

OXFORD REFORM

TO THE

HON. FRANCIS

MONTREAL:

SATURDAY MORNING, OCT. 24, 1846.

[From the Long Point Advocate.]

On Tuesday, the 13th instant, the Liberal Members of the Brock District Council and a few of their friends, entertained the Hon. FRANCIS HICKS, the late Representative of the County of Oxford, at a PUBLIC DINNER at the Royal Oak Tavern, Woodstock. The day was unfortunately very unfavourable, which prevented the attendance of a number of gentlemen from remote parts of the country.

About 5 o'clock, P. M., the Chair was taken by Wm. Carroll, Esq., District Councillor of Norwich; the Vice Chairmen were Eliakim Malcolm, Esq., District Councillor of Oakland, and Charles Chadwick, Esq., District Councillor of Dereham. Mr. Hicks sat on the right of the Chairman, and Jared Vining, Esq., District Councillor of Nissouri, the Senior Member of the Council on his left.

After doing justice to an excellent dinner, provided by Mr. Hill, the Chairman rose to propose the health of the Queen.

He said he thought he could propose that Toast with great propriety. He had been, he might say, born a Loyalist. His father was one of eight brothers who had emigrated to the United States before the Revolution.—When the war broke out his father was the only one of the eight that adhered to the British Crown (cheers.) He had afterwards emigrated to New Brunswick, where he (the Chairman) was born. His father had served in the British army, and he (the Chairman) had done so likewise, (applause) and he had imbibed principles of loyalty from his earliest youth. (Loud cheers.) He felt assured that the health of the Queen would be heartily responded to.

1st. THE QUEEN.

The next regular toast was prefaced by the Chairman with a few appropriate remarks, and honoured with the respect due to the consort of our beloved sovereign.

2nd. PRINCE ALBERT and the ROYAL FAMILY.

3rd. The GOVERNOR GENERAL.

In proposing this Toast the Chairman said, he knew little of the Governor General, but he believed he was an old soldier, and as such he respected him, as well as on account of his being the Representative of his Sovereign. He (the Chairman) was himself an old soldier, having served throughout the last war, and having been in every engagement on the frontier.

4th. THE PEOPLE—the only true source of legitimate power.

The Chairman had now to propose THE TOAST of the evening: Our Guest, the Hon. FRANCIS HICKS, whose presence among us after a long absence, was most cordially welcome. (Great applause.) When, said the Chairman, it became known that Mr. Hicks was in Upper Canada, the Council of the District happening to be in session, the Reform members thereof determined upon inviting him to accept a public dinner at Woodstock. The time for preparation

of the last three years, and to compare the conduct of our Ministers with that of English statesmen. Twice within the past year has Mr. Draper, by making overtures to the leading members of the Opposition, virtually acknowledged that his administration does not enjoy a sufficient amount of public confidence. At this moment the Ministry is virtually disorganized. One member resigned several months ago and his place has not been filled up, although it has been offered to a member of the Opposition, and has been by him refused. (Cheers.) Mr. Secretary Daly made arrangements several months since to receive the vacant office of Civil Secretary, which has been conducted by a clerk since Mr. Higginson's departure, merely to suit the convenience of the Ministry. Mr. Papineau, after an absence of months, has returned to his office, although he only holds it until it is convenient to appoint a successor. Compare these proceedings with English practice. When Sir Robert Peel resigned previous to the last session of Parliament, Lord John Russell was called on to form an administration. He experienced difficulties from want of co-operation among his friends, & he immediately abandoned the task, and his opponent was reinstated. He did not attempt to conduct the business of the country with an incomplete Cabinet, nor would he have been suffered to do so. But here, gentlemen, we have during the last three years had a Ministry whose whole conduct is a practical violation of Responsible Government—which introduces measures to Parliament only to abandon them, and which is unable to carry out the policy of the party by which it has been placed in power. We have in the circumstances attending a late appointment which has caused some discussion, proof positive that the practice of the present Government is not dissimilar from that of Lord Metcalfe. Sir Allan McNab applied personally to the Governor for the appointment of a deputy. He was authorised to write to his friend with an offer of the appointment and the Ministers afterwards compelled the Governor to retract his promise, thus bringing the Government of the country into contempt with the public. I need not however prosecute this subject. Responsible Government will never be carried out honestly by men who are at heart opposed to it, and whose real object is to induce a belief that its working is impracticable. The remedy is with the people alone. They alone are responsible for the present state of affairs, and they will do well instead of expecting relief from a change of Governors, to exert themselves to secure a better representation. To do that we must convince the public that our objects are such as ought to entitle us to their support. The present is a most favourable opportunity for doing so. Party spirit has in a great degree subsided and the public at large are enquiring calmly as to the views of public men. It is singular enough that at this crisis the most prominent question before the public is one calculated to unite in its advocacy many who have formerly been opposed to each other, but whose interests with respect to this measure are identically the same. I mean the

Assessment Bill had also been denounced at the last election. You will all recollect the cry about board fences, fruit trees, &c., but when the present Ministry introduced a bill upon the subject, the very same principle had been adopted of assessing according to value. True, the assessment of personal property was not provided for, the whole taxation being thrown upon the owners of real property, who are the farmers. I have perhaps already trespassed too long on the patience of my friends. (Cries no, no, go on, go on), but I conceive it incumbent upon me to refer to one or two subjects of a personal character, and I will endeavour to be as brief as possible. Most of those present have heard of the Rev. Mr. Burns, who paid a visit to this part of the province & has caused some excitement. It is not my intention to say anything disrespectful of that gentleman now, nor have I ever done so. I disapprove of his proceedings believing them calculated to excite dissension among the people, and I fearlessly expressed this opinion, nor can I now retract it. I will state facts. Mr. Burns came to Montreal, a stranger, and almost immediately commenced preaching in the streets, his object being to convert the Roman Catholics. He spoke of the religion of the great majority of the people of Montreal in terms which led to violence, and the end of it was, some two thousand persons assembled in the streets of the city with arms in their hands to shed one another's blood. Such was the state of feeling caused by Mr. Burns' preaching. If that gentleman were right then all the other clergy of the province were wrong, inasmuch as none of them had pursued a similar course, and Mr. Burns himself, by abandoning the field, has virtually admitted that he was in error.—There is another subject upon which I desire to make some explanation. I allude to what has been termed the Jesuit Controversy. Now all I desire to do on the present occasion is to make a plain statement of facts. I will not revive old controversies, nor do I wish to impute blame to any one who has differed from me; but I certainly must say that my views have been wholly misunderstood.—The origin of the dispute was a statement made by the Rev. Mr. Wilkes at New York to the effect that great ignorance prevailed among the people of Lower Canada, and that this was caused by the influence of the Catholic Clergy against education. I, connected as I was with a press which was the organ of Catholics as well as Protestants, felt it my duty to correct what I believe to be a misstatement. It was not a fact that the Catholic Clergy had opposed education; on the contrary, the educational institutions of Lower Canada are rightly credited to those who have established them. At their colleges an excellent classical education, with board, is provided for less than £30 a year. I will not pursue the subject, but will just read an extract or two from papers which all will admit to be good authority. The first, strange to say, is from the *Banner*. That print, on a recent occasion, said: "the Church of Rome, which was wont to dread education, and the Church of England, which habitually neglected

matter brot Chairman, of the VALUATION (G) said Mr H men will re issued where County. ere repre ew one w amo was hat sort of other party more comp own friend ask in xford were nther have who is gene placed in he who have b food, one w Commissi overlooked rising mon es much a prosperity of men, strang quainted, an two in the bar.) In several resp ship had c infect such Tidd. (He I wish to of worthy Council. I have been I know him former, and acquired a respected li of the con (Cheers.) my venerabl renat Thia of the Distr to whom the will now p CHURCH ES CLE. [Tho and loud a The Cna the honour was not in, bers, and he n of the ie Mr Vini duced by th words in re member of bery electe Institutions to hatch e believed the improv not holy re