

Anexo 2.

Lord Durham's Report, 1838

... From the peculiar circumstances in which I was placed, I was enabled to make such effectual observations as convinced me, that there had existed in the constitution of the province, in the balance of political powers, in the spirit and practice of administration in every department of the government, defects that were quite sufficient to account for a great degree of mismanagement and dissatisfaction.

The same observation had also impressed on me the conviction, that, for the peculiar and disastrous dissensions of this province, there existed a far deeper and far more efficient cause- a cause which penetrated beneath its political institutions into its social state, - a cause which no reform of constitution or laws, that should leave the elements of society unaltered, could remove: but which must be removed, ere any success could be expected in any attempt to remedy the many evils of this unhappy province. I expected to find a contest between a government and a people: and I perceived that it would be idle to attempt any amelioration of laws or institutions, until we could first succeed in terminating the deadly animosity that now separates the inhabitants of Lower Canada into the hostile divisions of French and English.

... They [the English in Lower Canada] complain loudly and bitterly of the whole course pursued by the Imperial government, with respect to the quarrel of the two races, as having been founded on an utter ignorance or disregard of the real question at issue, as having fostered the mischievous pretensions of French nationality, and as having by the vacillation and inconsistency which marked it, discouraged loyalty and fomented rebellion. Every measure of clemency or even justice towards their opponents they regard with jealousy, as indicating a disposition towards that conciliatory policy which is the subject of their angry recollection; for they feel that being a minority, any return to the due course of constitutional government would again subject them to a French majority; and to this I am persuaded they would never peaceably submit. They do not hesitate to say that they will not tolerate much longer the being made the sport of parties at home; and that if the mother country forgets what is due to the loyal and enterprising men of her own race, they must protect themselves. In the significant language of one of their ablest advocates, they assert that "Lower Canada must be English, at the expense, if necessary, of not being British."

I have, in despatches of a later date than that to which I have had occasion so frequently to refer, called the attention of the home government to the growth of this alarming state of feeling among the English population. The course of the late troubles, and the assistance which the French insurgents derived from some citizens of the United States, have caused a most intense exasperation among Canadian loyalists against the American government and people.

... They undoubtedly think that they should find some compensation in the promotion of their interests; they believe that the influx of American emigration would speedily place the English race in a majority; they talk frequently and loudly of what has occurred in Louisiana, where, by means which they utterly misrepresent, the end nevertheless of securing an English predominance over a French population, has

undoubtedly been attained; they assert very confidently that the Americans would make a very speedy and decisive settlement of the pretensions of the French; and they believe, that after the first shock of an entirely new political state had been got over, they and their posterity would share in that amazing progress, and that great material prosperity, which every day's experience shows them is the lot of the people of the United States, I do not believe that such a feeling has yet sapped their strong allegiance to the British Empire; but their allegiance is founded on their deep rooted attachment to British as distinguished from French institutions. And if they find that that authority, which they have maintained against its recent assailants, is to be exerted in such a manner as to subject them again to what they call a French dominion, I feel perfectly confident that they would attempt to avert the result, by courting, on any terms, an union with an Anglo-Saxon people.

Such is the lamentable and hazardous state of things produced by the conflict of races which has so long divided the province of Lower Canada, and which has assumed the formidable and irreconcilable character which I have depicted....

... It will be acknowledged by every one who has observed the progress of Anglo-Saxon colonization in America that sooner or later the English race was sure to predominate even numerically in Lower Canada, as they predominate already by their superior knowledge, energy, enterprise, and wealth. The error, therefore, to which the present contest must be attributed, is the vain endeavour to preserve a French Canadian nationality in the midst of Anglo-American colonies and states.

... The fatal feud of origin which is the cause of the most extensive mischief would be aggravated at the present moment by any change which should give the majority more power than they have hitherto possessed. A plan, by which it is proposed to ensure the tranquil government of Lower Canada, must include in itself the means of putting an end to the agitation of national disputes in the legislature, by settling, at once and forever, the national character of the province.

I entertain no doubts as to the national character which must be given to Lower Canada; it must be that of the British Empire; that of the majority of the population of British America; that of the great race which must, in the lapse of no long period of time, be predominant over the whole North American continent. Without effecting the change so rapidly or so roughly as to shock the feelings and trample on the welfare of the existing generation, it must henceforth be the first and steady purpose of the British government to establish an English population, with English laws and language, in this province, and to trust to none but a decidedly English legislature...

The utter want of municipal institutions giving the people any control over their local affairs, may indeed be considered as one of the main causes of the failure of representative government, and of the bad administration of the country. If the wise example of those countries in which a free representative government has alone worked well, had been in all respects followed in Lower Canada, care would have been taken that, at the same time that a parliamentary system based on a very extended suffrage, was introduced into the country, the people should have been entrusted with a complete control over their own local affairs, and been trained for taking their part in the management of that local business which was most interesting and most intelligible to them. But the inhabitants of Lower Canada were unhappily initiated into self-

government at exactly the wrong end, and those who were not trusted with the management of a parish, were enabled, by their votes, to influence the destinies of a State....

... The disorders of Lower Canada admit of no delay; the existing form of government is but a temporary and forcible subjugation. The recent constitution is one of which neither party would tolerate the re- establishment, and of which the bad working has been such, that no friend to liberty or to order could desire to see the province again subjected to its mischievous influence. Whatever may be the difficulty of discovering a remedy, its urgency is certain and obvious.

... I believe that the great mass of discontent in Upper Canada, which is not directly connected with personal irritation, arising out of the incidents of the late troubles, might be dispelled by an assurance that the government of the colony should henceforth be carried on in conformity with the views of the majority in the Assembly....

... I believe that no permanent or efficient remedy can be devised for the disorders of Lower Canada, except a fusion of the government in that of one or more of the surrounding provinces; and as I am of opinion that the full establishment of responsible government can only be permanently secured by giving these colonies an increased importance in the politics of the Empire, I find in union the only means of remedying at once and completely the two prominent causes of their present unsatisfactory condition.

Two kinds of union have been proposed: federal and legislative. By the first, the separate legislature of each province would be preserved in its present form, and retain almost all its present attributes of internal legislation; the federal legislature exercising no power, save in those matters of general concern, which may have been expressly ceded to it by the constituent provinces. A legislative union would imply a complete incorporation of the provinces included in it under one legislature, exercising universal and sole legislative authority over all of them, in exactly the same manner as the Parliament legislates alone for the whole of the British Isles.

... I cannot doubt that any French Assembly that should again meet in Lower Canada will use whatever power, be it more or less limited, it may have, to obstruct the government, and undo whatever has been done by it... I believe that tranquility can only be restored by subjecting the province to the vigorous rule of an English majority; and that the only efficacious government would be that formed by a legislative union.

If the population of Upper Canada is rightly estimated at 400,000, the English inhabitants of Lower Canada at 150,000, and the French at 450,000, the union of the two provinces would not only give a clear English majority, but one which would be increased every year by the influence of English emigration; and I have little doubt that the French, when once placed, by the legitimate course of events and the working of natural causes, in a minority, would abandon their vain hopes of nationality.

I do not mean that they would immediately give up their present animosities, or instantly renounce the hope of attaining their end by violent means. But the experience of the two unions in the British Isles may teach us how effectively the strong arm of a popular legislature would compel the obedience of the refractory population; and the

hopelessness of success would gradually subdue the existing animosities, and incline the French Canadians population to acquiesce in their new state of political existence.

Fuente: Unity Diversity and Respect website (UNI):
<http://www.uni.ca/durhamreport.html>

