

4111
Box 29

INFORMATION FOR THE PEOPLE. THE DESPATCHES.

Mr. G. R. Young's Speech.

[The following Speech was delivered by Mr. G. R. Young, in the House of Assembly, on the 15th February, 1845:]

Mr. G. R. Young rose, and said:—I have listened, Mr. Chairman, with the utmost patience, to the address of the Hon. Member for the County of Colchester; and am forced to confess, that his whole line of argument appears to me incomprehensible. First, argued the Hon. gentleman, Lord Sydenham did not grant to this Province the Responsible System, in its plenitude and vigour. Next, that the distinctions of Party were here unknown; and, of course, that Parties did not exist. And after maintaining these two strange and anomalous positions, he wound up by asserting that the present Administration were actually working out the Responsible System. We had, therefore, according to his argument, a system and no-system: we had the benefit of Responsibility, although the Responsible System had not been yielded to us; and again, in opposition to the Hon. gentleman, Lord Stanley had declared that Responsible Government was synonymous with Party Government—and, that without Party, Responsibility could not exist. I leave the Hon. gentleman to reconcile these strange and conflicting positions; and proceed to ask the attention of the Committee to the real points which have been submitted for consideration.

And first, let me here remark, that we come to the discussion of these Constitutional questions, in very different temper, and under a different aspect of things, than they were approached in last Session. When the House then met, whatever opinions were entertained by Members of the Opposition upon the Constitutional virtue of Party Govt., all were willing to yield what was then called an abstract opinion; and to give their support to a Coalition—provided it were constructed upon fair and equal terms. The Leaders, upon both sides, were disposed to extend to each other the language of courteous observance. As for the Lieutenant Governor, he was surrounded by every guard which the Constitution confers; and treated with the sacred respect due to the Representative of Her Gracious Majesty—so long as the Prerogative is exercised for its necessary and useful functions. How different, sir, the circumstances now! Party Government, then denounced and proscribed, is now openly advocated by the Opposition, and even the supporters of the Government admit, that it is not only indispensable, but beneficial. *Fierce—aye, indecent language, is cast from one side of the House to the other; and as for the Lieutenant Governor—alas! how fallen!*—the sanctity of his position has been broken down; and, as I contend, entirely by the indiscretion of those whose duty it was to shield and defend it. Who, sir, is to blame for this singular and lamentable change? I admit that I approach this question under impressions of a grave and anxious responsibility—that the tone of thought is sober; and yet my feelings are indignant. Sir, opinions have been incautiously broached, and assertions made in this Debate—which, if true, renders all our past struggles a vain and shadowy dream. My Hon. Colleague from Pictou has

said, that all our past changes have produced no fruits comparable to those of the good old times—that the errors and foibles of the Liberal Party were written upon the mill tops, as clear as a sun beam. The Hon. and learned Member for Hants has tauntingly spoken of the different names, and, as he said, the different and irreconcilable constructions, given to what is called Responsible Government. In his criticism upon the Hon. Speaker's speech, at the Toronto Dinner, he would not venture to decide whether it could be compared to a virgin or a harlot, a blushing bride or an old worn out hag; and a new position had been taken—that we had not in this Province, and could not have, the Responsibility conferred on Canada, and reduced there to practical operation. I mean, Mr. Chairman, as a Member of the Opposition, to inquire to-day whether those assertions are true or false—to state the principles which we are ready to defend—to lay down our Constitutional positions—to ask the most scrupulous enquiry: for if the principles themselves will not bear the most rigorous and searching examination, the Country have a right to say that we are seeking their support for that which is not tangible—for that which is delusive.

Sir, there are here three questions before the Committee—first, were the ex-Councillors justified in refusing the offers made of returning to the Council in February and July? second, can the Government defend themselves upon sound principles of Constitutional law, for remaining, as they have done, in their incomplete and confessedly weak position? and third, has their policy during the past year, confirmed the pledges which they made, and followed out that attractive but delusive theory so peculiarly their own, of *doing justice to all parties*? I shall treat these three questions in order; and as to the first, let me say, that I am prepared to defend the conduct of the ex-Councillors in rejecting the offer in February, upon four grounds: The Government party proposed to receive the three ex-Councillors back, with the addition of a member from the Catholic body, giving four seats to our party, and retaining six to the Conservatives. They were justified in rejecting it, because Mr Almon was to remain; and if, after retiring on account of his being nominated, they had then gone back, their reputation would have been forever damned as public men. But it is apparent, from the note read by Mr Howe, and which he intended for the eye of H's Excellency, that they could not have gone back with the cordial support of their party, because a portion of them had no confidence in the hon Mr Stewart as a public man, and refused to give their sanction to any Council of which he was to be a member. But considering the state of public feeling, and the balance of the two parties in the House, they did not consider that a Council so constructed, was a fair representation of their influence. One hon Member, in the course of this debate, has tauntingly said, that we are an ungracious party, because we do not