

# The Examiner.

## AND SEMI-WEEKLY INTELLIGENCER.

"THIS IS TRUE LIBERTY WHEN FREE-BORN MEN—HAVING TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC—MAY SPEAK FREE."—MILTON'S EURIPIDES.

NEW SERIES.

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### HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 12th March.

#### STOPPAGE OF SUPPLIES.

(Continued from our last.)

Mr. WHELAN replied to the Hon. Mr. Thornton. He was rejoiced to find that one, at least, of the minority had courage enough to oppose the passage of the Resolution. As the discussion proceeded—he could not say debate, as that word implied difference of opinion—he felt no animation at the prospect of triumph, since the enemy appeared too weak to offer battle. Now, however, that the honorable gentleman who represents the Government, had fairly entered the arena, he (Mr. W.) felt pleasure in coming forward to confront him. He should, indeed, give the honorable member from Murray Harbour credit for the caution and tact he displayed in his opposition to the Resolution. It might be supposed that when he rose to speak, a defence of the Government would be the chief object of his solicitude; but he had very wisely left the Government to take care of itself, and laboured to vindicate himself, as an individual member of the Council, from the obloquy which attached to the whole. The honorable gentleman has proclaimed his adhesion to the Responsible Government movement; but what time has he chosen to do so? Having opposed it in the last and preceding Sessions, what value should be set upon his support, now at the eleventh or twelfth hour, when the question can be settled independently both of him and his party. But, Sir, (continued Mr. W.) I value but slightly the pretensions of any honorable member who will say he is favourable to the introduction of Responsible Government, and declare, at the same time, his determination to vote against the Resolution now before the Committee, as the adoption of that Resolution appears to be the only alternative left to the advocates of responsibility. I am aware it will involve consequences of very serious moment to the Colony; but for the part I am prepared to take in bringing about these consequences, I am ready to assume my full share of the responsibility before my constituents. It has not been with me the subject of merely an hour's or a day's consideration; before the Session commenced, I believed that such a proceeding would be found necessary, for I understood the character of our Government too well to give it credit for that independence and regard for public opinion which would induce any other Administration to make a prompt and gracious concession to the wishes of the People's Representatives. The honorable member from Murray Harbour cannot, forsooth, vote for the Resolution because he is a member of the Government, and because that Resolution contemplates a step unprecedented in the history of the Colony. If he is a member of the Government, he ought not to be: he would prove the sincerity of the sentiments which he professed to entertain with respect to Responsible Government, and his regard for the opinions of his constituents, by ceasing to be a member of the Government when it was shown that it no longer possessed the confidence of the country:—that the Resolution was without precedent in this Island, at least, I am willing to admit; but how many things are here done for which no precedent can be found? Must we of necessity pause before adopting any measure, and ask—is there an example for this? To make it necessary to find a precedent for every change clearly necessary for the well-being of the Colony, would be a most effectual way indeed to stop the progress of all beneficial reform. Individuals who could never think it right to advance without a precedent, seemed most absurdly to forget that there must have been a time when every record now accounted a precedent was an original and unprecedented act. In the Legislature of a small Colony like Prince Edward Is-

land, whose Government is conducted according to no well-defined principles, questions relating to the administration of affairs will sometimes be adjusted without reference to any rule or practice which may be found to exist in Britain.

But since the hon. member from Murray Harbour must bring the question of precedents into the debate, I ask him, will he find in the history of this Colony or any other, an analogy—or precedent, if he prefers the word—for the course taken by the Government on this occasion?—When and where did the circumstance occur, that a vote of want of confidence was passed by a majority of 17 to 3, and the Council against whom such an unmistakable condemnation was recorded, still held their places? His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor declares, he has not power to change his Government—that a concession to the views of the Assembly would be a direct contravention of Her Majesty's instructions. With all proper respect for the Queen's Representative, I beg to say that I think he is in error. The Despatch to which reference has been made by the hon. Member from Murray Harbour, in support of the position assumed by the Lieutenant Governor, does not prohibit the introduction of the new system of Government, and sanction hostility to the people. The hon. member may imagine that he finds in the Despatch of the 27th December last a justification of His Excellency's policy; and it is no doubt a source of satisfaction to him and to his colleagues in the Government that some portion of that Despatch may be construed to warrant their unjustifiable retention of power. But let the hon. member cast his eyes a little further down upon that Despatch, and he will plainly see that it is not the desire nor intention of Her Majesty's Government to have the affairs of this colony administered in a manner contrary to the feelings and opinions of the people. What does my Lord Grey mean when he repeats the declaration made to the Governor of Nova Scotia, if he were not disposed to sanction a change in the character of the administration whenever public opinion should call for such change? Public opinion has called for it; but members of Government look awfully grand and say unto themselves—we are, and shall be, above public opinion! Irrespective of the abstract claim which the Island possesses to a participation in the advantages which must result to any colony from a faithful adoption of the responsible system, I contend it was the duty of the Governor to dismiss his Council, if they would not resign, and call new advisers around him, at the moment the House of Assembly declared it had no confidence in their administration of affairs. In this procedure His Excellency would have been borne out, not only by the Despatch of the 27th December, but by one of a much older date, and since the hon. member from Murray Harbour appears unwilling to do anything—to move either to the right or to the left—without the direct sanction of a Despatch, I trust his apprehensions will be removed and his mind informed by an extract which I am now about to read from a Despatch transmitted to a former Governor of this Island by the present Prime Minister of England while acting as Secretary for the Colonies. "You will understand," said Lord John Russell in 1839, "and cause it to be generally known, that hereafter the tenure of Colonial officers, held during Her Majesty's pleasure, will not be regarded as equivalent to a tenure during good behaviour; but that such officers will be called upon to retire from the public service as often as any sufficient motives of public policy may suggest the expediency of that measure." Why have not the hon. member from Murray Harbour and his colleagues in the Government, been called upon to retire from the Council? Is not a vote of a large majority of the People's Representatives a "sufficient motive" to "suggest the expediency of that measure"? If it be not, then it is difficult to say what is.

An attempt has been made to render the movement for Responsible Government an unpopular one, by representing that its adoption would involve a pension list in addition to the burthens of the Colony, and the hon. member from Murray Harbour has complacently referred the Committee to that part of Lord Grey's Despatch which alludes to the subject of pensions. I think those who have charge of the public money should be the fittest persons to decide as to the manner of its appropriation; and I am quite satisfied that neither Lord Grey nor any other lord will succeed in convincing the House of Assembly, that pensions ought to be given to, or that they are deserved by, any of the present officials. For my part, I would not vote a shilling of the public money towards a pension for any Officer in the Colony, because there is not one who can establish a claim to such consideration—not one individual connected with the Government who, by taking office, relinquished any

superior employment, or sacrificed any prospective advantage, and because the country is too young and its Revenue too small to warrant the ruinous system of providing retiring allowances for gentlemen who have been patriotic enough to serve themselves while they served the Crown for a series of years. If it be necessary, however, that we should be guided in our deliberations in reference to the question of pensions, by instructions contained in Despatches from the Colonial Office, it will be admitted, I presume, that the suggestions of a former Colonial Secretary, who is now at the head of Her Majesty's Government, ought to have as great an influence on the minds of this Committee as anything which has emanated from his successor. In Lord John Russell's Despatch of 1839—often quoted in this House, and from which I have just now cited a passage—an opinion is expressed, that only those officers who received their appointments in England should be regarded as having claim upon Government whenever they would be required to retire from the public service. "It may not be unadvisable," his lordship observes, "to compensate any such Officers"—that is, "such as have left Great Britain for the express purpose of accepting the offices they at present fill," "for their disappointment, even by pecuniary grants, when it may appear unjust to dispense with their services without such an indemnity." Is there any one of the officials so circumstanced? No. A similar cry for pensions was raised in Nova Scotia previously to the introduction of the Responsible System into the Government of that Province, but the only gentleman who was provided for when the change occurred was the late Provincial Secretary, who received that appointment in England, from which "motives of public policy" dictated the expediency of his removal. Did Earl Grey, who was then as now, Secretary for the Colonies, complain of the conduct of the Legislature of Nova Scotia? Were the claims of the late office-holders made the subject of long correspondence with Downing street? Did the Lieutenant Governor haggle with the House of Assembly as to the price this gentleman or that gentleman should have for relinquishing his situation? No, Sir, the adjustment of this question was very properly left to the House of Assembly; and it will be ultimately left to the House of Assembly of this Island too, though it may for a time be obstructed and annoyed by mal-official interference and secret intrigue. I do not believe the professed advocates for pensions can be sincere in urging this subject upon the attention of the Assembly. I regard the outcry that has been made about it only as a trick to deter the public from sanctioning the advocacy of Responsible Government. Every other subterfuge having failed, a pension list is now considered to be a good argument against the measure, and as such it is used. We were first told that we were incompetent to be entrusted with the management of our own affairs—that we had no men of wealth and education to fill situations under Government, if the present holders of office were required to retire. Will any honorable member tell me what amount of wealth—what extent of erudition distinguished the present officials on their accession to power? Even now, how far superior are they in mental acquirements to many other individuals to be readily found in the community? And as for their wealth, it cannot be very abundant, else we should not be so often told, that if some of them, at least, be deprived of their official employments, they will be immediately reduced to indigence and want. But how was the Government of the Island conducted before those good and eminent men came into the world? Was the country in a state of barbarism—were its inhabitants poor and unenlightened savages till, in the fullness of their compassion, in the plenitude of their wisdom, those immaculate and incomparable gentlemen came forward to guide the vessel of state? Alas, that the common lot of humanity will not permit us to hope for a realization of the extravagant Spanish compliment,—"May they live for a thousand years, and their shadows never grow less!"—for when they shall depart for "that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns," who will be found to "fill their vacant places," and maintain the institutions, the liberty and the prosperity of the land? An honorable member from Prince County (Mr. Pope) has called to our recollection the rise and progress of the United States of America, and has very happily and forcibly shown that it is not to aristocratic influence—nor great wealth—nor profound and extensive scholastic attainments, the people of those States are indebted for the establishment of a Government the happiest and the best that human genius has ever planned. Their unrivalled progress in the arts and sciences—their vast accumulation of the comforts and luxuries of life—their wide-spread influence amongst the nations of the earth—are all unmistakable