

The Weekly British Colonist.

Wednesday March 23, 1870.

The Incoming Population—The Duty of Government.

The cry for population has gone up from this community for years. When population does come, what effort is made to retain it? Here is the greatest evil. Had reasonable effort been put forth to retain population in this colony, it is not unreasonable to assume that we should have had double of what we now have. What attempt, for instance, has ever been made with a view to promoting agricultural settlement? Has there ever been any organized effort, great or small, to colonize the country? People have been permitted to come to the country, and they have been equally free to leave it. No hand has been put forth to voice has been raised with a view to making them feel that they were not really unwelcome intruders. Once more has the tide set in to our long neglected shores. Peace and Omrirea are the attraction; but, rich and extensive as these goldfields are, they cannot be presumed to present a magnetic power of sufficient strength to retain all who come. A percentage will never penetrate these distant gold-fields. Another percentage, having reached there, will never take root. The duty of the Government is plain. Let there be at once perfected an organized scheme for establishing all who are willing to settle, upon free homesteads. There are about \$75,000 appropriated for public works during the present year. Let it, as far as is consistent with the public interest, be expended in that manner and time best calculated to aid and encourage the fresh comers. Every bona fide settler is worth \$1000 to the country. Is it not worth a hundred dollars to secure them? It is anything but agreeable to be continually finding fault with the Government; but regarding them as the guardians of the people's interests, we would be wanting in our duty did we fail to point out the importance of making the most of the present influx of that which constitutes the colony's greatest want—Population. This will be our most critical year. Once admitted into the Dominion, public works of ample magnitude both to attract and retain population will be undertaken. It is, therefore, to present duty we now urge the Executive. As a first step we pointed out yesterday the desirability of at once commencing operations on the road between Burrard Inlet and New Westminster. As a second, let repairs on the main trunk road of the colony be commenced as soon as the state of the weather will permit.

Legislative Council.

Friday, March 18.

Mr. Humphreys moved that the Council recommend their simultaneously with admission into the Dominion Representative Institutions and Responsible Government be inaugurated in the colony.

The hon. mover said the British population of this country had been for years fighting for responsible government. They had signed petitions and in every constitutional way tried to obtain this just and natural right. As a student of history he had begun to realize one great fact—there is no hope of any great political improvement in times of tranquillity without responsible government. He held that the question of the form of government which we are to possess when the Union should not be dissolved in this house. The time of members should be occupied in legislating to develop the industry of the country. It is said by some that the people of the colony are not in favor of it. But he would say to his gentlemen in this house, if there is no responsible government there will be no Confederation.

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No Confederation, no pensions! He believed if this was not granted those in power would lose what power they had at present. A neighbor would have the care of us.

Those who oppose this measure will make a great mistake, and when we lose Confederation we lose this colony. His desire was for the welfare of the colony and he believed if we had a good form of government when united, we would progress.

He did not agree with that portion of the Governor's message relating to the matter of the form of government suitable for this colony. He believed any community were able to govern themselves. Government was not a complicated matter. He believed the misfortunes of the colony were attributable to bad government.

He compared the financial management of a government with that of a mercantile firm and submitted the question, if any one could believe that the business of a firm could be conducted as well under the management of hired clerks who were permitted to visit other organizations and limit their hours of service, as it could by the members of the firm themselves? How long it would not, would such a firm remain solvent?

He again assured the house that the people of the colony were exceedingly desirous for responsible government, and also in earnest. As an evidence of this he produced a petition very largely signed by his constituents setting out to the Queen to grant to this colony, with or without union, responsible government.

Mr. Robson—Profoundly impressed, as I am, with the gravity of the subject we are now called upon to consider, any remarks I may be enabled to offer will proceed rather from a sense of duty to my constituents and to my country than from any hope of changing, if not improving, the views of the general

chamber of the Executive, where they become—I will say—inflamed, educated to see what some have done before. In a House so constituted, it is unfair, is it uncharitable to conclude, that all government measures at least the government would command a majority? Take 3 from 11 and 8 remain. Take 1 from 10 and how many is left? To my mind, 9. Then, then, is the people's majority under the proposed constitution? And yet I can constantly tell that this is not the proper time to set up Responsible Government—star if the people want it, they will possess, under the new constitution, the ready means of doing it. Sir, I do not mean to say that Responsible Government is not a condition of this which requires a five years' possibly a ten years' agitation for what the people are prepared for now, desire now, are entitled to now. All governments are naturally conservative. All persons holding positions of honor, power, or eminence at are bound to be conservative, to hold on to what is, to maintain, will favor or promote a change which will make them responsible to the people—exchange their names from the Crown for the more brittle tenure of public opinion? On the contrary, we should if there is an opportunity to do so, to give the people a considerable extension of what the struggle might last, we would be able to predict. Besides the people of Canada do not desire to see British Columbia occupying any such position. They know too well the value of free institutions, and their adaptability to the needs of the people, and the prosperity and contentment of that people date from the inauguration of responsible government. The failure of Representative Institutions in Canada, and the consequent political stagnation, was due to the fact that the people of Canada, and the people of British Columbia, were not in agreement with the proposed government, but introduced here, I admit the partial failure of those institutions. That failure was not, however, an accident of the institution being Representative, but because they were not fully developed. The original principle was well founded, but the execution was faulty. The result was, that the sympathy between those who sit by the fire at the people's expense, and those who sit by the fire of that will. The system, painted though it was in popular dress, was rotten at the core, pravious to its adoption, and resulted in a general collapse, and ultimate dissolution of the proposed government, introduced here.

That honest gentleman supported the introduction of Responsible Government into this colony by applying the machinery of the Great Eastern to a dairymen's New. His Responsible Government is a private concern, and, such, it is applicable to the Great Eastern to a dairymen's capable of being applied a tiny lady's watch. It is a principle admirably adapted to the largest communities in the Old World; it is a principle which may be adapted to the smallest communities in the new world. It is a principle which may be worked out in a Cabinet of a hundred. It is a principle which may be successfully worked out in a Cabinet of three. Without it, no government can, in the true sense, be called a People's Government. All true governments derive their power from the people. All true governments must be responsible to the people. Responsible Government is then a principle which may be adapted to, and successfully worked out in this community. What would it have to do here? In dealing with this question, I, of course, assume British Columbia to be a Province of the Dominion and lies like Alberta, were it otherwise, were it proposed to remain a separate colony, the case would be different, and I do not say that even then I would not advocate the introduction of Responsible Government, but that advocacy might be less hearty and less firm. Regarding British Columbia as a Province of the Dominion, the chief objections are removed by the removal to Ottawa of all the larger and more complex questions of legislation which might threaten to crack the brain of our embryo statesmen. The local government would alone have to deal with local questions, and thus it would have very simple duties to discharge, scarcely more difficult, in fact, than those failing within the functions of a large municipality in Canada. Are the people of British Columbia fit for it? And, here, I would express my sincere regret that the Representative of Her Majesty in this colony has set it to be his duty to pronounce an adverse opinion. I will yield to no one, either in this House or out of it, in entertaining a high respect for His Excellency, for his talents, experience, and honesty of purpose. But I do say, and I say, it with regret, more in sorrow than in anger, that I cannot think his knowledge of the people of this colony was, as such, to justify him in so early pronouncing upon their fitness for self-government.

Mr. Robson—Thank the hon. and learned Attorney-General, and appreciate his motives. There is no one less disposed than myself to speak or write one word calculated to weaken the hands of the government, or cause the well deserved popularity of His Excellency to wane. But I do not, and I say, it with regret, more in sorrow than in anger, that I cannot think his knowledge of the people of this colony was, as such, to justify him in so early pronouncing upon their fitness for self-government.

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