

Enclosure 3, in No. 9.

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To his Grace the Duke of *Newcastle*, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonial Department.

May it please your Grace,

WE, the Commons of Newfoundland, in Legislative Session convened, beg to inform your Grace, that we are gratified to learn from your despatch of the 27th of February last to his Excellency the Governor of this island, that Her Majesty's Government have come to the conclusion that they ought not to withhold from Newfoundland those institutions, and that system of civil administration, which under the popular name of responsible government have now been adopted in all Her Majesty's neighbouring possessions in North America.

But we beg to state that some of the conditions on which the Imperial Government are prepared to concede the immediate application of that form of government to this colony, are so objectionable in their character, as to render its introduction upon such terms utterly impracticable.

The intended boon, instead of being received with approval by the people, with such qualifications, would be rejected without hesitation.

The conditions deemed objectionable by the Assembly are, first, a general geographical subdivision of our electoral districts; secondly, the imposition of local taxation by assessment, for the purpose of defraying the allowance usually granted to Members of the Assembly for their attendance during the sittings of the Legislature; and thirdly, the imposition of general election expenses on the Members elected.

The first condition cannot be carried out so as to secure a faithful return of independent representatives, owing to the scattered and widely extended nature of our settlements in nearly all of our outport districts, any general geographical subdivision mainly based upon territorial extent, would throw the elective power into the hands of the most scattered and isolated portions of our population, and thereby unjustly act upon the more populous and wealthy settlements. Besides the Assembly have invariably objected to any general subdivision of our electoral districts, because it would result in the creation of mere nomination or rotten boroughs, and throw the representation of the country into the hands of a few individuals who have invariably opposed the introduction and progress of free institutions in this colony, and by the system of trade which they have long pursued, reduced our operative population to a deplorable degree of misery and dependence. They form a leading portion of the Executive Council of this colony, and being identified with the policy and interest of that body, the Assembly are likewise confident, judging from the repeated efforts which they have made in vain with the Council, to induce them to pass a fair Bill, for the increase of our representatives, that no measure will be assented to by them that will in any degree endanger their paramount influence and their political position in the government of the colony.

But to convince your Grace of our desire to meet your view, we shall again endeavour to bring the Council to terms on this subject, and relax the resolution which after mature deliberation we had formed, of not attempting to renew an abortive system of legislation upon general subjects with the Council, a body consisting of ten irresponsible Crown nominees, one of whom is absent from the colony, and only one of whom has supported the measures of the liberal party which have been brought before them.

With reference to the second condition, the Assembly would remark that there is no such measure in operation in any other British North American colony; that local assessments are only imposed for local or municipal purposes or measures, and any attempt to saddle on our population a system of direct taxation for the payment of Members, cannot be favourably regarded, and must prove a failure, being unjust in principle, and unprecedented in the other colonies, it would be deemed oppressive by the people of this. As the third condition would be viewed in the same light by the Members elected.

The Assembly would further submit that these conditions are such as have not been annexed to the concession of responsible government to any of the neighbouring colonies, and being put forward by your Grace as indispensable precedents to the change of government sought by the people, we are convinced that in this view your good intentions on their behalf will be utterly frustrated, and their hopes disappointed.

We therefore trust, that upon a reconsideration of this important subject, your Grace will see the propriety of withdrawing these objectionable conditions, and granting responsible government to this colony on the same terms as it has been granted to the neighbouring colonies.

In conclusion, we have respectfully to thank your Grace for the information you have conveyed regarding the question of reciprocal free trade with the United States, on which your Grace acquaints us that Her Majesty's Government are in negotiation with that of the United States, and that in the conduct of that negotiation every attention will be paid to the expressed wishes of the Assembly on this subject.

And for which, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Passed the House of Assembly, 24 March 1854.

*John Kent, Speaker.*