

Lord John Russell stated that the corn-law proposition would embody the principle of a moderate fixed duty, and would be brought forward as a cabinet question.

The Chancellor is to submit the resolutions in which his scheme is to be incorporated on Friday.

Lord John Russell gave notice for the House of Commons to go into Committee on the Corn laws on the next order day after the 31st of May. Ministers intend to propose a fixed duty instead of the present changeable one, but what the amount of this fixed duty was to be had not transpired. It has been conjectured at 8s. per quarter, and at 10s. It is probable that the duty on Colonial bread-stuffs will also be reduced, if they are not admitted at a nominal duty, which is most probable.

The following despatch on the Land Granting System is from Lord Sydenham to Lord John Russell:—

Copy of a despatch from Lord Sydenham to Lord John Russell.

{ GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
{ Montreal, October 12, 1840.

MY LORD :

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's despatches of the 31st August and 3th September, Nos. 213 and 221. As the subjects of these despatches are intimately connected, I answer them together.

It is unquestionable that the land revenue of Lower Canada has been very inconsiderable during the last few years, but, in attributing the diminution, as I understand your Lordship to do, to the effect of Lord Durham's proclamations respecting squatters and militiamen, your Lordship appears to have fallen into an error. At the time when Lord Durham commenced his enquiry into the disposal of Crown Lands, he suspended the sale of them, and that suspension continued until it was altered lately by myself.

The only sums, therefore, received since that on account of the land revenues, have been instalments for lands previously purchased, rents for lands under lease, and payments for licences to cut timber. These sources of revenue are of course inconsiderable when compared with the proceeds of the sale of land when the old system was in full operation. I feel confident that as soon as the new system shall be in operation, the land revenue will not only equal, but exceed what it was in former years. I do not perceive that it can be affected in any way by Lord Durham's proclamations respecting squatters, because by setting up all unappropriated Crown Lands for sale at a fixed price, the exclusive privilege conceded to that class by Lord Durham, is at once neutralized. But in order to avoid any difficulty, the notice, of which the enclosed is a copy, was issued from the Crown

Land Office simultaneously with the new land regulations, requiring that all claims under Lord Durham's proclamation shall be lodged before the 22d of January next. Your Lordship's despatch contemplates closing those claims at even an earlier date; but as the curtailment of the time would now be comparatively immaterial, and as any interference with a notice of this nature might give rise to complaint, and be regarded as a breach of faith, I trust your Lordship will not disapprove of my leaving the matter as it at present stands.

I now proceed to notice the report of the Land and Emigration Commissioners, and in doing so I must express the satisfaction I have derived from the different communications from those gentlemen with which your Lordship has favoured me, exhibiting as they do great attention to the important subject entrusted to them, and expressing opinions in which for the most part I quite concur.

First, the Commissioners express their dissent from the principle of affixing different prices on land in different localities. Were Lower Canada a wilderness now about to be settled for the first time, I should agree with the Commissioners. The principle of leaving the choice of the purchaser unfettered and influenced is no doubt abstractedly correct, but it cannot be applied to such a country as this without modification. Under the old system settlement has been encouraged in every part of the Province indiscriminately; and although the concentration has naturally taken place in localities enjoying peculiar advantages, there is a very large population scattered through the more remote parts of the province. To fix a uniform price on all lands would draw away population from these less favoured districts, and concentrate it altogether in the neighbourhood of the large towns and rivers. This would not only be a hardship on the more remote districts, but would have a bad political effect by leaving those districts, principally inhabited by French Canadians, to grow up in their national prejudices and habits without any sympathy with their fellow colonists.

The fear expressed by the commissioners that the low price of the inferior lands may tempt those who should be labourers to become landholders is, I think, quite visionary. As the whole price must be paid at the time of sale, and as there is no intention of breaking up the land into small locations, there is no ground to apprehend that men without capital can become purchasers. It is not from the acquisition of land by poor men, but from the speculation of the rich that the country has suffered and continues to suffer. And for this evil the remedy is not to be found in an increase of price, but in the imposition of an annual tax.

On this latter point, the imposition of a tax, your lordship is well aware of my opinion, as it