

George Brown Describes the Charlottetown Conference, 1864

...Having dressed ourselves in correct style, our two boats were lowered man-of-war fashion -- and being each duly manned with four oarsmen and a boatswain, dressed in blue uniform, hats, belts, etc. in regular style, we pulled away for shore and landed like Mr. Christopher Columbus who had the precedence of us in taking possession of portions of the American Continent. Our brother delegates were there before us. Five from Nova Scotia, five from New Brunswick and five from Prince Edward Island. Newfoundland goes heartily with the movement, but was not notified in time to take part in the proceedings.

At two o'clock the Conference was organized by the appointment of Col. Gray, Prime Minister of Prince Edward Island, as President of the Convention. You are aware that the Conference was originally summoned merely to consider the question of a union of the Maritime Provinces and that Canada was no party to that Arrangement and had no interest in it. We came their [*sic*], not as recognized members of the Conference, but unofficially to discuss with them the propriety of extending their scheme and seeing whether the whole of British America could not be included in one government. The Conference was accordingly organized without us, but that being done we were formally invited to be present and were presented in great style to the Conference. Having gone through the shake elbow and the how dyedo and the fine weather -- the Conference adjourned to the next morning at 10 when to meet for the serious despatch of business. In the evening the Governor, Mr. Dundas, gave a large Dinner party to as many of the party as he could conveniently receive -- I being one....

On Friday we met in Conference and Canada opened her batteries -- John A. and Cartier exposing the general arguments in favour of Confederation -- and this occupied the time until the hour of adjournment at three. At four o'clock Mr. Pope gave us a grand *déjeuner à la fourchette*....

On Saturday the Conference resumed its deliberations and Mr. Galt occupied the sitting in opening up the financial aspects of the Federation and the manner in which the financial disparities and requirements of the several Provinces ought to be arranged. When the Conference adjourned, we all proceeded on board our steamer and the members were entertained at luncheon in princely style. Cartier and I made eloquent speeches -- of course -- and whether as the result of our eloquence or of the goodness of our champagne, the ice became completely broken, the tongues of the delegates wagged merrily, and the banns of matrimony between all the Provinces of BNA having been formally proclaimed and all manner of persons duly warned their [*sic*] and then to speak or forever after to hold their tongues -- no man appeared to forbid the banns and the union was thereupon formally completed and proclaimed! In the evening, Col. Gray gave a grand dinner party at his beautiful mansion....

On Monday the Conference resumed its sittings, when I addressed the members on the Constitutional aspects of the question -- the manner in which the several governments

general and local should be constructed -- and the Judiciary should be constituted -- what duties should be ascribed to the general and local legislatures respectively -- and so forth. My speech occupied the whole sitting... On Tuesday the Conference resumed its deliberations -- earnestly discussing the several details of the scheme. The Canadians this day closed their case, and left the Conference to decide what course it would take on their propositions. At four o'clock Mr. Palmer, Attorney-General, gave the delegates a grand luncheon at his residence....

On Wednesday, the Conference gave the Canadian Delegates their answer -- that they were unanimous in regarding Federation of all the Provinces to be highly desirable, *if the terms of union could be made satisfactory* -- and that they were prepared to waive their own more limited questions until the details of our scheme could be more fully considered and matured. It was agreed that the Conference should stand adjourned until Monday the 12th Sept. then to meet at Halifax....

Source: George Brown describes the Charlottetown Conference, 1864" (excerpt of letter to his wife, September 13, 1864), *The Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 48, no. 2 (June 1967) 110–112.