

No. 9.
 Sir Geo. Arthur
 to the Marquis of
 Normanby.
 July 29, 1839.
 Encl. 2, in No. 9.

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Executive Council Chamber, Thursday, 4th July, 1839.

PRESENT:

The Hon. Robert Baldwin Sullivan, Presiding Councillor,
 The Hon. William Allan,
 The Hon. Augustus Baldwin.

To His Excellency Sir George Arthur, K.C.H., Lieutenant-Governor of the province of Upper Canada, Major-General commanding Her Majesty's Forces therein, &c. &c. &c.

May it please your Excellency,

In obedience to the commands of your Excellency, the Executive Council respectfully offer the following remarks upon the report of the Board assembled for the purpose of considering the despatch of Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Council believe the statement of facts furnished by Mr. Hawke to the Board, to be founded upon a most careful investigation and great practical knowledge, and that they may be assumed as correct.

The commutation of the pensions of old soldiers, for the purpose of enabling them to proceed to a country where land could be granted them, and where they might provide for their wants by their own industry, had the appearance of a plan calculated to produce the greatest benefits to the pensioners themselves and their families.

It was, however, altogether fallacious, and it is now useless to theorize upon the subject, because it has been practically found that men who have acquired the habit of having their daily wants supplied without their own interference, are not equal to the steady course of provident industry which a settlement in the woods renders necessary. The habits of life acquired in the course of long military service, and the physical debility produced thereby, as well as loss of limbs and severe wounds, are equally opposed to the success of these unhappy persons, so that it is not surprising that they have been generally reduced to the state of extreme destitution which called for the benevolent interference of the Government in their behalf.

The appropriation of lands to commuted pensioners has proved from these causes useless to the grantees, and being apparently a part of the consideration for the commutation of their pensions, it could not be denied to the claimants, however disabled they were from making any use of their grants. It seemed almost a mockery to require the residence of maimed and disabled pensioners in the woods, where they would undoubtedly perish for want; and they have accordingly used every endeavour to evade regulations requiring settlement, and to turn the portion of land assigned to them into a present means of subsistence, or expenditure for bad purposes.

The Council felt much disappointed at finding the establishment at Penetanguishene not succeed. The pensioners are there congregated with their families; they have small portions of ground allotted to them, out of which the Council would have supposed they could have drawn their chief subsistence. The opportunity of fishing was also a means of providing for their wants which would appear particularly adapted to their habits and capabilities; but it seems that the Penetanguishene settlement has succeeded as badly as the location of the pensioners upon scattered lots of land.

It appears that very few of the pensioners can be induced to exert themselves for their own support, and the Council fear no means can be devised which will either force or persuade them to do so.

It seems to the Council that, by reason of their long services, and of the recognition of their claims for maintenance in their old age, which took place when they were allowed their pensions; that the Government have become so connected with them that they cannot now be cast off. The burden of failure of the plan of emigration cannot fall upon them, for they cannot bear it—if the failure of the plan has left them destitute, they cannot be left to starve; and the question now arises, in what manner they shall be assisted, and not whether aid shall be afforded them.

The Council are of opinion, with the Board, that the issue of daily rations, in cases of absolute destitution, is impracticable; and that any attempts to carry it into effect must be speedily abandoned.

The Council think also, that the principle of aiding those only who cannot, or will not, keep themselves, has a very bad tendency, which the Council will endeavour to demonstrate.

They suppose the cases of two pensioners, one of whom endeavours, with the assistance of his family, to provide so far as he can for his own wants; another who incapacitates himself from doing so by drunkenness and idleness.

In both cases the aid afforded is just sufficient to support nature. The industrious pensioner has no individual benefit from his industry, and the idle one suffers no privations in consequence of his idleness.

The inducements held out by this mode of relief are directly opposed to individual exertion on the part of the pensioners. The more perfect the state of destitution they can exhibit, the more continual and regular must be the aid afforded. The claimant neglects his land, because the possession of a small clearing deprives him of his Government allowance; he sells his cow, and leaves his crops unplanted, because the possession of a cow or a few potatoes will disqualify him from obtaining Government aid; all attempts to advance his condition, or that of his family, to any degree of comfort, are avoided, because beggary is the qualification under which he claims—even the catching a few fish shows a power of saving himself from starvation, and lessens or deprives him of his daily return.

There are some of the pensioners who are, from wounds and infirmities, wholly unable to