

NOVA SCOTIA. which they had then generally been discharged, I find thus described in a confidential despatch which the late Lord Sydenham, then Mr. P. Thomson, addressed to Lord J. Russell, from Halifax, in the year 1840 :—

“ The functions of the Executive Council, on the other hand are, it is perfectly clear, of a totally different character. They are a body upon whom the Governor must be able to call at any or at all times for advice; with whom he can consult upon the measures to be submitted to the Legislature, and in whom he may find instruments, within its walls, to introduce such amendments in the laws as he may think necessary, or to defend his acts and his policy. It is obvious, therefore, that those who compose this body must be persons whose constant attendance on the Governor can be secured; principally, therefore, officers of the Government itself; but, when it may be expedient to introduce others, men holding seats in one or other House, taking a leading part in political life, and, above all, exercising influence over the Assembly.”

“ The last, and, in my opinion, by far the most serious defect in the Government is the utter absence of power in the Executive, and its total want of energy to attempt to occupy the attention of the country upon real improvements, or to lead the Legislature in the preparation and adoption of measures for the benefit of the colony. It does not appear to have occurred to any one that it is one of the first duties of the Government to suggest improvements where they are wanted. That the constitution having placed the power of legislation in the hands of an Assembly and a Council, it is only by acting through these bodies that this duty can be performed, and that if these proper and legitimate functions of Government are neglected, the necessary result must be, not only that the improvements which the people have a right to expect will be neglected, and the prosperity of the country checked, but that the popular branch of the Legislature will misuse its power, and the popular mind be easily led into excitement upon mere abstract theories of government, to which their attention is directed as the remedy for the uneasiness they feel.”

In this view of the proper functions of the Executive Council I entirely concur; but I greatly doubt whether they could be adequately discharged by a Council composed of only two or three persons holding offices in the public service, and of gentlemen serving gratuitously. It is hardly possible to expect that those so serving should devote any large portion of their time to their public duties, and it therefore appears to me highly desirable that salaries should be assigned to at least one or two seats in the Executive Council.

On such terms as these, which I have thus detailed, it appears to me that the peculiar circumstances of Nova Scotia present no insuperable obstacle to the immediate adoption of that system of parliamentary government which has long prevailed in the mother country, and which seems to be a necessary part of representative institutions in a certain stage of their progress.

I have thought it due to you to enter thus fully into the practical difficulties to be encountered in giving effect to those general principles which, in my despatch of the 3d of November, I laid down for your guidance in the selection of your responsible advisers. I am in hopes that the present despatch will leave you in no doubt as to the course to be pursued by you in the event of any changes of which you may anticipate the contingency. I owed it to you to make myself clearly understood on this point; and I trust that what I have now said, will be regarded by your Council as amounting to such a declaration of my views as was requested by them in their letter of the 30th January.

I have, &c.
(signed) Grey.

— No. 9.—

(Separate and Confidential.)

EXTRACT of a DESPATCH from Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Harvey, K.C.B., to Earl Grey; dated Halifax, Nova Scotia, Government House, 20 April 1847.

No. 9.
Lieut. Governor
Sir John Harvey
to Earl Grey,
20 April 1847.

(Received 15 May 1847.)

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's despatch, No. 25, of the 31st ultimo. I have perused this document with the greater satisfaction, because one part of the plan which is suggested in it is one which, to a certain extent, I had myself propounded on more than one occasion; viz.