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## SPEECH OF LORD JOHN RUSSELL ON COLONIAL POLICY.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 8.

Lord J. Russell, the house having gone into committee with a view to his moving for a bill for the better government of the Australian colonies, said,—I believe there are few members of the house who do not consider it expedient that at this early period of the session, a declaration should be made by the government of the general policy it means to pursue with regard to our colonial affairs. ("Hear, hear," and cheers.) So many statements have been made on the subject, such a variety of views, of interests, so many various facts have been put forward, that it is, beyond doubt, desirable and necessary that Her Majesty's Ministers should not delay to declare what are the opinions they entertain as to the great colonial affairs committed for the time to their charge, as to what should be the permanent colonial policy of this country. (Hear, hear.) In undertaking this task I am appalled by its magnitude; I feel that I am not able adequately to discharge it; but I consider it most desirable, if for no other purpose than to enable this house, in the course of the various discussions it may hold upon subjects connected with the colonies, to form some clear judgment as to the general principles which should guide it in its deliberations. (Hear, hear.) It is a great consolation for me to reflect that there are several members of the house who have applied themselves to colonial questions, and who have shown great ability and knowledge in what they have advanced. I may mention, among others, the hon. baronet the member for Southwark, and the hon. and learned member for Sheffield, who have, in speeches addressed to this house, and in printed pamphlets, displayed very considerable talent, and very great knowledge of this most important subject. (Hear.) In considering this question, I will first state generally how our present colonial empire stands, and as the facts in detail must be familiar to most members of the house, I will content myself with the merest outline of those facts. Putting aside the foundations of those American colonies which afterwards separated from us, I will state that our first settlements in the West Indies date from the conclusion of the reign of James I., and the beginning of the reign of Charles I., that is to say, before the beginning of the civil war. Islands which had been discovered and afterwards abandoned by the Spaniards were at that period found by British navigators to produce the richest fruits of the earth, (and to be almost wholly destitute of inhabitants, these having been exterminated by Spanish cruelty,—proofs at once of the bounteous benevolence of Providence, and of the barbarous wickedness of man. During the Protectorate, Cromwell had to consider the pretensions, enforced with great vigour, of that powerful country, Spain, who insisted that not only none of her discoveries on the continent of America, and none of its islands, should be occupied by our colonists; but, further, that we should not carry on trade with any quarter of the New World. It was not to be expected that Cromwell, with his high notions of British power and energy, would yield to such pretensions; and, accordingly, an expedition was fitted out by him, which, though it did not attain its immediate object, effected, as its ultimate result, the conquest of Jamaica. Afterwards, in the reign of Charles II., other West India islands were occupied and colonized. Such, then, was the beginning of our first colonial empire. Next, in the commencement of the next century, during the war, Gibraltar fell into our hands. After the glorious war of 1756, many more islands were added to our dominions, and we, besides, obtained possession of Canada, as to the acquisition of which, the Marquis de Montcalm, a statesman as well as soldier, declared that, although it would be a loss to France, it would lead to the separation of her American provinces from England, and thus compensate to France for her loss. (Hear, hear.) In the unfortunate war with the united provinces of America, our losses were far greater than our gains. But, in the great revolutionary war which began in 1793, we made further additions, by the naval and military forces of the Crown, which were confirmed to us, as cessions, by the peace of 1814-15. I will enumerate to the house the colonial acquisitions made by England in the periods respectively between 1600 and 1700, between 1700 and 1793, and between 1793 and 1822:—From 1600

to 1700—Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward's Island, Newfoundland, Bermuda, Jamaica, Honduras, Bahamas, Barbadoes, Antigua, Montserrat, St. Christopher's, Nevis, Virgin Islands, Gambia, St. Helena; from 1700 to 1793—Canada, St. Vincent, Grenada, Tobago, Dominica, Gibraltar, Sierra Leone, forts and settlements on Gold Coast, New South Wales; from 1793 to 1815—St. Lucia, British Guiana, Trinidad, Malta, Cape of Good Hope, Van Diemen's Land, Mauritius, Ceylon. I will not here state the colonies which have since been formed. There will be other occasions on which to refer to them in the course of the debate. I will proceed to explain the general principles on which the colonies I have enumerated were formed. In the first place the object seems to have been to send out settlers from this country, and to enable them to colonize these distant islands. But, in the next place, it was evidently the system of this country—as at that time it was the system of all the European countries—to maintain strict commercial monopoly in relation to its colonies. By various statutes, to which I need not further allude, several of which have been very recently under the consideration of the house, we took care that all the trade of the colonies should centre in this country; that all their productions should be sent here, and that no other nation should bring those products to this country, or carry them abroad. It was conceived that we derived great advantages from this monopoly, and Mr. Dundas, so late as 1796, speaking of the colonies, expressed the opinion that unless the trade of our colonies was protected by us with monopoly they would find a market for their goods elsewhere, which would be productive of great loss and detriment to the nation. But there was another and a most remarkable characteristic attending these colonies, and this was, that wherever Englishmen have been sent, or have chosen to settle, they have carried with them the freedom and the institutions of the mother country. (Hear, hear.) I will take the liberty of reading some extracts from a patent given to the Earl of Carlisle when he went out to be Governor, and I think proprietor of Barbadoes, in 1627, that is to say, in the reign of Charles I.

"Further know ye, that we, for us, our heirs and successors, have authorized and appointed the said James, Earl of Carlisle, and his heirs (of whose fidelity, prudence, justice, and wisdom we have great confidence) for the good and happy government of the said province, whether for the public security of the said province or the private utility of every man, to make, erect, and set forth, and under his or their signet to publish, such laws as he, the said Earl of Carlisle, or his heirs, with the consent, assent, and approbation of the free inhabitants of the said province or the greater part of them, thereunto to be called, and in such form as he or they in his or their discretion shall think fit and best.

"We will also, of our princely grace, for us, our heirs, and successors, straightly charge, make, and ordain, that the said province be of our allegiance, and that all and every subject and liege people of us, our heirs, and successors, brought or to be brought, and their children, whether there born or afterwards to be born, become natives and subjects of us, our heirs, and successors, and be as free as they that were born in England; and so their inheritance within our kingdom of England, or other our dominions, to seek, receive, take, hold, buy, and possess, and use and enjoy them as his own, and to give, sell, alter, and bequeath them at their pleasure; and also freely, quietly, and peaceably, to have and possess all the liberties, franchises, and privileges of this kingdom, and them to use and enjoy as liege people of England, whether born, or to be born, without impediment, molestation, vexation, injury, or trouble of us, our heirs, and successors," &c.

Such were the terms on which the King, whose haughty assertion of his prerogative afterwards brought about the civil war, set forth the rights and liberties of those of his English subjects who chose to reside in the colony of Barbadoes. The government of Jamaica, settled by Cromwell, was at first a purely military government, but in the reign of Charles II. it was made likewise a constitutional government, having an Assembly, and the right to levy