

NORTH AMERICAN EMIGRATION.

31

NEWFOUND-
LAND.

Enclosure in No. 4.

MINUTE of COUNCIL.—7th December 1857.

Present:—The Honourable Attorney-General, Colonial Secretary, President, Receiver-General, Surveyor-General, James J. Rogerson.

WHEREAS the supply of labour in this colony has been found inadequate to the demand for the prosecution of the Government works and the fisheries of the country, and the supply from the United Kingdom has been stopped by means of the stringent provisions of the Passengers Act, 1855, it is the opinion of the Council, that in order to meet the immediate wants of the Government and the commercial community for a sufficient number of labourers to carry on the public works and the fisheries, recourse must be had to emigration from the United Kingdom, otherwise trade, fisheries, and internal improvements will suffer material injury; and, therefore, that his Excellency the Governor be respectfully requested to bring this important subject under the notice of Her Majesty's Government, and to solicit such a relaxation of the terms of the Passenger Act, 1855, as may afford some inducement to shipowners to employ some of their vessels in conveying passengers from any part of the United Kingdom to this colony and its dependencies. Owing to the loss and inconvenience experienced by the Government and the trade during the last summer for the want of labourers, the Board of Works of this island and several commercial firms have been obliged to authorise Messrs. James and Robert Kent, of Waterford, and Mr. John Shea, of Cork, Ireland, to procure in that country a number of labourers for Newfoundland to enable them to execute their orders. It is absolutely necessary that the Passenger Act should be relaxed in favour of such vessels as they may employ in carrying passengers to this colony in the following particulars, viz.: first, with reference to the limit of one passenger for every two tons of register tonnage; secondly, the obligation to carry life-boats, fire-engines, and to cut their decks for ventilation, as the emigration officer may think necessary; 3dly, the obligation to have a duly qualified surgeon on board when the number of passengers amounts to 100; 4thly, hospitals; 5thly, passengers' stewards, and such other provisions or Orders in Council as are not necessary or applicable to a northern voyage, or one so short as that from Ireland to Newfoundland, which is usually performed by sailing vessels, according to their sailing qualities, in periods varying from 15 to 30 days.

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While the Council trust that through the intervention of his Excellency a relaxation of the Act on the points above stated may be effected in favour of such vessels as may be laid on for passengers bound to this colony by the agents before named, they would not at all object to any general regulations adapted to the voyage, and calculated to secure the health and comfort of passengers, without unnecessarily interfering with a moderate supply of emigrants from the mother country to this truly British colony. The provisions of the present Act, although wisely intended for long voyages, have had the effect of diverting the stream of emigration from the smaller British and North American colonies to the United States and Canada, or more distant colonies, because the demand for emigrants being more restricted in the former, a smaller class of vessels was, before the passing of the Act of 1852, necessarily employed to carry the limited numbers they required; while it has been found, in Liverpool for instance, that since the passing of the present Act, a large ship can, with profit, take 500 passengers from that port to New York at 4 *l.* each, but 60 or 70 at 6 *l.* each to Newfoundland would not pay the cost of outfit and provisions for a vessel of medium size.

It is a subject of regret that the Local Government have not the means at their command to afford that pecuniary encouragement to emigration which the resources of the country and its requirements would appear to warrant. In the absence of such means, however, no proper measures should be left untried to induce emigrants to come to a country where labour is scarce, living is cheap, the climate salubrious, and the staple pursuits of the population, without reference to employment on Government works, afford handsome remuneration to the able and industrious man.

(Correct.)

J. Kent.