

CANADA.

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No. 1.

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COPY of a DESPATCH from Governor-General the Earl of ELGIN AND KINCARDINE to Earl GREY.

Government House, Toronto, December 31, 1850.

(Received January 28, 1851.)

(Answered March 14, 1851, No. 568, page 9.)

MY Lord,

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* This document is not printed with these papers on account of its bulk.

THE Executive Council of this province having had under consideration the reports made to the Legislative Assembly during its last session by a Committee appointed to inquire into the state of the provincial income and expenditure, has submitted a minute, of which I herewith inclose a copy, and requested me to forward it to your Lordship, with the view of obtaining the sanction of Her Majesty's Government to a reduction in the charge for pensions, and in certain salaries fixed under the Civil List Act, which it is the desire of the Council to recommend for the adoption of the Local Parliament. The Committee to which reference is here made was nominated at the instance of the Government, and composed of members selected from the several political parties represented in the House. I transmit in a separate despatch a printed volume containing a copy of the reports presented to the House by the Committee, and of the evidence* which accompanied them. The greater part of this evidence, which is bulky, consists of written statements in which schemes for effecting an entire change in the financial and administrative system of the province are discussed. The Committee have, however, offered no opinion on this branch of the subject.

2. As respects the recommendations contained in the minute which I inclose, I cannot but express regret that the Council should have deemed it their duty to make them. I do not indeed think that much practical inconvenience, in so far as the Government is concerned, would arise from restricting within the narrowest bounds, or even perhaps from entirely withdrawing the very limited power which the Crown possesses under the Civil List Act of conferring pensions other than those to judges. So great is the jealousy with which the exercise of this power by the Crown is viewed—a jealousy which tends to check not the abuse of the power merely, but also its proper use—that I think less injustice would be sustained by those who render services to the public entitling them to such consideration, if it were understood that the Crown had not the means of rewarding them in this manner, than is done by permitting them to form expectations which may be doomed to disappointment, even when most legitimate. Little evil would, therefore, in my opinion, result from a change of this nature unless it should lead to a revival of the practice of personal canvass and solicitation, which obtains so extensively, and with such demoralizing effects, whenever favours of this description are contingent on the votes of popular Assemblies, instead of being awarded on the responsibility of Ministers liable to be called to account for their acts.

3. The proposal to reduce the salaries of judges and heads of departments is, in my opinion, more objectionable. Whether the cost of living in towns, or the incomes realized by professional men in large practice, or the stipends assigned to persons filling situations of confidence and trust by private individuals and corporations, such as banks and land companies, be considered, I fail to discover any sufficient ground for the belief that the salaries of 1000*l.* currency, or 800*l.* sterling now enjoyed by those high functionaries, are excessive, if indeed it be assumed, as is the case in corresponding situations in England, that the services they are required to render to the public, claim their whole time and attention. I think, therefore, that it is much to be regretted that it should be supposed that a necessity exists for recommending a measure of this description. The more so, that a solemn compact with the Crown, deliberately