

No. 5.
Despatch from
Lord Glenelg to
Sir H. B. Head,
5 December 1835.

occasion, that experience would seem to prove that the administration of public affairs in Canada is by no means exempt from the control of a practical responsibility. To His Majesty and to Parliament the governor of Upper Canada is at all times most fully responsible for his official acts. That this responsibility is not merely nominal, but that His Majesty feels the most lively interest in the welfare of His Canadian subjects, and is ever anxious to devote a patient and laborious attention to any representations which they may address to Him, either through their representatives or as individuals, is proved not only by the whole tenor of the correspondence of my predecessors in this office, but by the despatch which I am now addressing to you. That the Imperial Parliament is not disposed to receive with inattention the representations of their Canadian fellow-subjects, is attested by the labours of the Committees which have been appointed by the House of Commons during the last few years to inquire into matters relating to those provinces.

It is the duty of the lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada to vindicate to the King and to Parliament every act of his administration. In the event of any representations being addressed to His Majesty upon the subject of your official conduct, you will have the highest possible claim to a favourable construction; but the presumptions which may reasonably be formed in your behalf will never supersede a close examination how far they coincide with the real facts of each particular case which may be brought under discussion.

This responsibility to His Majesty and to Parliament is second to none which can be imposed on a public man, and it is one which it is in the power of the House of Assembly at any time, by address or petition, to bring into active operation.

I further unreservedly acknowledge that the principle of effective responsibility should pervade every department of your government; and for this reason, if for no other, I should hold that every public officer should depend on His Majesty's pleasure for the tenure of his office. If the head of any department should place himself in decided opposition to your policy, whether that opposition be avowed or latent, it will be his duty to resign his office into your hands, because the system of government cannot proceed with safety on any other principle than that of the cordial co-operation of its various members in the same general plans of promoting the public good. The inferior members of the different offices should consider neutrality on this great litigated question of provincial policy as at once their duty and their privilege. Diligently obeying all the lawful commands of their superiors, they will be exempted from censure if the course which they have been directed to pursue should issue in any unfortunate results.

Some of the members of the local government will also occasionally be representatives of the people in the Assembly, or will hold seats in the Legislative Council. As members of the local legislature they will of course act with fidelity to the public, advocating and supporting no measures which, upon a large view of the general interest, they shall not think it incumbent on them to advance. But if any such person shall find himself compelled by his sense of duty to counteract the policy pursued by you as head of the government, it must be distinctly understood that the immediate resignation of his office is expected of him; and that, failing such a resignation, he must, as a general rule, be suspended from it. Unless this course be pursued, it would be impossible to rescue the head of the government from the imputation of insincerity, or to conduct the administration of public affairs with the necessary firmness and decision.

I need hardly say, that in the event of any public officer being urged into a resignation of his place by his inability to give a conscientious support to his official superior, the merits of the question would undergo an investigation of more than common exactness by His Majesty's Ministers, and that His Majesty's decision would be pronounced with a perfect impartiality towards those who had the honour to serve him in the province, however high or however subordinate might be their respective stations.

By a steadfast adherence to these rules, I trust that an effective system of responsibility would be established throughout the whole body of public officers in Upper Canada, from the highest to the lowest, without the introduction of any new and hazardous schemes; and without recourse to any system, of which the prudence and safety have not been sufficiently ascertained by a long course of practical experience.

15. I next advert to two subjects of far more importance than any of those to which