

to a limited extent,) the business which would be entailed upon the Department. Under the present system there were 8,025 letters received last year, and 7,500 have already (14th November,) been received this year; therefore, were all applications to be made and correspondence addressed to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, the number would probably be increased to between 30,000 and 40,000 for Upper Canada alone.

Agents relieve the Department from an immense number of inquiries, being able to answer personal applications whether certain lots are for sale or not; as well as informing persons within the limits of their agencies the precise amount due on lots sold on credit, as have been the Clergy Reserves since the commencement of the sale (in 1829) of those lands.

Persons having local knowledge, such as the resident agents may be supposed to have, are required to check the valuations of surveyors employed by persons who are allowed to purchase at a valuation whether Crown Lands or Clergy Reserves; and to see that an appropriate price be paid for the latter description of land, included in the general inspection of 1843-44, under the order of the Queen in Council, the directions of the Government being; that those lands should be disposed of, not with reference to the up-set price of Crown Lands, but with reference to the prices at which the lands of private individuals, of a like quality and situation are sold.

In cases of conflicting claims to land, and which are numerous, I should say that it would be better that an investigation be made by a disinterested agent of the Department, with whom the parties could personally communicate, than that the Department should have to contend with the private agent, supplied with *ex parte* evidence.

As far as the public is concerned I should think that a person desirous of settling in the woods would prefer a personal application to a local agent for the purchase of land, to either travelling to the distant seat of Government or employing a private agent at a considerable expense, and a prolonged uncertainty whether he could obtain the land he desired; while he and his family are kept in suspense, they being it may be presumed, not resident in the neighborhood. Every facility, it is conceived, should be given to intending settlers, which is afforded by easy access to information respecting vacant lands in the neighborhood where they desire to remain; and this is the more particularly applicable to illiterate persons who would be unable to communicate their wishes in writing either to the Department or to private agents at the seat of Government.

It may, however, I think, be worthy of consideration whether it might not be advisable rather to diminish the number of agents by extending the spheres of those of known efficiency, than the contrary, as has been the case since "Districts" were abolished in Upper Canada; care being taken when new appointments are made, that men are selected more with regard to their intelligence and business habits than for their political predilections.

And as one argument in favor of the abolition of the local agents of the Government has been the expense, I am disposed to question whether it would cost the public (who, it may be admitted, I presume, now indirectly pay the agent's commissions) less were they required to visit the seat of Government or employ a private agent for the purchase of land, and to advocate their claims thereto in cases of dispute, which such a system would have a tendency to multiply; while at the same time an increased number of hands must be employed in the office.