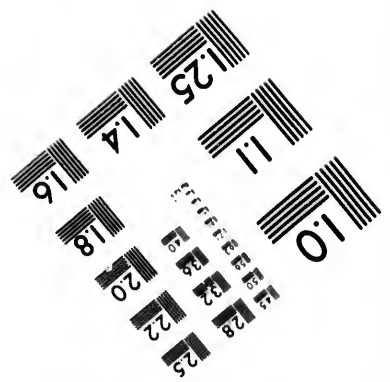
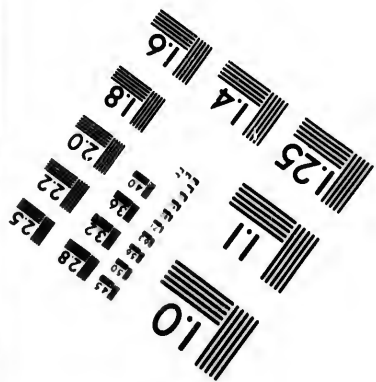
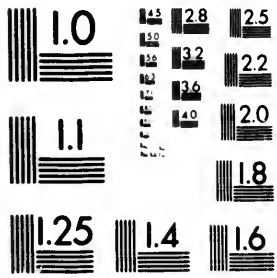


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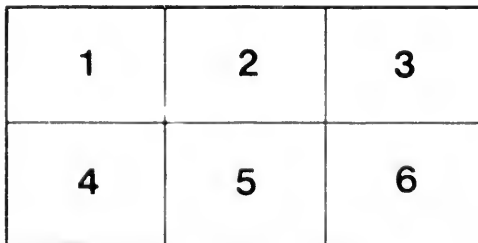
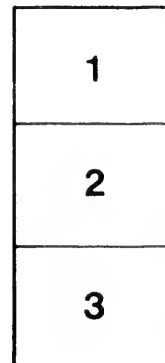
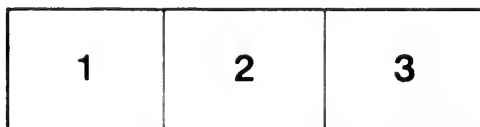
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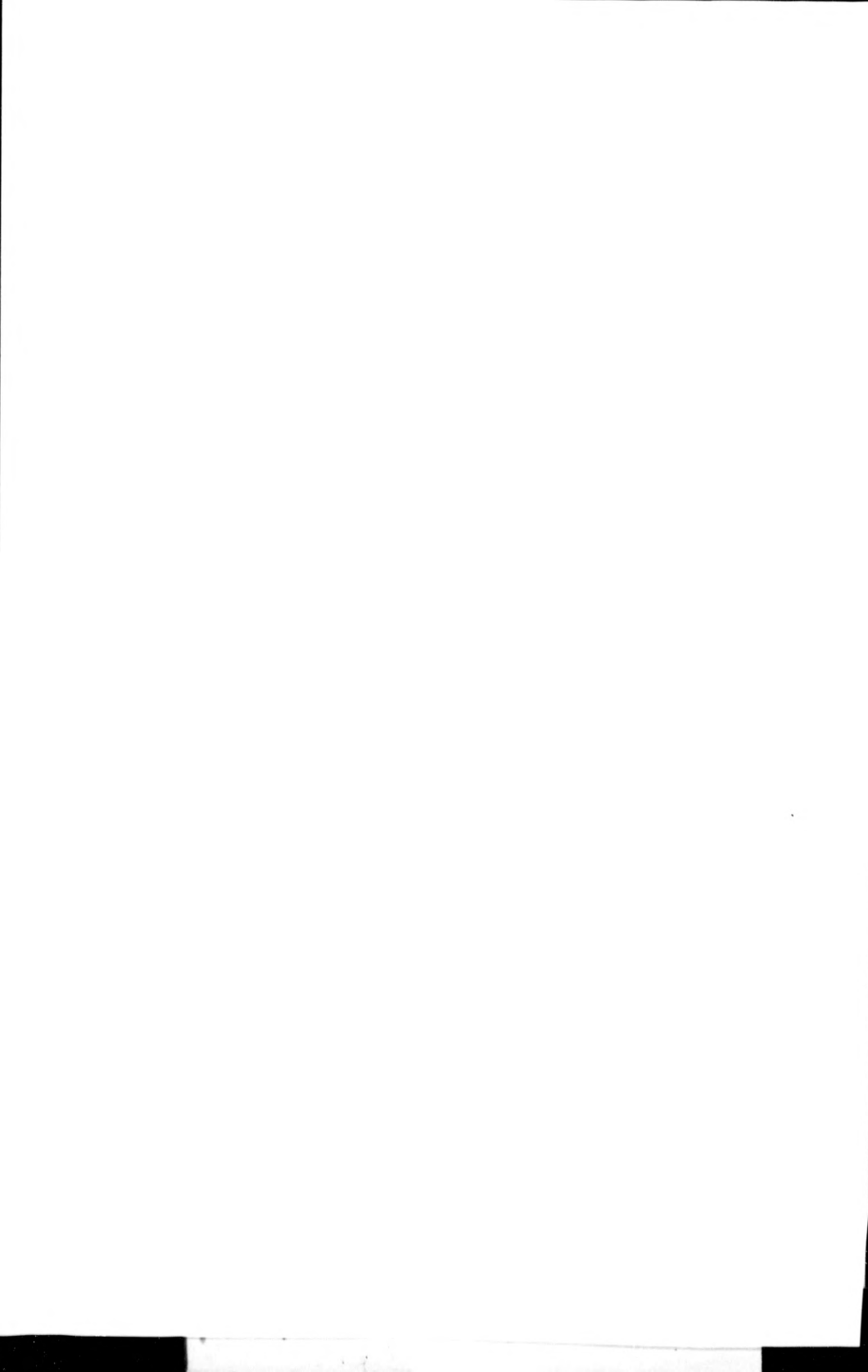
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C. F. BENNETT'S

LETTERS

ON

Confederation,

THE FISHERIES, &c. &c.

1068

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "TIMES."

SIR,

I have read the editorial of the *Express* of to-day, in which the Editor submits to his readers the following question—"How will this Colony be affected when the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States comes to be adopted by the Dominion of Canada, should we keep out of the Confederacy?" and he then goes on to argue and to answer the question himself, introducing the subjects of Finance, the late bad Fisheries, &c. &c., with his views upon which I cannot agree. I will, therefore, with your permission, through the medium of your columns, answer his question in the first place, and then take up the other matters mixed with it.

I deny that Newfoundland will be excluded from the benefit of a treaty with the United States if she keeps out of the Confederation. If Newfoundland retain her present independence and *self-Government*, she will be enabled, with the permission of Great Britain, or through her medium, to enter into her own treaty, or join, as she did before, other parties interested in the matter—Prince Edward Island, for instance—possibly securing a treaty more advantageous to her interests, than were she a member of the Dominion and a party to the terms of their treaty.

It is true that we have had partial failures of our Fisheries on the Newfoundland coast, and on the Southern part of the Labrador coast; but has not this failure been caused by the numerous seines used at the headlands on the arrival of the schules of fish following the caplin towards and filling our bays and inlets, which they at one time did do

during the whole summer, but which of late years they are not permitted to do? The heads of these schules, (like the foremost of a flock of sheep,) when stopped in their course, are turned and harried back into deep water, or to the Banks whence they came, and consequently the fish are not to be found near the shore as in the olden times when the hook and line only was used, and when every industrious man could catch, during the fishing season, from one to two hundred qtls. for his own hand. I myself have personally seen these things. The same principle applies to Salmon. There is not now one barrel taken to the hundreds that were caught in the olden times, and for the reason that the nets now stop the rivers and brooks in such a manner that the Salmon are prevented from going up them to deposit their spawn; and should any leap the nets and enter those rivers, they are pursued and taken from the holes to which they resort for the purpose of spawning, which does not take place before September. Therefore, unless the Legislature deal with this important subject, (which I have for many years past been urging them to do,) by prohibiting the use of seines and the improper fishing for Salmon, I venture to assert that we shall never again have good Cod or good Salmon fisheries upon the Newfoundland coast. But it fortunately happens that, in the Providence of nature, our fisheries are not limited exclusively to Newfoundland. We have had two successive years of good fishing on the Labrador, and our aggregate catch is not less as a whole, or barely less, (notwithstanding the partial failure of the Newfoundland Cod and Salmon fisheries,) than in previous years. The Labrador Cod, however, is not of the same value as that of Newfoundland.

Now with regard to the Revenue : Previous to the introduction of the Local Legislature this Colony was free from taxation, with the exception, so far as my memory at present serves me, of an Imperial duty on Spirits and Wines, and on Flour from the United States. When the first Legislature sat, (the best that we ever had, notwithstanding the hue and cry that was raised against them,) a small Colonial duty was placed on Wines and Spirits. In 1835 a moderate tax was put upon Provisions ; and manufactured goods, except those for the use of the Fishery, were subject to a duty of fifty shillings only on the hundred pounds. The fifty shilling tax was subsequently raised to seventy shillings : and later, when a larger outlay was required for roads, and to meet the increased expenses of the Legislature, and the loss of revenue occasioned by the senseless conduct of the House of Assembly in its refusal to pass a Revenue Bill, the tax was further increased to Five Pounds on the Hundred Pounds.

The next alteration was immediately after the great fire of 1846, when an additional tax of one per cent was imposed. Now, although this was a year of the greatest calamity and distress the Colony had ever experienced, its debt, notwithstanding, was not materially increased until the introduction of Responsible Government, with its train of jobbing and consequent gradually increased expenses. At the time the Colony entered into the American Treaty, in 1855, the duties upon all kinds of food and raw produce from the United States and elsewhere were removed, and in lieu thereof an additional duty of five per cent was imposed on manufactures from Great Britain and other places, making in all eleven pounds on every hundred pounds.

No very material change took place in our taxation from that time until 1865, when the American Treaty ceased, affording the Government a pretense for again taxing the food of the people to the extent of upwards of forty thousand pounds, as I am credibly informed; and this, too, was done when the utmost distress, and in many cases even destitution, existed; and this year they have imposed an additional duty on manufactured goods of nearly fifty per cent upon what had been previously paid!

Notwithstanding this monstrous increase of taxation, the debt of the Colony still goes on expanding, and the Government, in its rapacity, (it is further publicly stated, and enunciated by the Government Press,) contemplate imposing an *additional* amount of taxation!

How much longer does the Government think that the people will peaceably bear and submit to their prodigal, reckless, and imbecile management of the public affairs?

There is a large quantity of senseless twaddle introduced by the Editor into the subject of his editorial, which, I am quite sure, he would not expect me to notice otherwise than I have done—alintended, no doubt, to bewilder the unreflecting among his readers, and to make them believe that there is no hope for them out of the present temporary distress of the Colony unless they go into Confederation.

I have, however, a few more words to say upon this subject of “Confederation,” and which I will give to the public all in good time.

C. F. BENNETT.

St. John's, Nov. 14th, 1868.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "TIMES."

SIR,

The continued dropping of water will, it is said, wear away the hardest stone. It would seem as if the Confederates, in their straits after the repeated defeats which they have suffered both inside and outside the Legislature, have fallen back on this moral as a forlorn hope for their future course of action, imagining, no doubt, that the frequent and continued repetition of untruths and senseless dogmas may, among the many apathetic and unreflective, be made to pass as truths and valid reasons. It may be (and I know it is) contended by some that it is a waste of time to answer such impotent trash—that the objections raised by the opponents of Confederation are so strong and unanswerable, the numerical strength of the latter so great, (embracing nearly all of every class, with the exception of the members of the Executive Government, the lawyers, a few of the other officials and the place-hunters,) that there cannot be anything to fear from them. Now, I confess that I am not of the number of those who take this view of the situation. My experience has taught me that the battle is not to be won by mere strength. There is something more wanted. All men of observation and experience know right well that an unorganized mob, be it ever so great, is sure to be beaten by a comparatively very small force if well-disciplined and acting with one mind and one purpose. Hence I argue unless the opponents of Confederation cease to despise the strength of the Confederates, and in good earnest begin to organise themselves, they may when too late find out to their sorrow the great mistake they have made.

For the past four years this small party of Confederates has at intervals, by means of the Government patronage, through the Press, the exertions of a small fry of petty officials, and the hangers-on for employment, been assiduously promulgating not only in this community, but also in other parts of the Colony, their darling measure Confederation—(a measure universally hateful to the people)—and this, too, by the repetition over and over again, among the most ignorant of the population, of their stale, thread-bare, ill-founded, but nevertheless plausible and subtle observations. This has been more particularly noticeable within the past few weeks, during which time these Confederates, not at all dismayed by their second ignominious defeat in their discreditable (to use the mildest term) attempt to deceive the members of the Legislature by false pretences, and thereby induce them to adopt the *principle* of Confederation, and thus to render the voice of the House on the measure thereafter unnecessary and impotent, leaving, as it would do, the conditions upon which it is to be effected wholly in their hands—that is, in the hands of the Executive Government, of which their prominent advocates are members, have in their assumed strength thus come forth as brazen and as undaunted as ever, and with a system of organization and action never before witnessed among them.

Now, what are the arguments which the Confederates use to persuade the people of Newfoundland to accept of their measure? They are, first, that the people are at the present time in that wretched state that *any* change would be for the better. Second—That under Confederation, Canadians and their capital would come into the Colony in the greatest abundance; that our fish-

ermen would no longer be without supplies, that our labourers would be employed, our as yet hidden resources in the minerals of the Colony developed, and Agriculture receive a new impulse. Third--That union is strength, and that, by joining the Dominion, we should form part of a great Empire, whereas now we are "isolated." Fourth--that we shall then receive from Canada flour, bread, pork, butter, manufactured goods, &c., duty free. Fifty--The great field that Canada offers to the rising and aspiring youth in which to attain to eminence. And, lastly--That the Canadians will build a railway through the country, and at its Western terminus will put on a line of Steamers to bring passengers and goods from Canada and the United States to St John's, thore to join another line of Steamers for England; and in like manner from England to Canada. These are the reasons given by the Confederates, who no doubt fancy that the people are such fools as to believe them.

Let us now calmly and reasonably consider and analyze these amusing but nevertheless treacherous arguments. I will take them in their order.

First,--I assert that there is no condition whatever, in which a man may be placed, however bad it may be, that he cannot be placed in a worse one; and that great as is the present temporary suffering of many of our poor fishermen and others of the labouring population, caused by a reckless and unfeeling government, and excessive as may be the financial burdens of the Colony, yet if they go into Confederation they will be in a very much worse condition,—for the reason, that they and all the inhabitants of the Colony will then be still more heavily taxed;—they will lose their self-government, and with it every check against the extent

of the taxation which the Canadians will have the power of imposing, and all control over the expenditure of the money arising from the taxes,—the greater injury to arise from the transmission from this Colony to Canada of the product of those taxes over and above the paltry sum of eighty cents, or four shillings per head of our population, reserved (and the only reservation) for the use and maintenance of our then local Government, to aid in the payment of the interest of her many millions of debt, in the payment of her Army and Navy, in the building of her railroads, fortifications, docks, canals and other public works, and in other improvements,—compelling our merchants to purchase the dearer goods of Canada instead of the cheaper goods now imported from England and elsewhere—and also the dearer articles of food from Canada, instead of the cheaper food usually and more conveniently imported from the United States.

Now, Mr. Editor, it is a fact that I believe nobody will deny, that notwithstanding there are many persons in this Colony not engaged in the catching and curing of fish, that the inhabitants of Newfoundland are essentially from circumstances a fishing population,—that they are poor, and consequently cannot afford to pay the same extent of taxation as can the Canadians with their rich agricultural country, their other resources of wealth, and their known considerable accumulations of it, both personal and national. How, then, I ask, can this poor fishing population afford to pay, in addition to the increased and heavy taxes to be submitted to by them under the Dominion,—afford to pay the *additional* taxes that will necessarily have to be raised by our *local* government to feed the poor (who will still be left with us),—to make

our roads, and to meet our other requirements? These are serious questions, and ought to be satisfactorily answered.

The wise and natural remedy for the evil of which we have such undoubted cause to complain, and the only one to which we can look for relief, is clear enough, namely—the reduction of our present enormous taxes; the doing away with the immense appropriation expended under the *pretext* of poor relief, employed (as is *universally* reported) in electioneering-jobbing, in the limiting that appropriation to the wants of those who are really destitute, to the aged and infirm who are unable to gain a living by their own labor; and not to be used in feeding the pigs of the well-to-do, to be sold at half its original cost to purchase grog, to add to the store of those who are in good circumstances, and other discreditable purposes. I have reason for believing, from all I hear from every quarter, that not one-fourth of the money voted by the Legislature for the poor ever has reached those who were really in want of it. A great many of these unfortunate and unhappy persons have been left to pine and want, and are yet in that condition; and it is said that those who have received some relief, so very inadequate has it been that death from starvation stares them in the face; whilst the pampered and “fat official” paupers (like an imperial tyrant monster of old) are fiddling, laughing at, and disregarding their miseries. To their second argument that under Confederation, Canadians and their capital will come in abundance into the Colony, I reply, that if the Canadians are so disposed, what is the reason they do not come here now? There is nothing more to prevent them than there is to prevent myself or any other British subject from doing so.

They can, if they have any capital to spare, bring it here now and take the places of those who, by the incompetent and reckless administration of the Government, have been either ruined or driven with their capital from the country ; and also of those who, for the same cause, are preparing to quit it as soon as they can, as also of the numerous fishermen, mechanics and other able-bodied men, on whose class the revenue of this Colony depends for its prosperity. But how, I would again ask, are the Canadians to find money to work *our* mines, when they go to England and the United States for capital to work their own ?—That they do so is beyond question.

The third argument is that “ Union is strength.” Now I deny that union is always strength—it is as frequently a rope of sand. I contend that there would be no natural bond of union between this Colony and Canada, inasmuch as our commerce with that country, in comparison with our commerce with Great Britain, with the other European markets, with the United States of America, the West Indies and Brazil, is a mere nonentity ; and the Confederates may just as well and with equal force say, that the tacking this Colony to China with its three hundred millions of souls, its immense and splendid territory and vast natural resources, would be a source of strength ! It should not be forgotten, for it is a material and very important argument in this question, that at the present moment this Colony forms part of the great Empire of Great Britain—the strongest power on the face of the globe—of whose flag, of whose political Constitution, of whose many admirable philanthropic institutions, and of whose *direct* alliance with us, we have felt and have still just cause to feel

proud—and with them are our strongest social ties.

And yet the Confederates would, if they could, persuade the over and truly loyal people of this Colony to commit such a treason as to sever that glorious tie, our greatest strength and hope of security from the foreign foe, and join the embryo and ill-constituted new nation, “the Dominion of Canada”!!! Was there ever so gross, so wicked and so insane a scheme before practised on any community that had the slightest pretensions to civilization, or regard for their own security, as that one now urged on the people of this Colony? Surely the people are not so insane and insensible to their own interests as to afford this project the slightest countenance. The fact is, that although this Dominion has been in existence over a year, there is no more sign of cohesion amongst its several elements than there was at the time of its coerced union; and if there has been any change, it has been one tending to greater chaos. For instance, Nova Scotia is now more resolved for the repeal of that ill advised, unrighteous, unnecessary and forced union than ever. There are now sitting in her local Legislature no less than thirty-seven opponents to the Confederacy, out of thirty-eight members returned by the people, leaving only one member to support the measure; and this one will, I have reason to believe, have no chance of re-election at any ensuing appeal that may be made to the country. Again, the people of New Brunswick, who, under the same false pretences as have and are now being put forth by the Confederates in Newfoundland, were duped into the belief that Confederation was to be a good thing for them, have since discovered the great mistake they made in returning a majority of Confederates to their

Local and Dominion Parliament. They have, however, in every instance where a new election has since occurred, sent to their Legislature persons who are strongly opposed to that measure; and it is well known by all who are acquainted with what is passing in that Province that the great mass of the people are now resolved to support Nova Scotia in its efforts for repeal. Even the French population of Lower Canada are dissatisfied with the Confederacy, and are beginning to agitate the question for themselves, with a view to repeal also. When the people of Newfoundland consider that the population of these several Provinces must necessarily receive material benefit from the union, in their participation in the great public works that are contemplated by the Dominion Government, (such as its railroads, canals, fortifications, ships of war, and general public improvements, and requirements,) all opening up employment for their respective laboring classes, scattering many millions of money amongst them, and which cannot fail to foster for a time a considerable amount of prosperity, besides giving them even permanent advantages in their railroads and canals, which must greatly increase commercial and passenger accommodation—yet if, with all these benefits, *they* feel that the serious disadvantages (such as the heavy taxation imposed on them by the Dominion Government, and the debasing servility into which they are brought, under the influence and power of the Canadians) *overbalance* the good to accrue, how much greater, and far greater, are the disadvantages which the people of Newfoundland would have to suffer, and how much more strong should be their objections against going into that abomination, knowing as they must know, that they would not and could not by any

possibility be benefitted by the expenditure of that increased and excessive taxation, and that the surplus revenue raised in this Colony would not, as I have hereinbefore stated, be expended in it; but that all above the paltry sum of eighty cents a head on our population, would have to pass out of the Colony to be expended in the Dominion of Canada! How would the Newfoundlanders like this? and what would be the state and condition of our labouring population, of our poor, and of our present remaining commercial capitalists, under such circumstances? These are subjects for those among us who possess the powers of reflection, and more particularly of those who have money to lose, well to consider. For my part, could I believe that such a sad catastrophe could by any possibility fall on the Colony, I should view its approach with pangs something akin to horror.

The fourth argument is that we shall receive the flour, bread, pork, butter, &c., of Canada, and its manufactured goods, duty free. If the Government are so anxious to receive into the Colony these articles duty free, why do they impose taxes on them now? The Government put on those taxes, and it is in their power to remove them if they choose to do so. In 1865, they avail themselves of the termination of the Reciprocity Treaty to tax the food that previously came from Canada and other places *free* of duty. For many years to come, as must be well known to those who are competent to govern the Colony, the United States will be our *cheapest* market for flour and other articles of food, and they must also know, or ought to know, that freights from the United States are usually barely more than half what is paid from Canada. Moreover, it is more convenient to bring our food thence, inasmuch as the ships of our mer-

chants, when so required, call into American ports on their return voyages from the West Indies and Brazil to bring such produce as may be requisite. Under a Reciprocity Treaty our trade with the States would be far greater than with Canada. In fact it is so now without that Treaty ; whereas, as I have stated before, with Canada, it is comparatively trifling, and almost wholly out of the route of our commerce.

The fifth argument is a subject that interests seriously the youth of this Colony, and all those in it who aspire to any public office, or to enter into political life, whether here or in Canada. The Confederates hold out as a bait to them the prospect which Canada offers to the " rising and aspiring youth of this Colony." Now, as I assume that these young men have some brains wherewith to aid them in their aspirations, I would put the following pertinent questions to them : First—What is to prevent their going to Canada and indulging in their aspirations at the present time ? Second—What chance under Confederation would any young man in Newfoundland possess of filling an office even in his own *native* country, when opposed to the political aspirations of the natives and residents of Canada ? And, third—Who would be enabled to command most effectually that political influence which would be indispensable to secure such appointments ? Would it be those living in Canada, backed by their 147 representatives, or those of Newfoundland, backed by their eight representatives only ? If the replies to these questions do not satisfy them as to their fate, let them take warning from the treatment the inhabitants of Nova Scotia have received at the hands of the Dominion, in whose Commons House there are 19 Nova Scotians, and 15 members from New

Brunswick, and yet, notwithstanding, their public offices are for the most part filled by a pack of needy Canadians.

The sixth huge humbug, but plausible bait to attract the attention of our labouring population, who form so large a portion of the Electors of this Colony, is the project of building a railroad through the country from St John's to its Westernmost limits, there to meet a line of Steamers to and from the Dominion of Canada, and another line of Steamers between St John's and England, for the purpose of a passenger and traffic communication with these respective countries. Could anything in our age and in this Colony be more utopian? It is well known that passengers will travel and that goods will be carried by the cheapest, least inconvenient, safest and most certain route. Now, there is nobody in his senses will say that such a route can exist through the Island of Newfoundland. That tramroads may be established for mining purposes, in like manner as the Proprietors of the Tilt Cove Mine have a short line of this description from their Copper Mine to the place of shipment, is a very practicable and even probable thing—the expenses of such a road being comparatively trifling when compared with the immense cost of a proper railroad, with its rolling stock and necessary engineering establishment. What traffic for centuries to come is likely to pay the interest of the cost, or even the *annual expense* of such an undertaking?

There is another bait, I am told, to be offered to the non-Confederates which, the authors of it say, is sure to be swallowed by them, namely—“that all articles *fit* and *necessary* for the fisheries are, under the Dominion Government, to be admitted duty free!” Is this the basis on which the pro-

minent leader of the Confederate party founded his calculations when he publicly asserted in the Commercial Room that the Government had a measure to propose to the Legislature that the country would be sure to approve of, which would remove their objections to Confederation, and which it is also reported one or more of the members of the Legislature, previously opposed to the measure have said they are willing to accept? If it be, I should myself be glad to know,—and those who have a still deeper stake in the result of the question than I have, namely, the Electors generally, would also like to know more clearly than they do at present,—what the meaning of this great boon is? Is it that all our imports are to come into the country duty free? or is it that they are to be limited to the exemptions only that existed in the Colony some years past, when salt, nets, lines, twines, and it may be some other articles, were not chargeable with duty? If so, how inadequate and paltry would be the consideration! And if these exemptions are to be extended to such articles, when is the extent of such exemptions to be made known? Is it *after* the resolution has passed the Legislature, with the simple explanation “all things fit and necessary, and used in the fisheries?” Or, is it another snare to perpetuate their scheming? or when and by whom is it to be decided what are “*fit and necessary*?” I maintain that it is the produce of the fisheries that pays *all* the taxes, the public servants, the mechanics, and that supports every person, who resides in the Colony! and that it is impossible to separate any class from those who actually catch the fish. The expenses of the Government, all our public officers, the wages of the artisan and the laborer, the food they eat, the clothing they wear, the freights of our fish to mar-

ket, and every appliance incidental to the fisheries—all are paid for by the fish that the fisherman takes out of the water; and the salaries and wages of those not actually engaged in the fisheries are more or less regulated by the amount of taxation that is imposed on the country. Consequently, it is those who are engaged in the fisheries who have to bear the burthen of taxation in the end—and this fact cannot be controverted. Such being the case, why should not *everything* be exempt from duty, and why should not our *necessary* taxation be limited to the uses of this Colony solely, to be expended under the control of our local Government, instead of being sent to the New Dominion, for the benefit of others? If the catching and curing of the fish be more costly in the aggregate than the net price obtained for it at market, those immediately engaged in catching it must necessarily have nothing left to support themselves. Such having been the case of late years is the cause of their present poverty and destitution. Now, if the fisheries cannot be sustained under the present taxation, how are they to be sustained when the increased taxation is imposed by the Dominion Government.

It is evident from our experience that the only object Canada has in view is to wring all the revenues she possibly can out of us—else what is her motive for her strong desire that we should join the Dominion? If such be not her intention, let it be understood that none of the money raised by taxation be sent out of the country, but that the whole be expended in Newfoundland. This would be a proper test that they are disinterested,—but none other would.

Before I conclude there is one more subject to which I wish to call public attention, and more particularly that of the working classes, who do not possess the means of relieving themselves from the annoyances, the difficulties, and the still more serious inconveniences to which they will be subjected under its operation. I refer to the recent militia law of the New Dominion, which makes

every man of a given age liable to serve in their army or navy as militia men, or in the regular Dominion army. If drafted they *must* serve, unless they have the means wherewith to purchase their exemption; and any militia raised in this country under that law, would, at the *dictum* of the Dominion War office, be compelled to go to any part of that immense territory, should the Dominion Government embark in any war with their neighbours, while those who might be drafted into the regular army could be sent to any part of the world. So that, after all the sneers that have been attempted to be put upon the "bleaching bones," it is more than possible that Newfoundlanders may yet have to leave their bones to bleach in a foreign land. The people of Newfoundland do not and would not object to give their services to that military organization requisite in every country for the defence of their own homes and shores; but they do object to the military law of Canada, which will take them from their own country to be treated little better than slaves.

In conclusion, I will ask you, Mr. Editor, and I will ask your readers, whether there be any one among you who has ever seen a valid answer to the question that I, in the first letters I wrote on the subject of Confederation, put to the advocates of that measure, namely—"What one single *substantial* benefit is Newfoundland to receive from entering into Confederation," to balance all the grievous ills she will have to suffer, and all the sacrifices she will have to make, on entering that Confederacy?

If any one has a knowledge of such answer, or can name that one substantial benefit, I shall feel obliged if he will impart it for my own information and for the information of the public. As yet I have seen no such answer.

Your obedient Servant,

C. F. BENNETT.

St. John's, Nov. 23, 1868.

