

(Private and Confidential.)

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

APPLICATION OF THE SURPLUS

OF THE

EXHIBITION OF MDCCCLI.

BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE PRINCE CONSORT.

OSBORNE, August 1851.

MEMORANDUM BY THE PRINCE CONSORT ON THE
APPROPRIATION OF THE SURPLUS OF THE
EXHIBITION OF 1851.

It is estimated that after defraying the expenses of the Exhibition the Royal Commission will be left with a Surplus of from £150,000 to £200,000.

The question arises, what is to be done with this Surplus?

Schemes abound for its application and a great movement is being made to get it expended upon the purchase and maintenance of the Crystal Palace as a Winter Garden.

It becomes necessary for the Royal Commission to mature some plan for itself on a careful and conscientious consideration of its position, powers and duties, in order not to find itself at the end of its important labours driven into the execution of ill digested projects by the force of accidents or popular agitation.

In order to arrive at a sound opinion on what is to be done, we must ask ourselves: What are the objects the Exhibition had in view? how far have these objects been realized? and how far can they be further promoted?

I take the objects to have been the promotion of every branch of human industry by means of the comparison of their processes and results as carried on and obtained by all the Nations of the Earth, and the promotion of kindly feelings of the Nations towards each other by the practical illustration of the advantages which may be derived by each from the labours and achievements of the others.

Only in a *close adherence to this governing idea*, and in a *consistent* carrying out of what has been hitherto done can we find a *safe* guide for future plans.

But even if this were not the case, it will be found that by former announcements to the public we have distinctly pledged ourselves to expend any surplus, which may accrue, towards the establishment of future Exhibitions or objects strictly in connexion with the present Exhibition.

The purchase of the Crystal Palace for the purpose of establishing a Winter Garden, or a Museum of Antiquities, or a public Promenade, Ride, Lounging Place, &c., has, in my opinion, no connexion whatever with the objects of the Exhibition. Our connexion with the building has been an incidental one merely as a covering to our collection and ceases with the dispersion of the latter; and, therefore, even if we were not bound by legal contracts to remove the building on a specified day and the dictates of good faith did not induce us *strictly* to fulfil our *moral* engagements towards the public, should we be released from our legal engagements; I consider that we have not the power to divert any part of the surplus towards providing the London, or even the English public with a Place of Recreation.

But should the public wish to maintain the building we ought not to stand in the way of the Government keeping it up to the 1st May, should they feel it their duty to take such a course.

If I am asked what I would do with the surplus? I would propose the following scheme:

I am assured that from 25 to 30 acres of ground, nearly opposite the Crystal Palace on the other side of the Kensington Road, called Kensington Gore (including Soyer's Symposium) are to be purchased at this moment for about £50,000. I would buy this ground and place on it four Institutions corresponding to the four great sections of the Exhibition.

Raw Material.
Machinery.
Manufactures.
Plastic Art.

I would devote these Institutions to the furtherance of the industrial pursuits of all Nations in these four divisions.

If I examine what are the means by which improvement and progress can be obtained in any branch of human knowledge I find them to consist of four:

1. *Personal Study* from books.
2. Oral communication of knowledge by those who possess it to those who wish to acquire it.
3. Acquisition of knowledge by *ocular* observation, comparison and demonstration.
4. Exchange of ideas by *personal discussion*.

Hence I would provide each of these Institutions with the means of forming :

1. A Library, and Rooms for Study.
2. Lecture Rooms.
3. An acre of glass covering for the purposes of Exhibition; and
4. Rooms for Conversation, Discussions and Commercial Meetings.

The surplus space might be laid out as gardens for public enjoyment, and so as to admit of the future erection of Public Monuments there, according to a well arranged plan. The centre might be applicable for a Public Conservatory if wished for.

The Institution for the Raw Material would be most usefully subdivided into Metallurgy, Metallurgical Chemistry, Animal and Vegetable Physiology, (Agricultural Chemistry?) and Microscopy.

That of Machinery would embrace the whole brand of Polytechnic Science with the subdivisions.

That of Manufactures would comprise a School of Design, and Chemistry as applied to manufactures.

The fourth, the Plastic Arts, Architecture, Antiquities, and Sculpture.

Now I find that for all these separate pursuits we have a variety of public societies in England, struggling for existence, unconnected with each other, unprovided with any suitable locations.

The Geological Society, Botanical Society, Linnean Society, Zoological Society, Microscopical Society, Agricultural Society, &c., &c,

Polytechnic Society, Society of Civil Engineers, &c., &c.

The Society of Arts, Manufacture, and Commerce, (from which the Exhibition has sprung).

The Society of Architects, of Antiquaries, Archeological, &c.

Could not these Societies, or most of them, containing as they do all that this country possesses of talent and experience in these branches, be united in these Institutions? reserving to each its individuality and its self-

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supporting and self-managing character, but bringing them under a general system, and *so far* asking them to reform their Charters as to make them more popular Institutions, I mean, thereby, Institutions placed in a relation of reciprocal influence with public opinion.

If these Societies were to sell their present habitation and property, and thereby were freed from the heaviest part of their expense they would be enabled materially to assist the first establishment of their new existence.

In order to secure a certain uniformity of system amongst them, they might in all matters of interest common to them be governed by a Central Committee of their Chairmen. To this Central Body might be added the Statistical Society, in order to obtain for the civilized world an accurate collection of the material from which alone those general laws can be abstracted; guided by which we can hope safely to progress in all branches of civilization.

These Institutions must be open and common to all nations, and would soon spread their ramifications into all countries. As the surplus with which they are to be founded has been obtained from the public, attracted and gratified by the sight of the works which the *Exhibitors* have at great expense, trouble and risk to themselves sent to the Crystal Palace, it would be but a proper return, and I am afraid the only one we could offer, to receive them as the first Life Members of the Institutions.

By a scheme like this we should ensure that the Great Exhibition of 1851 should not become a transitory event of mere temporary interest, but that its objects would be perpetuated, that the different industrial pursuits of mankind, Arts and Sciences should not again relapse into a state of comparative isolation from each other, in which their progress is necessarily retarded, and that the different nations would remain in that immediate relation of mutual assistance by which these pursuits are incalculably advanced and their good will towards each other permanently fortified.

I may mention as a circumstance which may give additional importance to the consideration of such a scheme, that the locality I have mentioned is one which has been recommended* also as an eligible Site for a New National

*See Report of Commission of which Lord Seymour was Chairman. 15th July 1851.

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Gallery, and that the purchase of the whole and the re-sale to the Government of as much as might be required for this purpose might cause a considerable saving to the Exchequer, and instead of absorbing, it might furnish additional open space to the Metropolis, whilst it could assist the study of art in connexion with manufacture.

I am perfectly aware that this is but a very crude scheme requiring mature consideration and practical tests in its details, but I thought it my duty towards the Commission to lay it before them at as early a moment as possible, in order that the remaining weeks of the Exhibition might be employed in investigating it, or we, that might be led by that investigation, to the discovery of a more feasible plan.

(Signed) ALBERT.

Osborne, 10th August 1851.