

the earliest period, to enable you to apply yourselves to the public business which will claim your attention, and to mature those measures that may be called for in the present condition of the Colony.

I have assembled you at an earlier period than that at which the Legislature has been accustomed to be convened, to enable you to continue the Colonial Revenue Act, which will expire on the 31st of this month; and in connection with the subject of the collection of the Revenue, I have to direct your attention to an Imperial Act, received subsequent to the last session of the Amalgamated Assembly of this Colony, which extends complete fiscal authority to the Local Legislature.

The greatly distressed condition of the Trade of this Town and Colony generally, arising out of the train of disasters that afflicted us in the year 1816, was of so desponding a character on my first assumption of the Government, as to diffuse generally, throughout all classes, suffering and privations to an extent and degree hitherto unprecedented in the history of the Colony; and consequently in its effects to impose very serious embarrassments and obligations on the Executive; these were still further enhanced by the additional losses suffered in the failure of the fisheries, and destruction of the potato crop of the following year.

The state of the Colony at the approach of last winter was such as to demand our most anxious care and vigilant attention for the preservation of the very existence of a large portion of the population, and more especially those dwelling in the remote settlements of the Island; and to the attainment of an object of such paramount importance all the resources at the disposal of the government were devoted, and by the blessing of Divine Providence not unsuccessfully; for I am thankful to have it in my power to state that the loss of a single life from destitution was prevented although so large a mass of the population were dependant on the government for their daily subsistence.

The subject that has mainly occupied my attention has been the extension of the field of labour for our increasing population, the fisheries alone being now inadequate for their support; and the promotion of Agriculture appears to me not only the surest but the sole course now remaining for us in the attainment of this end; for the increased cultivation of the soil will not only carry with it the germs of future comfort and happiness to our population, but will directly contribute, as a most powerful auxiliary, to the great staple trade of the Colony—the Fisheries, which first laid the foundation of its commercial greatness, and must ever be the source of its prosperity.