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RE-COLONIZATION OF CANADA.

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(Mr. Buller's Speech concluded.)

There is, no doubt, absolutely a large class of persons in this country who possess small means, and, at the same time, the disposition and the ability to contend with the hardships of the life of a settler in the back-woods of Canada; but, comparatively, a small portion of those in this country who can labour, possess such means; and if you rely merely on an emigration of that class, you will never afford sufficient relief to the labouring population of this country, and you will never give the due impulse to the prosperity of Canada. When I consider the great proximity of Canada, and the comparative cheapness of the passage to it, I cannot but consider it as, after all, affording the readiest outlet for our surplus capital and labour. I cannot contentedly tell the suffering thousands who are annually resorting to Canada at their own cost, and the many thousands more who desire to do so, that the relief which they seek is not to be found so easily; or that Canada is not available to the poor emigrant from Great Britain, and still more from Ireland, who has nothing but his labour to carry abroad with him. It is our duty, it seems to me, to render Canada available to our people, and our people available to Canada. (Hear, hear.) And in order to do that, we must in Canada, as in our other colonies, endeavour to get over the great impediment to colonisation, by securing the simultaneous emigration of capital and labour. We must tempt the capitalist to embark his money in the improvement of Canada, by ensuring him labour for the cultivation of his property; and we must invite the labourer thither by holding out to him the certainty of being employed by others, until he shall have accumulated sufficient means for becoming a thriving proprietor. This we can only do by applying to Canada the principles on which our colonisation should be conducted elsewhere. There, as elsewhere, the placing a sufficient price on waste lands must furnish the means of colonisation, while it would serve the yet more important purpose of concentrating the population, which your former system seemed devised with a view of scattering as widely as possible.

But here, in the outset, the difficulty meets us, that almost the whole waste land of Canada is at the present moment appropriated; that the Government has no power to make it available for any sound system of colonisation; and that the greater part of the proprietors not only cannot be induced to adopt the best system, but do not even use their land at all. It would be useless, as I before said, to attempt to try any better system on the comparatively small portion of surveyed, or even on the large extent of unsurveyed, waste lands which still remain in the Crown; because every right step taken with respect to them will be neutralised by the bad system allowed with respect to the land of individuals. It is quite obvious that while a large extent of property is allowed to lie uncultivated in the possession of individuals, the improvement of a colony is hopeless. The experience of every colony has proved this. The public feeling of every colony has determined that no respect for private property must allow it to become a public nuisance; and the legislation of every colony contains some device or another for preventing the mischief. The two most common plans have been a law of escheat, whereby property, of which a certain proportion had not been reclaimed after a certain period, becomes forfeited to the Crown; and a wild land-tax, which in one form or another is generally adopted over the United States, and in some of our present colonies. My report to Lord Durham recommended the imposition of a wild land-tax, which was to be payable in land, and which would inevitably have had the effect, in course of time, of bringing almost the whole of the wild lands into the possession of the Crown. I have not the slightest misgiving as to the correctness of the reasoning by which this proposal was supported. But I am inclined to think that a much more speedy process for getting the wild lands into the possession of the Government is wanted in the present state of things than any which could be effected by a wild land-tax, unless you mean it to be a measure of summary confiscation. Put on a wild land-tax, such as that proposed in my report, of 2d. an acre; the present absentee proprietors will be unable to pay it in money, and their lands will gradually become the property of the Government. But the process will not have effect for a great many years. It will be a long time even before the amount of land thus acquired by the Crown will produce any sensible effect on the land market; and the application of a sound system to the Crown lands will be still further thwarted by the immense quantity of land which the proprietors will throw into the market at low prices, under the alarm of losing it altogether. Nevertheless, unless the nuisance of this immense amount of wild lands be removed in some milder way, the proprietors may make up their minds to being loaded with a very heavy tax on them. If the provincial Legislature does not impose one, the District Councils, which have now by law the power, will be sure to do so with very little scruple. In the Eastern Townships, by an ordinance which was disallowed, it is true, but which did not the less show the disposition of the Council of that District, that body I understand imposed on the British North American Land Company one simple rate of so enormous an amount as by itself to be equivalent to direct confiscation. In the French Districts the disposition would be quite the same; only luckily, from the unpopularity of the mode in which the municipal law was passed by the authority of the Special Council, the French District Councils have hitherto taken the line of making no use at all of their powers. But the danger is, that the powers of local taxation vested in these bodies will ere long be used, and without measure, against the wild lands. I think, therefore, that some precaution should be taken to secure the rights of the existing proprietors, even while our main object is that of securing the settlement of the wild lands.

A plan for this object has been suggested, of which I will briefly state the outline, for the purpose of its being fully considered both here and in Canada. The Government might at once determine to take into its own hands the whole of the wild lands in Canada, compensating the proprietors for the present value of them. For this purpose a general valuation of all the appropriated wild lands of the province would be the first step necessary; a process doubtless requiring some time and expense, but nothing like what the mention of a general valuation suggests to us in this country. For it would be wrong, as it would be impossible, in Canada, to fix a special value on each acre. The value of an estate there is mainly determined by considerations of position and general character, which apply to vast extents of territory; and every valuation, therefore, must be framed on a large scale. The present value of all those lands might easily be ascertained; for though, if all brought into the market now, they would probably not sell at all, still there is in every district of Canada a price which it is calculated that a purchaser wishing to buy any particular lot would give for it, and below which the proprietors would generally entertain no offer of purchase. This would be the value; but it should be provided, as I think is just in all cases of compulsory appropriation for public purposes, that the compensation should always equal any sum actually paid for the land by the present proprietor. The value might be as much higher as the valuers might think that altered circumstances had rendered just; but the price actually paid by the exist-

ing proprietor should always be the minimum of the value placed on his estate. The proportional interest of each proprietor of wild lands being thus ascertained, I do not propose that the Government, on taking the land, should compensate him by an actual payment of the estimated purchase money. For, recollect what the actual value of the land to those proprietors is. It is totally unproductive; it brings no rent; no money can be raised on it, even by way of mortgage. It has a kind of fancied value in the market; but even this value is a deferred one. At the present rate of settlement the proprietor cannot count on getting anything from his land for many long years. In taking the wild land, therefore, we may fairly say that the Government takes that which brings in no present income, and cannot at present be sold. If the Government, in taking the land, ensures to the proprietor a payment of its value at as early a period as he would get it in if left in his own possession, he is no loser; if the Government, having got possession of his wilderness, can, by means of a sound and vigorous system of colonisation, sell the land faster than he could, he is a gainer. I should propose, therefore, to pay the proprietor by debentures in a land stock, of which the total amount should consist of as many pounds as there would be in the total estimated value of the property resumed; and of which each proprietor's share should be of the amount at which his own lands were estimated. On these debentures I would pay no interest, because I see no justice in a claim for interest where the property taken brings in no income. But as the Government sold the land it should pay each purchaser a dividend, until the whole stock was paid off. Thus, suppose there to be 14,000,000 of acres of surveyed and appropriated but wild land in Upper Canada; and that the value of this were to be taken at four millions—I have really no reason for fixing this value, but take it quite arbitrarily, because I must take some number—I would create a stock of four millions. Suppose one proprietor has 10,000 acres, valued at 1l. a-piece; another, also 10,000 acres, estimated at 2s. a-piece. The first should receive interest; but, supposing 100,000l. to be got in the year by land sales, over and above prior charges on the proceeds, I would apply this sum to pay off the stock, which I should thus reduce 2½ per cent., and the first proprietor would get 250l. and the latter 25l. If the land sales produced an applicable fund of 1,000,000l., a quarter of the whole stock would be paid off, and the first proprietor would get 2,500l. and the second 250l. (Hear, hear.) My argument to recommend this to the proprietors would be very simple. I should say to them that by this arrangement they would get as much as they can ever expect under the present system to get for their estates; that in the hands of the Government, vigorously employing itself to give a value to those lands by a sound system of disposing of them, and by a large measure of colonisation, the whole price would be much sooner got than it could be realized by the absentee proprietors; and that whereas they now get no annual return, each proprietor would, in proportion to the Government sales, and without any exertion on his own part, get an annual instalment of greater or less amount. I should further remind them, that, at any rate, by this arrangement, they would secure themselves the original purchase money of their land, and something more if the present value was greater than the original cost; and that if things are left as they are, they will infallibly, according to the general practice of North America and the received notions of public justice current there, be subjected to a wild land-tax, imposed either by general or by municipal authority, which will more or less rapidly take their estates from them, without any compensation at all. The arrangement, therefore, is one which must be advantageous to them. (Hear, hear.) The advantage to the public would be, that the Government would thus get the whole of the granted wild lands into its hands; and might establish a plan for giving an increased value to them and its other lands by a sound system of disposing of them, subject to no obstruction from private competition, and by applying the surplus proceeds to promote extensive colonisation.

I would do this by reverting to the precise recommendations of my report to Lord Durham. I did not, or rather Mr. Wakefield did not, therein, by any means insist on applying the proceeds of the land-sales to defraying the passage of emigrants. I am rather surprised to find Lord Sydenham, in one of the letters recently published, arguing against the application of Mr. Wakefield's views to the colonisation of Canada, on the ground that it is not to be effected by selling land at a high price in order to get the means of carrying out emigrants. In that report, which contains Mr. Wakefield's own deliberate application of his principles to Canada, it is not proposed to set a high price on land; nor is it proposed to apply the proceeds in the first place to emigration. The means are varied to attain the great end of colonisation. In new colonies, especially in those of Australia, the great difficulty of colonisation is the carrying out the emigrant to the colony; and this is the expense which it is of most urgent necessity to defray by the proceeds of your land sales. The people will not, cannot get out without; and the getting them to the colony is the first necessity. But with respect to Canada the case is exactly the reverse. There, as we see, the means of getting across the ocean are within the reach of a vast number of the poorest of the population, not only of Great Britain but also of Ireland. Without any aid except that which friends, which parishes, and which liberal landlords have been in the habit of giving, a vast influx of labourers and their families has taken place. I should propose that, in the first place, at least, we should leave emigration to be carried on independent of the home Government; and I should suggest, as my report does, that the primary object to which the proceeds of the land-sales should be devoted, should be the opening up the interior of the country by roads, bridges, and other public works, so as to render it accessible; and to the building churches, schools, and other public buildings, which would render it really habitable by a civilized community. (Hear, hear.) By the great public works now in progress we shall establish those great lines of communication which are destined to make Montreal and Quebec the outposts of the vast country which lies on both sides of the great lakes. But at present this will be effected by facilitating communication with the Far West of the United States, and the transmission of its produce through Canada. If you wish to render the great mass of our own territory available for feeding this main stream, and making it the highway for bringing in the market Canadian produce raised by our own people, the system of communications must be completed by extending to each separate portion of the province its own system of minor internal communications, and rendering each not only accessible but habitable. (Hear, hear.) For really the great obstacle to the settlement of capitalists, great or small, in Canada, is the desolation and discomfort of the life that awaits them. Tempted by the prospect of getting a large quantity of land, they embark their fortunes in a purchase; they find that their lot is cast in a wilderness, and that their life is to be one of solitude and hardship; they are cut off from their kind, and can neither enjoy life nor lay the foundations of wealth; even the observances of a common worship are often denied them, and they see their children grow up without the possibility of educating them. The single settler who finds himself in this position can do nothing to remedy it; but a Government that really took up colonisation in earnest and on system, would provide against

such monstrous evils by a few roads, a few churches, and a few schools, which would, at a small expense, provide in every district for the comfort of large numbers. It would lay open various districts by roads made beforehand; and concentrate settlement round churches, schools, and markets previously established. These provisions for the comfort and well being of a civilized community would tempt the capitalist to resort to what would then be no desert; and they would enable you to plant your labourers in districts already prepared for settlement. The construction of such works would in another way facilitate the emigration of poor labourers, by affording them a certain means of getting employment on their arrival in the colony. Government, if conducting the whole operation on a combined plan, would do right in employing emigrants in preference to other persons on their works; and would direct them thither on their arrival. As the labours of these men opened up the country, capitalists would be induced to purchase and settle, and would employ another portion of the labouring emigrants. These labourers, either in public or in private employment, would be sure, in course of time, to accumulate sufficient savings out of their wages, to enable them to purchase and stock small farms; they would then not only make way for a fresh supply of labouring emigrants, but would create a fresh demand for labour. This is the sure result of a sound system of colonisation: the more labour and capital that are supplied to a colony, the larger is the field laid open for additional capital and labour (hear, hear); and the means of employing both go on continually augmenting in geometrical progression, while there remain any waste lands to be reclaimed. (Hear, hear.)

Of course it cannot be supposed that I mean any extensive improvement of the country to be effected merely by the actual produce of the land-sales in the first years of applying this system. I contemplate, as was proposed in my report, anticipating that produce by a loan. (Hear, hear.) The payment of the interest, and then of the principal of that loan, would be the first charges on the purchase-money of the land. But I should propose that this House should guarantee the payment of the interest; and this, not because I believe that it would ever be called upon actually to pay, but because such a guarantee would admit of the money being raised at a very low rate of interest. (Hear, hear.) Sir, even if this country should actually have to take the debt upon itself, and pay the interest for ever, I would not scruple, considering the object to be attained, to propose our taking the burden upon ourselves. (Hear.) Suppose that a loan of two millions should be raised at 4 per cent., which would amount to an annual charge of 80,000l., and that by means of the system thus established we could, as I feel very confident we should, double the present annual amount of emigration to Canada. Who would refuse to pay 80,000l. a-year, in order to enable 40,000 more of our countrymen to emigrate every year? It would be carrying on emigration at the rate, after all, of 2l. a-head. And if these 40,000 emigrants were landed in Canada, and, from paupers fed by our bounty, became customers demanding and paying for our goods, the cost incurred on their account would be paid over and over again by the mere addition to our revenue which would result from the increase in our trade which they must create. (Hear, hear.) But I lay this down merely as a position, which I should not scruple to defend, if driven to it. I have not the slightest fear of the produce of the land-sales proving insufficient for the discharge of every claim upon it.

It is a question whether the Government, by taking the waste lands of the province into its hands—by disposing of them on a uniform and sound principle, and by rendering them accessible and habitable by means of the expenditure of a loan raised on the security of future land sales—would so augment the value of its lands as to obtain from the sale of them the means of repaying the original purchase-money without interest, and the necessary loan with interest. It is impossible to make any calculations near enough to the truth to render it worth our while to discuss them hypothetically. It is impossible even to approximate to the actual value of the wild lands, for which stock would have to be created. What loan would be requisite, at what times, and how much at a time would have to be raised, and consequently, what annual amount of interest would be payable each year; and at what price and with what celerity the land sales would proceed: all these are points, of which some kind of estimate must be given in order to found any calculation of the results, and of which I see no ground for giving any plausible estimate. I will not, therefore, Sir, give an estimate after the usual fashion of projectors, by gravely working out with arithmetical accuracy the most precise results from perfectly hypothetical premises. I would rather trust to very general reasoning for leading us to general conclusions. Imagine to yourselves the contrast between a property situated in the midst of the forest, without a passable road to connect it with your neighbours or with your market during half the year; and the same property, with no change made in its condition but that of a village near it, and good roads connecting it with the neighbouring properties and town; and tell me whether you think it would be at all extravagant to say that the property would be tripled in value by that single change? Nay, as I am sure that your imaginations will give you but a feeble conception of the importance of mere roads to the Canadian settler, I would beg you to look to an extract given in the 85th page of Lord Durham's Report, from the evidence of the Chief Agent for emigrants in Upper Canada, who states that in 1834 he himself met a settler from the township of Warwick, who was returning from a grist mill at Westminster, about 45 miles distant from his home, whither he had been compelled to carry 13 bushels of wheat to get them ground. "He had a yoke of oxen and a horse attached to his wagon; had been absent nine days, and did not expect to reach home till the following evening. Light as his load was, he assured me that he had to unload wholly or in part several times; and after driving his wagon through the swamps, to pick out a road through the woods, where the swamps and gullies were fordable, and to carry the bags on his back, and to replace them in the wagon." The witness then goes on to calculate that it would have been cheaper to send the wheat from Toronto across the Atlantic to be ground at Liverpool and brought back, than it must have been to get it thus ground. (Hear, hear.) Neighbours, a mill in the next village, and a decent road, would have enabled this poor man to do in an hour what it cost him, his horse, and his oxen, ten days to do for thirteen bushels of wheat. This is, no doubt, an extreme case; but it is but an extreme case of a great class of difficulties, destroying the comfort of the settlers, and obstructing the settlement of Canada. It is but a sample of the mischief resulting from the want of roads. Judge then for yourselves what increased value mere roads would give to the lands of Canada. (Hear, hear.) Is it extravagant to count on that increase, and on the impulse given to the settlement of the colony and the sale of your land, being such as to ensure your paying off the entire debt contracted both for the acquisition and for the improvement of the lands in a few years? But even if it could be supposed that, to repay the loan would not suffice, and more than suffice, to all these debts, recollect that the Crown has, in addition to all these surveyed lands, a vast reserve of unsurveyed territory of its own,—valueless, it is true, until the surveyed lands be settled, but,—to which their mere settlement would give a value, and which would always furnish a large additional security for any debt contracted for the improvement of the colony.

You have indeed an ample property which would well repay any outlay that might now be required to render it available to your people. All that is needed is the mere will to turn it to account, and some method and system in doing so.

As to the machinery for carrying the plan into operation, my report to Lord Durham suggested a commission. I will not now, however, enter into this question further than to say that, as in any scheme of colonisation you have to further the interest of two parties, of the mother country and of the colony, it is necessary that the machinery for the purpose should consist partly of an establishment here, and partly of an establishment in the colony. The establishment in the colony it would be better to leave to the experience of the Colonial Legislature to suggest. The additions which it would be necessary to make to the existing commission in this country, for the purpose of enabling it to superintend the administration of the system in Canada, may be left to be considered when the constitution of our present emigrant department comes altogether before the House. For I will take this opportunity of saying, that I think the first requisite for a good system of colonisation is to have what Mr. Carlyle calls an effective Emigration Service; and the first practical step, which I would propose to take next session, would be to put the present Land and Emigration Commission on a footing proportioned to the magnitude and importance of the task assigned to it.

As for the details by which the Canadian scheme would have to be carried out, these also had better be left to the Colonial Legislature and Executive to suggest. There will be not a little difficulty in devising and carrying out such a scheme; and there will be no little risk of its being thwarted by blundering, and still more by jobbing. Of course there will. What good did ever Government undertake to do for a people that cost no pains and was attended with no risk of failure or even of mischief? If we are to be scared from every enterprise of public good by the aspect of difficulty and risk, we must give up every duty of Government. The only question here, as with respect to every other suggestion of public improvement, is, whether the object be worth the pains-taking necessary for mastering difficulties and preventing jobbing. The object here is to render the nearest of our colonies productive to our people of all the various benefits which sound and extensive colonisation may be made to produce. It is, in fact, nothing else than the re-colonisation of Canada. This is surely worth an effort, and the means which I propose are surely worth that consideration which I am confident they will meet with in the colony, and worth all that which I ask from the Government; namely, that during the recess they will co-operate with the Legislature of Canada in devising a plan for the effectual colonisation of that great province.

Here, Sir, I should close my present remarks, were it not for the necessity of not omitting from my suggestion of Canadian colonisation some reference to the wants and interests of the French portion of the population of Canada. (Hear, hear.) It seems to me that no plan of colonisation for Canada can be complete that does not include some provision for enabling the French population to extend itself beyond the limits of its present territory. By the plan adopted on the original occupation of the Canadas, the French laws and institutions were confined to the existing seigneuries, and all the rest of the whole province was formed into townships, in which the law of England was established. The growth of the French Canadian population since the period of the conquest has been the most rapid ever witnessed in any race not recruited by emigration. In less than 80 years they have multiplied sevenfold. Though the uncultivated land of the seigneuries was sufficient for the reception of a great addition to the original population, such an increase as this exceeded its capabilities. It is but too well ascertained that the increase of produce has not kept pace with the increase of population. The lands which formerly supplied not only the consumption of Canada, but also a large export of grain, are now worn out. "Complaints of distress," says Lord Durham's Report, "are constant, and the deterioration of the condition of a great part of the population admitted on all hands." In fact, Lower Canada exhibits but too many of those signs of the pressure of population in a restricted field of employment from which we are accustomed to regard the New World as exempted. That the population has not spread out and cleared the surrounding forest is attributable to no want of inclination or energy on their own part. But the French Canadian wishes to carry his own laws and institutions with him; he will not move save under the guidance of his priest. This our law prevented his doing; for the instant he passed the limits of the seigneuries no provision was made for his church; and he was subjected to a strange code of laws which he regarded with aversion. Many attempts were made to pass these barriers. When I was in Canada a project was mooted, though in no practical shape, for settling the upper valley of the Saguenay and the country round the Lake of St. John's, which had been surveyed by orders of the Assembly, and found to possess advantages of soil that rendered it more productive and habitable than a considerable portion of the country more to the southward. It was useless during the war of races for us to entertain any proposal for extending the domain of the French law and race, nor has anything been done for this purpose since the restoration of constitutional government. But surely now it would be right to take this up once more, and if the French race has outgrown the limits which not natural but merely legislative landmarks assigned to it, surely it is our business to provide for such an extension of their institutions as is necessary for enabling them to live and multiply in comfort. Thus much, while we are making provision for the extension of our own race in Canada, and for relieving ourselves from the pressure of population—thus much at least we are bound to do to guard these, the ancient European occupants of Canada, from the evil of being pent up in a restricted angle of what was once their undivided patrimony. (Hear, hear.) I must say that I think we owe the French Canadians much consideration—much for long obedience and affectionate loyalty—much for all the mischiefs brought on them by an insurrection of their own misconduct, had its foundation in our continued, obstinate, and gross misgovernment—and much for their ready and sincere return to better feelings on the first exhibition of an intention to govern them with fairness and kindness. This indeed has astonished those even who most highly estimated the gentleness and simplicity of their character. The only passage in Lord Durham's Report which subsequent events have at all shown to be founded in error, is that in which he deprecates the impossibility of ever reconciling the existing generation of French Canadians to the British Government. (Hear, hear.) The mistake shows that, highly as he has rated the amiable qualities of that people, he underrated their forgiving disposition, and that he has also underrated the efficacy of those great measures of conciliation which he recommended, and by carrying which into effect Sir Charles Bagot has for ever endeared his memory to the people of Canada. (Hear, hear, hear.)

I will now trouble you no longer at present. The general subject of the means of rendering our colonies at large available to our people by a systematic colonisation, I shall bring before this House at an early period of next session, unless indeed the general feeling in the country, and their own sense of the necessity of availing themselves of every