

P E T I T I O N .

To the Honourable the Commons House of Assembly, in Provincial Parliament assembled ;

THE PETITION OF ROBERT LACHLAN, OF COLCHESTER, ESSEX,
IN THE PROVINCE OF CANADA, ESQUIRE,

HUMBLY SHEWETH :

That your Petitioner, though at present temporarily residing in Montreal, is a Freeholder of the County of Essex, in the Western District of Upper Canada, in which he has been settled upwards of fourteen years, and owns considerable property in the Township of Colchester; and that it has been his fortune to have occupied the various public positions of Sheriff, Colonel of Militia, Justice of the Peace, and for some time, Chairman of the Quarter Sessions, besides being called upon to act as an Associate Judge of Assize.

That, in the discharge of each and all of these duties, your Petitioner became painfully sensible of very prejudicial consequences resulting to that remote section of the Province, from the great influx of fugitive slaves, of the worst character, from the neighbouring American States, as not only tending, by their presence, to prevent the introduction of a far more congenial class of agricultural labourers, from the Mother Country, but, by their conduct, to produce a very demoralizing influence, from the fearful amount of crime observed to be committed by them, compared with the great bulk of the inhabitants.

That, while impressed with these unwelcome truths, and yet unconscious of any feeling of prejudice against the unfortunate coloured race, your Petitioner was, in the year 1841, unexpectedly called upon, by the Government, to furnish such information as he could afford regarding these people; their number; occupations; habits; dispositions; temper, &c., and that he, in consequence, transmitted to the Provincial Secretary, a rather extended Report; embracing the various points referred to, in which he proved, by simple reference to the periodical statistics of crime, that much less than two thousand Negro Refugees perpetrated more criminal offences than the whole of the remaining twenty thousand white Inhabitants of the District, from Murder, Rape, Arson and Burglary, down to larceny and other minor crimes; and at the same time called attention to the little regarded, but well ascertained, indisputable fact, that, owing to these coloured settlers occupying the position which would naturally fall to the British agricultural labourer, emigrants of that class, who found their way to the District in hopes of

employment, were reluctantly forced to abandon a *British* soil, and seek a livelihood in the neighbouring American States,—to the great detriment of a remote and thinly settled part of the Province: and further that these lamentable effects were no where more evident than in the Township in which your Petitioner resided; and your Petitioner therefore expressed an anxious hope that some steps might, ere long, be taken by Government to alleviate so baneful a state of things.

That, notwithstanding these and other earnest representations, not only did the evil deplored continue to increase, year after year, in an alarmingly rapid degree; but about two years ago it assumed a still more formidable shape in ceasing to be dependent on the influx of casual individuals, and disclosing, under the auspices of an ill-advised though philanthropic society, known by the name of *the Elgin Association*, the far more obnoxious and objectionable purpose of establishing regular Negro Colonies in the very midst of a British population—the first of which being destined for the Township of Raleigh, in the County of Kent.

That the inhabitants of the District being thereby justly alarmed, lost no time in appealing to the Executive and Legislature against so unnatural and impolitic a project,—twice by petitions from their Municipal Council, and once through the medium of proceedings at a highly respectable public meeting, held at Chatham, urgently praying that the Government would, at least, refrain from acquiescing in the location of the Raleigh Settlement, till the subject should be brought under the consideration of Parliament; but on which it would appear no action has yet been taken.

That your Petitioner becoming accidentally aware of these public movements, was naturally led to second them, to the utmost of his humble ability, by respectfully addressing, more than one earnest communication to His Excellency, the Governor General, deprecating so reckless a procedure as that contemplated, and re-calling attention to the very strong objections to Negro Settlers which he had already pointed out, as well as expressing himself ready to afford further information on the subject if required; but all—it would appear, with equally little effect.

That, notwithstanding all these discouraging circumstances, your Petitioner still feels that he would be wanting in justice to his own family, as well as in patriotic duty to the land of his adoption, and more particularly of that remote section of it with which he has become more immediately identified, were he to shrink from a last strenuous, though humble, effort to prevail on the Legislature, ere too late, to take into wary deliberation a subject so seriously involving the present and prospective social, moral and political well being of a British Colony; and he accordingly most respectfully ventures to represent to your Honourable House, that, while he shares with every true Briton the proud feeling that Slavery and British Rule are irreconcilable with each other, and would be the last to close the door of refuge against the accidental, unhappy fugitive from a Land of Bondage, he cannot shut his eyes to the many evil consequences that must inevitably result from the introduction of organized *Negro* Colonies into the midst of a prejudiced white population, any more than he can reconcile to his feelings the levying of a restrictive Poll-tax upon the humblest Immigrant of his own national flesh and blood, while the far less congenial Negro Pauper is not only free to enter the Province without a check, but actually courted to Colonize among us.

Under all which conflicting circumstances, your Petitioner humbly entreats your Honourable House to take the general merits of the subject into grave consideration, and to adopt such measures as may relieve him and the other aggrieved

and despairing Loyal Inhabitants of the Western District, from their well-founded dread of the baneful consequences certain to result from a perseverance in so impolitic and pseudo-philanthropic a project as that in progress, and which they have no hesitation in characterizing as at once inexpedient, demoralizing, unnatural and dangerous, as well as utterly repugnant to the feelings and prejudices of the great body of the Inhabitants.

And your Petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

R. LACHLAN.

Montreal, 4th June, 1850.

3d Session, 3d Parliament, 13 & 14 Vict. 1850.

PETITION

OF

Robert Lachlan, of Colchester, Essex,
in the Province of Canada, Esquire.

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