

# REPORT

OF THE

## BOARD OF WORKS,

MONTREAL, DECEMBER, 1844.

SIR,

I have the honor hereby to discharge the duty imposed upon me by law, of furnishing for the information of His Excellency the Governor General, and the other Branches of the Legislature, a Report, upon the state of the various Public Works in the Province, which have been carried on under this Department, during the past year; In it, I have endeavoured to embody such general and detailed information respecting them severally, as will, I trust, afford a correct view of the present state of the Works, as well as of the progress, made since the date of the last Report I had the honor to furnish.

No new works having been ordered by the Parliament during the last Session, the duties of this Department have, from that period to the present, been very much confined to those involved in the superintendence of the Works previously sanctioned by the Legislature, to the checking of the Returns and measurements, arranging the payments, &c., and in reporting from day to day, for the information of His Excellency the Governor General in Council, upon the various matters, sent in reference, to this Office.

In addition however, to these its ordinary duties, this Department was called upon to prepare suitable Buildings for the reception of the several Branches of the Legislature, for the accommodation of His Excellency the Governor General, and for the various Public Departments; the whole of which was rendered necessary by the transfer of the Seat of Government to this City.

The destruction of the Court-House of this District by an Incendiary, also imposed upon this Department the preparation of a Building for the holding of the several Courts, and for the accommodation of the Officers connected therewith.

All these extraordinary expenses I have endeavoured to restrict as much as possible, and the several amounts expended, will be given hereafter under the respective heads.

In my former Report, from its being the first submitted after a commencement had been made with the extensive Works, provided for by the Act 4 and 5 Victoria, chap. 28, it was incumbent on me to enter upon, and explain a variety of points of a general nature, connected with them and their proposed management, to all of which it is obvious that on the present occasion, it is unnecessary for me to allude; but I feel it my duty to notice a few of those upon which no decision has as yet been come to, and upon

which, in my judgment, it is most desirable that some early Legislative enactment should take place.

Notwithstanding the many and unusual precautions which have been adopted, with the sanction of His Excellency the Governor General in Council, with a view to prevent and quell the spirit of riot and outrage, which had been evinced upon several of the Works where large bodies of labourers had congregated, it is well known and much to be lamented, that such precautions have not been effectual.

From an early period, I apprehended that nothing but the presence of a Military Party in the vicinity of each of the large Works, would be sufficient to keep the peace. The fact of its being known that a Military Party was on the spot to aid the Civil Power, would, I conceive, in itself be a guarantee for quiet and order.

The exertions of the Reverends Messrs. Falvy and McDonagh, and (since the commencement of the Works below Prescott) of the Reverend Mr. Clarke, and of Capt. Wetherall, with the Police under his command, have been unremitting and have no doubt tended to prevent the more frequent occurrence of outrage; but the determined and lawless spirit which unfortunately exists so extensively among the labourers, has too often set at naught the moral control of the former, and put at defiance the power at the disposal of the latter.

Experience has satisfied me of the correctness of the causes I assigned for the existence of this turbulent spirit, and which I enumerated in my former Report, as follows: "That the Riots have arisen simply from the fact of a great number of labourers having congregated at particular points, amongst many of whom, previous to their being so assembled, bitter national or sectional feuds had existed. The number of men also who flocked over from the United States, on being thrown out of employment by the general suspension of the Public Works there, added considerably to the evil; more especially as from their previous habits, and irregular modes of life, (wandering from one work to another) they were little accustomed to legal restraint, and had but slight respect for the laws; and finally the circumstance of crowds having remained at the Works over and above the number which could be with any advantage, employed thereon, tended much to a disposition for riot." I would now add an additional one, namely, the fact of a great quantity of fire arms being in the possession of the men; and I feel persuaded that until a registry of arms is made necessary by law, and rigorously enforced on the line

Failure of precautions taken to preserve the peace on the line of the works.

Necessity for a military party when a large body of men are congregated.

The moral influence of certain Roman Catholic Clergymen and the power of the police under Capt. Wetherall inefficual.

Causes assigned in former report for this spirit of riot correct.

Additional cause now assigned, being the quantity of fire arms in the possession of the labourers.

Necessity for a registry of arms Act.

Report required by the Act.

Describes the state of the work and the progress made since last Report.

Ordinary duties of the Department since last Report.

Preparation of buildings for public purposes necessary from the transfer of the Seat of Government to Montreal.

Montreal District Court House destroyed by an incendiary.

The old Jail building prepared for the holding of the Courts.