

CONFIDENTIAL.

Recruiting in British North America.

No. 1.

COPY of a LETTER from Sir GEORGE GREY to Governor Sir EDMUND
WALKER HEAD.

(Confidential.)

MY DEAR SIR,

Downing Street, December 22, 1854.

THE strong sympathy with this country in the conflict in which it is engaged, and the warm feelings of loyalty and attachment to the Crown which have been expressed in addresses from different parts of Her Majesty's North American Possessions with reference to the war, induce Her Majesty's Government to think that valuable reinforcements to our forces might be obtained from among the people of the principal North American Colonies.

I am anxious to ascertain your opinion as to the manner in which any proposal for recruiting for British regiments from among the Canadian people would be received, and with what success it would probably be attended.

It would be necessary, of course, that rules such as those which exist here should be laid down as to the qualifications of age, height, and physical strength, and on the other hand the same bounty which is offered to recruits at home would be paid to recruits from the Colonies on their enlistment, provided the terms of enlistment were in all respects similar.

If the recruits engaged to serve only for a comparatively short term, the bounty probably would require to be reduced in proportion. These, however, and other matters of detail would be easily arranged, if there is a disposition on the part of any considerable number of young men to enter the service.

In addition, however, to recruits from the ranks, the present opportunity appears to me to be a very desirable one for introducing into the British army as officers some young gentlemen from among the higher classes in these Colonies.

It has occurred to me that the best way of effecting this, would be to offer a limited number of commissions in British regiments of the Line, without purchase, to the sons of Canadian gentlemen to be recommended by the Governor, on a condition similar to that which has been attached to the offer of commissions in regiments of the Line to young officers already holding commissions in Militia regiments, namely, that they shall bring with them a certain number of approved recruits for the army from the Militia regiments to which they belong. This, as you are probably aware, has been recently done, subject to a proviso that not more than a certain proportion of any one Militia regiment shall be allowed to volunteer for the Line.

I should be glad to know whether you think it probable that if you were authorized to offer an Ensign's commission in a British regiment of the Line, to a limited number of young gentlemen who might be able to tender with their own, the services of a given number (say fifty) of young men as recruits, such offers would be accepted.

In addition to the advantage which we should immediately derive from the accession of strength which such recruits would give to our regiments, I think the infusion of some of our young colonists into the British army would have a beneficial effect, and tend to strengthen the feelings which at present happily unite these colonies with this country.

I shall probably be able to address you more formally on the subject at an

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early period, but in the meantime I shall feel obliged if you will favour me at your earliest convenience with your opinion on this question, together with any suggestions which may occur to you with regard to it.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. GREY.

His Excellency Sir Edmund Walker Head, Bart.,
&c. &c. &c.

P.S.—I have addressed a similar letter to the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, and to the Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick.

CANADA.

No. 2.

COPY of a LETTER from GOVERNOR SIR EDMUND WALKER HEAD to
SIR GEORGE GREY.

(Private.)

Government House, Quebec, January 12, 1855.

(Received January 31.)

DEAR SIR GEORGE GREY,

I HAD the honour of receiving your letter of December 22, marked *Private*, as well as the confidential letter of December 21.

By this time I hope that Lord Elgin has arrived in London. If so, he will have placed in your hands the address from the Canadian Legislature. I forwarded the money by the last mail, in two bills, made payable to the Duke of Newcastle.

Ten minutes' conversation with Lord Elgin on the subject of recruiting in Canada, will give you more information than I can pretend to convey in many letters. Indeed, my knowledge is as yet so imperfect that my opinion is worth little or nothing.

I fear that both here and in New Brunswick the ordinary demand for labour is such as to make it doubtful whether fit men could be obtained for the usual bounty.

On the other hand, the eagerness of respectable young men in these colonies to obtain commissions in the Queen's service is very great indeed. I fully appreciate the value of such an infusion into the British army of Colonial gentlemen; nothing could tend more to strengthen the ties between England and her Colonies. I have often thought that the indirect effect of the numerous marriages between officers of the army and Colonial ladies had far more influence than is commonly supposed, and formed an important element in the question of withdrawing our troops from the Colonies.

The practical question now before us is—could Canadian gentlemen, who are anxious to earn a commission by inducing men to enlist, find those ready to engage themselves?

If the Commission now sitting here on the subject of organizing our Militia and Volunteer Corps should succeed (as I have every reason to hope they will), in suggesting some effective and acceptable plan for the self-defence of the Province, it is very possible that the military spirit of Canada may be so roused as to present to the recruiting officer a better field than it now seems to offer.

One very material question, however, will be this—is it probable that the Queen's Government may desire to replace by a Militia regiment the one regiment of the Line remaining in garrison at Quebec?

I have an apprehension that the self-esteem of the Canadians may be a little touched by the notion of having English Militia to do the work which Canadian Militia might do in their own country. Confidence in the people of the Colony seems implied by the reduction of the force to its present dimensions. It may be said:—"If the English Government really trust us, why not let us

embody a regiment of our own militia to garrison Quebec, and do the duty now performed by the Queen's troops. It would cost them less, even if they paid them."

Whilst they did such duty it might be politic that the English Government should pay them, though I have little doubt the Canadian Parliament would do so if requested. Were a corps of Canadian militia embodied under such circumstances, and the officers carefully selected, so as only to include men fit for the Queen's service, there might be a great probability of an officer anxious to obtain a commission carrying with him a certain number of men—men who before their military spirit had been roused by service in the militia, would have rejected all the usual inducements to enlist.

I desire especially that it may not be supposed I am now recommending the immediate substitution at Quebec of a militia regiment (Canadian) for the Queen's troops. I am merely discussing the probable effects of such a step. The question itself is too grave a one to be thus summarily dealt with. It is not clear, if Quebec and Kingston were even handed over unconditionally to Colonial custody, that the English Government could easily resume them again; more especially if Canada paid the militia corps which held them. Neither until the report of the Commission shall be before the House of Assembly do we know how far we shall succeed in organizing our Colonial forces. I am convinced, however, from all I hear, that now is the time to do it. There is at this moment a strong feeling in Upper Canada in favour of preparations for the defence of the province. Volunteer corps may be formed in most of the towns. I hope that when the Houses meet again in February the report will be ready; and I have little doubt but that they will provide any immediate funds which may be requisite. I will not answer for their readiness to contribute money to the war.

Pray believe, &c.
(Signed) EDMUND HEAD.

The Right Hon. Sir George Grey, Bart.,
&c. &c. &c.

NOVA SCOTIA.

No. 3.

COPY of a LETTER from Lieutenant-Governor Sir J. GASPARD
LE MARCHANT to Sir GEORGE GREY.

(No. 4. Confidential.)

Halifax, Nova Scotia, January 4, 1855.
(Received January 31.)

SIR,

I HAVE given to your confidential despatch of the 22nd December all the consideration which the departure of the mail admits, although I may add that the opinions I venture to express are the result of much meditation upon the state of affairs in Europe, before and since that despatch was received.

One of the chief reasons why I do not think that any considerable number of persons in this province would enlist or volunteer to enter regiments of the Line, is, that every man can earn 4s. sterling per day throughout the year; and I therefore am of opinion that no pay or bounty yet offered would afford a pecuniary temptation sufficient to induce them to quit peaceful pursuits so remunerative for the hazards of war in the Crimea; and I am convinced that a recruiting sergeant might go through the streets of Halifax, or of any of the shire towns, and in a month he would not recruit ten men, offering the ordinary inducements for enlistment.

At the same time there is no want of physical force in the province, and assuming that every fifth person in the population is able to bear arms, the militia force of Nova Scotia would amount to 60,000 men.

From such a population four or five regiments could easily be raised, and a

regiment of volunteers to defend the British islands or serve abroad would never be wanting, provided that a patriotic or honorary inducement were offered, instead of the pecuniary reward, which, from the difference in the rates of wages here and at home, must certainly fail. I would also observe further that if the Imperial Government would throw freely open to British Americans the chances of promotion in the united services, and if some arrangement could be made by which the outlying portions of the empire could be made to feel a deep interest in the whole, then I would as soon undertake to raise a regiment for foreign service in Nova Scotia as in Essex or Yorkshire. As matters now stand, all that I could safely promise would be this :—

In the event of hostilities on this continent, I could in three months bring ten regiments, one thousand strong, into the field to guard our frontier or aid the neighbouring provinces.

Acting upon the pledge of the Legislature, given last spring, I would undertake to raise, and from provincial resources, aided by a contribution from the Imperial Exchequer, pay a force sufficient to guard the arsenals and protect the public property, leaving every soldier in the Province free to embark for the seat of war.

What I would prefer to do would be to raise a regiment in the Province, to be officered by natives or residents of it, who, like the Highland regiments, should bear some designation that they would cherish, and that the country would recognize. Such a regiment, armed with the Minié rifle, would in peace be sufficient to guard the country, and in war would form a valuable force, upon which all the militia regiments would form.

Such a regiment, though not bound to, would invariably volunteer to serve abroad, and in such service would be recruited from the province whenever its ranks were thinned by battle or disease.

If commissions are to be only offered to young men raising fifty soldiers, few, if indeed any, will be accepted, because few persons can fulfil the conditions.

It would, however, be sound policy to interest the Colonies in the war, by giving some commissions without any conditions; and if I were authorized to offer some half-dozen commissions as Ensigns in the British army, to the leading families of wealth and influence in Nova Scotia, I am certain that the measure would be attended with the happiest results; and these young officers, accustomed to a northern climate and all its incidents, might be valuable in such a war as England is now waging.

And I will only again repeat my conviction, that if one Nova Scotian regiment was doing garrison duty here, they would soon desire active service abroad; and if once in the trenches, or in the stirring actions in the Crimea, there would be no want of sympathy to sustain them, or of volunteers to recruit their ranks.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

J. GASPARD LE MARCHANT.

The Right Hon Sir George Grey, Bart.,
&c. &c. &c.

NEW BRUNSWICK.

No. 4.

COPY of a LETTER from Governor the Hon. J. H. T. MANNERS SUTTON to
Sir GEORGE GREY.

(Confidential.)

Government House, Fredericton, New Brunswick,
January 13, 1855.

(Received January 31.)

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE had the honour to receive your confidential letter of the 22nd ultimo, in which you require my opinion with respect to the prospect of obtaining in this province reinforcements for Her Majesty's forces.

I do not doubt that some young men of the higher classes would eagerly apply for commissions in the army if they saw a prospect of obtaining them ; but the state of society here, which is very different from that of England, and, as I believe, from that of Canada, precludes the hope that any single individual or family in the province could exercise any influence in augmenting the number of men who might be induced to join the army as privates.

Moreover, although the system of a militia force is theoretically in existence here, this system is practically in abeyance, for the Act of Assembly which regulates the militia is so comprehensive in its character, that it has been, for some years past, constantly suspended by Acts annually passed for that purpose.

There is, therefore, no opportunity afforded to the people in this province for acquiring military habits or military tastes.

Again, the demand for labour here has, for some years past, far exceeded the supply ; and it would be hopeless to expect that any man who possesses health and strength would enlist as a soldier, either with a view of improving his condition or from a love of change and adventure, when he has the certainty of high wages, the choice of his own employment, either in a town, in the fields, or in the woods, and the power to change both his employer and the nature of his employment at his will.

But this has been, generally speaking, the condition of the labouring population of this province for the last year or two ; and, although the present depression in the value of timber, and in some particular branches of trade, has changed this condition to a certain extent, and may cause temporary distress in some localities, the independent feeling still remains, and no labourer here, even if out of employment, would, I think, if healthy and able to work, be disposed to enter the army for the purpose of obtaining a livelihood, or of improving his prospects in a pecuniary point of view.

But I am by no means sure that the general sympathy with the mother country in the war in which she is now engaged, which is generally felt throughout the province, and the admiration which has been excited by the gallant exploits of the British troops engaged in it, may not prove stronger than any other considerations.

On such a point, however, it would be, at any time and under any circumstances, difficult to offer any decided opinion ; and the information which I at present possess on the subject does not enable me to offer one which would be worthy of your consideration.

With your permission, therefore, I should wish to defer giving a definite reply to your enquiries until next mail. By that time I hope that I shall have obtained the necessary information ; and I beg to assure you that, in seeking for this information, I shall not lose sight of the confidential character of your communication.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

J. H. T. MANNERS SUTTON.

The Right Hon. Sir George Grey, Bart.,

&c.

&c.

&c.
