

The Failure of a Mission

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The belief of the mercantilists that colonies existed for the benefit of the countries fortunate enough to possess them had resulted in the European Powers' lack of interest in and understanding of the colonial situation, especially in America. Great Britain's colonies, as the eighteenth century reached its second half, were particularly annoyed by the laws limiting their trade. When, after the conclusion of the war with France in 1763, Prime Minister George Grenville's government, with a big financial problem on its hands, passed the Stamp Act, the spark for rebellion had been enkindled. Within ten years the mother country and her American colonies were at war.

The strategic importance of Canada to the American cause was evident from the outset. The New England colonies could easily have been isolated by a British force working south from Quebec and Montreal as their base. To offset this possibility two expeditions to Canada were planned in 1775 by the Americans who had reached concerted action through a Congress of delegates from most of the colonies assembled in Philadelphia. Montgomery, a former British officer, succeeded in capturing Montreal in November, 1775, but the British held Quebec with its fortress on the Saint Lawrence against the assault led jointly by Montgomery and Arnold in December.

The remnant of Arnold's army did keep the British in Quebec, but the Americans were not equipped for the rigors of a Canadian winter. Sick, cold, hungry and without credit, they, in desperation, seized supplies when the Canadians would not accept their paper money. As the year 1776 opened the American situation in Canada was far from being a favorable one.

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On February 14, 1776, the Continental Congress considered a report of the Committee of Correspondence concerning a conference the Committee had previously been ordered to hold with a gentleman recently arrived from Canada. This gentleman, a native of Canada, had been engaged in the American Service since the appearance of American forces in Canada. His purpose in coming to the Colonies was to give a true picture of the situation and to inform the American Congress of the attitude among the Canadians towards their quarrel

with the mother country.¹ When Canadians had first heard of the dispute, they were generally on the American side, but by the influence of the Clergy and Noblesse, who had been continually preaching and persuading them against the Americans, the Canadians were now brought to the point of uncertainty as to which side to follow. The report of the Committee continues:

“That Papers printed by the Tories at New York have been read to them (the Canadians) by the Priests, assuring them that our Design was to deprive them of their Religion as well as their Possessions. That the Letters we have address’d to them have made little Impression, the common People being generally unable to read, and the Priests and Gentry who read them to others, explain them in such a Manner as best answers their purpose of prejudicing the People against us. That he therefore thinks it would be a great Service if some Persons from the Congress were sent to Canada, to explain viva voce to the People there the Nature of our Dispute with England, which they do not well understand, and to satisfy the Gentry and Clergy that we have no Intention against their Interests, but mean to put Canada in full Possession of Liberty, desiring only their Friendship and Union with us as good Neighbours and Brethren. That the Clergy and Gentry might, he thinks, by this means be brought over, and would he follow’d by all Canada. And unless some such Measure is taken, he is of Opinion our Affairs there will meet with continued Difficulty and Obstruction.”²

The report concludes with a mention of the jealousy felt in Canada over the issuing of paper money by the American Colonies.

The consideration of the report was taken up by the Congress the following day, February 15. As a result it was resolved that a committee of three, two of whom must be members of the Congress, should be appointed to proceed to Canada, there to pursue such instructions as the Congress should direct.³ The members chosen were Doctor Benjamin Franklin and Mr. Samuel Chase. The third delegate was Mr. Charles Carroll of Carrollton. The latter, it was resolved, should be requested to prevail on Mr. John Carroll to accompany the committee to Canada, to assist them in such matters as they should think useful. Provision was made for defraying any expense involved in the venture.⁴

¹ Worthington Chauncey Ford, editor, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* from the original records in the Library of Congress (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), IV, p. 148.

² *Ibid.*, p. 149. The report is in the writing of Benjamin Franklin (Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 22, folio 211). The gentleman from Canada seems to have been Prudent la Jeunesse accompanied by a John Dantermond (from copies of passports in the same volume, folio 213 and 215).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

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On March 11, the Congress began to consider the instructions for the commissioners going to Canada; debate on these continued for a few days.⁵ The orders were for the committee to set out as soon as possible. They must represent to the Canadians that the arms of the United Colonies had been carried into Canada for the purpose of frustrating the designs of the British against the common liberties of Americans and Canadians. Further the Canadians were to be assured of the uprightness of the Colonies' intentions towards them, the object being that the people of Canada might set up a form of government as would be most likely to produce their happiness. The Colonies were earnestly desirous to adopt the Canadians into their union as a sister colony, and to secure the same general system of mild and equal laws for both groups with only such local differences as might be agreeable to each. It was not expected by the Colonies that France would side with Great Britain: rather it was anticipated that France would be friendly towards the Colonies.⁶ The Commission must urge the Canadians to the need of doing something, of making a decisive step and, also, they must explain the nature and principles of government among free men. The instructions continue: "Endeavour to stimulate them by motives of glory, as well as interest, to assume a part in a contest, by which they must be deeply affected; and to aspire to a portion of that power, by which they are ruled; and not to remain the mere spoils and preys of conquerors and lords."⁷

The Canadians were to be promised the free and undisturbed exercise of their religion; their clergy, the full, peaceful possession of their estates. Everything concerning religion would be left entirely in the hands of the good people of Canada, provided that all other denominations of Christians might equally be entitled to hold offices, enjoy civil privileges, the free exercise of their religion and be totally exempt from the payment of any tythes or taxes for the support of any religion.

The Commission was invested with full powers to effect the foregoing purposes and again instructed to press the Canadians to have a complete representation of their people assembled in convention to consider the establishment of a form of government and a union with the United Colonies. If the Canadians would not agree to these terms of union, then the Commission must report back to Congress on what terms they would unite. If they did agree to these terms, they were to be promised that the United Colonies would defend and protect them against all enemies.

In conclusion, Congress ordered the Commission to establish a free press, to settle all disputes between the Canadians and the Continental troops, to force

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

all colonial officers to yield to the Commission in reforming any abuses, to promote the trade of Canada with the Indian Nations, to use every wise and prudent measure to introduce and give credit and circulation to the Continental money in Canada and to assure the inhabitants of Canada that their commerce with foreign nations would be in all respects on an equal footing with the trade of the United Colonies.⁸

After the Congress had completed the instructions, Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Chase and Charles Carroll were officially granted the Commission for and on behalf of the Congress and all the people of the United Colonies, to promote and form a union between the said Colonies and the people of Canada.⁹

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On what score were these commissioners and the fourth associate member chosen? What had they to qualify them for such an undertaking?

Benjamin Franklin,¹⁰ born in Boston in 1706, a printer by trade, a Presbyterian by upbringing and an active Freemason, was first known in the Colonies by his almanac containing maxims of prudence.¹¹ He rose gradually to prominence as a public servant until he became an elected member of the Pennsylvania Assembly where he proved himself a first class politician. Although he spoke seldom, he worked behind the scenes, shaping opinion, harmonizing differences, and summing up in incomparable and irresistible statements.¹² Having espoused the popular interests he was sent by the Pennsylvania Assembly to England in 1757 to present the cause of the people.

By the time Franklin was established in England, the war in America had been brilliantly directed by Pitt, so that the face of colonial affairs was changed. Louisbourg, then Quebec, and finally, all Canada by 1760 had fallen to the British. Franklin set himself at once to work to convince the authorities and the public in Britain that Canada must be permanently English.¹³ Already pamphlets had been circulating in London considering the relative advisability of keeping Canada or Guadeloupe which had been recently taken from the French. To many Englishmen Canada seemed a hopeless wilderness, while Guadeloupe was a flourishing sugar-producing island.

In Franklin's imperial vision portrayed in a pamphlet, Canada must be

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-218.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹⁰ Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: The Viking Press, 1938), p. 12. This is a good comprehensive biography of Franklin which gives a clear picture of the times in which he lived.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-115.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 205.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

English so that England could be secure; the colonies were the western frontier of the British Empire. To secure them was to secure the Empire.

The Stamp Act passed in 1765 by a Parliament in which they were not represented raised a great hue and cry in the American Colonies because it was a direct tax. Though they still had a traditional affection for the home land and the king, this did not extend in the same degree to Parliament, which they considered a corrupt oligarchy.¹⁴

On February 3, 1766, Franklin was ordered to attend the House of Commons.¹⁵ In the course of the ten following days he was questioned about the repeal of the Act and on the situation of America in general.¹⁶ Within less than a month the Act was repealed and America quieted. Franklin, however, was not satisfied because no imperial union had been established, which he saw as the basis of imperial harmony.¹⁷

Still agent for Pennsylvania, Franklin was voted as agent for Georgia in 1768, for New Jersey in 1769 and for Massachusetts in 1770. Had the revolution been delayed – or not come – he might have been agent-general for the Colonies. “He was an ambassador for America before America had the right to send one.”¹⁸ Once he had become the agent for Massachusetts, he stood strongly on the American side in that colony. He became more and more a thorn in the side of the British ministry.¹⁹

Events in the Colonies were moving along at a rapid pace. The Boston Tea Party and the subsequent closing of the Port of Boston had roused the attention of all. In September, 1774, delegates from every colony except Georgia met at a congress held in Philadelphia. Franklin delayed his return to America until the results of the congress would be known.²⁰

In December Congress sent Franklin the petition to be presented by him and the other colonial agents to the king.²¹ The king received it graciously and laid it before Parliament when it met on January 19. But Parliament neglected the petition. Measures were considered for suppressing the “rebellion.” Franklin offered to make payment for the tea destroyed in Boston if the punitive acts against Massachusetts would be repealed. The ministry was averse to repeal. Finally, having heard of his wife’s death some weeks before, Franklin engaged passage on the next ship for America. He arrived at Philadelphia on May 5, just

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 328.329.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 336-352.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 441

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 485.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 502.

after the outbreaks at Lexington and Concord. The next day he was chosen by the Pennsylvania Assembly to be one of its deputies to the Second Continental Congress, which was to meet in Philadelphia within four days.

Thus it was that when Congress assembled on May 10, Benjamin Franklin, aged 70, was its oldest member. “One of the firmest and boldest of the delegates, Franklin was one of the most silent.”²² He adjusted himself to the tone of the Congress. He was willing to take a chance on any hope of reconciliation as long as there was the least possibility of it. However, he began to feel that now there seemed no solution but armed measures. “Of all Americans he had had the largest vision of the Empire that might be shaped by political wisdom, and perhaps the strongest affection for the idea. But he had always known that it could not be brought about by the subordination of the colonies. To keep a part of the Empire weak was not the way to make the whole of it strong... If the ministry’s plan for the Empire was to compel the Americans to be less than they had the power to become, then they would be better off outside it, whatever they might lose by the separation.”²³ His old vision of Empire was gone.

For the second member of the Commission there is little to be said. A member of the Maryland Assembly in sympathy from the beginning with the patriot cause, a delegate from Maryland to the Continental Congress, and a Protestant, Mr. Samuel Chase was well known to the leaders in colonial politics.

The two Carrolls, Charles and John, natives of Maryland, were cousins, of Irish Catholic ancestry. Both families were of some standing in Maryland for they had considerable means. Eighteenth century Maryland had reverted to rigorous anti-Catholic laws: Catholics could not vote or hold office, they could not erect churches, nor could they teach.²⁴ Because the parents were determined to preserve the faith of their children, as most Catholics in the colony were, both boys, aged 12 and 14, were sent abroad to Flanders in 1748 to Saint Omer’s, a school conducted by English Jesuits since 1592.²⁵

After four years at this school, rising at 5 and retiring at 9, Charles Carroll was anxious to move to new fields of learning and a more colourful type of life. For the next twelve years he applied himself to the study of law – at a French Jesuit college in Rheims, at Bourges, at the college of Louis le Grand in Paris and in London.

After the completion of his studies in England, Charles returned to Maryland in 1765 and began to show great interest in colonial affairs. He became especially vociferous against the Stamp Act. Between 1773 and 1776 he came into prominence through a newspaper conflict in the *Maryland Gazette*.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 529.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 531-532.

²⁴ Annabelle M. Melville, *John Carroll of Baltimore: Founder of the American Catholic Hierarchy* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955), p. 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

He, signing himself as the “First Citizen,” became involved in a controversy with Daniel Dulany the Younger whose pseudonym was Antilon.²⁶

Charles Carroll wrote brilliantly. The *Gazette’s* circulation rose to an all time high as this disfranchised Catholic gave voice to the people’s rights and the patriotic cause against Dulany’s arguments supporting the Governor and the right to tax. The First Citizen’s letters determined the outcome of the May election in 1773 of the Maryland Assembly – a landslide for the patriot cause. When, within a year, delegates had to be chosen to the first Continental Congress, Marylanders thought of the First Citizen, Charles Carroll, as their ablest representative. Carroll refused, however, knowing that although his own colony had accepted him in spite of his religion, the other colonies retained their prejudices. With the furore over the Quebec Act, it was not the time as yet for him to serve his province to the fullest of his capabilities. However, in an unofficial capacity, Charles Carroll accompanied the Maryland delegation.²⁷ Thus it was that although not an official member of the Congress until after his return from the mission to Canada, Carroll was chosen as the third Commissioner to Canada. Congress optimistically hoped that the Canadians would take Mr. Carroll of Carrollton “for a typical American.” As an official envoy of the American Congress, the Roman Catholic should do much to eradicate the memory of the offense given in 1774.²⁸

John Carroll,²⁹ the associate member of the Canadian delegation, had with his cousin Charles attended Saint Omer’s in Flanders. When Charles left to prepare himself for more worldly pursuits, John, attracted by the clerical, academic atmosphere of Saint Omer’s, stayed on. Not far from the school was Watten, where in 1753 he entered the Jesuit novitiate. After his ordination around the year 1769, Father Carroll remained in Europe. For two years he toured the continent as the companion of the eighteen year old son of Lord Stourton, an English Catholic nobleman.³⁰) This trip broadened the young Jesuit’s horizons as he viewed evidences of decay in the Old Regime. Soon after the completion of the tour, a disaster which had been imminent for some years became a reality. The official words were spoken which dissolved the Society of Jesus in 1773. Father Carroll, greatly affected by the dissolution and the subsequent “snatching away of the way of life to which he had been so forcibly attracted,”³¹ came to England with the great majority of his Jesuit brethren,

²⁶ Ellen Hart Smith, *Charles Carroll of Carrollton* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942), pp. 103-104.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.p 120-121.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

²⁹ The most recent and complete biography of John Carroll is Annabelle Melville’s noted above.

³⁰ Melville, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

hoping that the Society might be re-established in the Catholic states of the continent and their dependencies.³² However, the following spring (1774) he sailed for America which he had left more than twenty-five years before. In Rock Creek, Maryland, Father Carroll settled down in his mother's home. He had returned "an aimable, cultured and polished man, endowed with all the acquirements of the learning of the day,"³³ very much aware, in spite of his long absence, of the situation in the Colonies and most favourably disposed to the patriotic cause.

Father Carroll's sentiments upon being requested to accompany the delegates are known to us in the draught of a letter, the original of which is now in the Archiepiscopal Archives in Baltimore.

"The Congress has done me the distinguished and unexpected honour of desiring me to accompany the Committee ordered to Canada, and of assisting them in such matters as they shall judge useful. I should betray the confidence put in me by the Honourable Congress, and perhaps disappoint their expectations were I not to open my mind to them with the utmost sincerity and plainly tell them how little service they can hope to derive from my assistance. In the first place, the nature and functions of that profession in which I have engaged from a very early period in life render me, as I humbly conceive, a very unfit person to be employed in a negotiation of so new a kind to me, of which I have neither experience nor systematical knowledge. I hope I may be allowed to add, that though I have very little regard to my personal safety amidst the present distress of my country, yet I cannot help feeling for my character, and I have observed that when the ministers of religion, leave the duties of their profession to take a busy part in political matters, they generally fall into contempt, and sometimes even bring discredit to the cause in whose service they are engaged. Secondly – From all the information I have been able to collect concerning the State of Canada it appears to me that the inhabitants of that Country are no wise disposed to molest the United Colonies, or prevent their forces from taking and holding possession of the strong places in that province, or to assist in any manner the British Arms. Now if it is proposed that the Canadians should concur with the other colonies any further than by such neutrality, I apprehend that it will not be in my power to advise them to it. They have not the same motives for taking up arms against England which renders the resistance of the colonies so justifiable. If an oppressive mode of government has been given them it was what some of them chose, and the rest have acquiesced in. Or if they find themselves oppressed they have not yet tried the success of petitions and remonstrances, all which ought, as I apprehend, to be ineffectual before it can be lawful to have recourse to arms and change of

³² John Carroll Brent, editor, *Biographical Sketch of the Most Rev. John Carroll – First Bishop of Baltimore with Select Portions of His Writings* (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1843), pp. 34-35.

³³ Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll* (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1954), p. 56. (Reprint of first edition, 1922).

government.

Thirdly – Though I were able to bring myself to think (which as objects now appear to me I cannot) that the Canadians might lawfully take up arms and concur with.”³⁴

Here abruptly the draught of the letters stops. It is evident that the idea of going to Canada did not appeal to Father Carroll, but his devotion to the patriot cause overcame his repugnance to the mission.

The Commissioners set out on April 2, 1776, for the long tiresome journey of over four hundred miles from New York. Charles Carroll kept for his father a journal of the trip to Canada,³⁵ but the account is filled with descriptions of weather conditions, geological formations, beauties of nature, difficulties of transportation, with little reference to the purpose of the journey.

On April 29, after four weeks of travel, the party was received by General Arnold in Montreal in a very polite manner and conducted to headquarters, where a genteel company of ladies and gentlemen had assembled to welcome the travellers.³⁶ The cannon of the citadel fired in compliment to the dignity of the Commissioners from Congress while they were going from the landing place to the general's house. The group was then conducted to the house of Mr. Thomas Walker, the best house in town.³⁷

The Commissioners had not been in Montreal a day before it was evident to them that they had come on a useless errand. Extensive powers had been granted to them by Congress, – full jurisdiction over military affairs, authority to settle disputes and administer discipline within the army, authority to negotiate with the Indians and to sit and vote in the councils of war, – but, Congress had failed to supply them with any more money than what was necessary for their own expenses. It became immediately evident that the whole situation rested on money. The first letter of the Commissioners to Congress stressed the need of money:

“It is impossible to give you a just idea of the lowness of the Continental credit here, from the want of hard money,.... Therefore, till the arrival of money, it seems improper to propose the Federal union of this Province with the others, as the few friends we have here will scarce venture to exert themselves in

³⁴ Text is quoted from William T. Russell, *Maryland the Land of Sanctuary* (Baltimore: J. H. Furst Co., 1907), pp. 497-498.

³⁵ Brantz Mayer, editor, *Journal of Charles Carroll of Carrollton during His Visit to Canada in 1776, As One of the Commissioners from Congress* with a memoir and notes, published by the Maryland Historical Society; (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1845).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

promoting it, till they see our credit recovered, and a sufficient army arrived to secure the possession of the country.”³⁸

Money was needed to impress the Canadians, to pay debts already contracted, to buy supplies for the poorly equipped American troops. Without money the Commissioners were discredited in the eyes of the Canadian people who had expected them to bring money with them. When they were found to have none, the Canadians concluded that they had none because the Congress had none to give.³⁹

Barren, too, was the hope of the Congress that Charles Carroll, America’s leading Catholic layman, would be received by the leaders of the American party in Canada as *persona grata*, speaking their language, belonging to their religion and holding similar political views. Vain, too, was the expectation that Father Carroll, former Jesuit, would be received by Bishop Briand and the Canadian clergy as one of their own and that he could impress the Canadian clergy with the tolerant attitude of the Congress.⁴⁰

The clergy in Montreal received Father Carroll with great coolness. Bishop Briand had ordered that no courtesy was to be shown the American priest. Father Carroll had brought a letter of introduction from Father Farmer of Philadelphia to Father Floquet, a Jesuit, the last superior of the Canadian mission. Father Carroll was permitted to say Mass in Floquet’s house, though the latter was in disgrace with Bishop Briand because of his favourable attitude toward the American cause. After John Carroll’s departure, Father Floquet was suspended from his priestly functions by the Bishop on account of his “Bostonnais heart.” When he had been summoned to Quebec, Father Floquet declared that he “was complaisant to the American out of human respect” for had he been “as violent against them as many others were, the whole brunt of the storm would have fallen on his head, as he was the only Jesuit in Montreal. He felt that he would have served as an example to others and perhaps occasioned a persecution of his confrères in Pennsylvania and Maryland.”⁴¹ In his own defense he protested that the vicargeneral, JMonsignor Montgolfier, had given Carroll the permission and that the latter had not lived with him and had dined with him only once. But Father Floquet had disobeyed Bishop Briand’s orders and suffered for his insubordination.⁴²

No native son of Britain could have been a stauncher supporter of British rule in Canada than Bishop Jean Briand who had been born in France in 1715.

³⁸ Peter Force, editor, *American Archives* (Washington: 1840), V, p. 1166.

³⁹ Smith, *Chas. Carroll*, pp. 146-148.

⁴⁰ Guilday, *John Carroll*, p. 98.

⁴¹ Martin I. J. Griffin, editor, *The American Catholic Historical Researches* (Philadelphia: 1907), XXIV (July, 1907), p. 235.

⁴² Guilday, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-103.

Within two years of his ordination twenty-four years later, Abbé Briand had set sail for Canada with Monseigneur Pontbriand, Bishop of Quebec. The Bishop named Briand canon of his cathedral, kept him near him and honoured him with his confidence.⁴³ When Pontbriand died in 1760, the possibility of having a successor named by the *King* of France being out of the question, the canons of Quebec named administrators for the various districts of the Canadian mission. Canada having been definitively ceded to England, the Chapter elected Monsieur Etienne Montgolfier, the vicar-general, unanimously. He betook himself to England to get his nomination accepted, but General Murray had written against him and the government was unwilling to recognize him. Montgolfier resigned and named Briand; – “I know no one in this colony,” he wrote, “more suitable to fill this position than Monsieur Briand who joins in his favour the vote of the clergy and people and the most marked protection of the government.”⁴⁴

Monsieur Briand, elected by the Chapter in September, 1764, set out the following November for London, fortified by a letter of recommendation from General Murray. After some delay and difficulties he succeeded in having himself put forth as the Bishop of Quebec, at the same time safeguarding the rights of the Holy See. The bulls were despatched from Rome in January, 1766. On March 16, the anniversary of his ordination, Jean Olivier Briand was consecrated by the Bishop of Blois in the Church of Sainte Marie de Merri in Paris. He arrived in Quebec on June 26 where the episcopal chair had been vacant for six years.

It may be said that when the Americans invaded in 1775, it was Bishop Briand who by his loyalty and authority preserved the colony for England; his exhortations and example were followed by the clergy and then by the people. He proved to the British authorities that if he knew how to defend the rights of God and of the Pope, he also knew how to defend those of his king. The governors knew how to appreciate the wisdom and devotion of the Bishop and gave him all the services compatible with their position.⁴⁵

In spite of the opposition against him, Father Carroll directed his exertions to visiting the clergy and conferring with them individually. He explained the nature of the differences between England and the United Colonies, that the colonies were resisting violations of well known and long recognized principles of the British constitution. The Canadian clergy replied that since the British had taken over Canada, its inhabitants had no aggressions to complain of, but that the government had faithfully kept the provisions of the treaty, sanctioned and

⁴³ M^{sr} H. Têtu et l'abbé C. O. Gagnon, editors, *Mandements, Lettres Pastorales et Circulaires des Evêques de Québec* (Québec: Imprimerie Générale A. Coté et Cie, 1888), Biographical Sketch, p. 186.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

protected ancient laws and customs. For all this the French were grateful.⁴⁶

Father Carroll went on to represent that Congress had said expressly that if the Canadians would unite with the Americans in the assertion of their constitutional rights, their religion and religious orders would be protected and guaranteed. It would be not just a toleration of Catholics, but Catholics would have equal rights with all other religions.

The French clergy countered that the British government had left them in possession of all church property held at the time of the cession of Canada; they were confident in the protection of their religion and its institutions. Officers of the British government had paid military honours at public religious exercises, the government had furnished a military escort to accompany the grand procession on the feast of Corpus Christi. On the principle that allegiance is due to protection, the clergy could not teach that neutrality was consistent with the allegiance due to such ample protection shown to the Catholics of Canada by Great Britain. The judicious, liberal policy of the British government had succeeded in inspiring Catholics with feelings of loyalty, while the conduct of the people and of public bodies in some of the United Colonies had only served to strengthen and confirm this loyalty. In the colonies who were now professing such a liberal policy the Catholic religion had not been tolerated hitherto. Priests had been excluded from most of them under severe penalties, and Catholic missionaries among the Indians had been badly treated.

Father Carroll argued that these harsh measures were largely the result of the laws of the royal government. The Canadians noted, however, that the Americans had been prompt enough to defend political rights, but had never shown a corresponding spirit in supporting the rights of the consciences of Catholics. Also, the Canadians still remembered the inconsistency between the address of the Continental Congress to the people of Great Britain and that to the people of Canada in 1774. After the Quebec Act had provided that Catholics in Quebec might have the free exercise of their religion, that the Clergy might enjoy their customary dues and that Catholics would be excused from taking the oath required by Elizabeth I, the Continental Congress on October 21, 1774, in an address to the people of Great Britain had said: “.. Nor can we suppress our astonishment that a British parliament should ever consent to establish in that country (Canada) a religion that has deluged your island in blood, and dispersed impiety, bigotry, persecution, murder, and rebellion through every part of the world.” And “that we think the legislature of Great Britain is not authorised by the constitution to establish a religion fraught with sanguinary and impious tenets ...”⁴⁷

After hearing the expression of such sentiments rendering Catholics so great an injustice, the Canadian Clergy were not disposed to receive too well the

⁴⁶ Mayer, *Memoir accompanying Journal*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ Ford, *Journals of Continental Congress*, I, pp. 82-90.

deliberations of the same Congress addressing the inhabitants of Quebec.

None of the Commissioners was enjoying the stay in Montreal. They reported to Congress that they were in a critical and annoying situation, pestered with all kinds of demands which they could not answer, in a place where their cause had a majority of enemies. Added to these problems was the fact that the garrison was weak. The Commissioners had hoped for military success⁴⁸ and for money from Congress. Both these hopes proved to be futile. After two weeks of fruitless conversations, the Commissioners learned that General John Thomas commanding the inadequate garrison at Quebec had been surprised by British warships coming up the river. The Americans had been overwhelmed, their cannon and small arms captured. Added to this was the report from Congress that it was unable to send any money. This, the Commissioners felt was the fatal blow to the American cause in Canada.⁴⁹ They informed Congress that they could render no service to their country by remaining any longer in Canada.

On May 11, Franklin left Montreal, the first of the group. The cold weather, an attack of gout and the weight of his seventy years had combined to make the trip a most wretched one for him. Father Carroll joined Franklin along the homeward route. Chase and Charles Carroll remained to attend to a few matters concerning the American military set-up. Everywhere Charles Carroll found the situation of the American cause distressing.

Finally, on May 30, Charles was able to record in his journal: "The council of war was held this day, and determined to maintain possession of the country between the Saint Lawrence and the Sorel, if possible, – in the meantime to dispose matters so as to make an orderly retreat out of Canada." He and Chase arrived back in Philadelphia on June 10. The following day they gave their report of the trip and of the state of the army in Canada to the Congress.⁵⁰

The Commission had failed in its purpose. During the six weeks that the Commissioners were absent the Congress had been moving towards a definite break with Britain. When, on July 4, the draft of the Declaration of Independence was ready, the gloom over the failure of the Canadian Commission was dispelled in the light of the greater issue.

It is evident that there were many factors which contributed to the failure of the mission: The Americans lacked hard money; the Continental troops were ill-equipped; the intolerance voiced by the Continental Congress in 1774 subsequent to the passage of the Quebec Act was still remembered by the Canadians; – but the most powerful positive force was the firm position maintained by Bishop Briand commanding the loyalty of all Canadians to Great Britain.

⁴⁸ Smith, *Chas. Carroll*, pp. 148-149.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149

⁵⁰ Force, *American Archives*, V, pp. 431; 448-454.