

With regard to the appointments to the Legislative Council recommended by the late Government, I am of opinion that, in accepting the advice tendered to you by your Lordship's Responsible Ministers, under the circumstances described in your despatches, you acted strictly in accordance with the Constitution of the colony, but I do not desire to be understood to offer any opinion upon the action of your Ministers in tendering that advice.

Governor, the Earl of Onslow.

I have, &c.,

KNUTSFORD.

No. 6.

The Earl of GLASGOW to Lord KNUTSFORD.

(Received 4th August, 1892. Answered by No. 7.)

MY LORD,—

Wellington, New Zealand, 22nd June, 1892.

I have the honour to inform you that, since my arrival in the colony, on the 7th instant, I have had several interviews with Mr. Ballance, the Premier, on the subject of the appointment of the increase of the Legislative Council, and the request of the Government that twelve new nominations to that Chamber be approved of; and yesterday morning I informed him that I felt myself unable to appoint more than nine.

2. The gist of his communications to me were as follows: That there are certain projects which the Government wish to pass into law, the legislation as to land in particular; and that the Government find themselves in an unbearable position in the Legislative Council. In the House of Representatives they have a good working majority, but in the Legislative Council the Attorney-General, who is the only Minister in that Chamber, finds himself with the support of only, at the outside, four or five members, none of whom possess any debating-power whatever. "It is plain," said Mr. Ballance, "that no Government can carry on the business of the House satisfactorily when in one Chamber they exist only on sufferance." He also said, later on, that it was not the wish of the Government to swamp the Legislative Council, but only to have a certain amount of debating-power, of which, at present, they have none. He remarked that, if the Legislative Council throws out the Bill he is going to reintroduce this session, the consequences may be very serious, and stated that he thought Lord Onslow would have granted twelve. But I pointed out that in the confidential despatch which Lord Onslow had left for me, and which he showed to Mr. Ballance before leaving, he had not indicated that he would grant more than eight.

3. In reply, I stated that I was glad to learn that Ministers did not contemplate swamping the Legislative Council; that I was anxious to do what I could to meet my Ministers' views, but that I must have some time to reflect.

4. At the interview which I had with Mr. Ballance yesterday morning, at which the Attorney-General was also present, I said that I had carefully weighed the arguments of the Premier in favour of appointing twelve members; that I admitted that appointments should be made; but that, after considering the reasons given by the late Governor against agreeing to the proposal made to him just before he left the colony, which was identical with the one made to me, I found myself in accord with Lord Onslow, and that I was unable to agree to more than eight appointments, though as soon as a resignation, which had been announced by telegraph, became an accomplished fact I would agree to fill up this vacancy, making in all nine appointments.

5. I remarked that when Ministers made this application they must have had one of two objects in view. They must either wish such an amount of debating-power as would enable them to place their measures fully before the Legislative Council, or they must aim at giving the Government a preponderance of votes in that Chamber. If the first is their desire, then, I said, I hoped they would accept my proposal, though it gave them less than they asked for; for, I said, I need hardly point out that in an assembly of forty-five members (which would be the number with the addition I proposed) an accession of nine skilled debaters, added to the five supporters Government already had, would be amply sufficient to insure the Government measures that respectful consideration which is their due. If the latter is their wish, I said, they will not accept my offer. If it is so, I would much regret that, so soon after my arrival, I should be obliged to decline a proposal made me by my Ministers; but I felt that, if I granted it, I would be running the risk of making the Legislative Council a mere echo of the other House; if it is to have no opinion of its own it is of no use, but if it continues to preserve its liberty, and gives the country time to reconsider such questions as may not have received due consideration, it may, at a critical time, be of invaluable service to the colony. I therefore felt bound to take the course I had announced, as granting a larger number might have the effect of destroying the independence of one of the two Chambers, which I am bound by the Constitution to uphold.

6. The Premier declined to admit that my definition of the possible objects of Ministers was a correct one. He said there was a third alternative, which was the correct one, and that the number I proposed was not sufficient. It was large enough to exasperate the Opposition, but not large enough to be "of any use," a statement which confirmed me in my opinion that what the Government really requires is a majority in the Legislative Council, and that I was right in my definition.

7. Both Mr. Ballance and Sir Patrick Buckley said that many of their supporters are opposed to a bi-cameral system, although they themselves are not, and that if nothing is done to improve the position of matters in the Upper House, and if a cry is got up for the abolition of the Legislative Council, it would be so strong that it would bear down all opposition. I replied that Ministers were holding out to me, as an alternative, an emasculated Upper House or none at all; but that I was bound to uphold, as far as I could, the Constitution of the country. I said I was making them an offer not much less than what they desired, and repeated that an addition of nine would give them a sufficient number to place their policy properly before the Council. I added that the