

has contracted in respect of those portions of the Native people who have assented and adhered to the authority of the Crown—without their assent or manifest acquiescence—without at least every possible precaution and safeguard for a fair and beneficial exercise by the Assembly of that power which the Crown finds itself unable to exercise? And as to the tribes who have never assented to our dominion, how can the Crown bestow on the Assembly an authority larger than that which (as we have seen) the Crown itself possesses over them? Let no man think that the trouble of this island will be summarily terminated, or even diminished, by merely handing over this authority to the General Assembly without due provision for rendering the exercise of it safe and legitimate. I know that at this time there are, even in the peaceful North, quiet and well-disposed men who view any such transfer of authority, or (as they term it) the “ceasing to be called children of the Queen,” with the liveliest apprehension and alarm.

14. Has it ever happened in the history of the world that a purely democratic body, with an Executive which depends solely on the will of the majority in that body, and where the members and the constituency belong to one race, has dealt justly with a race assumed to be inferior, and, in fact, unrepresented? especially where the relations between them have begun in a state of open war. To this intrinsic difficulty add, in this case, the practical difficulty arising from the peculiar relations between the two islands at this time, the majority of the Assembly consisting of members from the Southern Island whose interests are much less closely connected with those of the Natives than are those of the Northern members, and much less seriously affected by a Native war. We do not trust men of our own race with the power of governing us until we have secured protection in many ways against their possible misuse of power. Can we say that no safeguards are needed for the Native race? Can we reasonably expect a full acquiescence on their part until they see that some such safeguards are provided? It should be remembered that in conferring powers on the Assembly a reservation has always been made of Imperial interests, and what interest is more truly Imperial than the honor and good faith of the Crown of England.

Is it possible, then, to find safeguards which may be effectual for their purpose, yet such as to involve no minute interference with the proceedings of the Colonial Government, and no cost to the English Government? I suggest the following as being at present necessary conditions of safe legislation by the General Assembly:

(a.) That the war be readily and completely wound up. If Government, by the Assembly, is to have a fair chance of success, let it have a fair start. The Assembly will not become more competent, or better disposed for calm and wise legislation, by having first to pass through years of slow and exasperating war.

(b.) Representation being, under such a form of Government as ours, a necessary security for fair legislation, yet representation of the Native population being at present unattainable, let us do the best we can to supply its place. Before any measure of importance to the Natives is brought forward in the Assembly let a draft of it be published, with the proper explanations, in every district which has accepted our system, and let the people of the district be told that they are at liberty to address the Assembly by petition, and that any objections which they may entertain to such measures will in that way receive full consideration.

No course can be less favorable to the peaceful settlement of the country, or to the contented acceptance of our legislation; nothing more irritating even to friends and allies, than the sudden announcement that some novel and severe measure has been already passed without any previous intimation to them of what was intended. We shall not create confidence or make friends without openness and straightforwardness on these matters.

(c.) Let no Act of the Assembly, affecting land still under native tenure or in any way especially affecting the Natives in person or in land, be brought into operation until the Government shall have received a notification from the Secretary of State that the Royal assent has been given. Experience shows that every real safeguard against hasty legislature will be a boon to ourselves as well as to the Natives.

Administration of Native Affairs.

15. Equally serious is the question as to the administration of Native affairs. At the best, the Assembly can do little more than lay down sound general principles, with an outline of the mode of administering them. In this point of administration lies our great practical difficulty. I have already indicated that which appears to me the only mode of surmounting this difficulty; I will therefore be brief on this point. That for our success we need the continuous and consistent working of some one system for an adequate length of time most men will admit. Can any man, who has watched the present mode of proceeding see in it any security for the permanence of plans and arrangements, or even for the fulfilment of promises? Supposing a Native Minister to have formed some distinct conception of what ought to be done, his office will soon be transferred to another, who may have other views or none, so short-lived are our Ministers. One of two things must be expected to happen: either the substitution of officers will be left to go on at their own discretion, without aid and without check, or business must stand still until the new man has acquired the requisite knowledge. Such a state of things would be detrimental to the public service even in routine business, but in a business so novel and peculiar as this it may be fatal. With all this delay and uncertainty, projects put forward and never carried out, one expectation after another raised and disappointed, the soreness and distrust of the Natives will remain unallayed, or even increased; many more will come to say, what too many say already, that our plans and proposals to them are “maminga,”—devices to cheat them and gain time.

Whatever be the outward form or nature of the Native Department there must be somewhere a set of persons entrusted with special functions, and possessed of special knowledge, and empowered to carry out steadily and uninterruptedly some one consistent plan, if we intend to have contentment and peace. A mere theoretical uniformity of the outside of our administration will only screen from view a fact which it will be wiser to recognize. Special circumstances need a special organization to deal with them.