PUBLIC MEETING ON THE LAND QUESTION.

At a Meeting held on St. Peter's Road on the 3d of July inst., the following Resolutions and Addresses were unanimously agreed to:

1st. Moved by Mr. J. C. Campbell, seconded by Mr. Ronald Ban McDonald:

RESOLVED, That it is necessary to inform Her Majesty the Queen, that the Land Question is still unsettled; that the Colonial authorities govern themselves on that question by old despatches, instead of the Ordinances of the Sovereign; that such Government is not for the honor of the Sovereign; or the well-being of the inhabitants, but to enable conspirators and impostors to take a rent from the labouring class for forfeited lands. That the recent purchase of the Worrell Estates by the Government, appears to have been a flagrant conspiracy to take the public money, to confirm forfeited grants, and compel the inhabitants to pay a high price for forfeited land to refund that money. That we pray Her Majesty that such a transaction may be investigated as a warning to others, for the honor of Her Majesty, and the well-being of the community.

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty:

The Humble Petition of the Inhabitants of Prince Edward Island:

In forwarding their Petition to your Majesty, Petitioners beg leave most respectfully to renew their assurance of Loyalty and attachment to your Majesty's person and family; and their adherence to the British Constitution, and pray that your Majesty's Government, throughout the earth, may be always administered with wisdom and purity of intentions, for the honor of your Majesty—the happiness of your people—and the prosperity of all your dominions.

On looking around, on the freedom and happiness enjoyed by your Majesty's subjects in the sister Provinces, it is with sincere regret, that Petitioners have to mar the general harmony with complaints to your Majesty; but the people in the provinces hold us in derision, for submitting to become Tenants for unimproved Land; and with humiliation and shame we must own it, that the monopoly of the Land in this Island, which has been so often complained of, for a period of nearly seventy years, remains still without any redress—a hotbed and nursery for corruption and oppression.

Yet it is a great satisfaction to petitioners to have it to say, that it is not from any undue exercise of the Royal Authority; it is of the servants of the Crown we have to complain;—who have misunderstood the Royal intentions, and given encouragement to conspirators, to ensnare the labouring class of British subjects; to deprive them of their birth-right,—by placing them in the position of aliens, and reducing them to a state of bondage as Tenantry—to have them to reclaim wild lands, and pay rent for their own improvements; to enable conspirators to gain an improved Estate, by the labor and means of their fellow subjects. To explain the case more fully, it will be necessary to refer to the first colonization of America, as handed down to us.

When it became advisable to colonize America with British subjects, your Majesty's ancestors thought it necessary to grant extensive Territories to men of influence and property; who were to introduce families, and settle their grants, and to enable the Grantees to settle the people and do justice, they were empowered as lords of the land, and governors of the people. Such Grants were a public benefit for a time, for the transportation of families from where they were straitened for room, to where they had full scope for their exertions. But in process of time, it was found that the debts due by Colonists to the grantee were never to be discharged, but liable to be increased, through his influence over the Legislature and Grants which were a public benefit at first, became a benefit only to the Proprietor and his adherents, and a burthen and vexation to the rest of the community.

It is not an admitted principle in the British Constitution, that the public lands in their wild natural state, should be granted to a few persons for their own emoluments, so that other subjects who required land, must of necessity receive the land through a Grantee upon such terms as he may choose to dictate; consequently the Imperial Government had to compromise with such Grantees and revoke their Grants.

But the greatest care has been taken in the granting this Island, to avoid such difficulties. The Grants were made, that the Grantees were to defray the Colonial Civil List, and in such a manner that they should not make Tenants of British subjects. Grants were made by order of the King in Council, for Grantees who were to pay a Quit Rent to defray the Colonial Civil List, and settle their Grants within four years with Foreign Protestants, or forfeit their Grants. Foreigners had no right to a share of the public lands the same as British subjects, and although a forfeiture is not declared in the Grants for the non-payment of Quit Rent; yet a forfeiture is expressly declared for non-settlement with Foreign Protestants, which condition appears to have been introduced into all the grants, for the express purpose that the Grantees should not be landlords over their fellow-subjects. As it is implied that if the land had been fully occupied with British subjects within the term of four years, the grants must have expired *then* for non-settlement with foreigners.

But the time for settlement expired, without the introduction of foreigners, and the land remained unoccupied, a snare for British subjects who believed that the forfeiture would be enforced, and that they would be settled without disparagement, in fee-simple. Petitions from the Island to that effect, were forwarded to the Home Government as early as the year 1787, and about the year 1802, the then Lieut. Governor, had instructions to pass Acts for the regular payment of Quit Rent, and to revest the forfeited land in the Crown.

It appears, that there were only a party of the Grantees in the conspiracy to make Tenants of British subjects; and the main objects for moving in such enactments at that time, were to induce the Grantees, who were in the conspiracy, to give up their grants to the Lieut. Governor and other speculators in the Island, (for nominal or trifling sums), who would join in the conspiracy. For when the transfers were made, and the Officers of the Colonial Government, who were receiving their salaries from the Imperial Treasury, had either obtained grants for themselves, or were taken into the pay of Grantees as Land Agents, or had their forfeited lands in the Crown, which had gone through the forms and received all the solemnities of law, was suppressed.

In the year 1818, the Lieut. Governor of that day, made proclamation, that it was the pleasure of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent to release the Proprietors from the obligation of settling their grants with Foreign Protestants, provided they settled their grants with other persons within ten years from 1816. This proclamation received all the submission from the people in this Island and their representatives, as if it had been a Royal Ordinance; when after many years, it was admitted, that it had no legal foundation, and consequently it was only a fabrication to deceive the people; and the Governor paid so little regard to his proclamation, that two Townships were *then* revested in the Crown. The inhabitants were settled in fee-simple, on paying for the grant; but the object of that Escheat, appears to have been to grant land to his family and friends, to sell again to the people who intended to settle upon and improve it.

The applications which have been made to the Home Government, since the year 1832, to revest the forfeited land in the Crown, have been resisted by Ministers, upon the following grounds, viz: that the conditions were impracticable, and in consequence of which, the Grantees had indulgences, and the lands have never been forfeited; that the Landlords have a right to recover rent, because the Tenantry had covenanted to pay rent, and that the Tenantry should derive no benefit from the forfeiture, for in consequence of such covenant they would have to pay the same rent to the Crown, and which last mentioned Act was passed in the year 1803.

It would have been unnecessary to revert to the former opinions of Ministers at this time; but the Colonial Government have brought such opinions forward, as decisions of authority, to overrule and supersede later instructions, and subvert the principle of an Act, which lately received the Royal assent, which required an Officer of Government to investigate the titles of land, and as there is no appeal from the decision of the Colonial Government, but to your Majesty; it is, therefore, necessary to shew that such opinions of Ministers are not in accordance with Royal authority, and that your Petitioners desire no more than is consistent with reason, and for the honor of your Majesty to grant.

Grants of land are not made, but on the Petition of some person or party, and there are many unreasonable Petitioners, and on referring to the grants of this Island, where four years only are allowed to introduce and settle one-third of each grant with foreigners, and an annual Quit Rent of from three shillings to six shillings per hundred acres required to defray the Colonial Civil List, it leads to a belief that, instead of the grants being rewards for services, (as has been represented in this Island), it has more the appearance of a well merited *rebuke* from the Sovereign to unreasonable Petitioners, who had a desire to be landlords over their fellow subjects; and many of them must have *felt* the rebuke, who never took up their grants. But when they or impostors in their stead, after many years, found the land occupied and improved by British subjects, and that they had the indulgence of Ministers, and the authority of the Colonial Government to deprive such persons of their improvements, or compel them to pay rent, then the impostors followed the example of the conspirators.

Thus the order of the King in Council, which was intended to save Great Britian from the expense of the Colonial Civil List, and to save British subjects from being imposed upon by the Grantees, was subverted by ministers to give indulgence to conspirators and impostors, to enable them to claim the land and improvements of British subjects—worth at least a million of pounds sterling,—while Great Britain has been taxed to defray the Colonial Civil List, about £300,000 sterling.

The conspirators and impostors claimed not only the land granted, but the lands reserved for Fisheries. They had the Colonial Ministers, Governors and Officers to lend the land under toils, so that to acknowledge a conspirator or impostor as landlord, the Tenant could never afterwards dispute his title, and to commence improvements upon land without such acknowledgment, incurred an action of trespass, or a Writ of Ejectment. Such are the toils set against men, the scope of whose learning was to know their catechism, and say their prayers, and their education to be charitable, just in their dealings, obedient to the laws, and earn their bread by labour; consequently such men could not plead their own cause to the Sovereign against such influence opposed to them, or avoid being taken in the snares.

But it was not from a want of spirit of manliness that they did not resist their oppressors, it was from the certainty, that such actions would be misrepresented to the Sovereign, and that any outbursts of indignation would demoralize the inhabitants.

Applications to Colonial Ministers, for a settlement of the Land Question, have been resisted, until the year 1851, when Earl Grey instructed Sir Alexander Bannerman to use his influence to have the question settled in an equitable manner, by Legislative enactment; and an Act was passed for the Colonial Government to buy up the land from the landlords, and sell it again to the tenants. But as such an Act could not become Law, without the Royal Assent, nor be presented for your Majesty's confirmation, to allow of a purchase of *forfeited* lands for such a purpose. But to obtain your Majesty's confirmation, the following words were inserted in the Act without the intention of acting upon them, viz: "The Commissioner of Public Lands shall investigate, or cause to be investigated the titles of such lands; and he shall make a report of the result of such examination and investigation to the Government."

And for the first purchase of land under this Act, the report of the Attorney General's investigation of the *Titles* is in the following words, viz: "The conditions of settlement in all the Grants are the usual conditions, and being known to the Government, I have deemed it unnecessary to advert to them, in the foregoing abstract;" and the usual conditions for settlement in the Grants referred to, are in the following words, viz: "and the said Grantees further bind and oblige themselves, their heirs and assigns, to settle the said Lot or Township hereby granted within ten years from the date hereof, with Protestant settlers, in the proportions of one person to every two hundred acres—said Protestant settlers to be introduced from such parts of Europe as are not within His Majesty's dominions, or to be such persons as have resided within His Majesty's dominions of America two years antecedent to the date hereof; and if the said Grantees, shall not settle one-third of the said Lot or Township, in the proportion aforesaid, within four years from the date hereof, then the whole of the said Lot or Township, shall become forfeited to his Majesty, his heirs and successors; and this Grant shall be void and of none effect."

And the following case of a purchase of Land, by the colonial Government, under the Land Purchase Act, is submitted to show that the clause introduced into that Act, viz: "for the investigation of the titles of land," has been introduced for the purpose of deceiving your Majesty, as it has not been acted upon, in the first purchase under the Act.

Certain Townships and tracts of land, called the Worrell Estate, over 80,000acres, were offered last winter for the Government purchase. The Estates were in the hands of trustees, and the Attorney General, their reputed law agent, the trustees had mortgaged the Estate to satisfy themselves; but apparently to give a color to the validity of their titles, and Joseph Pope, together with his son and two others, purchased the Estates in London from Worrell, for £500 sterling—the mortgage of £9000 currency to be settled for in the Island—and the Government purchased the Estates from them for about £25,000, without *investigating* the titles. Joseph Pope was Treasurer of this Colony, a Member of the Executive and of the House of Assembly, when the Land Purchase Act was passed, and must have known *then*, or have been informed of it by his former colleagues in office, that the *titles* of land were *not* to be *investigated*, so that he could not be forestall the Government and gain a large profit, about £19,000; and the same applies to the mortgage of £9000. Such are the Acts, as far as they are known, of a secret tribunal—the Commissioner of Public Lands and Attorney General being members of the same body—to *investigate titles*, to buy with the public money, and sell, to the public, without any appeal from their decision, but to your Majesty. And as the Act referred to received your Majesty's special confirmation, we pray that your Majesty will be graciously pleased to order the case to be investigated, for the Honor of your Majesty, your crown and dignity.

It appears the Executive had another object in view, in making such a purchase without investigating the titles, viz: *to confirm forfeited Grants* by *precedent*, which could not be confirmed by law, to fix a price for land as a criterion for Landlord and Tenant, the average quality of land, 30 miles from Market at 12s 6d per acre.

It was publicly reported, and has not been denied, that the late Lieut. Governor, who was authorized to concede Responsible Government to this Colony, in the year 1851, pledged his Council, before they were allowed to take office, that they would maintain the forfeited Grants, and not seek or allow the titles to be investigated; and yet the same Governor, gave his assent to the Land Purchase Act, which required the titles to *be* investigated.

A motion was made in the House of Assembly, that a Court of competent Jurisdiction be appointed to investigate the titles of land, according to the Act for authorizing the Government to purchase land; but the motion was lost through the same influence as above. Such are the consequences of granting indulgence to one party, to deprive others of their property; and it is lamentable, that a power should exist in