

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS.

[Specially Reported for the British Colonist.]

Friday's Sitting.

MONDAY, Feb. 22, 1867.

Council met at 1 p. m. Present—Hons. Crease, Hamly, Brew, Ball, Smith, Barnard, Robson, Young, Macdonald, Walkem, Stamp, Helmecken, DeCosmos, Southgate, Pemberton, Cox, Sanders, O'Reilly and Trutch.

TRADES LICENSE BILL.

On motion of Hon Crease this bill was postponed one week, so as to come up after the report of committee of supply.

VICTORIA INCORPORATION BILL.

Hon Crease moved second reading of this bill, which was only the old Act with such amendments as would make it workable. Hon members were familiar with the various stages through which the bill had passed and the failures that impeded its progress. The chief difficulty was that the Corporation lacked the clearly defined means of enforcing their municipal taxes. The principle was the same as the old one.

Hon Macdonald asked that the second reading be postponed, as the bill had not been printed. Postponed for one week.

MECHANICS LIEN BILL.

Hon Robson moved the first reading of the Mechanics Lien Bill, chief provisions of which were to give to persons furnishing labour or material for repairing or building ships, a lien for their wages, process being attachment; also for labour or material for erecting, altering and repairing buildings, precaution being taken against a lien for too large a sum.

The bill was read first time, hon Crease remarking that the principles enunciated by the hon member were the strongest reasons for its condemnation.

THE TARIFF.

Hon Helmecken moved the appointment of a committee to revise the Tariff. He was not prepared to assume the personal responsibility, and he did this with a view to relieving the Executive (hear, hear). The tariff required alteration, and he believed it could be so framed as to protect home industry and encourage the trade of Puget Sound, which was of real value to the colony (hear, hear). To revise the tariff to a great extent was not his intention; it was high enough in the main, and to increase it on many articles would be a loss to the colony and only encourage smuggling. The Council generally could be of only one opinion if the tariff was to be carried to a legitimate extent and no further. If a system was to be followed there must be a policy, and that must be continued. We cannot mix free trade and tariff together. When a policy is established, particularly as to promoting agriculture and home industry, it might draw many people who would not otherwise come to the colony.

Hon Robson seconded the motion, though he was at a loss to understand the course pursued, since he had himself proposed a measure in a different way. The sooner, however, the tariff was attended to the better. In his own district there were many men watching it with anxiety, ready to go on an extended scale into industrial pursuits. The same could probably be said of the Island districts. Nothing, bearing the Estimates, was of greater importance than attending to our agricultural and industrial interests.

Hon Helmecken in explanation said he had enquired if the Government intended to bring in such a measure, and was answered in the negative, being told at the same time that the appointment of a Committee would be a relief to the Government.

Hon Pemberton sustained the hon member for New Westminster. He knew on the Island that parties were ready to break up and leave the country if their interests were not protected so as to give them an inducement to remain in the country, and he would remark that although we were snored up here others enjoyed a milder climate (laughter).

The motion was agreed to, and the President appointed the following Committee; Hons Hamly, Brew, Ball, Robson, Helmecken, DeCosmos, Smith.

CUSTOMS FINES.

Hon Pemberton's motion for returns of amount of fines and seizures in the Customs Department, from '60 to '66, inclusive, stating how appropriated, was assented to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Council went into Committee on the Estimates, Hon O'Reilly in the chair.

Hon Birch wished to state in answer to enquiries made at the previous sitting, that it was the intention of the Government to amalgamate the office of Treasurer with that of Collector of Customs or some other office; but they had no power to act until reference had been made to the home authorities; with that view he had put "if required" in the Estimates. Mr Watson would act in Vancouver Island until the Act was repealed, he could afford no further information until they heard from home.

Treasurer \$5020. Hon Walker said, hon members would have much difficulty in dealing with this department, as the office of Treasurer in expense, and he would advise, as the office of Treasurer was vacant, that every possible reduction be made in the office. In the meantime, however, as the promise of the Colonial Secretary might be taken as a guarantee of amalgamation, the offices might be voted.

Hon Birch would be glad to do so but could not see how the clerks could be reduced. He read a letter from Mr Graham, Chief Clerk of the New Westminster, office, showing the duties required to be performed; also from Mr Watson, stating that the accounts were in arrears; one of the clerks would have to be sent to Vancouver Island to assist that officer.

Hon Helmecken said it was not a matter of choice but of necessity that a reduction be made, otherwise the Colony would be in a state of absolute bankruptcy. He had no wish to cripple the Government, but absolute necessity of making some reduction over the thing. He had seen the same thing before, the House will vote more money than the country can raise and then the Government means to borrow money to cover it; the Council will have no cause to complain, no

that it can be done on this occasion, as no one will give the Government credit, and that is the only safeguard. He urged upon the House to go through the estimates with a view to reducing them to the utmost.

Hon Birch said he would be too glad to reduce, but he had gone through the estimates which were framed with the utmost economy consistent with efficiency. He believed the Colony could pay \$701,000, though hon members lost sight of the fact that over \$200,000 was to pay off debts. He had gone through the estimates with the intention of economising, but if the hon gentleman would show where a saving could be properly observed he would be glad to accept it.

Hon Helmecken said the expenditure must be reduced, it was disagreeable but there was no use talking—it had to be done, we should rather suffer inconvenience than go into debt. We might be poor, but let us be honest, and there was no use in voting money we could not pay.

Hon Macdonald remarked that the estimates were framed for salaries and loans, and nothing for public works. He fully endorsed every word that had fallen from the hon member and would vote for one of the clerks being struck out, as the office was going to be amalgamated.

Hon Southgate observed that the office should be concentrated at Victoria, where most of the money was received, and the staff reduced.

Hon Ball said this was a Crown Colony and hon members must bear in mind that there was a good deal of red tape required in the system, the estimates, he believed were framed with economy. The clerks in the service were always employed and if idle would be discharged; he did not see that they could be reduced.

Hon Helmecken said red tape was the evil, but it was the duty of the Government if not of the Legislature to inform Her Majesty's Government that it was entirely unsuited to the Colony. It was insisted on let H. M. Government pay for but the Governor should take upon himself the responsibility of changing the infernal system.

Hon Robson said the Colony was ground down by taxation in order that duties might be performed in a red tape way. It was the duty of the Government to have the system changed, but that was not the subject now before the Council.

Hon Pemberton—We are to pay some \$100 a head taxation without remittance or expostulation. It is four times greater than Australia, and ten times greater than England.

Hon Birch—Where does the hon gentleman take his figures from.

Hon DeCosmos—From the estimates.

Hon Birch—He does not include Indians; I do.

Hon Helmecken said Indians could not consume what they did not buy, and he would not let the Government depart from the red tape system while they would have a good pretext to offer to the Home Government.

Hon DeCosmos said if the country was to be anything at all it must have control over its own affairs. In England the taxation was equivalent to \$10 a head. If the population of Canada was three million it would not exceed \$3 50. In New Brunswick it was about \$3 10 with a population of from two to three hundred thousand. In Nova Scotia it was about \$2 50 or \$3, yet this colony was called upon to pay \$100. He would admit that so long as they were called upon to support the form of Government here, the tax must be high, but not unnecessarily light.

In pioneer communities, if we get the Government to preserve our property and land, it is really all we require. Here we have a staff capable of governing 500,000 people. Without going into details, in looking cursorily over the estimates, he could strike off \$75,000 which was equivalent to doing away with the road tolls, and yet the country would be as safe and commerce not affected. There was a general feeling up above and in his constituency that the road tolls should be struck off. But the representative of the government tells us that we must submit to be bound hand and foot, and our life blood taken from us because we are Englishmen. What was the position of our neighbors contrasted with ours, and yet there was no insecurity on the other side. The Governor was atrait to take upon himself the responsibility of amalgamation and was, therefore, unfit to be Her Majesty's representative. He was fully prepared to give a general support to prudent measures, but the course they were pursuing was crushing the life out of the place. We heard it from San Francisco, Portland and elsewhere that we were a tax-ridden lot of serfs. How had a reduction been made? When we look to the bank account and find \$170,000 deficit, is that a gentleman fit to administer the Government? Where is the information on this point, and why was it not supplied? With the overdraft due to the bank, the gentleman tells us he is going on reducing. The thing was past comprehension. Then the hon gentleman calls to his and the Indian population. Never was such a mistake. The number of Indians from the Island to the Rocky Mountains might be estimated at a maximum of 18,900 (he obtained his facts from an experienced authority, who got it by regular census.) They were only worth anything to the Colony to the extent of the furs they sold, the 60,000 gallons of oil they produced, and the fish and game they supply beyond that, say 250 on an average, what was the balance? Little or none. They contributed to the balance of the colony and they were the value of the tax-payers. They were not to be considered as a mere expense. In fact, to be regarded as a mere expense, many horses or mules. Take away the man and what would the Indian produce? Explain closely into the matter. To turn the count was and sinew of the country to turn so. Even include 2,000 Indians in the estimate, and we are then taxed \$70 per head, national debt on her shoulders, with her value of labor here seven times as much? The hon gentleman made a great reasoning justify it. What had the lands and whole duties might be performed by adding a daughter to the Colonial Secretary's office. If used as an engine for emigration, then it would be turned to proper account.

Then the Collector's office, what have they to do? Nothing—a little splurge once a week on the arrival of a steamer, and it is over; busy one day doing nothing six; a glaring instance of extravagance. The office ought to go to Victoria where the revenue is raised; the magistrate and one officer could do all the duties here as well as the Collector and his staff. But it was no use after what had been said; the Government were determined to push the estimates through, and through they must go. A serious lesson would, however, yet be taught them; there would be a deficit at the end of the year, and if the country is asked to make up the deficiency it will force the people into rebellion. Hon gentlemen might think that the community was too small and widely scattered, and that the presence of the navy and so on would prevent such a thing, but the people will first appeal to Her Majesty's Government, and if justice is not done the consequences will be serious. It was not until blood was spilt in Australia that excessive taxation was done away with. There the Government thought they could seize upon a man, and if he did not pay their exorbitant demands, they could cram him in prison. Here a similar process of wringing money from the pockets of the people was being carried out.

Hon Pemberton hoped the representative members would go to the Executive, and if no redress were obtained, petition the Crown. Hon Birch said he had heard a good deal from the hon Victoria member about rebellion, but he had himself been through the Colony, and must say, he never heard it mentioned until he was cried wolf! He had mentioned it, but he was not a prophet. He would find the wolf at his door. He had listened with patience to the hon gentleman's scheme, but did not look upon him as a Chancellor of the Exchequer, and to follow his suggestions, would soon bring the country to confusion. He was always talking about America and American institutions. The hon member, when he talked of security there, had not perhaps seen what he had on American soil, a long string of corpses? Perhaps he liked Puget Sound, but he did not know the condition of affairs further inland. No good and much harm might be occasioned by the statements so frequently made in this House, for which there was no foundation. He had been among the miners and he did not say that they were overtaxed, and he did not believe that a white man in the interior who owned their horses and cattle, and he regarded six Indians as equivalent to every white man in the country.

Hon Cox remarked that the miners of Cariboo said they did not wish to live under a more liberal Government.

Hon Pemberton said the Indians used to number 75,000 this side of the Rocky Mountains. He estimated the population of Vancouver Island at 4000 and the mainland at 3000 (oh!).

Hon Robson said the population of Cariboo alone was 1200, and he fully believed that of the Island was 5000, and the mainland the same; an entirely inside view. The Indian population of the united Colony was 60,000, according to the Rev Father Poirer, who knew more about the question than he did not believe, red, white, or black. Say ten Indians are equal to a white man under the present system of import duty. Indian pays in the same proportion for the articles he consumes, and that will give a population of 16,000, which divided by the amount asked for would give a result of \$43 75 per head. He admitted that this was far too much, and that we ought to be governed for half that amount, but there was this to be considered, that in making up the total \$700,000 that is making up the pay which Vancouver Island could not pay. There was even the celebrated telegraphic dispatch to pay for; these sums swelled up the amount to a larger sum, (laughter) and having married a wife over head ears in debt in her maidenhood they were obliged now to put their hands in their pockets. It was, to say the least, bad taste for hon gentlemen to bring up the subject of taxation, and not to say that they were overtaxed, and that they were not to be governed for half that amount, but there was this to be considered, that in making up the total \$700,000 that is making up the pay which Vancouver Island could not pay. There was even the celebrated telegraphic dispatch to pay for; these sums swelled up the amount to a larger sum, (laughter) and having married a wife over head ears in debt in her maidenhood they were obliged now to put their hands in their pockets. 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