

7,000 men, women, and children, and have thus proved beyond contradiction that in this district, at least, the Protestant population are entirely opposed to a change which they believe will have the effect of placing the governing power absolutely in the hands of the Roman-catholics.

5. In forming the committee care was taken, as I am informed, to exclude members of the Council and officers of the Government, in order to avoid all shadow of reason for the assertions which the Roman-catholic leaders have before so unreservedly made, that these classes, from interested motives, alone opposed their views; and for a like reason the signatures to the petition were procured entirely without the co-operation or assistance of the parties referred to. The only exception was in the case of the acting Solicitor-general, who, as Member for Fortune Bay for years before he was connected with the Government, invariably opposed the unqualified concession of the change of system in question.

6. The petitions from the outports cannot be expected in St. John's for some months, in consequence of the difficulties of communication at this season of the year, and of the delay that will be occasioned by the absence of the people at the seal fishery; but there can be little doubt, so far as I am informed and believe, that, making a reasonable allowance for the difference between a district like St. John's, where the inhabitants are collected within a small compass, and the outport districts where they are scattered over a large extent of coast, the outport petitions will show a like result with the one from St. John's.

7. I have mentioned these particulars, because the prayer of this petition to the Queen, delivered to me by a deputation of respectable inhabitants of this town, for transmission to your Grace, before the receipt by me of your despatch No. 49,* of the 21st of February, is for the fulfilment of the most important of the conditions which your Grace considers essential to justice, and requisite to the satisfactory working of the new system of government.

I have, &c.

(signed) *Ker B. Hamilton.*

* Page 1.

Enclosure in No. 6.

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(Circular.)

Sir,

St. John's, 6 March 1854.

You are doubtless aware that for some years past, the Roman-catholic majority of the House of Assembly have been unceasing in their efforts to obtain the establishment in this colony of what is termed responsible government; a change which the Protestant minority have steadily opposed, from the conviction that the introduction of that system, without a subdivision of the more populous districts and an increase of representatives, fairly apportioned among all classes, would be highly dangerous to our civil and religious liberties, as under the present unfair scale of representation, the Roman-catholic minority of the population have a majority in the Assembly, and the practical operation of responsible government would be, to vest in the Roman-catholic clergy, by whose influence such majority are elected, the whole legislative and executive powers of the local Government.

You will also have learned through the local press, that with the object, doubtless, of coercing the Imperial Government into this concession, the same majority have now deliberately resolved to discontinue all legislative action under our present form of government; and have carried their resolution into effect by adjourning until the 20th instant.

It is hardly necessary to observe, that this step will probably oblige the Imperial Government, either to accede to their wishes, or to make such alterations in the constitution, as will place it beyond the power of a few individuals to prevent its harmonious working; and that no effort may be spared on the part of the Protestant population, to avert from this colony what will, doubtless, be injurious alike to its moral, social, and political condition and prospects; a committee, consisting of the undersigned, has been formed in St. John's, for the purpose of adopting such measures as will unite the Protestant population in a combined appeal to the Imperial Government, in the hope that a true representation of their sentiments on this subject may influence the Government in its decision on a case of the whole merits of which it may not be fully informed.

With this view, the committee have prepared petitions to the Queen and both Houses of Parliament, a set of which they take liberty of transmitting to you, with a request, that should you concur in opinion with them, you will further the common cause by promoting the establishment of a local committee in _____, and by procuring to the petitions the signatures of every male Protestant in the district, who, having arrived at years of discretion, and having the effect and object of the petitions explained to them, will concur in their prayer.

You will observe, that in framing these petitions, all reference to any ground of objection to responsible government, other than the main one above referred to, has been avoided; as