

THE CONCEPTION-BAY MAN.

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HAEBOUR GRACE WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 4.

It must be cheering to those who rely with any degree of confidence upon the ministerial organ, to learn from its columns that the country is in a prosperous condition, that in comparison with times gone by there is little want or poverty in the land, and that as a consequence, means have been placed in the hands of the government, to discharge all their liabilities, and to leave a handsome sum to carry out measures of public utility.

Well we shall be delighted to find the latter statement correct as the few who still remain poor will doubtless receive some benefit, and there will be no necessity for trumping up an account in the legislature to meet their deficiencies last Session.

Free Trade we are told for the hundredth time, was the grand means by which, all or nearly all this relief and prosperity were realised, and for Free Trade with all its advantages the Country is solely indebted to those most Potent Grave and Reverend Seignors who now fatten upon the result of their own legislation, wisdom and economy. That we deny, Free Trade like every other extraordinary change in matters of business or policy, was gradual in its approach, but means were in operation, long before the present ministry obtained power, which would necessarily secure that desideratum when the proper time arrived. It proceeds from England to America was slow, and when at length it became an established fact between the Old and new world? when all the neighbouring colonies were reaping its full fruit, was it to be supposed that an Island altogether dependent upon trade as this is would long remain a voluntary and solitary exception.

This view of the case would materially lessen the claim of our present rulers even tho they had been the first to broach the subject in this country, but how greatly should their demand for the peoples gratitude dwindle, when we reflect upon the fact that not with them, nor with their party was the credit of initiating such a measure due. The question was ably entertained, and its adoption contemplated by members of the old government and even the much abused mercantile interests were largely exercised for its promotion.

When the late Sir Robert Peel first risked the welfare of his country, and his own fame upon the introduction of Free Trade to England, great must have been his anxiety, and still greater the confidence in his own power of reasoning which could bear him up against the unpopularity and opprobrium to which for a time he was subjected by those who had previously supported, and all but idolised the minister. The great land holders, whose interests he had never ceased to represent, were astonished, and dismayed, and if the change had been slow to produce those great results, which the might of his genius had enabled him to anticipate, he would have fallen a victim to his patriotism, before the fallacies of his opponents could be dissipated.

How widely different the position of those pigmy politicians who impulsively lay claim 'not thro a penny whistle, but through a six hundred year, trumpet' to the merit of having originated and introduced the Free Trade principle to this country, and who do not scruple, not only to arrogate to themselves this distinguished honour, but to grossly exaggerate its benefits, and gloss over the disadvantages to which a too precipitate engagement on their part has subjected the country.

Fortunately for them and for their political existence, a beautiful Providence granted a prosperous fishery the past season, to which if we add the reaction in trade which the recent close of an extensive and paralysing war has naturally called forth, may be fairly attributed that impetus which our rulers would fain have attributed to their unrivalled Legislation.

The Newfoundlanders modestly remarks (We do not claim the entire absorption of poverty in the general prosperity, but the testimony from all parts of the Island proclaim the comfort and well being of the able bodied and industrious fishermen?)

Pity our contemporary did not go the whole hog and state that all were prosperous, the poor amply provided for, and that Newfoundland had been suddenly converted into an elysium by the present ministry. The able bodied and industrious are certainly not in want, and seldom has it occurred in this Country that they were. But who has dared to testify that the poor and helpless are one whit better off now than when suffering under the old government, how are the widows and orphans the aged and afflicted, provided for? In this and in the neighbouring bays there is still much suffering, objects of distress are around on every hand, and we are assured that in many places absolute starvation is impending, in this place were it not for the daily employment obtained from our Merchants even the able bodied and the industrious would find it hard to live, and in the face of such facts are we to be told, or is it to be insinuated that our Irresponsibles have by their liberal legislation, swept poverty and suffering from the Land?

But let us glance across the same paper to the prices of provisions, how is it that before Free Trade was granted, Bread could be obtained for about twenty-three or twenty-four shillings which is now thirty-four and thirty-six per cwt., and Flour for twenty-eight or thirty, which is now 'quoted only at' thirty-eight and forty 'the many pay fifty shillings for that indispensable article, and all other kinds of provisions in proportion, it is true that Fish which then varied from twelve to thirteen shillings per Quintal is now worth fifteen but this difference is not a sufficient equivalent for the enormous prices above quoted, where there is the great advantage of those changes which only add two or three shillings to the price of Fish whilst Bread and Flour have increased ten or twelve shilling per bag or barrel, and to make up the deficiency of revenue' caused by the remittance of a duty which was scarcely felt upon provisions, the tax upon Tea Sugar Molasses and Ship-goods, and other necessities has been increased to an unnecessary and unreasonable extent.

Here are facts Patent to all as the Newfoundlanders express it, and yet the Fishermen are gravely assured that they owe a debt of gratitude to the self-satisfied authors of the scheme, verily we think something more must be done than has yet been effected by the present Ministry, before they can lay claim to the peoples gratitude, or should boast that they possess the confidence of the Country.

The much lauded epistle of the (Hon. Colonial Secretary) upon Bank establishments, reminds us that we retain in possession, among many others, short hand notes of a speech delivered by that zealous functionary on the subject of a petition from the Phoenix fire Company, presented during the last session of the Legislature.

Whatever may be the importance attached to the Banking document, we are of opinion that the subject matter of the speech which we this day publish, is of infinitely greater importance to the Outport population, we therefore give it a taken verbatim by us when employed as assistant reporter to the House of Assembly, and fee constrained to do so, as either from motives of state policy, or being like many others crowded out by less important matter, it was never before published, at least in extenso; and it is only fair that Conception Bay and others should know that the claim which we urge on their behalf is as just, but even a metropolitan member, and the second minister of the day, was found to advocate the justice and propriety of yielding to such a demand.

It is not within our province, to attempt to grapple with certain objections which have been urged, on account of the expense and corruption, generally attendant upon corporate institutions elsewhere; of extravagance and corruption, we have had quite enough in other departments, and may reasonably hope, that by proper legislation such evils may be avoided in this, but we need not speculate further, one thing is certain the outports should no longer be forced to contribute for those local improvements, and that security which in every other colony are provided for by equitable assessments upon the inhabitants, and whether the necessary change be effected by an act of Incorporation, or by a reformed and properly constituted Board of Works, the extern districts should be relieved of a burden to which they have been too long subjected. This would have been one of the first acts of a truly responsible Government, the out port members forming the great majority, might easily have effected it, but Alas for the country? outport members were influenced by the same selfish considerations which so completely sway a majority of the metropolitan, and the interests of their constituencies have been sacrificed to the same principles of party tactics, official rapacity, and misrule.

Such being the facts, the honest opinion of Mr. Secretary Kent upon this subject is valuable, and will doubtless operate favourably, when J. L. Pendergast Esq. or some other Hon. Member introduces a well digested measure to effect the much desired change.

With regard however to that portion of the Speech which treats upon the neglect of the outport people, and urges the propriety of a statute labour act, to compel them to keep roads and bridges in repair, we would observe, that if with all proper economy, the revenue of the Colony were found insufficient for the purposes of public improvements, such a proceeding might be urged with some degree of propriety, but whilst the funds of the Colony are being squandered by grasping Officials, and their satellites, it would be shameful to enforce upon the Fishermen of the Country a burden, which to say the least must be onerous, partial, and unavoidably unjust.

No, the people will never consent to work upon the roads without payment, for the purpose of leaving a larger amount of public money for political taskmasters to lavish upon one another, to bribe the representation, and thus corrupt the legislature of the land.

Let then the Capital and every other town, of note be fairly assessed for their local expenses and improvements; but for main lines of roads, necessary bridges, and all works of general and public utility, the public money, is or ought to be amply sufficient. The additional duties bear heavily enough upon the outport population

without compelling them to work in gangs upon the circuitous lines of roads which intersect their districts. Let the long promised and much vaunted economy be really practised. Let the Capital bear its own burdens, and the revenue will be found amply sufficient for all purposes of general utility, including the making and keeping in repair, extensive and main lines of roads for the benefit of the whole population.

The Hon. Colonial Secretary said

I am not in favour of this petition, being of opinion that the people of St. Johns should bear their own burdens.

How was the unfortunate revenue to stand, should this and numerous other claims for local purposes be taken out of it, look east, west, north, and South, and observe the necessity for improvements; the continually increasing demand for employment, and the pressing wants of the people, and yet the legislature is asked to sanction that an institution of this kind should be sustained out of the general revenue of the Island.

How is the country to progress? How is education to advance, main lines of roads to be perfected, or the natural resources of the Colony to be developed, if our means are to be thus diminished. Every town, every place of any consideration should be incorporated, and there should be a statute labour act by which roads and bridges might be kept in a state of repair. He, (Hon. Colonial Secretary) had seen bridges which cost the Colony hundreds of pounds, neglected and suffered to fall into ruin, for the want of slight repairs which might have been made by parties living in the neighborhood, and most interested in their security, but because there was no law to enforce their attention to the subject, these bridges were suffered to fall into a state of decay, which would cost the country a considerable amount to repair. Demands were thus made upon the public money which ought only to be expended for the general improvements of the Colony. Hon. Gent. of the ministry think if they could turn the present minority out, and grasp at power themselves, that they would be able to effect all necessary improvements without the changes we contemplate, but they would not withstanding their experience and ability that without some change in our system, undertaking of general utility should be abandoned, and the country would ultimately go to ruin.

Why do not the merchants and other inhabitants who are so deeply interested in the consequences of fire, contribute for this purely local improvement, why then for houses and other necessary appliances, applications have been made, and the amounts liquidated out of the public revenue. What fund then can be reserved for the necessities of the general poor if such expenses are to be paid out of the public chest. Surely Hon. Gentleman can only represent local, petty, and individual interests, who would perpetuate such a system. The burden of local expenses should be shared by the inhabitants for whose particular benefit it was incurred.

In every other civilised country on the face of the globe municipal regulations are introduced for this purpose, and the citizens of St. Johns should not sit idly down depending upon the legislature for that security which Municipal Institutions alone are intended and calculated to effect.

Ho Hon. Col. Secretary was astonished at the apathy of the out port Members on this occasion when the interests of their constituency were at stake, and every principle of justice demanded that they should be relieved of this burden.

Such measures as he (the Hon Col Sec) advocated would enable the government to afford the poor employment, and thus diminish the applications for pauper relief.

The stores of the merchants were greening with the weight of goods, and they should pay their quota of expense for its security, the poor should not be called upon to contribute to this, and even were it otherwise have they not been heavily burdened by the contagious diseases which so frequently prevail, and by the loss of their natural protectors from the want of sanitary regulations, which municipal institutions would introduce. Look to America, where new towns and cities are springing up from their swamps and morasses as if by the wand of the enchanter, their local arrangements and improvements all the result of municipal regulations, and shall we not have the courage to effect what under every other government in the civilised world has been established, why even Charlottown with its comparatively small population, the other day became incorporated, and of the old colonies those most marked by the progress of civilisation, and for fostering the arts and sciences, have long since adopted such institutions.

Even upon the abstract principle of correcting the legislation of this House, the change would be valuable, as we are to live on satisfied with our present position, whilst every other Colony is progressing, are we to still cling to a system which corrupts public opinion, weakens the moral influence of legislative authority and deprive us of the means of advancing the general interests of the Country. No! if you would retain your influence, your power, you must give up opinions which tend to vitiate public sentiment, and should

adopt those principles which tend to the public security, even 'tho you may gain a little unpopularity, or your passive resistance with unreasonable demands will injure the interests you desire to conserve, even tho you wish to propitiate will at length become satisfied and you will be at last swept from your positions.

From the Patriot of the 23. ult.

We observe that the Colonial Secretary can find time amid the cares, the anxieties, the duties, and the toil of his office, to devote a spare hour or two to discourse to the public subjects unconnected with 'red tape' and 'routine.' And although we think that the Colonial Secretary at all seasons must find sufficient to do within the scope of his official circle to occupy the entire of his time, there may not be any very great objection to an occasional essay upon things in general from the pen of an official when everything is going on smoothly, and satisfaction rests serenely upon the country; at the present conjuncture, however when open and manifest dissatisfaction pervades the public mind—when rank corruption promotes every department of the state—when favouritism and unblushing injustice characterise the conspicuous acts of the Executive—when thousands of the public money are being squandered and dissipated to gorge greedy stomachs without any return commensurate with the outlay—when the wives and children of our fishermen are crying for food to the government and are 'sent away empty,' whilst the monies voted for their sustenance remain unaccounted for by the Executive—is this a time for the Colonial Secretary of a government which is guilty of these things, to dawdle his hours away insipidating upon the presumed evils which may arise from the withdrawal of a Branch of the Bank of British North America established here? Was there no other theme at this particular time to engage his official pen than the nonsensical speculation as to whether the Union Bank might not feel it to be its interest to put on the screw 'when profitable' and to insist upon it that to prevent this screwing, and her bank ought to be immediately established to take the place of the existing Branch? Now how are we to regard all this babble of the Colonial Secretary? Is it to divert the attention of the people to abstract theories from the position in which the Cabinet is placed—to destroy the confidence of the people in the Union Bank and thereby to get breathing time to recover their own lost confidence? It would be well for them if they stood so fair with the public.

It is true that the Bank of British North America is about to withdraw its Branch from this Colony, does any one imagine that it does so because it has made its fortune? On the contrary it is not manifest that it has been since the establishment of the Union, a losing concern, and that therefore it has found necessary to wind up! And the Colonial Secretary wastes his ink and his official time to advocate the institution of another Bank to compete with the Union—for the public benefit—with no other prospect in view than the broken fortunes of its predecessor!—Most sapient Counsellor! Most sage statesman! Had such an epistle emanated from a third-rate Lawyer, such as the present Leader of the government and her Majesty's Attorney General, save the mark!—we should have regarded it with silent derision, as a deception and a scheme with some sinister object besides the ostensible one, in view; but coming from Mr. Kent, whom we look upon with some degree of respect, we are sorry that he should not occupy his time more profitably.

Being deprived of our Foreman by the machinations of the enemy, we are obliged to work at the type unceasingly, the preceding columns therefore were upon press before the St. John's Papers were received. We regret that His Excellency The Governor's Speech upon opening the present session of the Legislature did not come to hand in time for insertion in this day's publication. The following brief Synopsis of proceedings taken from the Morning Post will tell that we have space to devote to at present.

The members of the House of Assembly having repaired to their Hall, the Speaker read over the Governor's Speech.

Mr. KELLY, in moving for a Select Committee to prepare a reply to the Speech, touched upon the general topics which it embraced.

He referred to the present improved condition of the country, arising not alone from the unusually successful fishery of the past season, but attributable in a great degree to the result of the introduction of Free Trade.

He further alluded to a subject to which there was reference in the Governor's Speech, the concession of our fishing rights which it was rumored, Great Britain intended to make to France, deprecating such a measure, and urging upon all to unite in their efforts to defeat any such attempt.

Mr. MORRIS seconded the motion, speaking in favorable terms of the measure, which the Government has effected, and expressing his conviction that they would be supported both in

that House and were promotive of

Mr. MARCH, present Ministry, he said, "groaned the floor of that that a more tyrannical Government found under the

Mr. HOGGESS, exonerating the Government, dwelling emphatically upon which he maintained

Mr. LITTLE, in defence of the Government, large increase of over that of any ports imports and other similar that the Country and still improvement of Free Trade present Government under the former a challenge for the closest scrutiny of several departments and the general pursued.

Mr. HOYLES, able speech, making cutting reply, and that the very General had put ment of the Government of the Re try generally the and the strongest ly opposite position

Mr. KENT, followed, he was pelled to leave go the pleasure afforded us, and to gratify the people

Thus it will be offered has not and that, instead the discharge of single eye to good, the party have commenced array to each other winter campaign, he feared as dispreceded it. loaves and fishes

The notice was met in the House of Assembly, and was emphatically uncountenance, by hearty cooperation Whilst so many Countries, New hand in works; we trust exertions of the us for such abundant success

A MEETING of the British Association will be held in the Thursday next

On Monday Planter of this

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Febry. 7.—H 23 d

Febry. 1.—St ception, Boun

Ridley & Jan. 24.—Sat

27.—E Pulton &

WARRE

ST. JOHN'S

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