

**AN ESSAY ON THE RE-
CONSTITUTION OF HER
MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT
IN CANADA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649054428

An Essay on the Re-Constitution of Her Majesty's Government in Canada by Henry Bliss

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Cover @ 2017

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CANADA.

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BY
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OF THE INNER TEMPLE, BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

LONDON :
PUBLISHED BY EFFINGHAM WILSON,
18, BISHOPSGATE STREET.

1839.

INTRODUCTION.

WHAT is to be done for the Peace and Good Government of Canada? A question of momentous importance to all concerned in the British Northern Colonies, deeply interesting as a problem of political jurisprudence, and which, after two High Commissions sent out to solve it, is now about to be submitted to Parliament.

However the time for deliberation may have been employed, the moment for action is arrived. Something efficient and conclusive must now be done. No more elusion of the difficulty, procrastination of the remedy, coquetting with parties, compromising of principles,—no more of this can be admitted. Half measures are out of date. Temporary expedients will no longer answer. Enough has been sacrificed to the chance of events, and the expectation of accidents. The destinies of two great colonies require to be immediately and permanently settled. Government must govern; the legislature give law; the Imperial

Parliament must speak out; or all will betray their office. And, more, the exigency is so instant and so urgent, that it behoves even private individuals to come forward, if any, from peculiar opportunity or observation, be enabled to suggest what may appear to deserve consideration; every good subject seems called upon, by his duty to the crown and the empire, to declare what advice he can offer, or what opinion he has formed, that may profit his country, or serve the present occasion.

A deep sense of this obligation, no less than an attachment to such studies, and a peculiar interest in their present application, have been among the principal motives for the present publication. Safer, undoubtedly, and far less anxious and laborious would be the task, to expect some measure of her Majesty's Government, and reserve oneself for either alleging the errors, or accusing the absence, of any such bill. That, however, is an office which persons will never be wanting to undertake. But a worthier effort, and one more suited to the emergency of the times, is at once to assume the responsibility of humbly tendering counsel upon a subject, which, had adequate counsel been already possessed, or heretofore adopted, would never have been brought to so momentous a crisis. The attempt, whatever its character or success, may at least serve to attract attention, aid deliberation, and hasten a solution of the

question; the further deferring of which would be its most unfortunate result. What then is to be done for the peace and good government of the Canadas?

The question is of a complex character, involving a subject of foreign relations as well as of internal legislation. For the former,—the wealth and power of Great Britain are too vast for any opportunity of her dismemberment to pass neglected. The rebellions and piracies perpetrated in Canada have undoubtedly received from foreign powers supplies of men, arms, and money. The source of the two former is notorious; but large pecuniary assistance would little suit the means and character of either the people or government of that country. Yet such assistance must have been given from some quarter, and not sparingly; otherwise those enterprises were too expensive to have been prepared, and too desperate to have been undertaken. Their plotters and contrivers must have made money, by so repeatedly sending others to a peril, ever considered too hopeless for themselves. Russia has been accused, and with too much reason, of interposing by pecuniary at least, if by no other, encouragement. The journalism of France has evidently discovered a disposition to interfere, restrained, however, by considerations of public right, and the improbability of success; considerations, which may not for ever prevail, against either her an-

tipathy to British dominion, or sympathy for her Canadian descendants. But the United States of America have never even pretended that such considerations could for a moment restrain their citizens from taking, in this contest, such a part as either political animosity, the hope of plunder, or the merest wantonness of outrage and aggression, should at any time suggest. Not for once, nor twice, nor a third, nor a fourth time only, but oftener than can be enumerated with exactness, or remembered with endurance, expeditions have been assembled, equipped, and dispatched from the American territories; nay, the public arsenals of that country have been repeatedly emptied of their stores, with impunity; to invade the unoffending dominions of Great Britain, at a moment of profound peace. And when we demand the reason of this, we are told, forsooth, their government has no power to prevent it! Is Great Britain still herself? Has she any thing left of that ancient courage, which once would have regarded such an excuse as a mockery and an insult? Is there a country in Europe that would submit to this? Is there one other in the world that would dare to inflict, on Great Britain, this grossest outrage of public law and national rights? How long is the thing to be endured? How much is this country to tolerate? What limit is our patience to assume? That reparation has been demanded, as is presumed to be the fact, that com-

pensation will be exacted, is by no means enough. Prevention is necessary. The foreigner requires again to be convinced that Great Britain will not submit to the slightest wrong. The first affront must in future be resented; the least aggression repelled. Let the United States be informed that the next expedition they suffer to be equipped and dispatched by their citizens, for the invasion of Canada, shall be regarded by us as an act of hostility. When the seas shall be swept again, as a fish-pond is netted, the Americans will be undeceived in their hope, that we are so simple as to suffer them to have war in Canada, and peace upon the ocean. Let them be forewarned that, if they will have hostility, they must not expect to choose the scene, or limit the object; that insurrection and rebellion is a game at which two may play, though we scorn to begin it in peace, or to allege the impotence of our own government, or the barbarism of our people, to disguise a war.

Friendship and commerce between ourselves and the United States are unquestionably most desirable for both parties, but this is seldom rendered less secure by an attitude imposing respect and exacting just rights. Our amity will only be the more prized in proportion as our hostility is more formidable. The people of this country, though perhaps about to lament that policy of their government, which has made them so de-