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"This is true Liberty, when Freeborn Men, having to advise the Public, may speak free."—Euripides.

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### Colonial Parliament.

#### HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, Feb. 28.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—Mr. Chairman, when the Committee rose this morning I was alluding to a remark made by the hon. member, Mr. Longworth, to the effect that the Government are entitled to the gratitude of the country for the benefits they have conferred upon it, and he arrogated to his party the exclusive credit of sincerity in their political action. I asked for the proofs of his assertion and I repeat the enquiry. I referred to the financial condition of the Colony, and showed by statements, the correctness of which cannot be impugned, that they have added enormously to the public debt, and so far from having proved themselves the friends of the people their management of the finances has a direct tendency to retard the prosperity of the Island. When the late Government was in power, the present majority were continually declaring that the country had been brought to the verge of ruin, but I defy them to show a parallel to their own management of the public purse during the whole time the Liberals were in power. Look, Sir, at their conduct on the subject of the Bill to make the Legislative Council elective. I have on different occasions given my views on the merits of that question, so that I need not repeat them now; but I ask, what has been the result of the measure introduced and carried by the Government? Why, Sir, the leader of the Government in this House pronounced the Bill of last session unworthy of the consideration of the Imperial authorities. In what other branch of the public service are we to look for the improvements they have effected? They complain of the cost of Education as being altogether beyond the resources of the country, and in reduce this subject into the address, although it is not in the speech. Yet why do they not propose a scheme which would provide the necessary means to maintain the system. Their predecessors did so, and found no difficulty in meeting the expense. In the mode of collecting the Revenue the Government has made no alteration, although my hon. friend, Mr. Coles, when he addressed us, was blamed for having caused a great deal of embarrassment to the mercantile community. Where, then, is the improvement? Not certainly in diminished taxation, for they have added 14 per cent. to the *ad valorem* duties. Nor in the public houses, for they have increased the duty; not in the collection of the revenue, for they have made no change in the plans of their predecessors. If they had diminished the debt, they might have taken credit to themselves for benefits conferred by their administration. They denounced the principle of Government purchasing lands, declaring that it would lead to disastrous results; but now they make a merit of having done so, and it is rather curious that now, for the first time, they place upon the desks of hon. members this printed paper. (The hon. member referred to a printed statement connected with the Worell estate.) Why is it that the correspondence relative to the purchase of Lot 54 and the Selkirk estate is withheld? That correspondence was more recent, and has been repeatedly asked for by members on this side of the House. While all the information about the Worell estate can be found on the journals, I ask why the Government do not produce the correspondence relating to the two properties they have purchased? Are they ashamed of their proceedings, or are they apprehensive of a charge of bribery being made against them, as has been most unjustly and unwisely done by my hon. friend, Mr. Coles? It is well known that there was not the shadow of a foundation for the vile and infamous imputation. The character of that gentleman stands high in comparison with that of the present Government in the purchase of public lands. The late Government gave publicity to all documents referring to the Worell estate, while no information is communicated as regards the two other properties.

Hon. Mr. DOUSE—As agent of Lord Selkirk at the time of the sale of his estate, I can state that the Government are not liable to any blame. They acted honestly and fairly, and the transaction was conducted and concluded in a proper manner.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—I make no charge against Lord Selkirk or the hon. member as his agent. I am merely comparing the conduct of the present with that of the last Government. They ostentatiously produce the correspondence connected with the Worell estate which has been published for years, but take care not to show that relating to their own transactions. It is unfair to make such a charge in the newspapers or through any other channel, and especially desirable is it that it should emanate from the Colonial Secretary who, having been one of the principal vendors of the property, knew the true groundness of the allegation.

Hon. Mr. POPE—There is no charge in the "Islander."

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—The Editor of the "Islander," who is also Colonial Secretary, gave currency to the slander. The few remarks I make, Mr. Chairman, will necessarily be desultory, in consequence of my absence from the House during a portion of the debate, and I will here briefly refer to the statements of the hon. member, Mr. Longworth, in reference to the 1-9th Bill, the paternity of which he endeavored to transfer from the hon. member, Mr. Coles, to the late Duncan McLean. I, Sir, sat at a table in 1849 when that gentleman brought in a Bill to regulate the currency. This Bill, as introduced, had not the 1-9th clause, and it was not until after conference with Mr. Coles and others that it was incorporated into it. But even if the clause did not originate with Mr. Coles, the measure was not *non facta* accomplished until it was carried by him. The Colonial Minister sent out the Bill, as defers in some matter of detail, but the principle of the 1-9th clause was affirmed. The Government are trying to cover themselves with borrowed plumes, after having followed the policy of their predecessors in other branches of the public service, they now wish to appropriate the credit of the 1-9th Bill. They might, with equal propriety, claim for the services the introduction of our Educational system, when they and the proprietors petitioned against it. I make these remarks not so much as accusing the Government as defending the principles and acts of the party with which I am associated, and, in doing so, I cannot refrain from noticing the imputation of interested motives which the hon. member, Mr. Longworth, charged influenced the conduct of the opposition. He did not tell us what the particular motives were, but it is a reasonable presumption that he alluded to a supposed desire on our part to obtain possession of the public offices. Sir, I am fully that my political friends and myself would be glad to take those offices, and I ask those who impudently assure us for such desire, if it is in any degree disinterested or dishonest? I accord to the Government the right to the possession of the public offices during their term of public confidence; but, Sir, why should we be detained when seeking to graze, if an honorable ambition, by earning our right to them in a faithful performance of our public duties? Has not my hon. friend, Mr. Coles, who has been some 50 years in the Island, and has contributed so largely to the development of its resources, and has paid enormous sums in the shape of taxes, as good a claim to the Secretaryship as Mr. W. H. Pope? What has that gentleman ever done to give him a preferential claim to the office and its emoluments over Mr. Coles? Take the Registrar of Deeds and other public offices of Government, the Treasurer, Messrs. Morrison and Currie, what claim to official situations could they advance over my hon. members on this side of the House, who have obtained seats here while the others have returned to their homes without a look for a constituency? On the subject of the Award the hon. member, Mr. Longworth, stated that it was not true that the late Government had refused a copy of the Award. I may differ from the hon. member as to the particular meaning to be attached to the word "refused." It may not have been refused, but Mr. Commissioner Gray offered to send a copy here, and Mr. Haveland told Mr. Coles and myself that a copy had been prepared for His Excellency and his advisers; and a gentleman, on whose word all reliance can be placed, told Mr. Coles that the late Government had informed him that he could have a copy if he desired one. He may not have positively refused, or he may have intimated, and I think it probable that he did intimate a desire not to refer; it would be transmitted through the Imperial

Government. One thing is clear, a copy might have been obtained, and its publication would have been of great service. The hon. member, Mr. Longworth, said that it would be most improper that the Government should interfere with the progress of the Commission, but, in the next breath, he claims great credit for the appointment of two gentlemen so eminent in their profession as Messrs. Thomson and Haveland to whom it is all-given every facility was afforded by the Government. But I know that Mr. Thomson in his speech declared, that so far from having been furnished with all sources of information relative to the investigation he had received from Government only the Hon. Col. Gray, and these resolutions introduced by the Commission. The Commission and the Act, when handed to the Council, was not the law of the land. It had not been sent home. What more flagrant proof of their insincerity do we require when we bear resolutions which have rendered all assistance to the learned counsel for the tenantry? The excuse that hon. member makes for the non-arrival of the Award, is I am glad for the sake of variety, different from that which was advanced to account for the detention of it in the other end of the building. There the delay was attributed to the difficulties in the United States and the death of the Prince Consort. But the last excuse for the absence of the Award is still more untenable. In this case we are told that the questions to be considered were so difficult, and the documents to be printed so voluminous, that a long period of time must elapse between the report of the Commissioners and the final decision of the Colonial Minister on it. Why, Mr. Chairman, these questions have been before the Colonial Office for many years, and I supposed the settling of them had devolved on the Commissioners, and it would not take any long time for the Colonial Minister to decide what instructions on the subject he should send to the Lieut. Governor. As to the voluminous nature of the documents, their volume could have only been occasioned by the Spy to whom allusion has been so often made, and to whom I intend to refer. But as to the alleged time required to print them it is a silly excuse, for if they were ten times more numerous than they are, and I know from Mr. Howe their probable size, a few days would suffice for printing them.

Hon. Mr. LONGWORTH—I merely referred incidentally to the printing. It was the least worthy reason I adduced. I expressly assigned the importance of the interests involved as the great cause of delay.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—I beg the hon. member not to interrupt me. I have correctly stated his remarks. I come now, Sir, to the case of the Spy, and my reference to him shall be brief. The hon. member denied all connection with him or his employment, and asserted that he knew nothing about him until after he had left the Colony. Other members of the Government say the same thing. I believe a communication was received by the Lieut. Governor from the Commissioners, introducing Mr. Wightman and requesting that he be paid from the public funds of the Island. We are told that the members of Government had no knowledge of his appointment, with the exception of Mr. Palmer. Now, when it is admitted that the other members of the Government were kept in ignorance of it, I say it is a most unbecoming position for any of them to be placed in, if his mission was known to the Lieut. Governor and one member of his Council. It was known that he had an office in the building, with an official letter from the Colonial Secretary, or his Assis.

Messrs. POPE and LONGWORTH—It is false.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—It is true. He had a letter to the Collectors of Land Tax, authorizing them to give him every information in their power. Now, if his mission was considered creditable, why are members of the Government so anxious to screen themselves from any supposition of complicity with him?

Hon. Mr. POPE—There is no anxiety of the kind; the members referred to are only anxious not to allow false statements to pass uncontradicted.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—Will the Government deny that Mr. Wightman was here? That his mission was known to the Lieut. Governor, and that he was paid out of the public funds?

Hon. Mr. HAVILAND—If the Government had not paid Mr. Wightman they ought to have done so, and in fact were bound to.

Hon. Col. GRAY—I, for one, have no desire to shrink from any responsibility. I will say that I approve of the appointment by the Commissioners of the gentleman alluded to, and I think that, so far from meriting the censure passed upon them, the Commissioners acted as men of honor and integrity.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—If my remarks are productive of no other result, they have at least elicited the admission from hon. Col. Gray and Mr. Haveland, that they will assume the responsibility of having paid him.

Hon. Col. GRAY—It is only a minute or two since that I heard for the first time that the Government declined the responsibility.

Hon. Mr. HAVILAND—If the honorable member had been in his place yesterday morning he would have heard me state that I approved of the appointment of Mr. Wightman, and that I may have lost a good deal by my absence, but I trust that I shall be able to bear up under the privations. As I know the hon. member's mind and train of thought, I consider it more profitable to spend my time elsewhere.

Hon. Mr. HAVILAND—The hon. member may suit himself as to whether he shall attend in the House or not, but he must not put into my mouth statements which I never made use of.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—Well, Mr. Chairman, I have no disposition to quarrel with hon. members opposite. But it having been conceded that the Spy was here with the knowledge of the Lieut. Governor and Mr. Palmer, it follows that he did not prosecute his mission with strict candor. He was allowed access to the Public Records of the Colony.

Hon. Messrs. LONGWORTH and HAVILAND—It was his right—any one can have the same privilege on payment of their legal fee.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—Those interruptions only show the sincerity of the Government on this subject. It cannot be denied that the Government had been openly and fairly, and asked for what information the Commissioners required, stating the difficulty they had experienced when in the Island, and the impossibility of their going personally through all the districts of the Island, there could be no objection. It would be the last to offer any opposition to his employment or his payment by the Government. The Government are not to be taken in by the Commissioners, and to the best of my ability I am endeavoring to facilitate their investigation. But this Mr. Wightman came like a thief in the night, to worm out information in an odious and contemptible manner, and the Government by paying him have sanctioned his proceedings. It is their consciousness of the dishonor, odium, and contempt which attaches to the character of a Spy which renders the Government so sensitive. I care not with one of the Commissioners or whether the whole of them appointed him. The Government adopted him, and therefore they should take their share of the responsibility. The day is not far distant when the opinion of the people will be given on the subject of sending to the Island a Spy, to go into the people's dwellings, and large sheep farms were established with a view to give the public funds for such services, and the people think so too. The employment of this individual has been justified in the organ of the Government, the *Islander*, on the ground that the evidence of the people given by the Commissioners was of so scandalous a nature, that it was not to be credited, and that the evidence given by the Commissioners was so sensitive, I care not with one of the Commissioners, and to the best of my ability I am endeavoring to facilitate their investigation. 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