

No. 34.

COPY of a DESPATCH from Governor GREY to the Right Hon. Earl GREY.  
(No. 29.)

MY LORD,—

Wellington, New Zealand, 8th February, 1851.

I have the honour to transmit, for your Lordship's information, a letter addressed to your Lordship by Mr. John Dorset, enclosing some resolutions passed at a public meeting at which he appears to have been chairman. I at the same time enclose a newspaper containing the copy of a report drawn up by a committee who appear to have been appointed at this public meeting. No copy of this report has been furnished to me for transmission to your Lordship, and I delayed sending the resolutions now enclosed to so late a date in the hope of having a copy of the report forwarded to me in the usual manner, that I have now no time, if I transmit these papers by the present opportunity, to make the full report upon this subject for your Lordship's information which I had intended. One wrong proceeding has certainly been adopted in reference to the enclosed report, which is that it was not in any way made public until the 29th of January, although it was well known that the vessel by which it was to be sent Home was to sail direct for England upon the 7th or 8th of February. Thus even the settlers of Wellington and its neighbourhood have had no opportunity of expressing their opinions upon the subject, whilst the inhabitants of the out-settlements will even have no knowledge of what has been sent Home until it is too late for them to take any steps upon the subject.

To illustrate the extreme difficulty of the question of what is the best form of constitution which can be given to New Zealand, and the extensive local knowledge of the various distantly separated colonies in these Islands, which is requisite for the formation of a sound opinion upon this subject, I will direct your Lordship's attention to the positive contradiction which the report now enclosed gives to that transmitted from Nelson by the coadjutors of the preparers of the present report, and that upon a most important subject. The report from Nelson was transmitted in my Despatch No. 15, of the 29th of January last. It contained the following statement in reference to the qualifications which I proposed for electors: "In proposing the resolution in question, the qualification recommended by His Excellency the Governor-in-Chief in his despatch to your Lordship, dated the 29th November, 1848 (No. 106), was carefully considered, and it was found that, although that qualification might in the abstract be deemed a low one, it would, at the present time, practically exclude a large proportion of the owners and occupiers of land and houses in this settlement. It was found that a considerable portion of the rural land in the settlement was let in lots of from ten to thirty acres, at a present average rent insufficient to confer the proposed franchise. It was also found that very many of the houses in the Town of Nelson, which are hastily constructed of the cheapest materials, chiefly wood, and are of the smallest possible dimensions, do not yield a rent of £10 per annum. But it was not found that in point of independence or intelligence any of the persons paying the lower rent were inferior in the slightest degree to those who occupied larger portions of land or more extensive dwellings. . . . We need only mention these facts, which can be substantiated with the greatest facility and precision, to demonstrate to your Lordship the unfairness (so far at least as this settlement is concerned) of establishing a property qualification for voters," &c. It will be found on the other hand that the report I have enclosed in this despatch wholly contradicts the above statement, as follows: "Any qualification for electors which would be at all restrictive in practice would confer exclusive powers of Government on a very small portion of the colonists, creating an oligarchy to whose rule the bulk of the people would not submit; while, if you at all extend the franchise beyond this narrow pale, what you give virtually amounts to universal suffrage. The franchise proposed by Sir George Grey, in the opinion of your committee, amounts to that. Is it not better, then, to designate things by their right names, and when you give what amounts to universal suffrage to call it so?"

The Right Hon. Earl Grey, &amp;c.

I have, &c.,  
G. GREY.

Enclosure in No. 34.

Mr. DORSET to the Right Hon. Earl GREY.

MY LORD,—

Wellington, New Zealand, 15th January, 1851.

As chairman of the public meeting held on the 15th day of November, 1850, to take into consideration Sir George Grey's proposed Provincial Councils Bill, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship a newspaper, and a copy of the resolutions passed at that meeting.

The Right Hon. Earl Grey, &amp;c.

I have, &c.,  
JOHN DORSET.

Sub-Enclosure to Enclosure in No. 34.

COPY of RESOLUTIONS passed at a Public Meeting held in the Britannia Saloon, Wellington,  
15th November, 1850.

*Resolution 1.*—Moved by Mr. Godley (agent of the Canterbury Association); seconded by Dr. Featherston: "That the constitutional measure which Sir George Grey is understood to be about to offer to the colonists, and which has been already published by him in the shape of a draft Ordinance, does not deserve their approval or acceptance, inasmuch as it does not confer upon them an effectual control over the management of their own affairs. That the apparent liberality of its provisions with respect to the election and duration of Assemblies is rendered completely nugatory by the limitation imposed upon their jurisdiction and powers. That, while no Constitution can be said to confer real powers of self-government upon a people which does not vest in their representatives the disposal of their own revenue, the Civil List reserved under the proposed measure, which amounts already to nearly one-third of the revenue, and which Sir George Grey has recommended to be increased to nearly one-half, is withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the colonists altogether; and a power is further given