

*Letter from WILLIAM SPRAGGE, Esquire, Crown Land Department, to the Committee.*

CROWN LANDS DEPARTMENT,

QUEBEC, 28th March, 1854.

SIR,—In anticipation of the unusually extensive emigration from Europe, which recent intelligence assures us, may be expected; and in view also of the necessity which exists for providing lands suitable for settlement, and on favorable terms for such of the present Inhabitants of the Province, as may be desirous of engaging in clearing and cultivating the unappropriated public lands; I beg leave to place before you some observations and suggestions connected with that subject; premising them with the assertion of the fact, that no adequate facilities have hitherto been provided for the formation of new settlements upon a comprehensive scale; and that we are without any sound practical system for allotting lands to actual settlers; judiciously establishing them thereon, and rendering them any truly effectual aid, in contending with the difficulties inseparable from the organization of new settlements.

I now propose to demonstrate the possibility of accomplishing those various objects, without resorting to the unpopular and perhaps questionable policy of drawing from the public revenue, large sums of money to be employed in advancing such settlements.

An experience of now upwards of twenty-five years in the Land Departments, during which I have aided in remedying many errors in system and practice, which I found to exist, has convinced me, and enabled me to convince others, that the sanctioning or tolerating speculation in the public lands, and the accomplishing their actual settlement, are incompatible the one with the other; and that if Government must make sales to individuals who have immediate intention of settling, separate tracts are the only localities in which special privileges of that nature be exercised; of late years, the main consideration seems to have been the creation of a Land Revenue. But without sacrificing highly important interests, this can be attained only to a limited extent, and should be viewed as of secondary moment, and as not to be placed in competition with the great object at which we ought to aim; the increasing the Agricultural productions of Canada, and the adding to the numbers, of that best and most valuable class of all our Agriculturists. They add more than any other to the material wealth of the Colony; mainly contribute towards realizing that which our financial indebtedness is rendering more pressingly important; the balance of trade. And as the most moral, as well as superior, physically, to the other classes, are the source whence those other classes can be best reunited. *What does this mean*

To promote Agriculture, and encourage such as will embark in that pursuit, I would suggest the offering the public lands upon such terms, and accompanied by such inducements, as will be calculated to cause all who have it in their power to do so, to select this road to independence.

I would recommend that all the ordinary Public Lands in Upper Canada, extending from the Ottawa in the East, and to the Counties of Wellington, Gray and Halton on the West, and embracing also, in the first named County, the Townships of Melancthon, Luther, and Amaranth, should be placed at an uniform rate of five shillings per acre. By the term ordinary public lands, is included all but the detached lots in the old surveyed Townships.

Of the purchase money, it is desirable that a sufficient proportion should be paid down, to guard against the land being plundered of its timber, and then abandoned; which there is reason to believe is the course often pursued under the present system of one-tenth payments. Accordingly I would substitute payments of two-fifths, relieving the settler from any further payment until the expiration of three years, by which term, it may be assumed, that from the produce of his land he would then be in a condition to pay a