

*Mr. Speaker, Honourable Gentlemen, and Gentlemen :—*

Speech.

As the representative of our gracious Sovereign it has been my duty to co-operate with you in endeavouring to render a somewhat novel form of constitution the medium of conferring as large an amount of benefit as possible upon the inhabitants of Newfoundland; and I may be permitted to express a doubt whether it would have been in our power to have carried the beneficent wishes of our Sovereign more fully into effect through any other form of Government than that under which we have been called upon to act together for the last four years. This, however, is a question upon which different opinions will doubtless be entertained, and upon which it is not my province to decide; but in justice to those of whom this Amalgamated Assembly has been composed, I feel myself called upon to declare my conviction that so much of good feeling has been evinced, and so unequivocal has been the desire manifested to act together for the public good, that I am unable to entertain any apprehension as to the successful working of any form of constitution which the Sovereign by the advice of her Majesty's government, and of the Imperial Parliament, may see fit to confer upon this ancient, loyal, and valuable appendage of the British Crown.

Upon this subject it has been my pleasing duty to represent to the Queen's Government the wishes which I believe to be very generally entertained throughout the colony for a return to the usual form of colonial representative government, and I have no reason to anticipate any hesitation on their part in recognising the claims which her Majesty's loyal subjects in this Island have acquired to this mark of her Majesty's gracious favour, or any other causes of delay in a prompt compliance with their wishes than such as are wholly irrespective of any objection to meet them. But notwithstanding this conviction, I do not the less earnestly urge upon you the expediency of doing what may depend upon you to guard the colony against the possibility of the recurrence, for however short a period, of the loss and inconvenience to which it was subjected by the expiration, in 1842, of the act for raising a revenue, by the introduction into that of the present session of a clause extending its provisions to the end of the next ensuing session of the General Assembly.

From the result of the census which has recently been taken under the provision of the act passed for that purpose during the last session, and of which the returns will be laid before you, it will be seen that the population of the Island has increased in the ratio of nearly one-third since 1836—a fact which would appear to suggest the expediency of a corresponding augmentation in the number of representative members;—accordingly, bearing in mind the principle generally recognised throughout the representative colonies of the empire, of one member for every four thousand persons, I have recommended that the number of members of the House of Assembly shall be raised to twenty-five. This increase will render necessary a revision with a view to an equitable sub-division of existing electoral districts; a subject which is now engaging the attention of the executive government.