

The Weekly British Colonist.

Tuesday, February 20, 1866

A CONVENIENT "SUPPLY."

The report of the discussion given elsewhere on the British Columbia estimates, furnishes another of the innumerable arguments for a sweeping change in the Government of the neighboring colony.

In sober language, we would ask Messrs Homer, Walkem, Holbrook and Smith if they have any respect for themselves and the people of British Columbia?

curiosity from Yale and Lytton we leave to his grateful constituents—whether it would not be a wiser course, a more patriotic and less degrading course, to retire in a body from the Council Hall and appeal in a proper shape to Her Majesty's Government.

A MODEL PARLIAMENTARY SPEECH.

NOODLE'S ORATION.

The following inimitable political speech, which we take from Sidney Smith's Wit and Wisdom, is an apt illustration of the fallacious arguments occasionally adopted by the fossilized specimens in both branches of our Legislature as well as by some scribblers and public speakers.

most excellent, let each man reform himself let him look at home, he will find there enough to do, without looking abroad, and aiming at what is out of his power.

The British Columbian Council.

INTERESTING DEBATE ON SUPPLIES.

ATTEMPT TO RETRENCH.

We take the following interesting report of the proceedings in the British Columbian Council on supplies from the Columbian of Wednesday:

THE ESTIMATES.

The House went into Committee of Supply, hon. Mr. O'Reilly in the Chair. The various items set down for the Governor's department were passed unanimously.

The Legislative Council.—The item of \$970, for salary of the Clerk of the Legislative Council was objected to by hon. Mr. Holbrook, who moved that it be reduced to one-half.

The next item, \$1,250, for "stationery, fuel, light, &c." elicited some discussion, and the hon. the Acting Colonial Secretary explained that there was a Messenger in it, when the item passed.

Colonial Secretary's Department.—Upon the item of \$3,380, as salary of Colonial Secretary being read, the hon. Mr. Homer offered the following resolution: "That the Secretary of State for the Colonies be recommended to reduce the salaries of the Colonial Secretary, the Chief Commissioner, and the Collector of Customs to \$3,000 each."

The hon. Mr. Cornwall spoke against the resolution, which was lost, Messrs. Homer, Holbrook, Walkem and Smith only voting for it.

The items for clerks were passed; some objection to the items for messengers were raised, but the item passed without a division.

PRINTING BRANCH.—Upon the item of \$4,268 for salaries of printers being put to the House, hon. Mr. Walkem rose and enquired whether the Government had taken any steps to ascertain whether the printing could be done for less by private enterprise.

The hon. the acting Colonial Secretary replied that judging from the amount paid in the neighboring colony, the printing was being done very much cheaper here.

Hon. Mr. Holbrook said it was time for the elected members to speak out upon this subject. He did not believe in a Government entering into competition with private enterprise. He supposed we should next hear of the Government opening a store in the Big Bend country to supply the miners with beans.

Hon. Mr. Smith also spoke in favor of throwing the Government printing open to legitimate competition. It was their duty to encourage private enterprise in the colony, rather than crush it.

Hon. Mr. Cornwall spoke in favor of maintaining the Government printing establishment. He said the same objections had been raised last year, when the Colonial Secretary placed statistical information before the House, proving that the printing for this colony was done for very much less than in the neighboring colony, and much cheaper than it could be done by private enterprise.

Hon. Mr. Homer said he did not see how it was possible for the Government to do the work as economically as it could be done by private parties. The item was carried by the usual majority.

Treasurer's Department.—Hon. Mr. Homer moved the following resolution: "That the Secretary of State for the Colonies be recommended to amalgamate the office of Treasurer with that of Collector of Customs."

the greatest satisfaction. He alluded to the way the Imperial Government had treated this colony in respect to the Indian war and the camp buildings; and hon. members should not be deterred, from any supposed Imperial disinclination, to abolish or amalgamate offices of their own creation, from doing their duty to the country.

Hon. Mr. Smith also spoke in favor of the resolution, giving it as his conviction that the public interests would not suffer by the proposed arrangement, which would effect a considerable saving.

The Hon. the Acting Colonial Secretary spoke against the measure. The House had no power to meddle with Imperial appointments. This being a Crown Colony we must receive the officers sent out to us and pay the salaries attached to these offices.

Hon. Mr. Walkem, with some warmth, said that if such were the case the Legislature was a perfect farce. Here the taxpayer was asking to have an incubus removed, and if the explanations given by the Government be correct, they have no power whatever.

Hon. Mr. Cornwall spoke in opposition to the resolution. He said that as he appeared to be in opposition to the other elected members it might probably be as well that he should state his views upon the subject of retrenchment. Certain hon. members were following in the wake of the neighboring colony in its mad career of retrenchment.

The Hon. the Treasurer, who exhibited more nervousness than dignity and decorum during the foregoing discussion, rose and addressed the House at considerable length, but as his remarks were nothing more than an ill-timed and egotistical attempt to impress the House with the onerous character of the duties of his office, it will be unnecessary to occupy room with a report of what he said.

Hon. Mr. Walkem replied that however little he might know about the routine of the office, the fact that an hon. member had officiously filled the position of Chief Inspector of Police, County Court Judge, Acting Chief Commissioner and Treasurer, at one and the same time, would justify him in believing that the hon. Collector of Customs could discharge the functions of Treasurer in addition to those of his own department.

The motion was lost and the original item carried by the usual majority, the Hon. Mr. Cornwall voting with the Government, and the Hon. Treasurer voting upon his own salary.

Assay and Refinery Department.—The item for this establishment was carried with very little discussion.

Auditor-General's Department.—The appropriation for this department elicited no discussion whatever.

Chief Commissioner, &c.—The various items of this department were discussed and passed with little opposition.

Customs Department.—The appropriation for this department passed without opposition.

Registrar-General's Department.—The item passed without division.

Harbormaster's Department.—Hon. Mr. Holbrook asked whether the duties of the Revenue Officer could not be discharged by the Revenue Officer.

The hon. Attorney-General strongly opposed any such amalgamation. The extraordinary services rendered by the Harbormaster last year in superintending the Light Ship, &c., would have cost more than his year's salary; and now that the duties of the office had been rendered more important by placing the light vessel at the sand-head, it was no time to talk about dispensing with the services of that efficient officer. Item passed.

Post Office Department.—Hon. Mr. Walkem moved that the office of Postmaster-General and that of Registrar General be amalgamated. He was well assured that the very efficient Registrar-General could easily fill both offices.

The motion was lost and the item carried upon the usual division—No, we are wrong, Mr. Cornwall voted this once with the retrenchers!!!

Some discussion arose upon the item \$970 for Deputy Postmaster on Williams Creek, when it was explained by the hon. Acting Colonial Secretary that it was for half salary to that officer who was going to England on leave.

Here ended part first of the annual farce entitled "VOTING THE SUPPLIES."

The House adjourned till Tuesday at 2 o'clock.

Tuesday's Proceedings.

The curtain rose at 2 o'clock (the actors the same as on the previous day) when the second part of the farce was enacted, commencing with the judicial establishments.

Supreme Court.—Items passed without a division.

The hon. Messrs. Homer and Holbrook thought it was rather premature to appoint so many Commissioners to that district; for although they had unlimited confidence in the richness of these mines, yet they were of opinion that two Commissioners would be able to do the work.

Hon. Mr. Cornwall spoke in favor of the appointment.

The hon. the Acting Colonial Secretary spoke very warmly and very eloquently in defence of the appointment, telling the House that however necessary retrenchment might be, it would be beginning at the wrong end to reduce the staff of Gold Commissioners.

[Here an impertinent fellow at our elbow asked where the hon. gentleman would have retrenchment begin, seeing he had so stoutly and so irresistibly fought against retrenchment everywhere else.] He alluded to the injurious effect it would have both as regards the maintenance of law and the protection of revenue.

Hon. Mr. Homer objected to the allowances set down in the estimates. He thought the salaries were ample without any allowances, and moved that they be struck out: Resolution lost upon the usual division.

Cariboo East.—Items passed without discussion.

Cariboo West.—Hon. Mr. Walkem moved that the office of Gold Commissioner be abolished, as it was entirely uncalled for. The people residing there chiefly traders and agriculturists, and by appointing a respectable merchant to act as magistrate, and having the Gold Commissioner for Cariboo East hold court at Quesnelmouth periodically, the necessities of the district would be met.

Hon. Mr. Holbrook supported the motion. He said the road through to Williams creek was completed, and Quesnelmouth would cease to be more than a mere wayside stopping place.

The hon. the Acting Colonial Secretary strongly opposed the resolution. The district was a large and important one, in which much crime had been committed, and public interests would suffer most materially by the abolition.

The hon. Attorney General and Mr. Smith spoke against the resolution.

The hon. Mr. Homer enquired how it was that so very important a district had managed to get on six months without a magistrate. Resolution lost and original item passed.

Here Mr. Walkem suggested that it would be as well to pass the estimates in a lump, as any attempt at revision was utterly futile.

Hope, Yale and Lytton District.—Hon. Mr. Cornwall objected to abolishing the Lytton station, hon. Mr. Holbrook objecting to the Toll Collector at Yale, as he thought there were enough of constables in the list to do the duty. Objections overruled and items passed.

Lillooet.—Items passed without opposition.

The next item which evoked any discussion of importance was that of \$3500 for repairs of government buildings here and in the interior, to which the hon. Mr. Homer objected. He thought that inasmuch as the colony had been compelled to pay for the buildings at the camp, the best course was to sell them for what they would bring, and erect proper buildings in the city. It was most unwise to throw away large sums every year in repairing these worthless buildings.

Hon. Mr. Holbrook spoke on the same side. He thought the convenience of the public ought to be considered, as well as that of the officials, and the Camp was certainly not the proper place for the public offices.

Hon. Attorney General agreed with hon. members as to the desirability of concentrating the offices; but as we had these buildings it might be as well to use them a while longer.

The hon. the Acting Colonial Secretary said he agreed with much that had been said, but he thought it would be better not to attempt the erection of public buildings until we are in a position to erect good ones. Item passed.

All the remaining items in the Estimates were passed, none of them causing any discussion excepting the one of \$1000 for repairs and improvements to streets in New Westminster.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THURSDAY, Feb. 16th, 1866.

Council met at 2:30 p.m. Present.—The Hon. Colonial Secretary (presiding), the Hon. Attorney-General, and Hons. Messrs. Rhodes and Fraser.

The Council went into Committee of the Whole upon a bill relating to the law of evidence, Hon. Mr. Rhodes in the chair. The bill was reported as complete, and is entitled "The Native Evidence Act."

A bill to amend the Indian Liquor Act, 1860, was also committed, the Hon. Mr. Rhodes in the chair.

This bill is somewhat similar to the present Act, but more stringent in its character. Committed reported progress, and the Council adjourned.

Friday, February 16th, 1866.

Council met at 2:30, p.m. Present.—The Hon. Colonial Secretary, (President); the Hons. Attorney General and Treasurer, and the Hons. H. Rhodes and Donald Fraser.

The bill to amend the law of evidence, was committed, the Hon. H. Rhodes in the chair, and passed the third reading. It is entitled "The Native Evidence Act, 1866."

INDIAN LIQUOR BILL.

The Council went into Committee on the bill to amend the Indian Liquor Act of 1860, the Hon. H. Rhodes in the chair.

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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

THURSDAY, Feb. 16th, 1866.

House met at 1:15 p.m.—The Speaker in the Chair. Members present—Messrs. Cosmos, Powell, McClure, Trimble, Cochrane, Duncan, Dennes.

PASSPORTS.

Mr. Duncan's motion of an address of Excellency for a return of passports in 1865 was passed.

His impression was that the motion received under this head belonged to the royal revenue.

BREACH OF PRIVILEGE.

Mr. Dennes rose to a question of privilege held in his hand a copy of the Chronicle containing a statement that a bankrupt legislator; he denied the statement in toto, and he called upon the House to support its dignity. The papers had a long time permitted to state their censoring this House that were perfectly true, and it was time it should be moved that David W. Higgins and H. Long be required to attend before this House on Friday next at three for a gross breach of privilege.

Dr. Powell moved that it be referred to a committee of privilege.

Mr. Dennes opposed the amendment was a gross breach of privilege on a motion of the House.

Dr. Dickson carried Dr. Powell's which was seconded; Mr. Dennes' motion being seconded.

CLERK OF WRITS AND REGISTRAR.

Mr. Dennes gave notice that he should Monday next move for copy of the names of Richard Woods as Clerk of Court and copy of appointment, if any, Richard Woods as Acting Registrar Supreme Court, with amount of salary received by him for said duties.

WAYS AND MEANS.

The House went into Committee of the Whole on the bill.

TAX ON PACKAGES.

Mr. Duncan introduced his bill for a tax of 25 cents on imported packages. Dr. Dickson moved that the Council rise.

Mr. Duncan said the motion was in fact that the Committee should not discuss the measure, but it was out of order as the man must rise. He made a long speech in support of the scheme as a simple means of providing for a deficit in the revenue, and but a slight trespass on the port, while he denounced the other proposed as direct, expensive, illusory and dangerous, and exerted all his eloquence in pointing out the fallacy of maintaining the free port until union be accomplished when it was so self-evident to all that the free port was not adapted to the wants of the colony and must be abolished.

Mr. McClure said the House would discuss this question only if he had a hash of all the arguments brought forward last session when the union and tariff question was being discussed. No one doubts the benefits that would result from the union of the colonies, but it was most impolitic just now to make any change in the fiscal policy of the colony; and this applied with equal force to the proposition of his hon. colleague (Powell) to interfere with the system of duties.

Dr. Dickson moved that the bill be laid on the table for six months.

Mr. DeCosmos agreed with his hon. colleague (Mr. McClure) in making any changes in the machinery of government possible. What the interests of the colony called for was the abolition of those posts that were peculiarly obnoxious.

The Chairman said if the motion of the House be carried without leave to the proposition of his hon. colleague (Powell) to interfere with the system of duties.

Dr. Dickson obtained leave to withdraw his motion.

Several clauses of the bill were then considered and thrown out, and on motion Dr. Powell the committee reported progress.

REAL ESTATE TAX.

Mr. DeCosmos' scheme for raising a revenue was then considered.

Dr. Powell said as an amendment to motion to abolish the real estate tax would move the abolition of the Harbor Dues Act. His reasons for bringing forward the amendment was that he considered the estate tax as a most necessary source of revenue, and he did not think the hon. member for the city could find a precedent anywhere for the city away with this which would simply be the means of obliging gentlemen to walk about and speculate in real estate. There was no objection to the principle of the tax by the majority of the tax payers. After entering upon a few statistics on the items of revenue, he moved that the Harbor Dues Act be a law instead of the real estate tax.

Mr. McClure said no one attempted to do the principle of taxing real estate; what framers of the proposition had in view was to divide the Island into municipalities and make the land pay for the local improvements. This would reduce the expenses of the general Government if properly managed \$50,000 at the outside, and it would be only means of making the unimproving speculator pay his proper quota. So far the motion of his hon. colleague (Dr. Powell) was concerned, it was clearly a blind supposition that it would give anything like relief which the abolition of the tax on real estate would afford. The former was in fact and scarcely felt by the inhabitants while the latter was the most obnoxious tax in the country, whether in the manner of assessment or collecting. It would lead to endless litigation and confusion.

Dr. Powell objected to anticipating municipal taxes, although he had seen too many of the workings of municipal institutions object to them when they came up.

Dr. Tolmie also thought that the House should deal with what was before it, and condemned the abolition of the real estate tax, which he looked upon as a very necessary measure.