

NEWFOUNDLAND.]

3. I recommend the division of Conception Bay into four districts, in order that every class of Her Majesty's subjects may be fairly represented, which is not the case at present; and also that every other electoral district, whose population by the census of 1836 exceeds 5,000, and which now returns but one member, shall return two members to the General Assembly; and that all the votes be taken in one day, if practicable.

The division of Conception Bay to be as follows :—

- 1st. Bay de Verd to Salmon Cove inclusive.
- 2d. Thence to Spaniard's Bay inclusive.
- 3d. Thence to Cupid's inclusive.
- 4th. Thence to Topsail inclusive.

4. A clear annual income of 100*l.*, or personal property to the amount of 2,000*l.*, over and above the payment of all just debts to which the candidate must qualify by affidavit.

This latter qualification may appear high; but if it should at any time be the intention of Her Majesty's Government to nominate executive councillors from among the members of the Assembly, it must be absolutely requisite that such members should possess some considerable stake in the colony.

No. 5.

Sir,

St. John's, 27 January 1842.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your note of the 24th instant, which I did not receive until yesterday, enclosing questions relative to voters, and qualification of members for this colony, and now respectfully enclose my answers thereto, which you will be pleased to lay before his Excellency the Governor.

I have, &c.

The Hon. James Crowdy, &c. &c. &c.

* * *

1. I beg respectfully to state that the effect, in my opinion, of a rent or property qualification would be to prevent many persons who have hitherto been received as voters, and have had the occupation of a single room, as under-tenant, from voting at elections, as well as those who have occupied, during the fishing season, huts built for the accommodation of fishermen and shoremen during that period, and the occupation of a room as under-tenant in town, or from residence during the winter in a tilt in the woods, and in fishing-huts for twelve months previous to the time of election.

The advantages that would result from such a regulation or law would be to disfranchise many adventurers arriving from the mother country or the colonies, having no property or stake in this colony, and who have hitherto been allowed to vote from the occupation of a hut of nominal value in the woods, or a room as under-tenant in town.

The rate at which I should fix the qualification for a voter in the country would be 40*s.*, on proof of the voter holding property by grant or occupation previous to the year 1825, when the Imperial Government authorized his Majesty to grant waste lands, and having erected a house thereon, and cleared two acres of land of the same.

The qualification of a voter in this town being limited from 5*l.* to 10*l.* rent would have the effect of depriving many persons who have hitherto been allowed a vote as under-tenants in the dwelling-houses of their landlords, the sum paid by such tenants being from 3*l.* to 4*l.* per annum on an average; there are but few under-tenants in the country districts, and the number of landlords or tenants that would be disqualified in town would be inconsiderable, and but few in the outports or neighbourhood, should the qualification be fixed at 40*s.*

2. I would respectfully suggest that the qualification for a voter should be a residence for two years in the district in which he is to vote, and having occupied a house by himself for twelve months before the time of election, which, in my opinion, would have the effect of shutting out transient visitors; and as respects the rental of property, the payment of 5*l.* a year by a tenant, or the rating upon the dwelling-house of an occupant, owner of the same amount, should be a sufficient qualification; provided sub-tenants and tenants living in the same house with the landlord or tenant be disqualified from voting.

3. I would respectfully recommend an increase of members in the number of electoral districts, for the reason, that at present persons of influence in extensive districts, namely, clergymen, or a merchant supplying largely, may exert that influence in favour of a person of low degree, and entirely destitute of those legal acquirements necessary in a legislator, as was found to be the case in the last return of some members for this colony, which would not be likely to be the case if that district were divided, when the candidates and their qualifications would be better known to the voters generally than they can by possibility be under the present system; also, by increasing the number of electoral districts, and having the polling simultaneous, much of that influence would be lessened, as the votes would be given in the absence of those by whom they would otherwise be controlled.

4. The minimum amount of qualification, which I would respectfully recommend, would be an office of the yearly value of 100*l.* sterling, or property yielding or being valued at the same amount.

Many persons during the last election were allowed to vote in consequence of having lived in a tilt during the winter, in which they had no property (having no grant), and in fishing-huts in Loggy Bay during the summer.

Residence