

PARLIAMENTARY REPORTER.

CHARLOTTETOWN, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND, FEBRUARY, 1857.

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MEETING OF THE LEGISLATURE.

On Thursday, the 26th day of February, 1857, His Excellency the Lieut. Governor came down to the Council Chamber, and with the usual formalities, opened the Third Session of the Twentieth General Assembly with the following Speech:—

Mr. President and Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council:

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly:

I have much pleasure in again meeting you for the discharge of the important duties that devolve upon us.

It affords me much satisfaction to be enabled to inform you of the favourable determination of Her Majesty's Government with reference to the suggestion contained in your joint Address of last Session to the Queen, on the subject of a guarantee by Her Majesty's Government for such a Loan as might be sufficient for the purchase of Township Lands in this Island, with a view to the more speedy and general conversion of Leaseholds into Freehold tenures.

The Despatches from the Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, on this subject, shall be communicated to you, and a measure will be submitted for your consideration, in order to secure to the industrious inhabitants of this Island the benefits which have been thus placed within your reach by the paternal solicitude of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly:

The condition of the Revenue is satisfactory, and indicates general prosperity among the consuming population of the Island.

The Accounts for the past year, and the Estimates for the current year, shall be laid before you; and I rely on your readiness to grant such Supplies as may be necessary for the efficient support of the public service.

Mr. President and Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council:

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly:

The establishment of Municipalities throughout the Island appears to be highly desirable, in order that the principles of local self-government should receive a more extended application, by affording to the people the exercise of a greater degree of power over their own local affairs.

A measure upon this subject will be submitted to you; and I solicit your earnest attention to the establishment of such a form of local Government as may ensure satisfaction to the people; whilst it preserves inviolate the prerogative of the Crown, and maintains the due administration of the Law.

In connection with this subject, it is very desirable that the system under which the public moneys have hitherto been applied to the construction and repair of roads, bridges, and all other public works, should undergo a careful revision; and I would suggest for your consideration the expediency of establishing a Board of Works, which should comprise, besides certain members of the Government, a competent Civil Engineer.

A Board, so constituted, would afford the requisite responsibility, efficiency and economy in the execution of all public works, and greatly tend to promote the interests of the community in this important branch of the public service.

As those laws will shortly expire which have given to this Colony a well merited pre-eminence in securing to the rising generation the blessings of a Free Education, it will be for you to consider the expediency of continuing or re-enacting them.

I am fully sensible of the fact, that the educational establishment of this Island involves a very heavy charge upon its revenue, which is small in comparison to those of the sister Provinces; a charge which is larger than is incurred for a similar purpose in older, wealthier and more populous communities; and amounting in all to one-third of the public income. But keeping in view the great advantages that accrue from such an expenditure—advantages which are felt by the present generation, but which will be still more sensibly apparent to future ones,—I strongly incline to the opinion, that the public money could not be better applied than in fostering that free system of public instruction which has hitherto given such general satisfaction to the people of this Colony, and which has been referred to in terms of commendation by our fellow subjects in other portions of Her Majesty's dominions.

The interests of agriculture are entitled to the special care and attention of the Legislature, in a country where so large a portion of the community is employed in agricultural pursuits; and I am not aware of any mode by which those interests can be so effectually promoted, as by affording liberal encouragement to such institutions as the Royal Agricultural Society, whose exertions have hitherto been attended with very beneficial results.

I am again under the necessity of calling your attention to the subject of Steam Communication with the neighbouring Provinces. Arrangements of a more permanent character than have yet been effected are indispensable for placing that important communication on a satisfactory footing, and I earnestly recommend the subject to your consideration.

In all the measures which you may adopt for the promotion of the interests of the Island, and the happiness and contentment of the people, you may rely on my zealous co-operation; and I humbly hope that the Almighty may render our endeavours efficacious for the public good.