

HANSARD'S
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES:

THIRD SERIES,

COMMENCING WITH THE ACCESSION OF

WILLIAM IV.

12° & 13° VICTORIÆ, 1849.

VOL. CVI.

COMPRISING THE PERIOD FROM

THE TWELFTH DAY OF JUNE, TO THE
SIXTH DAY OF JULY, 1849.

Fifth Volume of the Session.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED FOR MR. HANSARD,

BY G. WOODFALL AND SON, ANGEL COURT, SKINNER STREET;

AND BY

LONGMAN AND CO.; C. DOLMAN; J. RODWELL; J. BOOTH; HATCHARD AND SON;
J. RIDGWAY; CALKIN AND BUDD; J. BIGG AND SON; J. BAIN; J. M. RICHARD-
SON; P. RICHARDSON; ALLEN AND CO.; AND R. BALDWIN.

1849.

of last Session, to call for some inquiry into the subject. We have now the evidence of the facts then referred to, and the whole of the case before us; and I think, judging from them, that grounds do exist why Parliament ought to meet any such proposition as that of the cession of Vancouver's Island to this company with a positive refusal. At any rate, I rejoice that the discussion took place last year upon this subject; for if the House, and those hon. Members who took part in that discussion, were unable to obtain the whole of their wish—namely, the cancelling of the charter—they have, at any rate, enforced such alteration in it as may, if any colonists should ever be found willing to go to that unfortunate island, mitigate, in some degree, the mischiefs which would have been entailed upon them by the charter as presented to the House upon that occasion. Considerable alterations have been made in that charter since the debate of last year, under the auspices of the President of the Board of Trade, and the other Members of the Committee of Privy Council, to whom, according to the promise of the noble Lord at the head of the Government, this question was submitted after the discussion of last year. By the draft of the charter as then proposed, the whole of the fisheries in the neighbourhood of Vancouver's Island would have been exclusively confined to the company. It was perfectly monstrous that the Colonial Office should for a moment have entertained such a demand, and still more so that Earl Grey should have approved of such a proposition. We have before us a copy of his letter approving of this monstrous monopoly. Why, it was a wonder that they did not call upon the Government for powers to exclude the colonists from the very air they breathed. This provision has now been altered, and the fisheries are left as free as is the air. Another alteration has been promised with respect to the administration of justice—namely, the repeal of the Act to which I have already alluded, 1 and 2 Geo. IV., and the institution of judicial tribunals. Another very important alteration has been made with respect to the sale of the land. By the charter, as laid before the House last year, the company were actually to be in possession as proprietors. The whole of the land was to be given to them, and they were to be empowered to sell it for such sum as they could obtain for it, and to be allowed to pocket the

whole of the proceeds. I rejoice to find, however, that, from the publicity which has been given to this transaction, and the discussion which has taken place upon the subject, this further infraction upon the rights and liberties of Englishmen has been prevented, and that the company are now bound by the charter, as at present published, to apply 90 per cent—I do not see why they should not be compelled to apply the whole sum—for the purposes of the colony, and only to appropriate 10 per cent of the proceeds among themselves. Although I admit that this charter is very much improved, still I can by no means assert that all the objections to it have been removed. On the contrary, I think that, judging from the experience we have had of the conduct of the company, the whole affair remains, in its main features, almost as unjust and as flagrant as ever. What can be the object in granting this island to the company at all? What does the company want with more territory than they already possess? The company do not wish to found a colony there. On the contrary, I believe that the sole object of the company in obtaining possession of the island, is to keep others out of it. It is simply because a monopoly of the fur trade could not be maintained if a great, free, and independent colony were established in Vancouver's Island. If a model of Great Britain were established in that island, the people would not submit to such acts as the colonists of the Red River have been compelled to submit to under the arbitrary conduct of the Hudson's Bay Company. The monopoly of the company would be ultimately done away with under such circumstances; and it was solely to preserve that monopoly that the Hudson's Bay Company were striving to obtain possession of this island. It might, perhaps, be asked, what object is there to gain by the country opposing this grant? What other plan can be proposed? There is one point which has been put forward in answer to that inquiry, by Earl Grey, I think, which was, that no private party was likely to be forthcoming having sufficient capital to undertake so large a concern. I think I could show that that is not a valid objection. How does the present company stand? Can any portion of the capital of the Hudson's Bay Company be applied to colonisation purposes, in the strict and legitimate sense of the word "colonisation?" What is the capital of the Hudson's Bay Company?