

THE CAPITAL MEMORIAL.

THE MEMORIAL of British Columbia Bondholders, and Representatives of Commercial, Banking, Landed, and other Interests in British Columbia, some of whom have resided in the Colony for several years:

The Memorialists beg leave respectfully to refer to the Memorial dated the 20th of April last, which they had the honour of presenting to your Grace on the subject of the Seat of Government; and again to draw your Grace's serious attention to the subject.

I. Petitions were lately presented to the Governor and to the Legislative Council, praying that Victoria be made the Capital and Seat of Government.

1. Copies of these Petitions, as published in the Government Gazette of 24th April, 1867, received since the Memorialists last addressed your Grace, are appended hereto, and marked No. 1.

2. These Petitions, eight in number, express the wishes of Property Owners, Merchants, Traders, Farmers and other Colonists and Residents of Vancouver Island and the Mainland.

3. One of these Petitions from residents, and another from non-resident Property Owners in New Westminster, from which place they ask the Capital to be removed,—both express the wishes of Owners of Property in that place amounting to twenty-five per cent of the assessed value of the whole real property of the town.

4. The Memorialists are informed that if the Petitions from the Interior Districts of the Mainland had not been circulated in the Winter, when the bulk of the Miners, and others subsidiary to the Mining interest were absent on their annual migration from the scenes of their summer and autumn occupations, more persons would have joined in the expression of the same sentiments; and that, for this reason, the signatures are chiefly those of the more constant or settled residents—a fact commended in the Colony as adding weight to these Petitions.

5. The Memorialists, in calling your Grace's attention to the reasons adduced for granting the prayers of these Petitions, would state that the Petitions represent a preponderance of the intelligence and property, and of the commercial and industrial interests of the community of Vancouver Island and the Mainland.

11. The Memorialists have now received Governor Seymour's Message to the Legislative Council—No. II, also appended hereto, and marked No. 2.

12. The Memorialists have also since the presentation of their last Memorial, received Resolutions passed by the Legislative Council, in the same subject, and it may be stated that the official members of the Government Council used with them the same language.

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take, which a short delay and the possession of fuller information might have prevented.

10. The measure which created the Mainland into a Colony, was passed with the best intentions, but on insufficient information at home of the true state and condition of the country to guide the Colonial Minister to a right conclusion; and this measure having been premature, unnecessary, and of a character unsuited to the condition of the Mainland at the time; and the wants of the country not having required a measure of this character since, it is not to be wondered at that its results have been unsatisfactory.

11. A short recital of facts will explain and justify these remarks.

12. The Mainland was established into a separate Colony, on the presumption that it contained a large population which would become settled, that is to say, a population which would remain, more or less permanently, to be governed. This presumption was inaccurate.

13. The fact was, that although on the discovery of Gold on Fraser River, a multitude of Miners and others of all Nationalities, but nearly all foreigners, to the number of upwards of thirty thousand persons, rushed suddenly from the neighboring countries to the British territory (of the Mainland, afterwards named British Columbia) in the summer of 1858; which fact reached the Colonial Office, and no doubt influenced the Minister in his measures, and led him to prepare an Act for the government of a considerable population; yet as winter approached, this multitude left almost as hurriedly as they came.

14. This population, being in excess of the extent of the Gold field discovered, departed as fast as they could find means of transport; and only such as were profitably employed on paying-gold-diggings remained,—a residue amounting to but a tithe of the original number.

15. The exodus had begun, in fact, while the Act of Parliament establishing the Colony was on its way from England. The Miners were on the wing when the Act arrived; and at the time of its proclamation, the bulk of the population had fled; and, in fact, never returned.

16. It is true that next season brought back a certain number of Miners, but what returned and what had remained of the first immigration never amounted to a population sufficient in number, or in variety of occupations, to be capable of supporting, as we shall immediately show, the expensive separate Administration established by the Imperial Government,—an Establishment sufficient for the government of the former number, or even a larger population.

17. In short, the Tax payers were gone, but the expensive system of Government was continued, and had to be provided for by a population too small to support it with ease and good will.

18. Where union of Government was natural, expedient and necessary to the prosperity of both the Island and Mainland, as to concentrate the means and energies of the people instead of dividing them, dissipated money, and for no instance.

19. The union of Government, though desirable, was not expedient, as the Mainland was too distant from the Island to be governed by the same authority.

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21. Consequently the taxes were of necessity levied upon commodities in form of Customs duties, license dues, tolls, and other impost upon the trade of indirect taxation which fell heavily upon the consumers.

22. The chief industry of the country being Mining, and the bulk of the population Miners, on this class fell inevitably the weight of the taxation, as they were the principal consumers,—a burden they complained of as pressing unduly upon a special industry,—and a fact which, added to other causes of discontent, on similar grounds, of late years, did not encourage, but no doubt prevented immigration of this most important class of Settlers.

23. Onerous as was the expense of Government under the peculiar circumstances just stated it was not the only expenditure that had to be provided for by taxation, which as we have shown fell chiefly upon one class.

24. In addition, the attempt to reclaim and improve a wild country like British Columbia from a state of nature,—a very wilderness in fact encumbered with dense forests of enormous trees, and without a single Road, and scarcely a path of communication open,—caused an enormous expenditure, which fell heavily upon a limited population.

25. To this was added the exceptional cost of building extensive Military Residences, and accommodations for Soldiers sent from home, unsolicited, which cost having been incurred, as was believed, for Imperial purposes, was expected to be borne by the Home Government.

26. The taxation imposed, to defray all these objects of expenditure, upon a sparse and poor population, before the Colonists had time to develop the natural resources of the country, did not, as may be supposed, either dispose, or encourage the Colonists to favour the scheme of building a Capital on the Mainland.

27. The unlucky measure that established British Columbia a separate Colony was construed as rendering it necessary that a separate Capital must be built for that Colony.

28. And this caused the costly, and in the case of New Westminster, the abortive attempt to build one of "two rival towns in comparatively close proximity," as Governor Seymour remarks, when one town would have sufficed; for Victoria was already established, and was then, as has ever since continued to be, used practically as the Capital of both Colonies, for which it was and is amply sufficient.

29. The evil of the attempt to build this new Capital was aggravated by two facts.

30. First, by a previous expenditure upon another town, viz. Derby (at Langley) intended for a Capital, but which was abandoned; and, secondly, by the untoward site chosen for New Westminster, as a steep bank traversed by gullies and covered by a forest of gigantic trees,—all which drawbacks involved a large outlay in grading,

levelling, bridging and clearing, to make the place tolerably habitable.

31. This expenditure following close upon the waste of money laid out at Derby, was a heavy drain upon the diminished resources of the Colony, and resulted in two unprofitable investments in a short period,—a loss which New Westminster has not retrieved to the property owners, as the place has never thriven.

32. The importance to your Grace of having correct information on the circumstances which have led to the present position of the country, the Memorialists trust, will excuse them for having ventured to trace the origin of the Colony and of its Capital.

33. They will now advert to another portion of the subject, namely, the RELATIVE CONDITIONS OF THE TWO TOWNS OF VICTORIA AND NEW WESTMINSTER.

34. Governor Seymour's remarks in his Message of 27th March last, hereto appended, No. II, on the question of the Capital, render it necessary to explain to your Grace the relative conditions of the two towns of Victoria on Vancouver Island, and of New Westminster on the Mainland of British Columbia, in order to enable your Grace to come to a right decision on this question.

First, as regards Victoria.

35. Before New Westminster existed, Victoria, situated on the Straits of Juan de Fuca, the highway from the Pacific Ocean to British Columbia, was well advanced.

36. It was the Emporium of Trade, not only for the Island, but for British Columbia also, for which latter purpose, it was well adapted, both by its proximity to Fraser River, and by its being the terminus of Ocean Navigation, beyond which large vessels did not sail.

37. Victoria at this early period concentrated the wealth and commercial enterprise of the entire country, insular and Continental; attracted Settlers of several classes and of different Nationalities who invested large sums of money in the Town and adjoining Agricultural Districts.

38. Victoria at this time possessed all the elements of a rapidly growing, busy, and thriving Town of several thousand inhabitants.

39. It had the advantage of a resident Governor of local knowledge and experience; and of being the Capital of a Colony with a Constitutional Government composed of a Legislature, consisting of an Elective Assembly and of a Nominate Council of Colonists.

40. In short, Victoria was in 1858-59 exactly such a Town as Governor Seymour correctly thinks, the spare resources of the inhabitants (of both the Island and Mainland) should have been concentrated in the early stage of the political existence of this vast and thinly peopled Territory, so as to have made "one town of magnitude and of sufficient importance and attraction, to retain during the Winter the greater part of the unattached population of the Colony."

41. This, indeed, appeared at the time spoken of to be the natural destiny of Victoria, and had the real conditions, and true resources of the Country been known to the Home Government, before the establishment of a separate Colony, the result would have been different.

42. The result would have been different, as the Mainland was too distant from the Island to be governed by the same authority.

43. This advantage, together with the others set forth in our last Memorial to your Grace, and the fact testified to by the Governor himself, in his Speech No. IV, hereto appended, of its continuing to be the chief town "of the united Colony, and where the principal commerce of the Colony is carried on," all conspire to place Victoria the most suitable place now, as it was in 1858 and in 1859, for the Capital,—at all events until the increase of population on the Mainland may need the Capital to be placed far inland.

44. It is natural that to a stranger, looking at a Map of the united Colony, it might seem inconsistent with the fact of the great extent of the Mainland, that the Capital should be on the Island.

45. This objection is, however, equally applicable, on the ground of convenience, to the site of New Westminster which is in the corner of the Mainland, being at the south western extremity of the Mainland; only 12 miles north of the American boundary line (parallel 45).

46. New Westminster is besides farther removed than Victoria from the islands which are dependencies of the present Colony of British Columbia.

47. Admitting that the objection is correct, from a superficial view, yet to one familiar with the positions of the two Towns, and with the true state of the two Countries, the objection loses its force.

48. The facts and circumstances stated in paragraph 5, of our Memorial of 20th April last, and the fact, admitted by Naval Officers, that Esquimaux Harbour is the only convenient and the most suitable Station for Her Majesty's Ships, are reasons that justify the almost universal opinion of the Colonists of both the Island and the Mainland that Victoria is the most suitable place for the Capital.

49. And the Memorialists agree with them, not alone on Colonial, but also on Imperial grounds. The uses and advantages of Victoria for Imperial purposes we have never overlooked.

XI. Secondly, as regards New Westminster, the Memorialists state:

50. New Westminster, from the first, has presented a striking contrast to Victoria.

51. Built almost entirely of Wooden Houses, it has progressed but little in eight years of its existence.

52. Although a vast amount of Public Money has been expended upon and around the place: Although it has had from the period of its foundation the advantages of:

(1) the residence of the Commander, Officers and Corps of Royal Engineers, for whom costly Houses and Barracks were erected;

(2) Victoria business Agencies and connections;

(3) the present Governor's residence and patronage since he came to the Colony;

(4) the residence of the Governor's Staff permanently, and the Judges of the 7th and 8th Divisions of the Court of Appeal, yet with all these benefits and favours New

Westminster has not become a place of residence for Colonists in any number, having at this late day only a few hundred inhabitants. And, notwithstanding it has been the Port of Entry, and has had the Custom House Establishment and Staff, the only commercial character the place has attained is that of a forwarding post to the interior.

53. This would seem to be its natural destiny; and even this subsidiary position is in danger of being invaded by the superior claims of Yale higher up the River, better situated for a forwarding business by land with the Mines.

54. And besides, if the Country ever fills up in the interior, which is the only portion of the Mainland that offers attractions for settlement to any extent, then the chief town will be placed farther inland, where the Governor says, "the centre of population will be found on the eastern side of the Cascade Range."

55. On the other hand, should a Road to the Upper Country be opened from one of the Inlets on the northern coast of the Mainland, as is contemplated, and is the subject of negotiation at present in England and in British Columbia, then it is believed that New Westminster will be practically deserted; as by this new route the tortuous and difficult and inter-holts Navigation of the Fraser River will be avoided, and a shorter and cheaper route from the Coast obtained to the Upper Mining Country.

56. The facts above set forth are confirmed by the present condition of New Westminster, as described by the Solicitor General in the recent Debate in the Legislative Council of British Columbia, at New Westminster, on the Capital question: "Official life is its only hope. For eight years it has attempted to struggle into importance as a town, but has struggled in vain. Enormous sums have been lavished upon it. Houses, wharves, plank-ways erected for no practical end; and, almost at every step, we meet something which shows the sad results of misapplied energy, one grave of great expectations, the monuments of departed hope."

57. That is New Westminster, he asks? It is a Wharf and landing-place on the Fraser River; a Custom-house Station, and a Seat of Government by Proclamation only.

58. The failure of New Westminster is believed to be due:

(1) To the town being in excess of the requirements of the Country;

(2) To the want of attractions for settlers in the neighbourhood; and

(3) To the better situation of Victoria for trade; its better climate, commercial resources, superior means of education, social amenities and public amusements; advantages which attract the people of the Mainland to Victoria; while their absence repels them from New Westminster.

59. This result is just what was predicted of New Westminster, when the unhappy selection of its site was made, subject as it is to such drawbacks as an unequal climate; severe cold and much rain in Winter, heat and the pest of Mosquitoes in Summer, the delays caused by the difficulties of approach, and the interruption of regular communication by the freezing of the river.

60. The failure of the place is a proof of the inability of the attempt to force the growth of a town by artificial means in opposition to the natural conditions of the Country.

61. In detail of facts, expensiveness of the true state of both towns, in addition to the observations hereinbefore made in tracing the origin of the Colony, will not be without some advantage in aiding your Grace to come to a correct decision as to the proper place for the Capital.

62. The Memorialists now beg leave to make a few remarks upon the two prominent objections to the removal of the Capital, in Governor Seymour's Message and Speech.

XIII. In the Message of 27th March, No. II, hereto appended, the Governor alludes to the public offices at New Westminster in terms which do not convey that they are suitable or comfortable; but seems to think, on the ground of economy, that because "there is no intention of erecting" outlay, and "inasmuch as a considerable outlay would be required to make the Government House at Victoria permanently habitable, the retention of the Seat of Government on the bank of the Fraser is to be preferred."

63. As to the public offices at New Westminster, the Memorialists would remark in the first place, (1) that although they cost a vast amount of money at the time they were built, when materials and labour were very high, they are mere rough wooden buildings erected from a superficial view, yet to one familiar with the positions of the two Towns, and with the true state of the two Countries, the objection loses its force.

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61. In detail of facts, expensiveness of the true state of both towns, in addition to the observations hereinbefore made in tracing the origin of the Colony, will not be without some advantage in aiding your Grace to come to a correct decision as to the proper place for the Capital.

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