

— No. 10. —

(No. 19.)

N. 10.
Governor Douglas
to Right Hon. H.
Labouchere, M. P.,
20 Aug. 1856.

EXTRACT of DESPATCH from Governor Douglas to the Right Honourable
H. Labouchere, M. P.; dated Victoria, Vancouver's Island, 20 August
1856.

(Received, 28 October 1856.)

(Answered, No. 19, 10 November 1856, page 5.)

THE House of Assembly was opened on the 12th of the present month. The affair passed off quietly, and did not appear to excite much interest among the lower orders.

I herewith forward a copy of my address to the Assembly on that occasion, which I can only hope will meet with your approbation. As mentioned in one of my previous communications, the House of Assembly consists of seven members, viz.,

John Muir	-	-	-	-	-	-	Soke District.
John S. Helmcken	}	-	-	-	-	-	Esquimalt District.
Thomas Skinner	}	-	-	-	-	-	
J. D. Pemberton	}	-	-	-	-	-	Victoria District.
James Yates	}	-	-	-	-	-	
E. E. Langford	}	-	-	-	-	-	Nanaimo District.
John F. Kennedy	-	-	-	-	-	-	

J. S. Helmcken has been elected Speaker of the House, but nothing further has been done; in consequence of objections having been raised to the validity of the election in one instance, and to the property qualification in two cases, making three out of the seven members against whose return petitions have been sent in, leaving only the Speaker and three members at liberty to act, and that number is insufficient to form a committee of inquiry, the House, therefore, hardly know how to get over the difficulty. One of the petitions is evidently got up for mere party purposes, and if that were withdrawn, there would be four members and the Speaker, who might proceed to regulate the affairs of the House. In the territorial governments of the United States, the practice in such cases is, for the governor to grant certificates of qualification to a majority of the members, who then proceed to constitute the House, but I am not certain if such a course would be in harmony with English law; nevertheless, if the House should appeal to me on the subject, I will have recourse to that expedient.

Encl. in No. 10.

Enclosure in No. 10.

The Governor's Address on opening the General Assembly at *Victoria*,
Tuesday, 12 August 1856.

Gentlemen of the Legislative Council, and of the House of Assembly.

I congratulate you most sincerely on this memorable occasion; the meeting in full convention of the General Assembly of Vancouver's Island, an event fraught with consequences of the utmost importance to its present and future inhabitants; and remarkable as the first instance of representative institutions being granted in the infancy of a British colony.

The history and actual position of this colony are marked by many other remarkable circumstances. Called into existence by an Act of the Supreme Government, immediately after the discovery of gold in California, it has maintained an arduous and incessant struggle with the disorganising effects on labour of that discovery. Remote from every other British settlement, with its commerce trammelled, and met by restrictive duties on every side, its trade and resources remain undeveloped.

Self-supporting, and defraying all the expenses of its own Government, it presents a striking contrast to every other colony in the British empire, and like the native pines of its storm-beaten promontories, it has acquired a slow but hardy growth.

Its future progress must, under Providence, in a great measure depend, on the intelligence, industry, and enterprise of its inhabitants, and upon the legislative wisdom of this Assembly.

Gentlemen, I look forward with confidence and satisfaction to the aid and support which the executive power may in future expect to derive from your local experience and knowledge of the wishes of the people, and the wants of the country. I feel assured that, as public men, holding a solemn and momentous trust, you will, as a governing principle, strive with one accord to promote the true and substantial interests of the country; and

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