

The Examiner.

"THIS IS TRUE LIBERTY, WHEN FREEBORN MEN.—HAVING TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC, MAY SPEAK FREE."—EURIPIDES.

Vol. I.]

CHARLOTTETOWN, P. E. ISLAND, MONDAY, MARCH 20, 1848.

[No. 33.]

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

16TH FEBRUARY, 1848.

POSTAL ARRANGEMENTS.

House in Committee in consideration of His Excellency's Speech, at the opening of the Session.

Mr. Thornton moved the appointment of a Committee to bring in a Bill relative to the Post Office Department.

The hon. Speaker. The committee may be appointed, but time must elapse before it can offer a report, as at present we are pretty much in the dark as respects the state of the question; although by and by we may become more enlightened. The most important consideration which ought to have been impressed upon the minds of those who have to decide with respect to the future management of the Post Offices in the Colonies, is our situation and the conveyance of the Mails between the Island and Pictou. I expect it will, hereafter, transpire that the late Governor was instructed to delegate proper persons to represent this Island to the Governor General; and I am of opinion that, had he done so, this, as well as other important matters connected with the Island, would have been fairly stated; but, instead of doing as he ought to have done, he chose to go to Montreal on some political business, and drew a large sum here—contrary to practice—to bear his expenses. It was a bad and wilful act, of one of the worst of Governors, and we ought to express our disapprobation of his neglect, by which the representation of our interests has been left to others. I have heard it stated that the excuse was, that he did not consider there was a person in the Island capable of performing the duty. Be this as it may, we do know that no commissioner was appointed by him; but I hope the committee will yet be in time to correspond with the Post Master General, and to represent the interests so glaringly neglected by our late Governor. If it be necessary to address the Home Government upon this subject, certainly such conduct as his with respect to that important question, ought to be represented, although any thing that can be said of him cannot cause him to be worse thought of than he was. I believe our Post Office does not clear itself by about £300 per annum. I hope our case will be properly represented, and that the Government at home will provide us a steam conveyance between Charlottetown and Pictou. To have to resort to a sailing vessel would be attended with inconvenience and loss, and, in the last year, when a steamer was employed, we were subjected to the will and pleasure of the contractor; and such would always be the case under any similar contract.

Mr. Thornton did not agree with the hon. Speaker, and would not advise the committee to mix up the late Governor in any enquiries connected with the question. If he (Mr. Thornton) was rightly informed, the instruction to His Excellency was to appoint two of the Executive Council as Commissioners or Delegates, and he, being head of that body, perhaps thought himself best qualified, and might wish to embrace the opportunity of enjoying a pleasant cruise, and to have it in his power personally to state to the Governor General his views of Responsible Government, as applicable to this Island. He (Mr. T.) was, however, fully convinced of the importance of a steam communication between this Island and Pictou; and felt assured that if we put our mite into the general fund, we should certainly receive a benefit equivalent to our contribution. It was reported that two steamers would ply between Pictou and Quebec. Should such an arrangement be made, we might hope to derive considerable advantage from it. The hon. member then pressed his motion; and a committee was appointed to bring in a Bill.

[HOUSE IN COMMITTEE ON THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.]

LAND TAX.

Mr. Thornton, in moving a resolution for the appointment of a Committee, to bring in a Bill to continue a Tax on land, remarked that the present law would not expire for one year more, but it was alluded to in the speech, he supposed, because the Tax was in lieu of a Quit Rent; and hence arose the necessity of renewing the question, and submitting it to Her Majesty before the expiration of the present Act. He hoped there would be no opposition to a greater tax on wilderness lands. He himself would be glad to see a larger amount of revenue derived from this source, if it could be done; but it behoved the House to be careful, and not to endanger the Bill from receiving the Royal assent. If the House contemplated any departure from the present Act, it should declare itself, in order that the Bill might be prepared in accordance with its existing views.

Mr. D. Macdonald expressed himself in favor of an increased Tax on wilderness land, and stated his belief

that other members of the House were favourable to such policy. He was also of opinion that then was the proper time to take the sense of the House upon the subject.

Mr. H. Macdonald made a few remarks in opposition—if we understood the hon. member aright—to any increase of the tax.

Mr. Rae. I agree, Sir, with what has fallen from the hon. member for the First District of King's County (Mr. McDonald), relative to a further imposition on wilderness lands. At the same time, I would not think it good policy to introduce the increase into the Bill for the continuing the present Act. I would have one as it is now, and a separate one for the additional Tax. I have no doubt the present may pass without any weighty opposition to its renewal on the part of the proprietors; but I would run no risk, and, therefore, suggest the propriety of a separate Bill for the increase, whether it be on one or both descriptions of land; and would recommend that the second Bill be framed upon the broad and general grounds, that there are some lands in the Island increasing in value, which do not, as it were, contribute anything. The Tax originally was intended to be imposed on the proprietors, but they have evaded it, by compelling the tenants to meet the demand; and, therefore, they gain all the benefits without, in many instances, contributing one farthing to the public service.

The hon. Speaker had no fear whatever as to the rejection of the Bill by the Home Government, even if the Tax should be increased. He would not, therefore, make two Bills of one measure. The views of the hon. member (Mr. Rae) coincide with his own, as to the propriety of increasing the Land Tax, and he would go for a reduction of the duties on Tea or other necessities of life, which are much too high, and are not only felt to be oppressive, but act as a drawback to our trade and commerce. I was, at first, a little surprised to see the paragraph in the speech relating to this Tax; but, upon consideration, and reviewing the past, I perceive it is easy to be accounted for, by the supposition that the proprietors have paid some visits at the Colonial Office. The hon. member (Mr. Rae) need not, however, fear any obstruction in that quarter. The amount of the additional Tax on wilderness land, if it be increased to six shillings the hundred acres, is really so contemptible, that were it not for the principle involved, it would not be worth the time taken up in its consideration. It will only affect those proprietors who have been negligent about the settling of their estates; and, when we consider the expense thrown upon us in making good roads for the enhancement of the value of their property, and then taking advantage of mere quibbles and technicalities to save their pockets, we must be satisfied they ought to suffer. If it pass the other House, no fear need be entertained respecting its subsequent fate; for, when I say the present Secretary of State for the Colonies is alive to the subject, it is no idle boast; and, therefore, it entirely rests with ourselves to legislate upon the matter. If we so far forget the interests of the Colony, as to allow this important matter to slip through our fingers, no doubt the iniquitous Quit Rent will be revived, with all its arbitrary means of collection. I will, therefore, cheerfully go to increase the Tax one shilling on cultivated, and two shillings on uncultivated land.

[To be continued.]

SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8.

HOME MANUFACTURES.—Mr. Palmer presented a Petition from the inhabitants of Charlottetown and elsewhere, praying protection for Home Manufactures. The Petition was numerously signed; and after its being read it was ordered to be laid on the table.

Law Courts.—A Message was received from His Excellency accompanied by a recommendation of His Hon. the Chief Justice, for the appointment of an Assistant Professional Judge, to sit in the Supreme and Chancery Courts.

After the taking up and considering of various Petitions, the House deliberated, with closed doors, till its usual time of adjournment.

BOUNTIES ON FISH AND FISHERY RESERVES.

In the afternoon sitting, the House went into committee on two Petitions: one praying that the Fishery Reserves may be made available for the prosecution of the Fishery Trade; the other praying for a Bounty for the encouragement of Cod Fishing:—Mr. N. Conroy in the Chair.

To say that a most animated discussion ensued, would convey but a very faint idea of the reality: the debate may well be characterized as the best sustained contest of the Session.

Previous to our Reporter taking his seat, Mr. F. Longworth briefly addressed the Committee. He ex-

pressed his willingness to support the prayer of the Petitions, as regarded granting a Bounty, if he could be assured that the expense which would be necessarily incurred in that respect, could be borne by the Colony. But at that time he was at a loss to say, how the money could be obtained for the purpose. He thought, however, that, as the subject had been brought under the consideration of the House by His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, the hon. member for Queen's County (Mr. Coles) would probably explain the views of the Government in reference to the matter.

The Hon. Mr. Coles was surprised to hear the hon. member for Charlottetown (Mr. Longworth) call upon him to explain the views of the Government, in reference to the Petitions then before Committee,—he did not think that the responsibility of doing so devolved upon him, in the absence of that system of Constitutional Government which the hon. member for Charlottetown (Mr. Longworth) had all along most steadily opposed. He (Mr. Coles) advocated going into the question respecting the opening of the Fishery Reserves, before taking up either that of the expediency of a remission of duties upon all articles imported for the prosecution of the fishery trade, or that of the propriety of giving bounties for catches of Cod-fish. Both the Petitions, the hon. Gentleman observed, adverted to the fact that fishermen's families would emigrate from Newfoundland to this Island, and settle here for the purpose of prosecuting the fishing trade, provided the Fishery Reserves were open to them to locate their establishments upon.

The hon. Speaker observed that the House in granting bounties for the encouragement of Seal Fishing this year—influenced by a consideration of the favourable character of the season—had manifested a willingness to do what they could, consistently with a due regard to the means of the Colony, for the encouragement of fisheries; but he thought it would not be prudent to hold out a bounty to Cod-fishery this year: such a proposition, if made, should not have his support.

Mr. Whelan.—The hon. Speaker should recollect what large sums had, from time to time, been voted to the Agricultural Societies. And why, he would ask, should not the Legislature endeavour to open up another source of wealth, by granting bounties for the encouragement of fisheries? The hon. Speaker seemed to doubt, whether or not the Americans found fish upon our coasts to be so profitable as it was supposed to be. He (Mr. W.) could tell the hon. Speaker, from what he had himself witnessed in the States last year, that the Americans found it to be the most profitable trade. A certain individual engaged in it, he had ascertained, carried it on to so great an extent, as to employ therein nearly one hundred families; and, by means of its prosecution, had become a wealthy man.

Mr. McIntosh.—His opinion with respect to the fishery Reserves, was what it had ever been. He considered the Government to be highly culpable in allowing the proprietors to exact rent for those lands, which did not belong to them. Throw open the Fishery Reserves, said the hon. member; make homes for fishermen, and the main point will be gained.

Mr. J. Longworth was not so sanguine as to the success of the fishing trade in this Island, as the hon. member who had just sat down. The condition of this Island with respect to fisheries, was not like that of Newfoundland. There it was their only trade, they had nothing else to depend upon. But here the case was very different. He was of opinion, with the hon. Speaker, that to grant bounties upon small quantities which were to be exported to places distant only a few days sail, would be productive of very little good; and neither did he think it would be advisable to grant bounties on Cod Fish this year. He would be willing to grant bounties for certain quantities to be exported to the West Indies and foreign countries, and a law to that affect to come into operation in the year 1849. He would, therefore, move a resolution in accordance with that view.

Resolved, that it is the opinion of this Committee, that it is expedient to encourage the establishment of a Fishery, by granting a Bounty upon the exportation of Cod Fish from this Island to the West Indies, or to foreign parts, in all cases where the export if by one person shall not amount to less than—quintals in a year;—such encouragement to be afforded by a Bill, to come into operation in the Spring of the year 1849.

Mr. D. McDonald said there were three questions before the Committee: that of throwing open the Fishery Reserves; that of granting bounties on the exportation of Cod Fish; and that of taking off the impost duty on articles required for the prosecution of the fishing trade.—Although at Souris a large tract of land had been reserved for the use of persons engaged in the fishing trade, he knew that as much as 200 an acre had been given for parts of it; and persons who wished to enter