Speech of JOHN WILLSON, Esq., *of Wentworth, delivered in the House of Assembly, on Monday Evening, the 1st of March,* 1830, *on* MR. FOTHERGILL'S *motion for sending Three Commissioners to England to procure a* "Redress of Grievances."—[*From the* Courier, *March* 13, 1830.]

After Mr. Bidwell had delivered himself of some of his Democratic spleen against the British Government, &c.

MR WILLSON, of Wentworth, rose and said—When, Sir, we hear accusations so numerous, and charges so serious and unqualified levelled against the Government of our Country, it becomes necessary for us to bestow the most dispassionate and attentive consideration to the subject; lest, under the influence of those prejudices, and of that haste, which are incident to popular assemblies, we make charges which cannot be sustained and thus lower our influence with the people; and lessen our weight—if we do not render ourselves altogether ridiculous—in the eyes of that Government to which we are about to make our appeal.

Now, said *Mr. Willson*, after listening to the flowing numbers and the growing sublimity of the Hon. Member's, [Mr. Fothergill's] eloquent speech, and his long list of "grievances;" he, [Mr. W.] must say that he could not yet bring his mind to accord with all the positions taken, or all the premises laid down by the Hon. mover of the resolutions which were then before the committee. In the first place, he tells us that we must "overturn the whole of that Executive influence which is exercised over the Legislative Council." What undue influence, (said Mr W.) does the Executive exercise over that Council, or what object can either of those branches of our Government have but that which we have ourselves—the common good of the country.

The Hon Gent. next tells us, that when there is a higher Legislature over a lesser one, the liberty of the latter "is seeming, not real." This proposition, (said Mr. W.) requires some elucidation.—When Sovereign and independant kingdoms, like Greece and Egypt, and Macedon and Palestine, and Britain, were subjugated by the Romans, and brought under the conquerors power, their liberties, with regard to the exercise of their own Government and laws, were certainly "seeming, not real;" but will that Hon Gent or any other Gent tell me that the people of the British Colonies, and of this Colony in particular, have no "real liberty," because the Imperial Legislature is paramount to our own? Or will he tell me that the people of the United States have no "real liberty," because they have a higher Legislature over their several subordinate State Legislatures? Do not the people of those States, on the contrary, look upon the superior national Legislature as the great guardian over the whole? And yet do they not at the same time imagine that their liberties "are real," and "not seeming?"

The Hon. Gent next complains that many of our "bills are thrown out by the Legislative Council;" which circumstance he (Mr. W.) truly believed to be one of the greatest blessings which could be conferred on the country, for were all the bills which went through the House of Assembly to be passed into laws, with all their absurdities, their self contradictions, their oppressive, tyrannical and partial enactments, he verily believed that the people would rise up in open rebellion against them. He, therefore, thought it an evidence of the wisdom of the Legislative Council, to pick and cull out acts, to adopt or amend those which had any thing good in them, and to throw those that were worthless or mischievous under their table. As to what the Hon Gent. read from Mr. Fox's Speech, about "*electing* the Legislative Counsel for life," he (Mr. W.) could only say, the members of that body were *appointed* for life now, and therefore were quite as independant as if they were *elected* for life, and he was inclined to think they were rather more so.

The Hon. Member for Durham next shows up what he calls the "judiciary" grievance; but he, (Mr. W.) would like to know what alteration was wanted just now in that quarter! Was not the Bench now occupied by three Gentlemen of the first professional distinction, of superior talents, and of unimpeached integrity, who were all in the prime of life too, and, therefore, not likely soon to be added to the list of pensioned and retired Judges. Next, (said Mr. W.) we have the "Post-Office" grievance, which the Hon member for Durham contends, ought to be placed under the control of the Provincial Legislature; and so far he (Mr W.) coincided with him; but when the Hon member asserted that the profits of that establishment, which was annually sent to England, ammounted to £10,000, he (Mr. W.) did *not* agree with that Gent for it was a matter of doubt with him, whether, after deducting the American, Colonial, and British postage from the total sum collected, there were in reality any profits at all to send to England. And altho' he (Mr. W.) wished to see some alteration in that department, yet he did not think there were quite sufficient grounds for placing it on the list of "grievances."

The Gent. next expresses his doubts whether the "War-Losses" will be paid unless some agents are sent home to attend to it; an idea, which he (Mr W) conceived to be altogether chimerical, because the Bill itself, accompanied by a communication from the Government, would answer every purpose. The next grievance on the list, (said Mr. W.) are the "Militia lands," and the "settlement duty" grievances—with respect to the former, no well established claim for lands on account of Militia services, had ever been rejected. And with regard to the latter, he (Mr. W.) thought that to do away with the settlement duties, and not to compel settlers to cut a road through their lots, so that more remote settlers might have a road open to them, would be the madness of folly.

The Hon. member's next grievance, and which appeared to be the most grevious grievance of all, was the *Canada Company* grievance; which that Gent. was pleased to call a "Scotch Humbug," but he (Mr. W.) was afraid that if there were any 'humbug' at all in it, it was a 'humbug' to the Company themselves, and not to the country.—They had bought our wild lands, and now hold them up at a good round price, and there certainly could be no 'humbug' in that to our Land Speculators, who wish to sell their own wild lands.—Then, (said Mr. W.) this Canada Company—this "Scotch Humbug," as the Gent. terms it, expend a commodity which we are somewhat in want of, he could not see that there could be a great deal of 'humbug' about that.

The "Crown and Clergy Reserve" grievance was the next item in the Hon. member's list: but he (Mr W.) thought that as the wishes of the House, on that subject, had already been communicated to the Home Government, those wishes were quite as likely to be attended to now as if a deputation were sent to England about it. Next, (said Mr. W.) we come to a grievance, which is backed up by all the eloquence of the Hon Speaker—he meant the 14 Geo III. Now he (Mr. W.) would remind the Gent. from Durham, of his own language made use of on the very same subject, a Sennoon or two ago—that Gent. *then* said, that as the same subject had been taken up by the Lower Province, who were much more able to contend the matter than we were, it would be impolite and useless for us to embroil ourselves with the Home Government about it, and that, at any rate, it would be wise to wait for the result of the application of the Lower Province, before we took the matter up here. And these we e sentiments with which he (Mr. W.) *then* and *now* concurred.

We next come (said Mr. Willson) to what could not but be viewed as a remarkable disclosure of a very remarkable conversation which the Hon. Gent says he had that morning with the Receiver-General, relative to the matter in discussion. One piece of information which the Hon. member says he has obtained during that conversation is, that there will be several thousand pounds left in the Treasury after all the votes of the House are supplied, and that therefore there will be plenty of funds to fit out the proposed embassy to England. This was certainly a novel piece of information, after the House had voted away all the money which they believed to be in the Treasury, and had authorised a Loan of Eight Thousand Pounds to help out the Road Bill. Where this bag of Doubloons and Guineas could have lain so long undiscovered, was to him, (Mr W.) a very great mystery, and he should call on the Committee on Public accounts, to know if they were aware of the existence of such a bag of treasure!

As a sovereign panacea for this long catalogue of grievances, the Hon. Gent. (said Mr. W.) proposes the very singular expedient of choosing by ballot, three Ambassadors from the House of Assembly, who, with this load of grievances upon their shoulders, and *two thousand dollars a piece in their pockets!* were to take themselves home to England, and lay down their cargo of grievances aforesaid, at the feet of their most gracious Sovereign! He (Mr. W.) would not animadvert further on the self evident folly of this project, but he thought he might venture to affirm that, if in this election by ballot, the Hon. Gent from Durham should not himself happen to be chosen as an Ambassador, the whole catalogue of grievances which he had so ostentatiously displayed that night, would vanish into "thin air" in a twinkling!

The Hon member from Durham (said Mr. W.) has been followed by the member from Lennox and of Addington, (Mr. Perry) who attributes all the aforesaid grievances to the obstinacy of the Legislative Council; and contends that it would be quite useless to send any more *adresses* to the Home Government, because among the many strong adresses which had already been sent home, very few, if any of them, had been attended to; and he (Mr. W.) would have felt a good deal surprised if they had been attended to; for the statements of most of those addresses were so ridiculous, the complaints so petty and foolish, and the demands so unreasonable, that they were calculated rather to bring the House into contempt, than to procure any serious attention—for the House had asked at random for so many things which the country did not want, as well as for what it did" that we could not wonder if the latter, even, were overlooked.

Next (said Mr. W.) comes the Hon. and learned member from Niagara, (Dr. Lefferty) who wants an Ambassador to be sent by the people, from each District; imagining; no doubt, that he would be the fortunate man in his own District. He proposes too, that these noble gentry should be paid Two Thousand Dollars a piece, or *Twenty-two Thousand Dollars* for the whole batch of Ambassadors; "a noble phalanx," (said Mr. W.) "and a generous bounty; but I think we had better lay out the money upon the Roads, and keep our brave men and our money at home; where they are both very scarce and very much needed!" The *learned* member, (said Mr. W.) with his usual consistency, speaks against the plan proposed by the mover of this strange list of grievances, and then concludes by saying he shall vote for the resolutions: and he (Mr. W.) was very much afraid that there were a great many persons just like that Hon. member, who would find fault without grounds, and say one thing and mean another.

Now, (said *Mr. W.*) I shall take notice of the speech of the Hon the Speaker—he says in the most unqualified terms, that our grievances are not seeming; that our rights are invaded, and our constitution wounded; and he begins his list of grievances, by referring to the 14 Geo III, and says that the House of Assembly should have the control over that, and all the rest of the Revenue. Now, (said *Mr. W.*) whatever may be my opinion as to the principle itself, I think with the Hon. member from Durham, that Lower Canada had pressed the question upon the consideration of his Majesty's Government, and it was therefore unnecessary that we should embroil ourselves with it; and besides that, I am of opinion, that it is a blessing that the Govt. at this moment have something at their disposal whereswith to keep the wheels of Government in motion, for had they not, it was full evident that we would paralize them altogether. Our own unreasonable conduct naturally predisposes the Government to hold fast to any portion of the Revenue which they may now cl im to control, for they see clearly that the Assembly watches every opportunity to frustrate their designs, and to withhold what they may ask.

The next grievance is the Government selling timber in the Ottawa District, on the ungranted lands of the Crown. I—t not (said *Mr W.*) the interest and acknowledged right of the Crown, or Supreme Government, to claim and own the right of sale of all their territories? Did Great Britain ever do otherwise, than to claim all the lands discovered or conquered? And do not the general Government of the United States do the same? Do *they* not own and sell all the western lands? And why then this uproar about the Government selling, or giving, or doing as they please, with some Forest timber that stands in the way of the country's improvement? Then the Hon the Speaker brings up the matter of Mr Justice Willis' removal, and the wounded constitution, &c. Who wounded the constitution? (said *Mr W.*) was it not Mr. Justice Willis himself, and those evil counsellors that his weakness led him to follow? I (said *Mr W.*) have reason to believe that the learned Speaker himself, had been of opinion, and had expressed that opinion, that *Mr. Justice Willis was not qualified to fill the high office for which he had been sent here!* But no sooner was he removed, than his removal was made the rallying point for all the discontented; and the focus for all the slander and labuse which had so wantonly been poured on the Government. If there was a wound upon the constitution, it was by our own impudence, and it was our own unhallowed hands that had inflicted it—The Hon. the Speaker then wrings out his wormwood against a dominant Church, or a Church desiring to become such—for what purpose are all these mighty efforts against the Church? Is it to take away the excess of power and privilege possessed by one Church, in order to place them all upon an equality in point of religious liberty? No, Sir, to do that would be praiseworthy—the object is to pull one Church down, to set another Church (the one of which the Hon. the Speaker is a member) up into equal dominancy. The Hon the Speaker tells us of another denomination that ought to enjoy certain privileges which they cannot get. Yes, Sir, there is *another* aspirant to dominancy, as arbitrary in its power and as bitter in its resentments as any dominant Church which ever existed, and far less discreet. There are a few persons who have very improperly thrust themselves at the head of a numerous denomination, and are using their weight in a way that would only se vo to raise over themselves a second master; whereas if they had acted in a moderate and discreet manner, they might have been in the possession of the privileges which they pretend to seek, long before this time: and all the return they have a right to expect for their ill-tempered zeal, and unexalled-for hastiness of conduct, will be to be allowed to exercise a renewal of that patience which they have permitted to be so soon exhausted; and when they shall have so learned to act discreetly, they will undoubtedly obtain their request. My opinion, (said *Mr Willson*, in conclusion) is, that the most of our "grievances" are imaginary, that the most of those which have a real existance, are of our own creating; and such as are not so, we are taking the wrong method to have redressed. I shall, therefore, feel it my duty to vote against the whole series of resolutions proposed.