

LOWER CANADA.

— No. 1. —

COPY of a DESPATCH from the Earl of Gosford to Lord Glenelg.

Castle of St. Lewis, Quebec,

12 November 1835.

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My Lord,

I HAVE the honour herewith to transmit a copy of the speech with which I opened the session of the Provincial Parliament on the 27th ultimo, together with copies of the Addresses of the Legislative Council and House of Assembly in answer to it, and my replies to each.

I have, &c.

(signed) Gosford.

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Gentlemen of the Legislative Council,

Gentlemen of the House of Assembly,

IT is in no ordinary circumstances that I meet you ; and consequences of vast importance depend on the impression you may receive from my words. Dissensions have almost arrested the course of government. The supplies required for carrying into execution the laws by which society is held together, have now for a considerable period been withheld. The most urgent and conflicting statements of numerous grievances by adverse parties have been borne to the throne of His Majesty ; but accompanied with expressions of an apprehension that the Ministers of the Crown might not have that practical and local knowledge of the province which is necessary for the discernment of the most appropriate remedies.

I am sent amongst you therefore, not only as your Governor, but as the Head of a Commission upon which the task is imposed of inquiring fully, and upon the spot, into the complaints which have been made, and of offering to the King and to the Councils by which the Throne is surrounded, the deliberate conclusions of the Commissioners.

There are some cases in which the executive power of the Governor will of itself be sufficient to apply a remedy ; in others, though he cannot act by himself, yet with the help of one or both branches of the Provincial Legislature, he may effectually accomplish what is required. There are others in which the laws and institutions of the United Kingdom make it impossible for us, without the enactments or sanction of the authorities in England, to effect what is asked ; so that if we were to act we should be acting unlawfully ; if we were to make laws, they would be binding upon no one.

If these distinctions are borne in mind, whilst I state to you the commands I have received from His Majesty, and the policy to which I shall adhere, I am confident that I shall satisfy all impartial minds of the magnanimity and wisdom with which His Majesty has listened to your complaints ; of the resolution which has been taken to redress every grievance under which any class of His Majesty's Canadian subjects may labour, and of my own determination to do all of which I am capable in giving effect to these generous and wise intentions. As Governor, I will execute with alacrity, impartiality and firmness whatever I am competent to do of myself ; as head of the Provincial Legislature, I will zealously co-operate with its other members in the redress of every evil they may find occasion to correct ; as Commissioner, I pledge myself that a prompt, but careful examination shall be made of those still weightier matters which depend upon the highest powers of the empire ; and that having, with the most anxious thought and solemn deliberation, arrived at our conclusions, the Commissioners will state them with an earnestness of purpose calculated to give additional force to the authority which they ought to derive from having been deemed worthy of so grave a charge.

In what I shall now proceed to communicate, it is not my design, nor am I authorized by His Majesty, to condemn or to applaud generally the conduct of any one ; the abatement of dissensions, and the conciliation of adverse parties, are the objects at which I aim : the goodwill of the Canadians of all ranks and classes ; the confidence of the representatives of the people ; the respect of all branches and members of the Government, are what I ardently desire to earn and to retain, and in this I hope to succeed, because I am conscious that my intentions deserve it. With as much freedom from fear or favour as I have promised to act, I will now speak of the things of which you have complained, and of the remedies which I hope to see applied.

It is affirmed that the French origin of the majority of the inhabitants of Lower Canada has been made a pretext for excluding them from office and employment, and for retaining them in a state of political inferiority. I disclaim, on the part of His Majesty and of the British people, so ungenerous a motive. Having long ago become a part of the family of British subjects, our Constitution recognises nothing, as a mark for disfavour, which may denote the estrangement of their ancestors in a former century. It regards nothing in the present generation as demerit, save misconduct. The circumstances which first united this country with the British Empire, must necessarily have occasioned for some time afterwards an exclusion of its prior inhabitants from offices of Government, and the bias thus unavoid-

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