

Encl. 1, in No. 10.

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SPEECH of his Excellency the Governor, on closing the second Session of the Fifth General Assembly, Wednesday, 14 June 1854.

Mr. President, and Gentlemen of the Council;
Mr. Speaker, and Gentlemen of the Assembly,

In my reply to the Address of the Assembly in answer to my Speech on opening the present Session, I expressed my regret at the course the Assembly then appeared resolved to pursue; and that whether the public good had been consulted in arriving at the determination to which they had come, was a question for their own consideration; and that with them would rest the responsibility for any detriment to important public interests which might arise from such course. And, now, whether circumstances—especially since the communication to the Assembly of the Duke of Newcastle's despatch of the 21st February last, on the subject of responsible government—justify the course of procedure on the part of the Assembly, announced by them in their Address to his Grace, is a point on which I forbear to express an opinion; but which must be submitted to the consideration of the Imperial Authorities.

The Session having extended over four months and a half, and the Assembly having, at the expiration of that protracted period, stated their determination, for reasons mentioned in their Address to Her Majesty's Secretary of State, not to grant to Her Majesty supplies for defraying the expenses of the civil government of the colony, I am induced, by regard for the honour of the Crown, formally to terminate the Session by prorogation.

Encl. 2, in No. 10.

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ADDRESS from the House of Assembly of Newfoundland, to his Grace the Duke of Newcastle, on the subject of the Increase of Representatives Bill.

To his Grace the Duke of Newcastle, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary for the Colonies.

May it please your Grace,

THE House of Assembly beg leave to inform your Grace that since the receipt of the despatch of your Grace of the 24th February last, they have endeavoured to carry out the views of your Grace with reference to the conditions declared in the despatch referred to as necessary precedents to the introduction of responsible government into this colony.

The Bill for the increase of representatives in the Assembly being the most prominent of these conditions, a Bill to provide for this object was introduced without delay, on a basis which provided for the fair representation of the Liberal and Conservative or Mercantile interest, and appropriated the Members to the several electoral districts with a due regard to the two great religious denominations of the colony; the number of Protestants being by the last census 49,523, and of Catholics 46,983; and the number of Members allotted by the Bill, being, to nine districts having decided Protestant majorities, 15, and 14 Members to six districts having Catholic majorities; a test of settlement, as far as the religious aspect of it is concerned, which the Assembly have always repudiated, and which they have reluctantly assented to in the present instance, from an anxious desire to meet the objections of the party opposed to responsible government, whose objections took the assumed ground that the change would result in the establishment of Catholic ascendancy.

The House beg leave to annex, for the information of your Grace, a tabular statement of this Bill, and they submit to the impartial decision of your Grace whether the facts disclosed in this statement was not an ample refutation of the charge that the Assembly are animated by a desire for any undue religious ascendancy in this colony.

Assuming that the Council would be desirous to give effect to the instructions of your Grace, the Assembly did not anticipate that any material objection would be made by that body to the adoption of a measure which carries with it the proofs of fairness and equity. It soon became apparent, however, that the question was to be considered not by regard to its abstract merits, but in reference to the issue it contemplated; for notwithstanding that the principle of responsible government had been conceded by the despatch of your Grace, Members of the Council, as though this concession were still a question, mixed up with the discussion on this Bill, their selfish arguments against the change of system which your Grace had decreed. Influenced by such views, the fairness of the Bill was not calculated to be its recommendation, and it was amended by abstracting one Member from the liberal district of Placentia and St. Mary's, which is not amenable to mercantile influence, and bestowing it on the mercantile district of Bonavista, and by introducing a principle, to be applied only in the district of Burin, by which the minority might return one of the two Members for that district.

The object of the party who have opposed the introduction of responsible government into this colony, has been to show that our social condition was anomalous, and that sectarian asperities.