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THE FREE PRESS.

VOL. I.] MONTREAL, THURSDAY, 20th FEB. 1823. [No. 18.

Id ita esse vos jam judicare poteritis. TERENCE.

That this is so, you all will be able to judge.

REMARKS ON PROCEEDINGS IN THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY IN UPPER-CANADA....*Continued.*

The liberal motive which induced Mr. Burwell, though an advocate for the union, to oppose any increase of the representation this session, because it would, in case the union were to take place, be taking an undue advantage of Lower Canada, was treated with contempt by Mr. N.; who, in defiance, not only of all political writers, (whom, by the bye, he can not be supposed to be much acquainted with,) but of all propriety both of reason and language, stated, that an increase could be no injustice to Lower Canada, since "territory, property, and population, should guide the house in increasing the representation of the colony, and not population alone, and that he would not allow a worthless mob of vagrants to be put on a footing with men of property and overturn our system." Population is the main basis of representation, and property is likewise necessarily considered, because it is only the stationary inhabitants of the country, and not the migratory, transient, part of the community, (such as the bulk of the Scotch faction consists of,) that ought to have a voice in its legislation; but property is not part of the system, for its own sake, but only for the sake of giving stability and consistency to the popular part, else it would follow that a man possessing £5000 ought to have ten votes to the one that had £500. As to territory, mere extent of acres, unconnected with population, who, before this wisehead, ever heard of that being a basis to be considered in a system of representation? But perhaps Mr. N. is one of those men, who have been so highly beneficial both to Upper and Lower Canada, and have obtained or inherited large tracts of land, which they leave in a state of wilderness, in order to speculate upon the increased value which the efforts of "the worthless mob of vagrants," who emigrate from home, in clearing the adjoining lands, produce in those of the monopolizing favourites, or intriguers, to whom those unproductive tracts have been granted. By the phrase "worthless mob of vagrants," however, if there is any meaning in it, I apprehend the urbane colonel, meant, the

population of Lower Canada, the seigneurs, landholders, and peasantry of this province, set in opposition to the grantees of land in the upper; for the whole tenor of his observations went to imply that an increased number of representatives was necessary in the Assembly of Upper Canada, in order that, in case of an union, they might not be outnumbered by the representatives of Lower Canada, and so have their system overturned. I am apt to believe that, when the true merits and bearings of the case come to be considered in the Imperial parliament, it will not be either the old and settled population of Lower Canada, nor the poorer, but industrious and persevering yeomanry, of Upper Canada, but the illiterate Scotch traders, extortioners, pedlars, and transitory visitors, that infest and contaminate both provinces, but especially the Lower, that will be considered, with respect to us, as 'a worthless mob of vagrants.'

This Col. Nichol is, however, famous for his *parliamentary* and *gentlemanly* language; but to use a phrase, which from the style of his education, he can not but both fully comprehend, and be much pleased with, "what is bred in the bone will not out of the flesh," we therefore need not stare at the further specimens of chaste, refined, and elegant blackguardism that are presented in his speech (as reported) on the motion for the appointment of a reporter of the debates by the House.

Mr. John Wilson, who introduced the motion, said, with truth, that it was one which met with the universal concurrence of the people. The people were pleased and gratified with the reports that were given during the last session; they never before had an opportunity of judging of the conduct and proceedings of those delegated by them to the House. If it ever were necessary, or it ever were expedient, if it ever were proper to employ a reporter, it was so now. By the reports, men possessed of rights and liberties which they hold dear and sacred, and which were now attempted to be infringed upon, would be enabled to judge of the fitness or unfitness of their members at a future election, and without them, it would be impossible for them to judge of their talents or virtue. It was, therefore, fit and proper that the people should possess that information which would enable them to guard against deception, and select those men for their representatives who are devoted to the constitutional interests of the country. There was one objection made against the principle of paying a reporter, namely, because it was unprecedented; but the house ought not to stand upon this peculiarity. If it was expedient to grant a sum to a reporter, they should make it a precedent; for the want of one was a trifling objection.

Mr. Nichol said, he would give his decided negative to the motion. He deemed that it was never proper, necessary, or expedient, to employ a reporter; and the time of the house

should not be occupied with a discussion of this kind. Was it right to employ an *ignorant, unprincipled, incapable* person, to send forth to the public language that was never uttered.— By such conduct they were sanctioning the publication of libels; and acting contrary to the rules of the British Parliament. The members' speeches last year, he said, were given in the most *shameful, base, and calumnious* manner: language was attributed to members which they never uttered, and the speeches were full of bad English. Even himself, who was not in the habit of speaking ungrammatically, was ashamed to see the language that was attributed to him in those publications. He saw himself grossly libelled in one paper, in which it was stated that he proposed a clause to legalize the children of certain marriages, and make their mothers *whores*. A reporter, if employed by the House was not responsible for any misrepresentation. If they called him to the bar for an offence, wilfully or ignorantly committed, they could not punish him; he might tell the house, "I have been employed by you to give the debates; and I have given them to you in the best manner I could, and you have no right to punish me for them." After pointing out the practice of England, and inveighing against the principle of employing a reporter, he opposed the motion.

The opposition made by the colonel, however, not having been successful, and the house having voted £100 for a reporter, it is only for the purpose of exposing the odious principles of the party who wish to keep the people in ignorance of the conduct and language of their representatives; and the unfounded arguments they have recourse to, that I have selected this subject. Being likewise desirous to see a similar measure adopted by the House of Assembly of this province, which the liberality of their ideas can not fail to perceive the benefits of, I trust they will also see the futility of that objection (the main one which is made to the measure,) namely that it is not sanctioned by parliamentary usage in England. The question has several times been agitated in the House of Commons in England, whether they should have an appointed reporter of their debates or not; and has, fitly and wisely too, considering the circumstances attending it, been decided in the negative; for the state of society, and of literature, in England, has given rise to a body of intelligent men, both men of learning and acuteness, who make it a profession, and the means of a handsome maintenance, to be the reporters of the proceedings of all public bodies, for newspapers. Their general information and abilities are guarantees for the general propriety of their reports; and their number, and different parties and sentiments are checks against misrepresentations, or falsehood. Hence, it was justly argued in Parliament, that the people would receive better, and

were faithful reports from the pens of such men, taking them collectively, than from that of any one salaried individual, whatever judgement might have been exercised in his selection. Now the case is widely different in these provinces: no such class of men does or can exist; and a single reporter, who might either be employed by all the papers (as suggested in No. 10 of the Free Press,) or might think it worth his while to employ himself in that way on his own account, were he even one of the best qualified, could scarcely fail of being partial, prejudiced, and at times incorrect; or he might be ignorant, unprincipled, and incapable, as Mr. Nichol took it for granted a reporter appointed by the House would be. But surely such an appointment would not be made without due consideration, and the House would not bestow it on an ignorant, unprincipled, and incapable person; or if they were misled so to do, it is folly to say he could not be punished, for he could be punished in the best way by dismissal from his office, upon any complaint, made and substantiated by a member, of misrepresentation, or incorrectness, in his reports. Now the jet of the argument is this. The publication of faithful reports of the debates is highly desirable; circumstances will not permit of their finding their way to the public in the manner they do at home; it is therefore fit that the best way that can be suggested should be adopted here; and it will not be denied that, if reports are to be published at all, the next best way, or indeed the only way in the present state of society and literature in these provinces, is that of an authorised reporter appointed by the assembly.

I may take another opportunity of enquiring what were the misrepresentations and labels which were printed with respect to Mr. Nichol's speeches last session; but I can not quit him, without enquiring why he has never published a second letter from Stamford on the subject of the letter he produced in the House, relative to the free importation of American flour; in the one he did publish he denied that he ever received, or made use in the House of any such letter from Mr. Richardson; it afterwards came out that the letter in question was one from Mr. Richardson's house of Forsyth Richardson, & Co and not from Mr. R. himself; and it was upon this jesuitical evasion that Mr. Nichol grounded, both his defence against the inconsistency that was on that occasion charged to him, and his denunciation of the assertion that he had made use of such a letter, as a *barefaced falsehood*: now his assertion was not exactly a *barefaced falsehood*, but is certainly something akin to *two facts under a hood*.

L. L. M.

As it is now probable that a correct census of the population of Lower Canada will soon be obtained, it is perhaps premature, to say much on the subject of the improvement in that

respect, that has taken place since the country has been an appendage of the British crown. That an increase of population is an improvement in the state of every country, notwithstanding the sophistry of Malthus, than whom no political quack ever more egregiously erred, I believe, none but system-mongers, or paradox-manufacturers, will deny; and the newer, and the more extensive the country, the greater is the proportionate benefit derived by the birth of every child, and the importation of every emigrant from abroad. The unionists have alleged that Lower Canada has not advanced in population, prosperity, agriculture, commerce and civilization, in the same proportion as it would have done, had the Scotch sutlers, bum-boaters, pedlars, and contractors, who accompanied the army by which it was conquered, and who subsequently became the commercial interest of the country, had the ordering of all things. Increase of population is the basis of all other improvement; without a large population there can be no extensive consumption to cause an extended import trade; there can be no agriculture commensurate with the demands for exportation; it is only by density of population that by degrees, manufactures arise, mines are explored, and finally, the arts, and ornamental parts of life, cultivated, and literature encouraged. But it is demonstrable, upon the present accepted data, that Lower Canada has advanced in population, that basis and source of all other improvement, in full as great a ratio as the boasted rapid increase that has taken place in the United States, and certainly in a much greater ratio than any other dependency of Great Britain. By a comparison of the different census taken in America, it appears that the population of the States increases at the rate of three per cent per annum, that is, it doubles in 23 years. Now, as at the conquest there was, as the Quebec Act asserts; a Canadian population of 65000 persons, there ought to be in 1823, according to that rate, a Canadian population of 455,000. Col. Bouchette in his gross estimate stated it at 450,000 in 1822, and in his subsequent more laboured and detailed calculation, at 473,642, making thus a surplus of nearly 20,000 beyond the rate in which the States regularly increase; and as this alludes to the Canadian population alone, and does not include the inhabitants of the townships &c. it must be recollected that this increase is one, independent of foreign aid, and not swelled, like that of the States, and that of Upper Canada, by an annual tide of emigration, but one arising, to use a term familiar to the writers on rural affairs, from 'breeding in and in.' The emigrants who come to Quebec, averaging of late years about 10,000 in number, do not add to the population of Lower Canada, but in a very small degree. So that on that score the Canadians may with the greatest propriety say to all political theorists, as the French

merchants did to Cardinal Richelieu, when he asked what he could do for them, *Laissez nous faire*. What therefore would the unionists have? more than physical causes can produce? yet it has been shewn that even more is produced in Lower Canada than physical causes, under what may be supposed to be the most favourable circumstances, produce elsewhere. But these unreasonable Scotch encroachers, (so might the Canadians say,) after getting rich at our expense, want to obtain from us our lands, to deprive us of our laws, and our language, and even to get our children for us. Were their pestiferous union to take place they would verify the complaint in Tacitus. "*Boves ipsos, mox agros, postremo corpora servitio tradunt*. First they take our cattle away, then our fields, and at last carry our bodies into slavery."

L. L. M.

As an introduction to an article on the subject of the *anti-commercial* spirit which has been ascribed to the Canadians, I take from the *Canadian Spectator*, a letter which touches upon those parts of the question which relate to the capability of the people, and the rights they ought to possess in that respect.—Both these form main objects of enquiry, but the principal ground upon which I mean to go, is, that the Canadian nation, whilst in disposition and ability, they are far from being anti-commercial, yet, ought, paradoxical as it may appear, in another sense, (that of their geographical, physical, and moral situation,) to be essentially so, in order to secure their own happiness, their own dignity, and their own prosperity.

MR. EDITOR,

"Much has been said by the friends of the union against the character of the Canadians as a commercial people: I would ask these commercial men, if they can be so called, who urge these imputations, what opportunities have the Canadians had to shew their talents or knowledge of business, when every stranger, settling in the country, makes a point of destroying the credit of those of the Canadians who have had the good fortune to import from Britain; and this for the purpose of promoting his own views, or forwarding those of some near relation in his employment? Have any of these unionists, (I mean among the merchants,) ever taken a French Canadian into their employment to learn him his business? and can it be said the French Canadians are not fit? These questions can be easily answered. Do not the Canadians in their humble situation of retail-merchants, do more honour to integrity than the Scotch who are in the same line? Let the banks be questioned, and let us hear the truth. It must then be admitted, that, though they do not, in appearance, carry on an extensive business, they are more prudent, and do not expose their creditors to a loss.

"Those commercial madcaps flatter themselves with a great extension of trade by the union: produce is to be enhanced to double its present value; the importation is to increase twofold! Poor deluded men! Where are you to send the staple produce of the provinces, wheat? Will the people in England consume your grain, and leave their own to moulder in their stores? Or will this union make both the Upper and Lower Canadians wear a double suit of clothes of British manufacture yearly, and lay aside altogether, their homespun stuff, to meet your ends? But let me ask these great commercial persons, who have their friends and agents on the other side of the Atlantic, why did they allow to pass in silence, and why did they acquiesce thereby in, the law granting the furtrade solely to individuals? Was it because that few Canadians were concerned in that business? Was not that branch of our trade in their hands as much as any other branch? Why did they not oppose the passing of this law so injurious to the country? His Majesty's council always conceived that this trade belonged to His Majesty's Canadian subjects, if I may judge from the answer given to the application made in 1810 and 1811 by Mess. Inglis Ellice & Co. and McTavish Fraser & Co. of London, in behalf of themselves and the ci-devant North West Company, for the exclusive privilege of the trade of the Columbia River. What was that answer? That such a privilege could be granted but to His Majesty's Canadian subjects only. These facts may be doubted by many of your readers, but let the office of lord Bathurst be searched, and the whole correspondence will be found, and what I here say found to be true. The loss of this trade is and will continue to be severely felt by this province.— Let an impartial man compare the value of exports this last season, both at Quebec and St. Johns, with that at a time when that trade was carried on through this place, & its value will be ascertained.

"These facts must convince you, Mr. Editor, that the promoters of the union have other things in view than the welfare of either of the provinces. It strikes me more forcibly when I consider that the furtrade was snatched from us at a time when there was no more than a quorum in the Imperial House of Commons, and at nearly the close of the session; and the infamous union bill was brought in nearly at the same period, and what is more astonishing, by the same person. **THERE MUST BE FOUL PLAY THERE.**

"At a future time I will resume this subject, should you encourage me. **ANTI-COMMERCIAL.**

Montreal, 5th Feb. 1823.

*This law was passed, and it was not till the governor's proclamation that we had any knowledge of it. Note of Canad. Spect

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