

LOWER CANADA, NOVA SCOTIA, &c.

— No. 1. —

COPY of a Circular DESPATCH addressed to the Governors of Lower Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, by Viscount *Goderich*, dated Downing-street, 11 December 1831.

Sir,

MY attention has been lately particularly called to the inconvenience which in the present year has been found to arise from the want of some efficient means of regulating and controlling the emigration which has taken place from this country to the North American Colonies. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Passengers' Act, it has been found that many vessels have been crowded to such a degree as to expose to much danger the health of the emigrants, and even to create an alarm lest they should carry infection to the ports where they have been disembarked.

Great complaints have also been made of the various kinds of imposition to which unguarded and ignorant persons proceeding to America have been subjected: some have been carried, not to their intended place of destination, but to different and to distant ports; others have been induced, by false promises of the early departure of the vessels in which they have taken their passages, to leave their homes for the port of embarkation long before the ships have been ready to receive them, and have in consequence frequently been placed in a situation of great distress; while others again have been deceived as to the probable length of the voyage, and consequently as to the necessary stock of provisions, that an unfair profit might be made from the supply of their wants during the latter part of the passage. The arrival also of great numbers of emigrants at once at the same port has, in some instances, been the cause of much suffering to themselves, and of much inconvenience to the inhabitants of the place where they have been landed; at Quebec more especially this has been found a most serious evil. It has been a subject of my most anxious consideration to discover some means of obviating the various causes of complaint which I have enumerated; the result has been, that I am impressed with a belief that this can only be accomplished by giving a considerable discretionary power to the Executive Government; any positive law, defining beforehand what is to be required of the masters of vessels carrying out emigrants, would not be framed without much difficulty, and would always be liable to evasion, while by appealing to their pecuniary interest, by making misconduct no longer answer as a matter of profit, it may, I think, be effectually prevented. In order to do this, and at the same time to raise a fund applicable to the expense of receiving and forwarding emigrants to the places of their destination, it appears to me that a measure of the kind pointed out in my confidential circular of the 11th September, might be adopted with advantage; I therefore wish you to suggest to the Provincial Legislature the propriety of levying a small tax, payable by the master of the ship, upon all emigrants on their arrival in the colony, and of providing that this tax shall be doubled in respect of those who shall have been embarked without the sanction of the Government, signified by a certificate from one of the officers of customs at the port of clearance. The adoption of this measure would give to His Majesty's Government the power which it appears so desirable that they should possess, of controlling and directing the tide of emigration; it would enable them in a great measure to distribute the arrivals of emigrants at different ports at convenient periods, and to secure their proper treatment by enforcing all the regulations which might be found necessary for that purpose. The proceeds of the tax would also be of much service in supporting hospitals in the ports where emigrants arrive (thus relieving the inhabitants from the burthen to which they are now exposed), and in defraying other necessary expenses. For these reasons I would strongly