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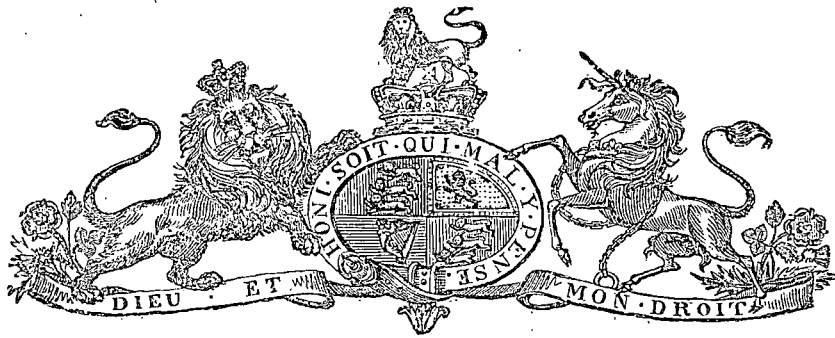
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

PUBLIC WORKS.

ARTICLES IN "CORNWALL CHRONICLE."

Return to an Order of the Council dated August 19, 1864. (Mr. Kermode.)

Presented by Mr. Wilson, and ordered by the Council to be printed,
August 23, 1864.



PUBLIC WORKS.

[Extract from CORNWALL CHRONICLE, 13th July, 1864.]

THE intention of Ministers to propose a scheme of Public Works suited to the circumstances of the Colony, has been more than hinted by the Colonial Treasurer. In his financial statement he informed us, that some £70,000 or £80,000 would be proposed to be spent in certain localities, and for purposes which he indicated. Roads are to be made through the heavily timbered districts, where the soil and other circumstances give promise of an adequate return for the outlay. Bridges are to be built, and agricultural areas to be laid out. So far as promises go, nothing can be better. But the great question still remains to be decided—the question upon the wise determination of which every thing depends. Who is to direct, and be responsible for, the outlay and the work done? This is the question.

We have already had ample experience of what can be done with the public money, when placed under the control of the Survey Department—or a Board, such as we saw divided by internal dissensions into Northern and Southern departments. What have we got for £14,000 or £15,000 voted to open roads in the Devon and other Northern districts—or at least so much of it, as was lavished under the direct superintendence of the Surveyor-General? Parliamentary Returns, in reference to this subject, accessible to every member of both Houses, ought to be carefully studied before a single shilling is voted for the construction of Roads. The data thus provided prove two facts, rendered by them indisputable, viz., that the Survey Department ought not to be entrusted with the expending of one shilling—and that the frequently expressed opinion of former Parliaments ought to be carried by appointing a Minister of Lands and Works, who would be specially responsible to the country. This is the only country enjoying the right of self-government, in all the British colonies, where the pursuit of agriculture is followed to any extent, and where a Minister specially responsible for the moneys expended on Public Works is not provided. The necessity for such a Minister here, the expense of the last few years places beyond a doubt. For all the expenses incurred in road-making, there is not half a mile of practical road-making to be found either North or South, wherever the Survey Department has been allowed to interfere. From whichever cause it arises—the impracticability of co-operating on the same Board with the Surveyor-General has been long established. He will work with no one. To offer a suggestion is taken as an insult—but to disagree in opinion with him, is quite sufficient to let loose the flood-gates of his unmeasured abuse. Until we know under whose direction the money proposed to be voted for Roads and Bridges is to be expended, we shall refrain from encouraging any hopes as to the probable consequences on the future of the Colony, which the initiation of any liberal project for the opening up of the Country might justify. Every thing depends upon the character and ability of those to whom the responsibility of the expenditure is to be attached. But we protest against the absurdity of again entrusting either the expenditure for, or the planning of, the Works to be paid for by the public to the Surveyor-General. He has quite enough to do in his own department—and his meddling with the Roads, about which he has shown his entire ignorance, has cost the Colony quite enough already.

REPRODUCTIVE WORKS.

[Extract from CORNWALL CHRONICLE, 20th July, 1864.]

WE have already expressed pretty freely our opinions upon the probable consequences of leaving to the Survey Department the carrying out of what is termed REPRODUCTIVE WORKS. We again take the opportunity of reiterating our objections to any interference upon the part of the Surveyor-General or his Department. Every corner of the Island bears witness to the incompetency of the Surveyor-General as a Constructor or Surveyor of Roads. His sole purpose is to sell, not to settle, the lands. Once they are from under his control, it matters not a stiver whether those who purchase them are able to bring the produce of their labour to market or not. The land is sold, and the first business of his Department is accomplished. *Nay, heretofore it was supposed to be the interest of the Government he represents, that purchasers or settlers should not have inducements to remain on the allotments originally acquired—for in their despair they became purchasers perhaps two or three times over, in the vain hope of acquiring some spot of land from which the labour of their hands could reach markets. In this way unfortunate settlers were compelled by their necessities to enter the public auction mart, perhaps, two or three times oftener than their circumstances warranted. The principle of selling, not settling, the land is largely predominant in the ministerial scheme; but this we hope to see modified by discussion, and amendments conducted and carried through from a disinterested desire to benefit the public interests.*

NOTE.—The passages in *italics* contain the statements that I have replied to.—J. E. CALDER.

Survey Office, 9th August, 1864.

SIR,

I BEG to attract your attention to the two extracts cut from *The Cornwall Chronicle*, of the 13th and 20th ultimo, which head this letter; the first of which contains statements against me, as Head of the Survey Department, and as a Member of the Board of Works, so opposed to truth, that to let them pass without explanation would be to neglect a duty which I owe not only to myself, but to others with whom I acted in some important matters relating to the opening of the Crown Lands; while the second charges the Government and this Department with acts of a most discreditable nature, which never took place.

The papers from which I have taken the extracts that stand at the head of this letter were not seen by me till a few days ago, or I should have addressed you before this about them,—and the more particularly so, as they abound in premonitions to the Parliament (which will soon be asked to vote considerable sums for certain Public Works, in the designing of which I took a subordinate part), wherein my perfect untrustworthiness in everything relating to the expenditure of public money is affirmed.

The misstatements made in the extract taken from *The Cornwall Chronicle* of the 13th ultimo are three—*Firstly*, that the lavish and unprofitable expenditure of £14,000 or £15,000 on roads, &c., in Devon and other northern countries is mainly due to me; *secondly*, that I grossly insulted every Member of the Board of Works who offered me any hint or suggestion that varied from my own ideas; and *thirdly*, that I was entirely ignorant of the duties that the Board entrusted to me, of laying out such roads as it designed to clear.

In discussing the matter contained in the first statement, it will be necessary to show what share I had in the expenditure of the £14,000 or £15,000 in question,—the chief, or even the sole, responsibility of which it is the design of the writer to attach to me.

That I had very little to do with it, and that that little was done either in connexion with or by desire of my Colleagues, I hope to be able to show.

I may here state, that the Board of Works was instituted by a Resolution of the House of Assembly, of the 7th September, 1860. It was to consist of Five Members at least, of whom, so it is stated, “the Colonial Treasurer, the Surveyor-General, and the Director of Public Works shall be members.” The same Resolution placed £12,000 at its disposal, “to be appropriated to roads and bridges.”

The Board of Works, consisting of six persons, (1. Colonial Treasurer; 2. Surveyor-General; 3. Director of Public Works; 4. Deputy-Commissioner of Crown Lands, Launceston; 5. W. A. Tully, Esquire; 6. John Forster, Esquire;) was formally appointed on the 12th of November following. It held its first meeting on the 20th of the same month, its chief business then being to receive my Report of the districts to be opened by roads, of which very extensive examinations had lately been made by myself and other Surveyors. The Report pointed out those portions of the Colony where some of the largest tracts of good crown land lay, naming approximately the areas on the north and south sides of the Island,—namely 450,000 acres in Dorset, Devon, and Wellington, and about half that quantity in Buckingham and Kent (illustrated by a map that I exhibited). Hence I suggested that the grant it was entrusted with to open the same should be expended in proportion to the areas of good crown lands which were then known to exist on either side of the Island,—namely, £8000 for the North, and £4000 for the South. The Report also suggested the number of miles of road (which roads were all shown on the map) to be laid out and cleared through the lands above referred to; and recommended that no road should exceed a width of fifteen feet. The Report was then adopted without dissent.

At the same meeting a Resolution was carried, that “the Surveyor-General, the Deputy-Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Northern side of the Island, and the Inspecting Surveyor be a Sub-Committee to frame definite proposals to be submitted to the Board at an adjourned meeting to be held on Thursday, at 2 o’clock,” which proposals were presented and received.

The proposals detailed all essential particulars about the cost of the works to be performed; and, so far as they related to the lands in the North, they proposed the following expenditure:—

	£
For Dorset	3500
For Devon	3000
For Wellington	1000
For Hobbler’s Bridge	500
	<hr/>
	£8000
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After the submission of these proposals, several Resolutions were passed; two of which I must refer to, as they relate to the matters charged against me in the *Chronicle*. They will show (as indeed all other proceedings of the Board will) that I never acted alone in any thing connected with its duties,—any more, indeed, than that I assumed the dominant position amongst, and the outrageously insolent demeanour towards, my colleagues which the *Chronicle* asserts I did.

The first of these Resolutions directed Mr. Tully and myself to prepare the instructions under which the Surveyors to be employed by the Board were to act. The same were presented and read on the 5th January, 1861, and were adopted. The second Resolution directed that all Tenders for Northern works should be addressed to a Member, who was directed “to forward them to the Surveyor-General to be laid before a meeting of such Members as may be in Hobart Town, by whom the same will be accepted or rejected.” This last Resolution I desire to direct attention to, as its violation soon afterwards led to the separation of the Board into Northern and Southern Sub-Boards (20th May, 1861), and to my disconnexion, except nominally, with Northern works, further than this, that I ordered a few road surveys for the Northern Sub-Board by request.

Up to the date of my disconnexion with Northern works, only *four* tenders had been accepted, and *four* others called for, whose value was represented by £1171 3s. 9d., or about one-twelfth of the sum for which the *Cornwall Chronicle* would make me mainly, if not wholly responsible. With all ulterior expenditure I had nothing whatever to do.

Having said thus much about my own share in Northern works, I will here detail certain transactions of the Board that immediately preceded its separation, and from which that separation arose, which most certainly was not caused by any difficulty of working with me.

It will be seen that the Board determined at its first meeting that no road with which it had to do should have a greater width than *fifteen* feet; and furthermore, that it passed a Resolution on the 22nd of November, 1860, that all Tenders for Northern works should be addressed to a Member, who was to forward them through me to his colleagues for their consideration. But I soon after discovered that the Resolutions above alluded to (which I, for one, thought should be respected) were departed from.

In forgetfulness of these Resolutions, two tenders for clearing, fencing, and levelling $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles of the Patersonia line *thirty* feet wide, or twice the authorised width, were accepted without reference to the Board; and, as these tenders had to pass through me, it became my duty to report this oversight to the Board at its first meeting, which took place on the 8th of April, 1861, when the Members present unanimously recorded their disapproval of the procedure.

The censure which this disapproval implied gave offence that was not intended, and the influence of some of the Members of the Board obtained its revocation on the 26th April. Two of them being very earnest, and the rest indifferent about its withdrawal, it was rescinded; and about three weeks after (during which nothing of any moment took place to cause the least ill-will or dissension at the Board) it was separated into two Sub-Boards, each acting quite independently of, and holding no correspondence with, the other. Henceforward I, who am charged by the *Chronicle* writer with such gross mismanagement of Northern works, had absolutely nothing to do with them,—though their cost must have amounted, if this writer may be trusted, to £13,000 or £14,000 after my connexion with them terminated.

The Northern Board, in carrying out its duties, undertook several works that cost nearly £3000 that formed no portion of the design of thoroughfares originally planned by me, which had very little to do with the occupation of the back crown lands; but on those works that I did design for Devon and Dorset the Board expended (in clearing only, *without other improvement*) the sum of £3497 12s. 3d., exclusive of the cost of surveys and superintendence. On these roads we have since disposed of no less than 16,609 acres, almost all at 20s. per acre, or three or four times more than they cost; which fact completely damnifies the statement of their inutility, as well as the one that asserts my ignorance in planning useful works.

Some small alterations were, indeed, made in these roads by the Northern Board, but with what views I know not: but this I may say, that every reliable authority I have conferred with as to the value of these alterations has pronounced them to be injurious to their utility. Surveyors Tully, Babbington, Hall, Thomas, and Scott, have all expressed themselves disapprovingly of them either verbally or in writing. The opinion of Mr. Tully, who was officially deputed by the Board to examine the whole of them, is very decisive. He thus writes of them as they were originally laid out, and as they were afterwards altered by the Northern Sub-Board:—

“Without one exception the roads in both Dorset and Devon were marked out in the most careful and creditable manner.”

* * * * *

“I am only aware of one* instance (that of the road from Tarleton to the Kentish Track) in which any modification of the original survey was carried out,—and in that case I doubt very much whether any improvement was made in the line referred to.”†

The ignorance displayed in these works, for which the writer in the *Chronicle* abuses me so liberally, was, therefore, none of mine.

I have dwelt at some length on the subject of these roads, as it has been far too much the fashion on the other side of the Island to ascribe the blame of their mismanagement, if any, to the wrong person. That several of these roads have been tampered with by Contractors (in Dorset particularly) is, I fear, correct, notwithstanding that nearly £540 was spent by the Northern Sub-Board in two years in the general superintendence of their works. Of this Board's mismanagement, whatever it has been, I have hitherto borne the blame quietly, because no opportunity has been afforded me before this occasion of showing how very little I had to do with them; and even now I might, perhaps, not concern myself to correct the mistake, only that I believe these articles have been written to produce a prejudice with some against me, just at a moment when Parliament is about to discuss the question of Reproductive Works, in the design of which I have been permitted to take a secondary part.

The charge that I deported myself to my colleagues with unbearable insolence seems to carry its own refutation with it; for would such men as Messieurs Chapman, Innes, Forster, Falconer, and Tully have continued to act with me for more than two years had my demeanour towards them been of the offensive nature that this writer declares it was?

I hope that what I have said before about the success that has attended the clearing of such roads as I designed (imperfectly as that work may have been done) will be a sufficient answer to all the statements about my ignorance of designing useful works; but if not, I would then refer to the frequency with which I have been employed in past times on these duties, which would not have been entrusted to me had I not understood my business. The road up the difficult Native Tier and onward to Bronti, near Marlborough, was designed by me, and many a score of miles elsewhere also; and any one who desires a familiar example of the style in which my roads were always planned, may quickly satisfy himself by visiting that part of the direct Huon line that lies between the City boundary and “Hall's Saddle,” which is my work.

The remaining charge, in the last half of the second extract, that it has been the policy of the Government to force purchasers of Crown Land to abandon their Selections that they might have to buy again and again, is quickly disposed of. I have had the Registers of the Survey Office searched; and the Report of the gentleman entrusted with this duty is, that no instance can be discovered of a defaulting Selector making a second purchase, which is the best answer that can be given to such an untruth.

I remain, Sir,

Your very obedient Servant,

The Hon. J. E. CALDER.

The Hon. Colonial Treasurer.

* There was another change in the direction of a line, but which was never cleared; many alterations were made by Contractors.

† Letter 13th July, 1863.