

June and July to explain the outline of his plan, the new institution was to be based upon a continuance of the existing guarantee fund; the surplus from the present Exhibition, then estimated to be £50,000, was to be devoted to it, and it was to be self-supporting. The plan was more fully defined in His Royal Highness's circular memorandum of the 21st July, together with the conditions on which he would place himself at the head of the institution. This memorandum was immediately sent out by us to our Governments, with His Royal Highness's request that their answer should be sent to him by telegraph before the end of October.

Thus the matter stood until the Prince proposed to the Lord Mayor to establish the institution as a special memorial of the Jubilee of the Queen's reign. Immediately afterwards, on the 15th September, His Royal Highness sent a telegram to the Viceroy of India and Governors of colonies, asking them either to give an annual grant to the institution, or (if they preferred it) a capital sum down. Whatever is given, I suppose it may be taken for granted that it will be in the form of a sum down, and not an annual grant.

Now the Prince calls the Commissioners together again and repeats the same questions he put before. He still asks that the exhibits should not be allowed to be dispersed, but be retained as a nucleus for the permanent collection at the new institution; that the Governments should give their own exhibits, and try to induce as many private exhibitors as possible to do the same; and that the exhibits should still be under the "personal and continued superintendence" of the Executive Commissioners until the organisation of the institution is completed. They will be housed as they are in the respective courts after the Exhibition is closed, a small staff being retained by the Royal Commission to look after them and arrange for their safety; and as the permanent structure must take a long time, the present buildings will have to represent it for the time being, the courts being practically reopened as they are next year by the Queen. Further, His Royal Highness asks the Executive Commissioners, as the details of the practical arrangements to be made must surely have engaged their attention during all this time, to give him their ideas as to what plan would most conduce to success, and be most acceptable to the Governments—collectively if possible, if not, then separately.

Now, as to the exhibits, His Royal Highness's questions are practically answered. Canada, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, New Zealand, the West Indies, and the Cape will all place their Government exhibits (or others as good) at his disposal; South Australia wants hers back for her own exhibition; Tasmania is sure to send some; India and the Crown colonies will no doubt give whatever of theirs is unsold. Most of the Canadian private exhibits will also be left for the reopening, and in a short time answers can be got as to the private exhibits of the other colonies.

For the present, therefore, a good nucleus for the institution is ensured. But all this does not advance us any nearer to the answer that must be given to the Prince about continuing the superintendence of the Commissioners over their respective courts, and preparing for the reopening next year. The Governments cannot be expected to say what they will do until they know what they will be committed to in the way of cost, and up to this time none of us have been able to tell our Governments what the cost will be. On the other hand, it is impossible to expect that the Prince can be in a position to make up his mind yet about the details of his scheme. Everything depends on the amount of the general fund he is able to raise. It may be a very large one, in which case the English subscribers will of course have a right to a potential voice in its disposal; or it may be so small that the project cannot be carried out at all. No one can tell until the amount of the subscriptions, English and colonial, is known. But in the meantime His Royal Highness can say what he intends about the expense connected with the reopening of the courts; and I think we might on our parts say this to him: "Our Governments have got together a great collection. The total sum represented by what they have done is very large. If they now give you their own exhibits, and induce private exhibitors to do the same, that of itself will be a great contribution to your project. They are willing to give, in addition, a capital sum in money down to your general fund; they will continue to give you the most cordial assistance in any work you want done, whether for the care of the exhibits till next year, or for the reopening of the Exhibition, or for the supervision of the courts during 1887; they will renovate their courts and put them in order for the reopening, and will afterwards keep them replenished with new exhibits from time to time, doing their best to make a continually improving show of their products and industries. But as to everything else, the new executive authority must take charge. The staff, the expenses, in short, the entire permanent responsibility for the scheme, must devolve upon that authority. The colonies cannot keep up a separate staff and organization of their own for each court, nor can they promise any annual grant for the support of the institution. They have elected for the second of the alternatives you proposed in September, and are going to give a sum down to your general fund. All future expenses after the reopening must be met out of that fund and out of whatever receipts the institution will get, whenever you shall have settled all the details of the scheme."

I trust that this general idea will be in accord with the views of the Government. Hitherto there has been nothing but desultory discussion at the meetings of the Commissioners, and while many opinions have been expressed, nothing has been done to decide the matter which is immediately pressing, nor has any Executive Commissioner yet been in a position to tell his Government what was really intended, especially as to expense. A vast number of questions connected with the organization of the new institution have yet been settled, about which plenty of time for consultation must be allowed; but, while these are being considered, the immediate question cannot wait any longer, and I accordingly propose to move, at the adjourned meeting of the Commissioners this week, the series of resolutions of which a copy is transmitted herewith.

In the meantime, the Prince of Wales has written a letter to the Lord Mayor containing further explanations of the Queen's wishes and his own, which will be made public in a few days.

I have, &c.,

The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer, Wellington.

F. D. BELL.