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MAY 5 1936

TO THE

ELECTORS

OF THE

COLBORNE DISTRICT.

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Gentlemen,--

I believe the present to be a proper time for me to address you. In doing so I have, in the first place, to assure you that I am influenced by no unworthy motive, but solely by reasons and feelings which should be and I trust are common to every inhabitant of this great country, viz: a desire of public good and a desire to preserve the people in their Constitutional rights and liberties. If I were influenced by any other motive I should be disgracing myself and insulting you.

Gentlemen, I am emphatically one of the people. I am what our would be aristocracy would call one of the Yeomanry of the country; that is to say—I lay claims to no higher pretensions than the rest of my fellow men. But, at the same time, being a British born subject, I am jealous of my rights, and I claim the same freedom which every one is entitled to under British Laws, and the British Constitution. I say I am jealous of my rights, and, believe me, there is good reason for my saying it. As freemen we ought at all times to be so, *but never more so than now.*

The present is an important crisis. It is big with events, which men, who are not far-sighted, do not foresee. A contest has lately, most unexpectedly, sprung up between the Executive and the country, which involves in its principles the greatest danger to the province and which if successful will scatter to the four winds of Heaven every vestige of Canadian liberty and trample under foot the dearest blessings of the people. It is a contest which is now raging in every part of British America and which is intended to crush and break down every noble aspiration and every warm and generous feeling, in fine it is a contest by which it is meant to subvert *Responsible Government*, and substitute in its place the old system of Irresponsibility and Family Compact

power, and to place the necks of the people again under the foot of Executive tyranny.

Let the people therefore beware. Let them be fully alive to the importance of passing events. Let them not think too lightly of what, at first sight, may appear to be trifling and of small moment. They may be assured that beneath a fair exterior are at work means which they little dream of, that beneath the apparently smooth surface runs a black, dark current which may sweep away the last remnant of our prosperity and our liberties. *Let them therefore not be deceived.* This is my solemn warning and I again tell you *beware.*

The difficulty between his Excellency and his Council involves the dearest principles of our Government. If the Country stands true to itself all will yet go well, but if through deception and misrepresentation or by any means the people desert their friends and support the Governor General in his present course, they will commit an error which they may never retrieve.

But before I proceed any further in my observations, I will endeavor to give you a plain account of our present difficulties, and when I have done so, I think you will admit that this is an important crisis in our affairs. Of course I need not tell you that formerly we had no such thing as a proper Constitutional Administration in the Province. That our affairs were conducted in the worst manner, and that consequently dissatisfaction and discontent among the people existed to a most alarming extent—so much so that the British Government found it necessary to send out here Lord Durham, one of her best and greatest Statesmen, to inquire into, and remedy the numberless abuses of which we complain. He made and published his celebrated Report, which doubtless, every one has either read or heard of. In it he clearly and forcibly pointed out our grievances and the remedy for them. He then returned to England and died. Next came Lord Sydenham. Treading as nearly as possible in the footsteps of Lord Durham, he

introduced a system of Government based upon just principles and which recognised the legitimate influence of the people. In fact he established what is fondly called, "Responsible Government."

Now what is meant by this is that the local affairs of the Country shall be administered in accordance with the wishes of the people as expressed through their Representatives in Parliament, that is to say that no measure of Government should be carried out unless sanctioned by a majority of our Representatives. And that the Governor should have a Council possessing the confidence of the Country, whose advice he should ask in all the affairs of his Government.

The moment this was promulgated and acted upon, the people became satisfied. It was all they asked. It was a transcript of the system of Government enjoyed in England, and they wanted no more. It would insure them the utmost extent of political and religious freedom. Lord Sydenham died lamented and he was followed by the just and the good, Sir Charles Bagot, who also governed with honor to himself and happiness to the Country. He died and his memory will ever live in the hearts of a grateful people.

Then came our present Governor General, Sir Charles T. Metcalfe, a man who by his talents and from his success elsewhere, promised to be as popular a Governor as his two predecessors. He found the Country tranquil and happy and he saw prosperity springing up and advancing on every side. He too *professed* to carry out the same system of Responsible Government. Occasionally, however, suspicions arose that all was not right, but still His Excellency enjoyed the character of sincerity. The character and popularity of his advisers gave a sure guarantee to all his acts. Through his Council his Excellency possessed the strongest administration that was ever enjoyed by any Governor in this Province.

The meeting of the Parliament which has just passed by was looked forward to by the people with strong

hope and anxious expectation. The Council came down to the House determined not to disappoint the just desires of the Country. Never before in the annals of Canada were so many just and good measures brought forward. Never before were the interests of all classes and conditions of our fellow subjects so honestly dealt by. Legislation was no longer to be a mockery—one section of the people was not to be enriched at the expense of all the rest—one religious denomination was not to be built up and all others pulled down—but all were equally to be dealt with and all were considered equal.

Just at this moment of happy confidence, the Council rose and informed the House that they had resigned. That circumstances had rendered it incumbent upon them to refuse any longer to carry on the Government of the Country—seeing that they could not do so with honor to themselves and with profit to the people. The announcement was received by Parliament with consternation. Mr. Baldwin then stated that as he and his colleagues entered upon Office *under the avowed principles of Responsible Government*, and that system of Government being the only one suited to the Country and with which they and the people would be satisfied, *and that having been denied by His Excellency*, they had resigned. No Council possessed of common honesty could have done otherwise.

Immediately we see the Tories seizing upon the event as a means by which to regain their lost power. Every course is resorted to, every circumstance is seized upon for that purpose. Meetings are called, inflammatory harangues are addressed to the people. A false colouring is given to every act of the late Council, and they who were the true friends of the people, are held up as the enemies of the Country.

Addresses are poured in upon the Governor to induce him to persevere, and ultimately to dissolve the House, and to throw the Country again into anarchy and confusion. There is not a doubt but His Excellency will carry out their intentions. He has thrown himself

wholly into their arms, and he must now stand or fall by his own folly. He has eagerly entered the arena of political warfare—the Tories presuming that with the weight of his character and influence to succeed in carrying a majority of the Constituencies of the Province.

But they will be mistaken, and His Excellency will find when it is too late that he has wofully deceived himself. However much the people may respect him personally, and however strong may be their admiration of his abilities, still they will be sure to draw a broad line of distinction between the man himself and his acts. They will undeceive His Excellency in the opinion which he seems to entertain, that the people of Canada have no fixed principles of political economy. The people are not now as they were once. They have become enlightened and I will venture to affirm that in no portion of the wide spread dominions of the British Crown can a more intelligent population be found than in Canada.

Since the fall of the Family Compact, it has been the unceasing aim of the Government, to stimulate a desire for knowledge among the people, and to instruct them in their rightful duties as British freemen. It will therefore be a difficult matter now to persuade them to believe that black is white and to induce them to divest themselves of all their legitimate influence, and intrust their lives and their liberties into the hands of their enemies: The time has gone by when a few designing knaves could sport with the will of the whole country.

The High Church Tory Party may strive to retain the present exclusive and intollerant character of King's College, in opposition to the Royal will and to the interests and feelings of nine tenths of the people. They may insult and stigmatise as heretics and blasphemers Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists and all other religious bodies in the Province. They may for a short time stem the tide of public opinion, but they will never be allowed to perpetuate the evils of an Institution, which in its inception is not surpassed on the whole Con-

tion of America. The generous Grant by our late Sovereign, of a large portion of the public domain for the education of the youth of this Province, will not be suffered to fall into the hands of the High Church Party, and thereby exclude all other religious denominations from its benefits.

There is no doubt in my mind but the Bill brought in by Mr. Baldwin to liberalise that Institution and throw it open to all classes, has been one cause of the difficulties between the Governor and His Council. Influenced by Bishop Strachan—who calls that bill *atheistical*—he has hastened a rupture to prevent its becoming a law. *But will the people suffer this.* Will they desert Mr. Baldwin, because he sought to prevent the High Church party from monopolising all the great sources of Education and to extend them equally to all, and because he sought to place all other religious denominations beyond the assaults and insults of Bishop Strachan and his Church. I think not, else have I formed a most erroneous opinion of their independence and integrity.

I do not believe that in the wide extent of Canada, there is to be found one man whose bosom would not swell with honest indignation at the bare idea of ever seeing his children obliged to submit to the galling position of inferiority to others, because they may have been less favored by fortune, or because they have been taught to worship their Maker in a "Dissenting" Church, and whose heart would not bleed at witnessing the slights and contempt heaped upon them by our would be aristocracy, because they are the children of humble but honest parents, and do not enjoy offices of power and emolument under the Crown. *So long as there is no responsibility to the people so long will these odious distinctions exist.* It therefore rests with the people themselves to do away with them through *Responsible Government.*

A good deal is said by the Tories about French domination and French ascendancy, and about Upper Canada being taxed for the benefit of the French, for

the purpose of making Upper Canadians believe that their interests are sacrificed to Lower Canada. But I hope it is not necessary for me to tell you that this is utterly false, and that these assertions are merely clap-traps to arouse the prejudices and fears of Upper Canada against Reformers, for the purpose of strengthening the Tory Party. The Tories would exterminate every person of French origin in Lower Canada. They would deny them any participation in our laws or Government. But it is not so with Upper Canada Reformers. They regard every subject of Queen Victoria as friends, and it is because the French are Reformers, and unite with the Upper Canada Reformers in their just efforts after an impartial administration, and therefore compose a majority of nine-tenths of the people and so keep the Tories out of power, that all the cry is raised about French domination and French ascendancy.

The interests of Upper Canada Reformers are identical with the Reformers of Lower Canada, and they have too much justice and too much regard for their own welfare to allow themselves to be thus split up and and so place the Tories again in power. They know that such a step would forever ruin them, and prostrate their party.

It was, I verily believe, with this view of dividing the Upper Canada Reformers, that the Seat of Government Question was so injudiciously referred back to the Legislature of this Province. The authors of that step naturally supposed that it would arouse the local interests and prejudices of the two sections of the Country, and that it would place them in direct antagonism to each other. If so, then they assumed that the same effects would exhibit themselves powerfully in the House, and that as a necessary consequence the Ministry must fall to the ground. This was at once foreseen and every man of common penetration immediately detected the trick. The Reformers therefore fully alive to the importance of the subject, took the only course left them,

and they preferred the loss of the Seat of Government to the destruction of their party. But after all, generally speaking, our loss is not a great one. It is more imaginary than otherwise. The principal difficulty is the prejudices of the people. But prejudices must not be allowed to stand in the way of real good *and minor considerations must give way to the higher interests of the Country.*

Another bug-bear held up by the Tories to frighten and influence the people of Upper Canada against Reformers is an Assessment Law, introduced in the last Session of Parliament. They try to make out that that measure was oppressive and inquisitorial, and that by it Upper Canada was to be taxed for the benefit of Lower Canada. Now I happen to know as much about that measure as the Tories, and I can affirm that it was neither oppressive nor inquisitorial nor was it partial in its operation. It is true that when the bill was first laid upon the table of the House, it contained what was thought by some to be one or two objectionable clauses. But they were expunged, and I have no hesitation in saying that if that bill had become a law, it would have been a popular one among the people. *It particularly favored the poor man and the farmer, and it is because it removed the unequal burthen of taxation from them to the great Capitalist and Landowner, that it is so hated by them.* It seems not to be known, that this bill laid on *no taxes.* But such is the fact. It merely declared the species of property upon which taxes were to be levied and the manner of doing so—and then it was left to the people to tax themselves to what extent they might see fit. Heretofore all land was assessed equally, and great complaint was made for this unjust mode of taxation—but by this bill it was proposed to do away with this system, and to assess all land according to its respective value. Now, I ask, would this have been a bad or unpopular law. I am sure any man will say no, and, further that it was just such a law as was wanted.

But why should the people give heed to statements of

the Tories about that bill, *when they must know that they are advancing them for their own political purposes.* Why should they be carried away by misrepresentations made by their political opponents about a measure which they have not seen, and when they have no certain means of knowing the truth or falsity of them. It is because the people are ignorant of the proposed assessment bill that the Tories intend to profit by it. They know that they can easily make statements, and they also know that it is far easier to make them, be they ever so false, than to rebut those statements after they are once made, and circulated through the Country.

It may not be amiss for me here, to remark that so far from the late Ministry increasing or wishing to increase the burthens of the people, *they did the very reverse.* It is well known that by the Union Act, Canada is saddled with a most outrageously exorbitant Civil List, far beyond the necessities or resources of the Country. Who will not say so when I inform him that *it exceeds the annual sum of £75,000.* Who will deny it when he reflects that all this is wrung from the hard earnings of the people, and who will not strive for its revision and its reduction, when he is told that over the payment of this enormous sum *the Province has no control.* Influenced therefore by the most noble motives, Mr. Baldwin and his colleagues endeavored to diminish it, and they accordingly presented a tariff which, if it had been accepted by the Imperial Government, would have saved the Country *more than £15,000 a year.* But although it was rejected, the people ought, at least, to thank the late Ministry for their disinterested exertions. They must not forget that it is *Reformers* who not only insist upon the reduction of public salaries, *but upon the right of the people of this Province to all control over all charges upon the public revenue.*

I must again refer to the difficulties between the Governor General and his late Council. I do so because it is a matter of the utmost importance to the people of Canada, that they should fully understand the question

and the principles involved in it. There is no doubt in my mind that in it is involved the whole question of Responsible Government, and I would therefore enforce upon the people a full knowledge of the case and have them understand, if possible, the effects of it, and the consequences necessarily attendant upon it.

By our Constitution and by the system of Responsible Government introduced into this Province and sanctioned and established by the Resolutions of 1841, the Governor is to have a Provincial Council, possessed of the confidence of the people, who are to advise him upon all the local affairs of the country. It could not be expected, in common reason, that a Governor coming here, necessarily a stranger to the Country, and to its wants and feelings, could of himself carry out his Government without the advice of somebody. To meet this he is required to form a Council of men resident in the Province, who are to advise him fairly for the public good, and to insure the people against any injustice in this respect, the members of this Council are not only to have a seat in our Legislature, but they must carry a majority in Parliament. So long therefore as their measures are popular they will stand, when they cease to be so they must fall.

It is in this way that the people exercise a control over the affairs of the Country. It is in this way that they secure the due administration of the Government, and it is in this that their whole security lies.

This is the grand principle of Responsible Government. If it was not so, if the Governor were not obliged to have such a Council, possessing the confidence of the Country, and should apply to and be influenced by persons behind the door, in whom the people have no confidence, what security could we have that our affairs would be conducted honestly and according to public opinion. Certainly none. That would just be a repetition of the old Family Compact system of Government, and the Country would become again a prey to the worst abuses and to a faction.

Had Sir Charles Metcalfe followed up the policy of Lord Sydenham and Sir Charles Bagot, there would have been no difficulty with his Council, and the public business would not now be interrupted. *He contended that he was not bound to advise with His Council, more especially in making appointments to Offices in the Country.*

This he says is a prerogative of the Crown, *with which the people have nothing to do.* Why all his acts as Governor are prerogative, if he choose so to call it, and he might therefore with just as much reason or justice affirm, that in no case ought he to advise with His Council, because the matters about which he would have to take their advice belonged to the prerogative of the Crown.

But let me tell you that in no part of our Colonial Administration, are the people more deeply interested than in the selection of fit and proper persons to fill offices of trust in the Province. That duty is paramount to all others. If therefore the Governor is not bound to ask the advice of His Council, in matters of such deep moment to the people, he may well say that he is not bound to do it at all.

The fact is he is determined to break up Responsible Government, and this is the grand beginning. He could not have taken a better means of doing so. If the people are to have no voice in appointments to Office among themselves, the time will very soon arrive when they will have no voice at all. Mr. Baldwin and his colleagues saw this and they therefore resigned.

Now this is the true issue between the Governor and the Country. It is responsibility or no responsibility. It is whether the Government of the Country is to be carried on in accordance with the wishes and interests of the people, or for the benefit of the Family Compact. It is whether the people are to be any thing or nothing, whether their Legislature is to be respected or treated with contempt. It is whether we are to be chained down to the wheel of Executive tyranny, without any

voice or influence in the Government of the Country, or
whether we shall enjoy the British Constitution.

A REFORMER.

Peterboro, January 1st, 1844.

