

The Weekly British Colonist

Wednesday March 2 1870

Vote the Supplies

Once more has the burlesque of 'Voting the Supplies' been played in this colony. Under a liberal constitution the Government is once a year made to realize that the people hold the purse-strings. Under the glorious constitution enjoyed here the people are once a year made to realize their utter powerlessness. Once a year the paid officers of the colony go in and divide the 'Loaves and Fishes,' and tauntingly shake the empty bag in the face of the people. If anything were needed to convince the colonists of the necessity for constitutional changes, surely the voting of the supplies will have carried conviction to the heart of every thinking person. Not that there is anything absolutely new or unusually impressive about this year's burlesque. But, somehow, there was more expected from the present stage-manager. It was supposed that, being a man of talent and energy, he would have exhibited some practical improvement in the play. To drop the figurative form of expression, we cannot help thinking that it would be more becoming if on these occasions the representative members of the Council were quietly so retire into the lobby. Their presence in the legislative chamber is not only needless, but they are really placed in a false and most painful position. To offer opposition to the supplies as a whole would seem factious, and would certainly be futile. To analyze and reconnoitre would be attended with very great difficulty, even if it were permitted. To attempt to eliminate items of seeming superfluity or extravagance is so completely overwhelmed, to be put hors de combat by a perfect deluge of pathetic eloquence, directed to showing the enormous amount of work performed in every department, and the marvelous ability of each and every worker, and thus the member who has the courage to make the attempt resumes his seat in a condition of bewildered doubt as to whether or not the whole thing is a dream. It is no more than just—and we desire to be just—to say that the routine work in the public departments is very largely and needlessly increased by the cumbersome system of 'red-tape' imposed upon the colony by the great 'circumlocution office' in Downing-street. According to that system all the accounts must be kept in triplicate, and it is asserted that this entails about double work, necessitating nearly double the staff of clerks that would otherwise be required. And here one is led to ask, what right have the Imperial authorities to impose such a cumbersome and expensive system upon a colony so utterly unable to bear it? Especial care is taken that the colonists are made to pay every farthing of the expense; yet they are not only denied all control in the levying and expenditure of taxes, but they are compelled to have the affairs of the colony conducted in triplicate form, chiefly, it may be presumed, in order that there may be so-called employment for double the number of appointees of the Colonial Office. Truly has it been said that the Crown Colonies are mere pasture-grounds for Imperial sheep. They are home-land in danger of being overstocked, and the grass eaten too close to sprout again. It may be said that we are not dealing quite fairly with the new Governor; but in view of the probability of immediate Confederation, it was scarcely to be expected that any changes would be attempted in a condition of things so soon to be completely revolutionized. We were anxious to accept this view as an explanation; but we are not permitted to do so. The official announcement that the Estimates have been framed with the strictest regard to economy and without the slightest view to Confederation, and the solemn and frigid assurance of the head of each Department that to cut off a man or a dollar would imperil the public interests, forbids a view which we would gladly have adopted. Here, then, we find ourselves with the same all-absorbing, all-consuming Civil List. Education must go a-berging, because there is no revenue left. The colony is practically cut off from the rest of the world, at a time when population is eager to come and when population is our very life, because the Treasury has been drained to pay official salaries. The colony must be content to grow by chance or by sheer mendacity, because there is no revenue left. Even the 'Sister' must continue to endanger life and property—demands yet more blood, because officialdom has not left money enough to buy powder with which to blast her. In most instances the settlers must still be left to struggle through tangled forest and unbridged streams, because there is no money left. Possibly his Excellency may deem it fitting that a hated Constitution and a deplorable condition should end together; but the people naturally feel disappointed. There is only one remedy,

and to that let all address themselves. But, in accepting Confederation upon fair terms, let the people see to it that they do not accept a Constitution that will cheat them out of all real power to control their own local affairs.

Friday Feb 24th

Legislative Council

Wednesday, Feb 25th
SUPPLY.
On motion to go into committee of Supply Mr DeCosmos rose and said he would take the opportunity which the present time afforded him to make some remarks upon the general affairs of the Government. The right of the hon member to speak was called in question, when after a lengthy discussion the President decided him in order according to parliamentary law, although not by the rules of order of the Council.

Mr DeCosmos then referred to the journals of last session, quoting a protest which was signed by the hon Dr Helmcken and Dr Carrall against the action of the Government in paying such high salaries to the officials, and remarked upon the contrast between their action then and at the present time when they are members of that executive which they a year ago so strongly condemned; now the same gentlemen are found recommending the same expenditures that they then so strongly protested against. The hon member reviewed at great length the estimates before the Council, complaining of the high salaries and excessive expenditure for the support of the Government, and for the small allowances for the equipment of schools, and the omission of any appropriation for public works. He also pointed out how, in his estimation, a large saving might be made to the colony by the reduction of salaries and the amalgamation of offices, and he concluded by saying that 'the course of the hon representative members who had gone into the Executive Council was indefensible.' Mr Humphreys said he congratulated the hon member who had just sat down upon the clear and laud manner in which he had explained the cause of the unnecessary and extravagant expenditure of the public money, and he only regretted that there were not more in the Council to support him in the matter.

Hon Dr Helmcken said he was sorry that his appointment had been the cause of so much complaint; he hoped Confederation would come soon. The hon member for Victoria District had shown a great deal of ignorance regarding the Executive Council, he (Dr H.) could not tell the secrets of the Government, but he could tell the hon member that he was as much at liberty to vote for the reduction of any salaries as he ever was. He would not attempt to defend himself against the charges made by the hon member for Victoria District, but he replied out of consideration to his constituents.

Hon Dr Carrall said so far as the charges had been made against him for assisting in maintaining the expenses of the Government, he would state that the estimates were prepared before he came down from Cariboo and he had no hand in them at all, and he was not only free but would be most happy to assist in any measure of reduction that seemed reasonable and necessary.

The Council then went into committee of supply. Mr Ball in the chair. The following items in the Civil Departments were taken up, and passed: His Excellency the Governor, \$2050; Legislative Council, \$900.

Mr DeCosmos moved that the words 'assistant Colonial Secretary' be struck out and the word clerk substituted, and that the sum of \$1400 be substituted for \$1940.

Mr DeCosmos moved that one clerk be substituted and that the sum of \$1500 be substituted for \$2904.

Motion lost.

Mr DeCosmos moved that the salary be \$2000, and asked if there was a book kept by the Auditor to which reference might be had, showing the items of expenditure.

Mr DeCosmos in judgment terms rebuked very severely the hon Colonial Secretary for applying the term 'fellow' to the members of the Legislative Council.

The Chief Commissioner said there was a book in course of preparation which would answer the enquiry of the hon member for Victoria District.

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Canadian Mail Summary

Our Canadian correspondents of the 29th ultimo, but contain no news of special importance to dwellers in British Columbia. Arrangements have been completed at Ottawa for giving a citizens hall to Prince Arthur on his return from the United States, and before the opening of Parliament. This hall was to take place on the skating rink. It had not transpired what course the Government would adopt towards the ex-Governor of Red River. The Reifeinstein case continued to drag out its weary length before the Police Magistrate. It was stated that Senator Atkins has gone into the Dominion Cabinet without knowing its policy. John Torrance, a leading merchant of Montreal, died at the age of 64. The Provincial Legislature of Quebec has passed a Bill to provide for the interdiction of habitual drunkards. A conference of the Roman Catholic clergy was held at the Archbishop's palace Quebec, on the 21st. The question of the Pope's infallibility was discussed, and all were understood to have supported the dogma. Capt Strachan, eldest son of the late Bishop Strachan, died at Toronto on the 24th. A very shocking murder had been committed at Harbor Grace, Newfoundland. The victim was a young woman named Pike, respectfully connected, and suspicion rested upon a cousin of the same name. The Globe's Red River correspondent gives the following news, under date 22nd January:

Messrs Snow, Mullins, Nimmons, Grant and Hamilton leave St Paul for Canada today. Messrs Mullins and Hamilton were liberated from Fort Garry on January 6th on condition of quitting the country. Mr Nimmons and five others came to Fort Winnipeg on the Government road early in December, and were arrested and imprisoned. They and twenty-five other prisoners were confined in a room 10 by 30 feet, with cells along the sides into which the men crowded to sleep at night. Rice supplied them with sugar and tea of the poorest quality. Mr Nimmons escaped on the night of Jan 2nd, by jumping from the second story window into the street. He was immediately rescued by the police, and his friends were ordered their liberty if they would swear allegiance to the insurgent government, but all refused and were returned to prison. Snow and his son had not been prisoners. Rice had subjected all at any time, dismissed his troops, with the exception of those fifty who were on guard duty. Vice General Thibault is at the residence of Bishop Jacob and is yet somewhat under surveillance. DeSalaberry is at liberty and allowed to go wherever he pleases.

A Pembina letter says that the Indians who were marching towards Fort Garry were met by Riel and other insurgents five miles from the Fort, where they had a talk, and after receiving some tobacco and provisions the Indians returned home. They said they understood the French and Americans were waging war against the British Government, and they came down to see if this was true, and if it was they would fight them. The Indians were not altogether satisfied and estimated that they would probably soon be back again.

It was stated that the Dominion Cabinet had appointed Mr Smith, the acting Governor of the Hudson Bay Company at Fort Garry, a commissioner to enquire into the causes of the insurrection there. The following dispatch from Earl Greyville to the Governor-General, under date of 1 September last, has been published, and may be interesting as indicating Imperial anxiety for the completion of Confederation in British North America.

The Hon. Secy of State for the Colonies, Mr. J. Lubbock, has had with much satisfaction the speech which you issued 'The last session of the Parliament of the Dominion of Canada as well as the Resolutions of the Parliament, authorizing your Government to enter into negotiations with the Government of Prince Edward Island with a view to the admission of that Colony into the Dominion.

It is not that in settling the terms proposed as the basis of this arrangement the Government of the Dominion will deal liberally as well as justly with the Island, and that the Government of the Island will receive favorably such propositions when made, as I believe it is in the interest of the whole of the British North American Colonies that they should be united under one Government; and H. M.'s Government watch with much interest the successive steps that are being taken towards the accomplishment of this great end.

Referring to the new Finance Minister an Ottawa correspondent of the Toronto Leader remarks:—'SIR FRANCIS HIMPON is a most indefatigable worker. Gubernatorial position has not rubbed off a particle of his old buoyancy or in the slightest degree affected his capacity for business. He is in his office early and late closely examining every item of the public accounts and mastering all the details of his office. There could not possibly be a more painstaking Chief in the Finance Department. Nothing is left to be done by subordinates which ought to be attended to by himself. The Banking measure to be submitted to Parliament by him next session is receiving a great deal of attention at his hands, and if there be evinced the slightest disposition on the part of the bankers to meet the views of the cabinet I have no doubt that an excellent banking act will be incorporated among the statutes of the next session.'

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CHIEF OF GLASGOW LIFE ASSURANCE CO.—This old-established Company publish a balance sheet showing liabilities and assets, with sufficient particulars of investments to enable anyone accustomed to ordinary accounts to judge of the stability of the undertaking. The next division of profits falls on the 20th January, 1874. The profile of the Company being divided every five years. The Governor of the City of Glasgow is the Right Hon. the Earl of Glasgow.

The Duets and Manson, charged with robbery have been again remanded for examination. The affair looks black against them.

The California sails at 6 o'clock this morning.

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