

No. 25.

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Copy of a Despatch from Lieutenant General Sir James Kempt to Secretary Sir George Murray.

SIR,

Castle of St. Lewis, Quebec, 3d January 1830.

THE great diversity of opinion which prevails in this province on almost every subject of political interest, and the difficulty which I have experienced since my assumption of the Government in obtaining correct information upon several important topics to which you called my attention in your Despatch of the 29th September 1828, have prevented my replying, at an earlier period, to that part of it in which you require me to afford you information respecting the Legislative and Executive Council.

You are pleased, in that Despatch, to desire me to report to you, whether it would be expedient to make any alteration in the general constitution of these bodies, and especially how far it would be desirable to introduce a larger proportion of members not holding office at the pleasure of the Crown; and if it should be considered desirable, how far it may be practicable to find a sufficient number of persons of respectability of this description.

The Paper, No. 1, which I have the honour herewith to transmit to you, will afford you, I trust, all the information which you desire in respect to the present composition of the Legislative and Executive Councils.

The former consists, as you will observe, of twenty-three members, and of these twelve hold offices under the Crown; seven are large landed proprietors unconnected with the Government; three are merchants, also unconnected with the Government; and one member has been absent from the province for several years; sixteen of the number are Protestants, and seven are Roman Catholics; eight are natives of the province, and fifteen are natives of the United Kingdom, or born in other Countries.

The Executive Council consists at present of nine members, of whom only one is entirely unconnected with the Government; two are natives of the Canadas, and all are Protestants except one Roman Catholic member.

After giving the subject my best consideration, I confess that I am not at present prepared to point out any material alteration in the general constitution of either of the Councils which it will be expedient to make; but I am humbly of opinion, that it will be very desirable to introduce, by degrees, a larger proportion of members not holding offices at the pleasure of the Crown into the Legislative Council, and that the Judges (with the exception of the Chief Justice of the Province) should not be in future appointed to seats in either of these bodies. I am further disposed to think that it will be expedient to appoint one or two of the most distinguished members of the House of Assembly to the Executive Council, with the view of giving the popular branch of the legislature confidence in the local government, an object, it appears to me, of the greatest importance to the peace, prosperity, and happiness of the colony.

The three gentlemen that I have recently had the honour of recommending to His Majesty for seats in the Legislative Council are large landed proprietors in the province, and persons of the greatest respectability; and although it would certainly be exceedingly difficult to select any great number of persons of the same description, yet a sufficient number, I should hope, may be found to fill the vacancies that may occur in either of the Councils.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most humble obedient Servant,

(Signed)

JAMES KEMPT.

The Right Hon. Sir Geo. Murray, G. C. B.
&c. &c. &c.