shut, expect to do better than them? What such a state of things would bring us to, or rather what it would perpetuate, would be to accept office at any price. What French Canadians should do above every thing is to remain united and to make themselves respected. They will make themselves respected in the Council, and will thence exercise the legitimate influence which is due to them, not when they are represented there only by the passive instruments of power, however numerous they may be, but when they shall be constitutionally represented there by a Lower Canadian administration formed in harmony with principles which public opinion does not repudiate. The step taken by Mr. Draper towards you is in every respect similar with that which Mr. Sullivan took towards you and me at Quebec in July, 1842. It was then acknowledged that the administration of the day which was that which Lord Sydenham bequeathed to Sir Charles Bagot, did not represent Lower Canada. It was desired as now to add to it one or two French names only as French Canadians. You know all that followed, I have no occasion to remind you of it. The same scene is on the eve of being re-enacted, or I am much mistaken; unless, indeed the system of accepting places at all price should, by accomplishing the wishes of the office-seekers, throw our countrymen into a deadly division and weakness. Lord Metcalfe is the Lord Sydenham, and his successor will be the Sir Charles Bagot. I arrive then at a conclusion regarding which you cannot misunderstand me. It is, that as regards the Administration, Lower Canada should have what is granted to Upper Canada—nothing more, but also nothing less. This is the sincere expression of my views. If I am mistaken, the error is mine. I may regret it, without doubt, but come what may, I desire above every thing, to remain at peace with my own convictions, which are my conscience.

I cannot close without saying a word upon my position with respect to my political friends. I have often said, and I again repeat it, that no personal consideration for me should prevent them from forming part of an Administration, which for Lower Canada should be organized, in accordance with the constitutional principles which ought to direct our conduct. I will never be an instrument to divide my countrymen. If an Administration should be formed which commands my confidence, I will support it with all my heart. If that Administration has not my confidence, but possesses that of the majority of my countrymen, being unable to support it, I would cheerfully withdraw from the House rather than cause division

in our ranks. If, under the system of accepting office at any price, there are persons who, for a personal and momentary advantage, do not fear to break the only bond which constitutes our strength, viz., union among ourselves, I do not wish to be, and I never will be, of the number. Having no desire to keep secret my thoughts or my political views, I permit you to make whatever use of this letter you think best.

I am,

L. H. LAFONTAINE.

[From the Hon. R. E. Caron to the Hon. W. H. Draper.]

TRANSLATION.

QUEBEC, 17th Sept., 1845.

MY DEAR SIR,—After the conversation I had with you at Montreal last month, I promised you that I would place myself in Communication with some influential persons, belonging to the French Canadian party, for the purpose of ascertaining whether there would not be some means of effecting an arrangement under which they might be induced to take a share in the administration and to join the party now in power.—My last letter will have informed you that I had been endeavouring to keep my promise, and will have acquainted you with the causes which had retarded the conclusion of my negotiation; it is only to-day that I have been enabled to inform you of the result of my undertaking, and in doing so I will speak to you with that frankness which you have a right to expect from me after the confidence you have shown me.

If I correctly recollect our conversation,—after having premised that there were in the two Sections of the Province two great parties,—your own in Upper, and that to which I belong in Lower Canada,—you insisted upon the advantages which would result to the Province generally, and to Lower Canada in particular, from the Union of these two great parties, the result of which would be a strong administration enjoying the confidence of the great majority of the people throughout the whole country.—You spoke to me of the mischief arising to that portion of the population to which I belong, from the isolation from public affairs to which we had been for some time subjected; and you shewed me the best possible reasons for wishing that the arrangement first mentioned should be accomplished in order to obviate the state of things last referred to.

When we came to examine the difficulties to be encountered in reaching this result, we paused upon the following, as being those which appeared to us to be the most serious:—1st, All the seats in the Council being filled, how was room to be found for those it might be wished to introduce into it.—2nd, Would it be just to leave out and to abandon certain influential individuals justly respected by the party whose support is

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