

SUMMARY OF NEWS. MUNICIPAL DISTRICTS.

We copy the following article on Municipal Corporations from the Novascotian, as it is a subject of great importance to our Readers, and indeed to the Province generally, we beg to call their attention and serious consideration to it.

During the last year a Bill went into operation in Canada, which provides corporate privileges for the rural districts of the Province. A similar measure may be expected to be introduced into the Nova Scotia Assembly in the ensuing session.

We understand the provisions of the Bill to be somewhat as follows: Each County is invested with corporate privileges, by which it elects a Common Council of twelve persons, for the management of local concerns, like the Common Council of the city, within its jurisdiction. To each of these Councils the Governor appoints a Chairman, called a Warden, who has a casting vote, and is in communication with the government. This Council appoints a certain number of persons for each township within the boundaries of the county, who act as subordinate councils. The Governor has the power to dissolve each County Council, as he has dissolve the House of Assembly, and send the members to their constituents for an opinion on their conduct.

Such, without having read the Bill, we understand to be its chief characteristics. The last mentioned provisions is a check on any unwise or unwise course, and the appointment of Wardens is expected to cause uniformity throughout the county, to prevent any illegal steps, and so avoid confusion and other evils. The recommendations of this part of the system, have been mentioned above—the objections, as they appear on hasty inspection, may be thus stated—Such appointments may excite jealousy between the councils and their Chairman;—the Wardens may be looked on as exercising an ungracious superintendency;—and as being the organs of an unnecessary centralization of power and influence in Halifax. Although such a part of the system might be wise for so vast a country as Canada, and one composed of such varied materials, Nova Scotia may be considered under different circumstances, and therefore not requiring precisely similar regulations.

As the measure has been for some months in operation in Canada, we may glean some experience by attending to Canadian opinions on the subject. Several journals have been examined with this object, and the substance of their information may be here given. The Montreal Times, a paper generally hostile to the late Governor General's administration, finds fault with the measure. Its objections appear as follows:—1st. Instead of the Bill conferring legislative privileges for purely local purposes, it will induce many petty legislatures, misinterpreting this office, deriving importance from abuse of trust. 2nd. Instead of local governments in small circles, some of the Districts embrace populations amounting to nearly fifty thousand persons. 3rd. Some of the Councils have already deviated from their charter, and encroached on the franchises of the subject and the law of the land, by raising money for undefined purposes, under the head of contingencies, and otherwise. 4th. The statute holds out temptation towards the abuse of trust, and the burthening of the people. 5th. As only one third of the Council go out each year, the remaining members have the power of influencing the new Councilors, and of perpetuating their own mode of management. 6th. The people should themselves, at public meetings, determine the amount of local taxes, instead of that power being entrusted to the Municipalities. On these counts we might remark,—respecting the 1st and 3rd, that the superintendance of the Wardens, and the power lodged in the General Government, ought to provide ample redress: the Council for the district of Missisquoi reported certain expenses of Members and Wardens, while the statute expressly states that they shall receive no compensation for their services as such. Some confusion may be expected the first introduction of extensive a measure, but the remedy appears to be easy and immediate. The 2nd might be obviated for Canada, and would not apply to Nova Scotia. 4th. This objection might be made to many of the best enactments;—ample checks seem provided in the act under consideration, by the control of the people and the specific provisions. 5th. If this were found of force, a modification might be provided. 6th. Limitation might be provided on this head also, so as to prevent any improper exercise in the taxing power.

The Quebec Gazette makes some objections similar to those of the Montreal Times. The Montreal Transcript complains that the law is too general and vague, and in some particulars inadequate for the requisite action of the Councils,—that the Councils want power to collect the necessary taxes, and definite directions respecting enforcement of their bye laws. This may afford a hint on any adoption of the system. The Toronto Examiner and other papers, we believe, consistently support the system, and some of all shades of politics call for a fair trial of the law as the period approaches when the election of Councilors is to occur; we do not know when the Bill went into operation in Canada, but from remarks made, it would appear that the elections were to take place at the beginning of the present year.

The Expenses of Congress.—The official estimates of the expenses of Congress, including members, officers, and clerks—estimating the Sessions for which each member is elected, at 218 days—are, Senators, \$90,886; Speaker of the House, at \$16 per day, 3,488; 242 members, at \$8 per day, 422,048; Delegates from the Territories, 5,282; Travelling expenses of the members, 54,000.

The Secretary of the Senate receives \$3,000, and the clerks in his office \$9,300; Chaplain of the Senate, \$500; Chaplain of the House, \$500; Postmaster of the House, \$1,500; Stationary, &c. \$60,000; incidental expenses of the House, \$150,000; the Library of Congress, including the salaries of its officers and contingent expenses, \$12,300; gross expense, \$1,079,570. This includes salaries for door-keepers, assistant ditto, clerks of the House, sergeants-at-arms, and all other sub-officers connected with the two Houses. It is stated that the colored people of Philadelphia have 16 churches, 21 schools, 80 benevolent societies, six literary and debating societies, three moral reform societies, two lyceums, and two weekly newspapers.

The three Lord Chancellors of England who have held the seals of office longest are, Lord Ellesmere, twenty years within a few days; Lord Hardwicke, twenty years and nine months; and Lord Eldon, during the two periods of his being in office, twenty-five years within a few days.

At the siege of Acre, a cannon-ball from one of the Turkish batteries, passed very near Sir Charles Felix Smith, whose ear is particularly accustomed to that kind of music. "Do you hear that music?" said he to a Scotch sub in the Artillery. "Hoot, toot," was the reply, "I care nothing about the balls which come—my business is w' the balls which go."

Our readers will be gratified to learn, that the Public Works of the Province are to be pushed forward forthwith, toward completion. The contracts for the finishing of that section of the St. Lawrence Canal between Prescott and Cornwall are given out, and it is expected that the completion of it will be completed in November next—which it will be observed, will open the navigation for steamboats to the Coteau du Lac.

We have also heard with pleasure, that immediate steps are about being taken to expel some of our rear Townships for the reception of Emigrants in the Spring.—Kingston Chronicle.

Several addresses from various parts of the Province have been presented to His Excellency, the Governor General, within the last few days.—Ibid.

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNALS.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

February 1.

Mr. Boyd presented a petition from Thomas Berry, of Saint Andrews, in the County of Charlotte, Contractor for building the new Court House at that place, praying compensation for loss sustained in the erection thereof; which he read; and upon the question, that the said petition be received and referred to the Committee of Supply, the House divided—Yea, 6. Nays, 12; whereupon it was decided in the negative.

Mr. Owen presented a Petition from the Justices of the Peace for the County of Charlotte, praying that an Act may pass to authorize a further assessment for the payment of the debts due from the said County; and also for a further grant in aid towards the erection of the new Court House; which was referred to the Committee of Supply.

Mr. Hill presented a Petition from John Grimmer, of Saint Stephen, in the County of Charlotte, on behalf of himself and one James Gillis, praying that the penalty paid under the "Act to provide for a regular supply of Seamen for new Ships fitted out or loaded in the Province," may be returned; which was referred to the Committee for taking Petitions of a like prayer into consideration, to report thereon.

Mr. Hill presented a Petition from Samuel Frye, the Rev. Alexander McLean, Charles V. Foster, and 25 others, Members of the Saint Andrews Geological and Philosophical Society, in the County of Charlotte, praying aid towards the encouragement thereof; which was referred to the Committee on Education, to report thereon.

Mr. Brown presented a Petition from John Porter, George M. Porter, Joseph Porter, and James Porter, Ship Owners, in Saint Stephen, in the County of Charlotte, praying that a sum of money paid under the "Act to provide for a regular supply of Seamen for new Ships fitted out or loaded in the Province," may be returned to them; which was referred to the Committee for taking Petitions of a like prayer into consideration, to report thereon.

On motion of Mr. Palmer.—Ordered, That the House do, on Thursday next, the 10th inst., go into Committee of the whole, in further consideration of the Bill to limit the duration of the Assembly.

Mr. Brown presented a Petition from William Todd, of Saint Stephen, in the County of Charlotte, praying for relief in consequence of losses sustained in the purchase of a Tract of Crown Land in the year 1835, and upon which he had paid two instalments, and afterwards made surrender of the whole Tract; which was not received.

February 5. A Bill relating to the driving of Stage Coaches and other Wheel Carriages on the Great Roads of Communication throughout this Province, passed the House and was taken to the Council by Mr. Brown.

On motion of Mr. Hill.—The House proceeded to take into consideration the amendments made by the Legislative Council to the Bill for the appointment of Firewards, and the better extinguishing of Fires which may happen in that part of the Parish of Saint Stephen, commonly called Salt Water, and its immediate vicinity. And they being severally read, and the question taken thereon, they were not concurred in by the House.

February 7. Mr. L. A. Wilmot, presented a Petition from Edmund Ward, Proprietor and Editor of the Sentinel, Newspaper, complaining of certain Post Office charges on Newspapers circulated through the Provincial Post Offices, and praying relief; which he read.—Ordered, That the said Petition be received, and lie on the Table.

Mr. Hill brought in a Bill, relating to the appointment of Firewards, and the better extinguishing of Fires in a part of the Parish of Saint Stephen, in the County of Charlotte, therein mentioned, which was read a first time.

[From our Fredericton Correspondent.]

COMMUNICATIONS.

FREDERICTON, 9th Feb, 1842.

Mr. Editor.—

The debate on Lord Stanley's despatch on the financial system, commenced on Monday and lasted three days. It was a very interesting discussion, and was conducted with great ability. It appeared from the despatch, that Sir William Colebrooke had applied to Lord Stanley for leave to borrow £500,000 for New Brunswick, if the House of Assembly should want the money. To this proposal his Lordship objected, that the finances of the Province were in a "disorderly" condition, and that before any loan would be sanctioned, it would be necessary for the House of Assembly to give up the right of voting the money as they always have done, and hand over to the Governor and Council the sole power of introducing grants of the people's money into the House. Mr. H. F. Partlow took the Chair of the Committee, and the debate was opened by Mr. Woodward. He, however, was interrupted, and as the proposed change was a "disorderly" one, the committee called upon some of the members of the Executive Council. Mr. Speaker then arose, and having distinctly stated the history of the whole transaction, condemned in toto the system pursued by the House for the last half century with regard to the manner of voting the money—that there was neither safety, regularity, nor certainty, in it—that it had been the means of running the Province into debt, and if persisted in would ruin the country. He was therefore, for giving up to the Governor and Council the right of sending down the estimates of all monies wanted for the public service. He maintained that the Governor and Council were the best judges, that they would manage matters for the good of the people, would limit the expenditure to the income, and prevent exorbitant taxation. After examining the whole subject at great length, and affirming that the credit of the country was completely destroyed; he sat down and was followed by Mr. Johnston. He chiefly insisted upon the necessity of a dropping some scheme whereby the annual appropriations would be limited to the income, and produced an estimate sent down by the Governor, which he read, and which appeared to have been based upon the grants of last year. He stated that a loan would be required to maintain the former scale of appropriations, and that his proposal would prevent the House from dividing the money in the usual way, only the estimate would be the limit beyond which they could not extend.

Mr. Ed. regretted exceedingly that his political life had been prolonged to hear the Speaker's recantation. He exclaimed against the proposed innovation with all his eloquence—maintained that the House deprived of the management of the money would be prostrate before the Executive—that members in order to obtain a little money for their own countries would "gra," "nag," and "bray" just as the Governor and Council might direct. He read the correspondence between Lord Glenelg and Messrs. Crane & Wilmot—showed that the right of voting the money in the usual way was confirmed by contract, and said it was a most audacious attempt on the part of the present Executive to break through that contract, and endeavour to deprive the people of their inherent right. Mr. L. A. Wilmot, in a most eloquent and powerful speech deprecated the financial system as extremely unsatisfactory and unsafe. That seeing and feeling the wretchedness and uncertainty thereof, he had charged his mind, and since his interview with Lord Glenelg—that the division of the public money was nothing more nor less than a scramble among members, wherein he who got the most was the best fellow—that it was governed by no principle, neither could any man tell within £20,000 what the sum granted would amount to, until after the Committee of Supply was closed. He maintained that a change was imperatively called for;—that the safety and welfare of the people demanded an immediate departure from the present practice, and the adoption of the government estimates. He concluded his eloquent speech with an earnest prayer, that prosperity and peace might be established in the Province.

Mr. Weldon would not consent to depart from the long established practice—it was peculiarly adapted to the condition of the country. Pecuniary difficulties had arisen and would arise, but for this there was a legitimate remedy which had always been exercised, and could be so exercised again.—Economy and retrenchment were only required to cure any temporary evil that might arise. He said that the finances were not in a disordered state, that the amount due the Province was more than the Province owed, but that owing to the unusual pressure of the times the sums due could not at present be collected. He was against a loan as tending to create an enormous debt which would hang like a dead weight upon the country. He pointed out the bad effects of a debt, and concluded by recommending strict economy as the best means of getting clear of present difficulties.

Mr. Brown called the despatch "a budget of blunders" and said that Lord Stanley did not understand the subject. He said the casual revenue had afforded £93,000, which had been laid out, a portion every year, over and above the annual income; that at present the accounts stood £93,000 against the Province, and £110,000 in its favour—that by reason of commercial embarrassments the people were unable to pay what they owe—that these commercial difficulties were beyond Legislative control, affecting nations as well as individuals. He called Lord Stanley the "evil genius" of New Brunswick;—would neither sanction a loan as contemplated in the despatch, nor give up to the Governor and Council the right of initiating grants of money.

Mr. Barbicte then began to speak against the measures proposed in the despatch, but the crowd in the gallery had by this time become so dense, and the heat so great that I was compelled to retreat to get a snuff of "colder air"—when I returned I found Col. Allen on his legs and in his own peculiar manner admonishing and warning the House against the hasty adoption of any of the contemplated changes. He said the despatch was inconsiderately written—that there was no analogy between that House and the House of Commons—that the privilege sought by the government would disfranchise the people—that nothing could justify a departure from fixed principles—that the people themselves ought to be consulted before these great changes were made. "He knew the people were against these measures—the people were against the loan of money, they were afraid of these strange movements." He had travelled the length and breadth of the Province and knew the people well—"reproductive works." Look at all the great schemes—all the mill companies and other great works—what are they now? Abortives all! He warned them to be cautious, and to take heed to their dough lest the plausible schemes now in contemplation should in the end become burdensome to the people, and entail upon posterity a pressure of taxation.

Mr. Partlow appealed to the rest of the members, whether they had not from year to year enquired into the state of the finances, and managed prudently and successfully? He maintained that the annual grants had ever been made with reference to their available means, except last Session, when the House granted too much—that even now, there were outstanding demands in favour of the Province more than could meet all the debts, but the misfortune was, that owing to the unexampled pressure of the times, these demands could not be collected at present. He said that as a temporary relief, a loan, to a certain extent, would be absolutely necessary, as it would be imprudent to press for immediate payment of outstanding demands.

Mr. Wilson, after reading the despatch, and showing that there was no similarity between the position of the Assembly and the Imperial Parliament, condemned the proposed scheme as impracticable. That under its operation the power of the Executive would be irresistible—that when called upon by the constituency to render an account of their stewardships, it would be a poor apology to tell the people, that the House of Assembly finding themselves unable to manage the people's money, had handed the whole matter over to the Governor and Council.

Mr. Owen adverted to the complicated nature of the public accounts—advocated Lord Stanley—condemned the unprincipled manner of voting the money in supply—recounted a number of bygone cases to show that no executive abuse could equal theirs—would adopt the system recommended in the despatch, and receive estimates from the Governor.

Mr. Gilbert blamed the House for its extravagance—named a number of improper grants—and spoke with great severity against several other members. Mr. Hanington defended the general conduct of the House, and pointed to the great improvements in the Roads and Bridges—he said he would neither borrow money nor give up the management of the people's money to the Executive Government.

Mr. Hill alluded to the practice in England, and was willing to give up a right which could not be exercised with safety or advantage. He described the scramble for money inseparable from the present system, and would adopt the mode pointed out by government as the best remedy. He answered a number of objections, and pointed out the partiality and difficulty of the present mode. He was opposed to the loan. Mr. Street, in a very long speech, condemned the present mode of granting the supplies as unjust, partial, and unprincipled—commented upon every paragraph of the despatch, and denied that there was either blunder or impropriety in it. He then went at some length into the principles of Political Economy—then to Emigration; and concluded by affirming that a change in the mode of granting the supplies was absolutely necessary.

Mr. Boyd said that those who had profited by the present mode of dividing the money would be likely to hold on to it;—he did not like it, and would adopt the other. He spoke against the pension list—mentioned improper grants, and £1500 to buy a service of plate for Sir John Harvey—mentioned the unsatisfactory state of the finances, and said that his colleague, though good in figures, was not in this case, to be depended upon. He also was opposed to the loan.

Mr. Rankin strongly recommended prudence and economy, and implored the House to engage in no untried measure without full consideration.

Mr. Woodward described the uncertain, partial and unprincipled character of the present mode—defined the Parliamentary system which he wished to see introduced most fully—as a necessary preliminary measure he would have both the Legislature and Executive Councils remodelled. He would receive all the estimates from the Executive and send up the supplies by Bill to the other Branch—in short,

he was for no half way measure—no compromise for the sake of expediency—he would "go the whole hog." After some explanations and remarks from two of the members of the Executive Government, Mr. L. A. Wilmot again arose, and in a torrent of eloquence, perfectly irresistible, deprecated the mode of managing the finances—condemned in unmeasured terms the conduct of members—said the management was improper, and the expenditure imprudent—that by such management the country had been overwhelmed with a debt which would now require £4,000 a year to pay the interest; and having traced the whole of the financial difficulties to the badness of the present mode of granting the supplies, put the question whether such a wretched system should not be at once abandoned.

Mr. Weldon, to whom certain allusions had been made by Mr. Wilmot, made a very able reply. He maintained that although a member of the Executive Council, he was not bound to Government measures, but in that House would act independently, and advocate what he deemed the interests of his constituency. He denied that the present system was a bad one—maintained that its operation for half a century had been beneficial—showed that the pecuniary difficulties at present existing had arisen from the embarrassed state of trade, which rendered the Province unable at present to collect its debts. He was loudly cheered by the people in the gallery.

Mr. Brown again arose, and briefly warned the Committee not to be misled by the eloquence of Mr. Wilmot. He said that the state of the finances had been fairly reported every Session. That last Session the House had been warned by the finance Committee, not to vote more than the income of the current year; that the House voted £34,000 more than the estimated income, being anxious to continue the road service—that the debts against the Province at present were £93,000, and the demands in its favour £110,000, and therefore there would have been no pressure whatever, had not the commercial troubles presented people from paying their just debts.

Mr. M'Leod examined the despatch at length, and condemned both the Loan and the demand to yield up the right of making the money estimates. He admitted that they had granted too much money, but was sorry to hear members blame one another when it was notorious they were all to blame—the people were to blame for calling so loudly for money for every possible purpose. There was a remedy—let them reform and retrench,—for yielding up to the Executive, the right of managing the people's money, that he never would do, unless he lost his senses—and then the idea of borrowing a large sum was monstrous. It would take the revenue to pay the interest, and then a millstone would be hanged to their necks forever. The national debt of England was terrifying, and nothing could induce him to run the Province yet deeper into difficulty.

Mr. Ed. then moved a resolution, upon which Mr. Hill moved another, and Mr. Fisher, in a very long speech, pointed out all the evils of the present mode—condemned the resolution system which gives the Legislative Council a veto upon every item—explained Lord Durham and Lord Sydenham's policy—defined Responsible Government as set forth in Lord J. Russell's despatch, and having condemned many Provincial transactions, insisted, like Mr. Woodward, on the true Parliamentary mode in all its parts.

Mr. J. M. Wilmot briefly stated his opposition to the present mode. Mr. M'Almon examined the despatch, and referred to the two propositions therein contained. They were called upon to abandon the practice of fifty years, and give the right to the Government which they had exercised all that time;—yes, the Executive would recommend, and the House would divide the sums recommended. Well, suppose the Executive should omit some important matter, what would the House do then? But here was an estimate already sent down, with all the usual appropriations. Yes, yes; that was a key to unlock the outside door, to let in the Loan, and the Board of Works, and all the other matters, which would at least ensure the expending of the money. Her members might laugh, and he would consider what he should say next. It had been said that they were voting in the dark, and these schemes, if once adopted, would bring on a cloud of darkness, through which neither they nor their children would ever see. And then this sinking fund he did not exactly understand—to pay the principal and interest of the Loan was it?—Well, when the Loan was all sunk, he feared the sinking fund would not be sunk so deep but that they would fish it up again, and spend that also. He was therefore opposed to all these untried schemes. The Province, it appeared was rather embarrassed, but at the same time, if the outstanding debts were collected, they could even then meet all the demands.

Mr. Hayward would neither give up the right of originating money grants, nor sanction a Loan. He was sorry to hear members blame each other, when it was evident these members were as much to blame themselves as those they blamed. Large sums had been granted, and very great improvements had been made, and now there would have been no trouble, had not the hardness of the times prevented the Province from collecting its debts. He would advise economy and retrenchment. He pointed out a variety of instances where money would not be needed on the Roads, and expressed his desire to restore to the public the same privileges with which he had been entrusted.

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