

REPORT

Of the Select Committee to which was referred the Petition of DONALD BETHUNE and others of Kingston, complaining of the increasing influence of a Foreign Priesthood, &c.

COMMITTEE.

Messes. SOLICITOR GENERAL, *Chairman.*
THOMSON,
J. WILLSON.
MORRIS,
WERDEN.

To the Honorable the Commons House of Assembly.
The Committee to whom was referred the Petition of DONALD BETHUNE and others, of Kingston, &c. beg leave to submit the following

REPORT:

THE Petitioners represent, that the influence of a Foreign Priesthood is daily increasing, and that its existence is irreconcilable with a true allegiance to His Majesty; they, therefore, call upon the Legislature to pass a Law—*First*, To prohibit any exercise of the functions of a Priest, or Exhorter, or Elder, of any Denomination in the Province, except by British Subjects.

Secondly—To prevent the assembling therein of any Religious Society or Societies in Conference, who shall be in Society or Conference with any foreign body calling themselves a Religious Society or Conference, or otherwise; and,

Thirdly—To prevent the raising of money by any religious, or pretended religious, person or body, for any pretended charity, mission, or fund, the objects of which are not strictly British.

In taking into consideration the application thus made, your Committee had no hesitation in coming to the conclusion, that it is inconsistent with the benign and tolerant principles of the British Constitution, to restrain, by penal enactments, any denomination of Christians, whether subjects or foreigners, in the free exercise of their religious worship; and that it is equally inconsistent with the fundamental principles of civil liberty to control by Law the voluntary contributions of any man, unless made with an intent to accomplish some unlawful purpose.

Entertaining these sentiments, your Committee cannot recommend compliance with the prayer of

the Petitioners. They are of opinion, that the incorruptible loyalty and good sense of His Majesty's Subjects in Upper Canada *ought* to be, and may be, safely relied on, as the best security against any attempt to destroy the allegiance they owe to their lawful Sovereign, or to deceive them into an improvident waste of their resources.

It having occurred to your Committee, that the Petitioners might be under a misapprehension as to the extent of control exercised by Foreign Religious Bodies over the Ministers of the different denominations of Christians in this Province, and that the number of Ministers who were not British Subjects was much less than was generally supposed, your Committee deemed it advisable and just to the parties most interested, to make enquiries into these points. With that view, they requested the attendance before them of the Rev. Mr. Harris, of the Presbytery of Upper Canada; the Rev. Mr. E. Ryerson, of the Methodist, and the Rev. Mr. Stewart, of the Baptist persuasions; who very readily and promptly furnished the tables and statements hereto annexed.

Relying on the accuracy of these statements, your committee feel great satisfaction in reporting that there are good reasons for believing that all cause for complaint on the score of foreign influence, if any just cause do exist, will shortly be removed; and they trust to the judicious exertions of the parties immediately concerned, to satisfy, with as little delay as practicable, the just expectations of the public in this respect.

C. A. HAGERMAN,
Chairman.

*Committee Room, House of Assembly,
15th February, 1831.*