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PRINCE EDWARD'S ISLAND.

COPY of the SPEECH of His Excellency the  
LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR of PRINCE EDWARD'S  
ISLAND, on the Opening of the present Session  
of the Legislature, on the 9th day of February  
1854.

(*Mr. Hume.*)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,  
14 March 1854.

PRINCE EDWARD'S ISLAND.

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RETURN to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons,  
dated 28 February 1854;—for,

A "COPY of the SPEECH of His Excellency the LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR of  
PRINCE EDWARD'S ISLAND, on the Opening of the present Session of the  
Legislature, on the 9th day of February 1854."

Colonial Office, }  
13 March 1854. }

FREDERICK PEEL.

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SPEECH of His Excellency the LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR, at the opening of the  
Legislature, on Thursday, the 9th of February 1854.

Mr. President and Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council :

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly :

I FEEL much satisfaction in now meeting the Legislature for the despatch of  
public business.

Some months after the general election last summer a requisition was addressed  
to me by several Members of the Assembly, to summon you to meet on an early  
day, they considering that no time should be lost, in order to exclude by legal  
enactment departmental officers from occupying seats in the Legislature. I did  
not think it expedient to accede to that request, because it occurred to me that such  
a departure from the usual course would have been construed into an admission  
on my part that evils had arisen demanding an immediate change; for one of your  
own statutes, passed six years ago, is in force (as it was at the time of the election),  
defining what are departmental offices, and it provides, "that any Member of the  
Assembly who shall accept of any such office of profit or emolument shall be  
incapable of taking or holding his seat in the General Assembly of this Island,  
unless re-elected after his acceptance thereof."

In regard to the Legislative Council, I do not understand why members of that  
body should be excluded (if such be really the intention) from participating, as  
they have hitherto done, in a share of the salaried or departmental offices of  
Government.

Three years have nearly passed away since I was instructed to introduce what  
is termed responsible government, in accordance with the often-repeated solici-  
tations of many of Her Majesty's subjects here. Since that time the colony has been  
prospering, tranquil and contented; and, judging from my intercourse with the  
people, they are well entitled to the concession they asked for. If, however, they  
now seek for changes in the constitution, I hope they will be such as may contri-  
bute to the welfare of the community at large; for while I feel confident every  
favourable consideration will be given to the wishes of Her Majesty's loyal sub-  
jects, I am equally certain that no Colonial Minister, unless for very cogent reasons,  
will deem it expedient, at least by Imperial interference, to narrow or diminish the  
principles of self-government now established in this island. Since its introduction  
all the Acts which have been passed by the Legislature, with the exception of one  
(still under consideration), have received the Royal assent; a circumstance, during  
a period of three years' legislation, which I believe never before occurred in any  
North American province.

You are aware that the Education Bill, which was described at a public meeting by one of your learned judges "as the wisest, the noblest, and the best that ever graced your statute book," came into operation last spring. At that time there were of existing schools about 110; the number contemplated by the Act was 200, all of which have been applied for and recorded in terms of its provisions, and many more are earnestly desired. The Government has secured the services of Mr. Stark, an efficient inspector, thoroughly qualified for the task, and who is also prepared to carry out the views of the Royal Agricultural Society during his visits to the different districts of the country. He comes from the Normal Seminary, in the city of Glasgow, most strongly recommended by Mr. Stow, the philanthropic individual by whose exertions that seminary has attained its eminence, being known in distant quarters of the globe, where the system introduced by him is spreading its beneficial influence. Mr. Stow takes a lively interest in your Christian and benevolent exertions in the cause of education, and has urged on me to call your attention to the importance of perfecting your good work, by the establishment of a small Normal School, under the direction of the inspector, where your teachers would be taught to practise an uniform system of training, which has proved so successful wherever it has been tried. If this can be accomplished (and I believe it can at a moderate expense), this colony, small in extent, will become great in the estimation of all who value the blessings which society must derive from an improved method of training the hearts and minds of the rising generation.

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly :

The oaths appointed by law have been administered to you to-day, in virtue of a commission issued by me in the same form which has been used on all similar occasions, narrating that the high sheriffs have returned all of you duly elected and qualified to serve in the Assembly. I observe, however, that the high sheriff for Queen's County has returned one of the Members for that county, "duly elected, subject to the determination of the House of Assembly on the scrutiny, and of the facts set forth in respect thereof." This is an unusual return, and as such I notice it; its legality is a matter entirely for you to decide.

I am happy to say that the financial state of the colony is very satisfactory. On the 31st January 1850, the balance of the debt against the colony was 28,579 *l.* 11 *s.* 0½ *d.* On the 31st January last (1854), it was only 3,028 *l.* 11 *s.* 6 *d.*, a reduction of 25,550 *l.* 19 *s.* 6½ *d.* in four years. In 1849, the revenue was 18,615 *l.*; in 1850, 22,768 *l.*; in 1851, 22,500 *l.*; in 1852, 31,283 *l.*, and last year, notwithstanding the reduction of the duty on tea, it was 35,345 *l.*, including about 2,800 *l.*, assessment imposed by the Education Act. An increase of revenue is a sure indication of the progressive state of the colony, always bearing in mind that Providence has been bountiful in our harvests and other blessings, for which we cannot be too thankful.

The estimates will be submitted for your consideration. I hope they will meet with your approval, and I doubt not you will provide supplies for the public service.

Last year memorials, numerously signed by individuals engaged in the export of juniper knees, were presented to me, complaining of a proposed, almost prohibitory duty on their export. I am sure it will be your inclination to avoid class legislation, and impose no higher duties on any particular article than are required for the welfare, support and credit of the province.

Mr. President and Honorable Gentlemen of the Legislative Council :

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Assembly :

In Prince Edward Island unsettled questions have too often occasioned many difficulties. I hope I now allude to the last, the fishery reserves; a subject which has occupied much of the attention of the Government. The late Assembly presented an address to me relative to these reserves. As similar questions, affecting Crown rights, had arisen in some parts of the United Kingdom, it was considered advisable to forward a copy of the Assembly's address to Her Majesty's Government,

and

and by a recent despatch from the Duke of Newcastle, his Grace expresses "much satisfaction that this question has been so fully taken in hand by the Government, with a reasonable prospect of a satisfactory issue," and promises all the assistance Her Majesty's Government can at present give, "by consulting the law officers of the Crown in England, respecting the legal steps to be taken to assert the Crown rights." With that view, his Grace required further information, and it has been furnished. When the opinions of the law officers of the Crown are received they will be laid before you, along with various documents connected with the subject. In the meantime, I shall only say, that fulfilling a duty to the public, in protecting the fishery reserves, on which many parties may have ignorantly encroached, it has been the anxious wish of the Government, as it appeared to have been that of the late Assembly, to deal with this question in a just and equitable manner.

I shall have soon to bring under your notice matters of a local nature, among others, the proposed withdrawal of the military; but I shall do so as usual by message; and I will be happy at all times to communicate with you when you may desire it.

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