

THE
PARLIAMENTARY REPORTER.

SESSION 1861.

MEETING OF THE LEGISLATURE.

On Thursday, February 21st, 1861, His Excellency Lieutenant Governor Dundas came down to the Council Chamber at 2 o'clock, when he was pleased to open the Legislature with the following

SPEECH:

Mr. President and Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council;

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly;

The period being arrived at which the business of the Legislature is usually resumed, I have called you together, and have much satisfaction in again meeting you, in Assembly, to deliberate on the affairs of this Colony.

Nearly six years have elapsed since a Census of Prince Edward Island was taken. I would, therefore, direct your attention to the propriety of, this year, renewing that Census: more especially as the Imperial Government, having determined on taking one of Great Britain in April next, considers it desirable, that in all the Colonies a similar course should be simultaneously adopted. A Despatch from the Right Honorable the Secretary of State, and Documents on this subject, shall be laid before you.

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly;

The Accounts of the past year, and the Estimates for the present, shall be duly submitted to you. All Financial arrangements, connected with the public service, have been framed with a due regard to economy.

The unusual Expenses of the past year, which were incurred, principally, by the purchase of the Estates of two non-resident Proprietors, are not altogether met by the Revenue.

I would direct your most serious attention to the fact, that the Revenue, as regards the Imports on Spirits, has, in some measure, decreased in the face of increased duties. It is to be feared, that a system of Smuggling extensively prevails—an illicit Traffic as destructive to public morality, as it is injurious to your finances.

The Land Commission, which your Address to Her Majesty procured, has, as you are aware, investigated with the utmost care and diligence those questions submitted to it. The award of the Commissioners, will, I am assured by them, be made as early in the ensuing Summer, as practicable. That a decision so important, and so anxiously looked for by you, should have been delayed, is a subject of regret both to the Commissioners and to myself. Such delay was, however, unavoidable. It has arisen as much from the laborious and responsible character of the task which the Commissioners undertook, as from frequent interruptions;—your own Referee having, in his high official position, other onerous duties to discharge.

Mr. President and Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council;

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly;

A Despatch which I have recently received, acquaints me, that the Colonial Minister gladly acknowledges the promptitude with which the Legislature of this Colony hastened to give effect to what, they supposed, was the desire of Her Majesty's Government, that the award of the Commissioners, when given, be rendered valid and binding. The Colonial Minister did not, however, anticipate, that the Legislature, with this object in view, would have proceeded to pass an Act of Assembly antecedent to the making of the award. As it, therefore, appears to His Grace, the Duke of Newcastle, that such legislation is premature, His Grace does not consider it advisable to submit, at the present moment, this Act for Her Majesty's assent.

You will be gratified to learn, that the purchase of the Selkirk Estates—sanctioned by you last year—has been attended with the most satisfactory results. The great majority of the Tenants on that Property have, in a manner highly creditable to themselves, come forward and paid the deposit of the purchase-money requisite for the redemption of their leaseholds. The large amount of the sum deposited, is an earnest of the self-sustaining character of the transaction.

In consequence of a clause in the Land Purchase Act, restricting the Interest on Debenture Loans to five per cent., it was found impossible to negotiate these, while Treasury Warrants yielded six per cent. I was therefore, compelled, in order to meet our engagements to avail myself of the temporary expedient of issuing Warrants to the amount required. A considerable proportion of these Warrants has been redeemed, and I confidently look for your approval of the course I adopted.

In the absence of all Military Forces, for the protection of the Colony, I have endeavoured to organize, throughout the Island, Volunteer Rifle and Artillery Companies. My efforts have been seconded, in a praiseworthy manner, by numbers of spirited young men, who have enrolled themselves in these corps. I trust, that a patriotic feeling, similar to what prevails at home, and in the adjacent Provinces, will prompt you, liberally, to support the movement, and enable me to complete the efficiency of these Volunteers. As the present Militia Law is not applicable to them, I would direct your attention to the necessity of legislating in reference to this valuable acquisition to our Military Forces.

The past year will be long remembered, as that in which our Queen sent her eldest Son to visit Her North American subjects. In your reception of the Prince of Wales, you testified an attachment to Her Throne as gratifying to His Royal Highness, as it was characteristic of the