

John Bull newspapers concerning William Redfern

John Bull newspaper August 5, 1822.

The report of Mr. Bigg [sic], the person who was sent out to make observations upon the state of the Colony of New South Wales, printed by Government, has got into circulation. It is very elaborate and sounds vastly fine; but we would advice those persons, into whose hands it may fall, to stay their judgement till they hear “T’other side.”

In the prosecution of all such enquiries as that, which this Mr. Bigg was sent to make, jealousies and bickerings must naturally arise, and the very high character of Governor Macquarie has, we know, excited some feelings of this nature, if not in the report at least in the colony. Mr. Bigg is a Whig in politics, and is therefore much espoused by the mountaineers; Grey Bennet, we have no doubt swears by him; for, as that Honourable Gentleman has made no sort of reply to Governor Macquarie's pamphlet, himself, nor, as we suppose, intends to do so, he must be pleased with any body else who may consider it his duty to find fault with his Excellency's Government.

General Macquarie is, however, now in England, and has an opportunity seldom enjoyed by Governors of distant Colonies, of being on the spot to explain and vindicate his measures, should such explanation or vindication be necessary.

John Bull newspaper August 19, 1822.

It has been suggested, we find, that we took notice last Sunday week of Mr. Bigg's report upon the condition of New South Wales, upon the motion of a Mr. Redfern, one of the delegates from the convicts of that Colony. We know nothing of this person, nor has he made any sort of communication to us; it appears, however, that he is writing a book, which, he says, “will make Ministers ashamed of themselves.”

We are sorry to hear *this* said, because Governor Macquarie appears not only by the report, but by subsequent facts, to be much interested in this Mr. Redfern, who is a surgeon, mentioned by Mr. Bigg as having been transported to Botany Bay for being concerned in the mutiny at the Nore.

Governor Macquarie stands upon too high ground to need such an auxiliary. We have attentively read the report of the Commissioner, and we can see no charge made against the Governor, but that of “being too humane;” for which crime, we should think, there can be no very serious punishment in store; and we would advise his Excellency not to be led to lend himself to any thing like party feeling.

It is pretty generally known that the Hon. Henry Grey Bennet published...a pamphlet on...New South Wales...

Governor Macquarie published an answer to this book, in which he most satisfactorily vindicated his character from the calumnies contained in it...

...it is equally clear to every impartial observer, that the Governor is able to fight his own battles, and repel calumny from whatever quarter it may assail him. All we are anxious to state at the moment, is, that knowing nothing of Governor Macquarie but by public reputation, we have taken up the subject on public grounds, and that most decidedly the Mr. Redfern in question has never communicated a line to this paper touching the matter.

We certainly have an opinion about sending Commissioners to colonies. They appear to us to be neither more nor less than official tinkers, who, upon the principle of their trade, make two holes wherever they stop one...

...it should not be permitted that a Colonial Governor should be questioned and brow-beat by any whipper-snapper whom it may be deemed expedient to send out as a sort of accredited spy.

In these remarks we do not specifically allude to any particular Report; that which we mentioned in the beginning of this article is fuller of private *tittle-tattle* as to who and who visited each other, and what day Col. Erskine called on Mr. Redfern, and when Mr. Redfern happened to be out, and when Mrs. Marsden would not go to dinner here, and who Mrs. Macquarie asked there, than we had hoped to find in an official statement.

In consequence, however, of this historical exposition, Mr. Wentworth, a native of New South Wales, and not either at or studying for the bar here, took the liberty of sending a friend to Mr. Bigg to demand satisfaction for an allusion made to him in the Report. It seems Mr. Bigg, in consequence, has deemed it expedient to promise, that the allusion shall be explained away in the next Report he makes, (for the 180 pages are only a Report on the *first head* of his instructions), and this we have to reason to believe he has promised to do in writing.

We mention this as by no means discreditable to Mr. Bigg; but we confess we think nothing should be inserted in a public Report which admits of *apology* or *explanation*; facts, not imputations – plain truths, and not surmises – should alone occupy such a document; and therefore the *possibility*

of explaining away a thing said in such a paper, is to us a striking proof of the futility and inefficiency of the system altogether.

[William Charles Wentworth's ultimate response to Bigge's Report was to update his own 950-page book on New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. *A Statistical Account of the British Settlements in Australasia...Third Edition in Two Volumes* was printed in 1824.]

John Bull newspaper August 26, 1822.

We must decline inserting Mr. Redfern's letter, as being a personal attack upon a gentleman known only to us in his public character. We can feel for Mr. Redfern, and can easily make allowances for the expression of his sentiments upon the subject of Mr. Bigge's Report; but we cannot suffer this Paper to be made the vehicle of an attack upon a public Officer, who has had a very arduous and unpleasant duty to perform, and has, for all we know, performed it well. Mr. Redfern appears to have mistaken us; we were anxious to disclaim any connexion or communication with any of the parties; we take subjects up upon public grounds, without fear, favour, or affection, and when Mr. Redfern's book appears we will read it, and, as it seems an object to him to have himself *spoken of* by us, we will deal fairly by him, observing always, that the task assigned to Mr. Bigge by Government was one which could not, from its nature, fail of making enemies of that class of the colonial population to which Mr. Redfern unfortunately belongs.
