

— No. 8. —

(No. 14.)

EXTRACT of DESPATCH from Governor *Douglas* to the Right Honourable *H. Labouchere*, M. P.; dated Victoria, Vancouver's Island, 7 June 1856.

(Received, 12 August 1859.)

Answered, No. 16, 23 August 1856, page 4.)

SINCE I had the honour of addressing you on the 22d May last,* I have held a meeting of Council for the purpose of taking into consideration the instructions contained in your despatch No. 5, respecting the summoning of Assemblies of the freeholders of this colony. I read to Council a draft of the proclamation which I intend to issue for convening the Assembly; proposed that the island should be divided into four electoral districts, and should return seven members; and that the property qualification of members should be freehold estate of the value and not lower than 300 l. sterling. The property qualification of voters to be according to the terms of Her Majesty's Commission, 20 acres or upwards of freehold land.

The Council adjourned without coming to any decision till to-morrow, for the better consideration of the subjects laid before them.

The proclamation for convening the freeholders will probably be issued in the course of this week, and the Assembly will probably meet about the first week in August.

There will be a difficulty in finding properly qualified representatives; and I fear that our early attempts at legislation will make a sorry figure; though at all events, they will have the effect you contemplate, of removing all doubts as to the validity of our local enactments.

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Governor Douglas to Right Hon. H. Labouchere, M. P., 7 June 1856.

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— No. 9. —

(No. 15.)

EXTRACT of DESPATCH from Governor *Douglas*, to the Right Honourable *H. Labouchere*, M. P.; dated Victoria, Vancouver's Island, 22 July 1856.

(Received, 14 October 1856.)

(Answered, No. 18, 21 October 1856, page 5.)

I HAVE the honour of enclosing herewith minutes of the proceedings in the Council of Vancouver's Island, on the 4th and 9th of June last. I stated in my communication of the 7th of June, † the subjects which had been laid before the Council on the 4th of that month. The propositions in respect to the convening and constitution of the Assembly, were approved and passed without alteration at the meeting of the 9th of June.

In order to suit the circumstances of the colony, the property qualification of members was limited to the ownership of 300 l. of freehold estate, or upwards. To have fixed upon a higher standard of qualification, would have disqualified all the present representatives, leaving no disposable persons to replace them, and it appeared to me impolitic, as well as unconstitutional, to dispense altogether with the property qualification.

You will observe by the said minutes, that absentee proprietors of freehold estates are allowed to vote through their resident agents or attorneys, after the example of British Guiana.

The division of the settlements into four electoral districts, admits of a more equal representation, and has given more general satisfaction to the colonists, than a single poli opened in any one district.

The electors are so few in number, that the returns were mere nominations in all the districts with the exception of Victoria, where the contest was stoutly maintained by no fewer than five rival candidates.

The elections are now over, and the Assembly is convened for the 12th day of August.

No. 9.

Governor Douglas to Right Hon. H. Labouchere, M. P., 22 July 1856.

† Supra.