

The Examiner.

"THIS IS TRUE LIBERTY, WHEN FREEBORN MEN—HAVING TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC, MAY SPEAK FREE."—EURIPIDES.

Vol. I.]

CHARLOTTETOWN, P. E. ISLAND, MONDAY, APRIL 3, 1848.

[No. 35.]

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

PARLIAMENTARY SUMMARY.

THURSDAY, March 23.

Seed Grain Returns.—After reading the journals the standing order was moved, and the House deliberated with closed doors. On our admission, we found Mr. Rae on his legs, moving, as we understood, that all the Returns from the Commissioners appointed last year for the distribution of the appropriation for seed grain, be deposited in the office of the Provincial Secretary.

Road Commissioners.—Mr. N. Conroy presented a Petition from inhabitants of Road Districts No. 1 and 2, praying that said Districts may be subdivided into three. The Petition having been read, and laid on the table, the hon. member gave notice that he would move further in the matter on some early day.

Members' Seats.—On motion that this Bill be read a third time, Mr. Thornton moved an additional clause, to the effect that when any member shall make application to the proper authorities for leave to take the benefit of the Insolvent Debtors Act, such application shall be considered a forfeiture of his seat.

Mr. Rae, in seconding the motion, observed, he wished an amendment of Mr. D. McLean's, made on a former day, had been carried. It proposed to leave it in the power of the Member himself, when he found himself in embarrassed circumstances, to resign of his own accord.

Mr. Palmer, at some length, urged the necessity of going still further. Power, he said, ought to be placed in the Assembly to investigate, and to call upon members, at any time, to produce their qualifications. The hon. member concluded by moving an amendment to the amendment to that effect.

Mr. D. McLean opposed the investing of the House with any such inquisitorial powers. A merchant may have a seat, said the hon. member, in this House; a rumor may exist which the House might act upon; it may turn out false, and the seat be not jeopardized; but, ten to one, the very fact of the inquiry would be his ruin, because his credit thereby might be blasted and prove irrecoverable.

Messrs. Thornton, H. Macdonald, Rae, and J. Longworth expressed themselves to the same effect, as did also, subsequently, Mr. Mooney and Dr. Conroy. On the question being put, the motion was supported only by the mover and seconder, the hon. members for Charlottetown and Georgetown. Another resolution of the hon. member for Charlottetown was also negatived. Then the original motion was put, carried, and ordered to be engrossed. Bill read a third time and passed.

Scarcity of Grain &c.—Mr. D. McDonald presented a petition from inhabitants of Lots 43 and 44 and others, complaining of scarcity of produce, &c. Ordered to be laid on the table.

Census Bill.—The House in Committee resumed the consideration of this Bill, which after having received several amendments, passed the Committee, and was ordered to be engrossed.

Message from the Legislative Council.—A Message was received from the Council informing the House that they had passed a Bill to punish drunkenness by fine and imprisonment, to which they desired the concurrence of the House.—Said Bill was therefore read a first time and its second reading ordered for tomorrow.

Treasury.—Dr. Conroy moved that a special Committee be appointed to enquire into the affairs of the Treasury. Hon. Mr. Coles seconded the motion, and thereupon Messrs. J. H. Conroy, Thornton, Rae, D. McLean, and the Hon. Mr. Coles were named a Committee for that purpose.

Collector of Customs' Report.—On motion of Dr. Conroy, the House went into Committee on the Report of the Special Committee on the Collector of Customs' Report, relative to the amount of goods imported during the late Governor's absence when on a mission to Canada, upon some parts of which certain duties had not been paid. A spirited debate ensued. Several amendments were proposed by the Hon. Mr. Coles, who contended that the Report was incorrect, that the real amount of loss was about 200l. instead of near 300l., as stated in the Report, and 600l. as stated by others out of doors,—which were severally lost by majorities of 11 to 8 and 10 to 9. Finally the Report was agreed to, and the House having resumed, adjourned forthwith.

FRIDAY, March 24.

Supply.—House in Committee on Supply during the

whole of the morning sitting: Mr. Fraser in the Chair. A very spirited debate took place, on the moving of a resolution to increase the vote of last year for professional services, rendered by Dr. Hobkirk, to individuals injured during the riot which occurred at the Belfast Election.

The sum of 25l. was, last year, appropriated for this service; but this being only about one fourth of his demand, Dr. Hobkirk would not accept it; and, in order to procure what he conceived to be adequate remuneration, he subsequently brought an action against the Government for the amount to which he conceived himself entitled. This action was tried at the last sitting of the Supreme Court, and resulted in a verdict in favour of Dr. Hobkirk for 60l. The debate was terminated by the agreement of the Committee to a vote of 35l., which together with that of last year, made up the sum of 60l., the verdict of the jury,—the vote of 35l., however, to be considered as subject to the confirmation of the verdict by the Supreme Court.

The Currency.—In the afternoon sitting, the House again went into Committee on the Currency Bill: Mr. Whelan in the Chair. Several clauses having been disposed of, Mr. D. McLean moved an additional one to the effect, That, although, in many cases, the rents reserved are in British Sterling, and such rents are, in some instances, in reality so exacted by arbitrary agents; and such exactions are confirmed by the judgments and decisions of our Law Courts; the legal mode of bringing any such British Sterling rents into Island Currency, shall, hereafter, be by adding one-ninth to their amount in British Sterling; and the tender or payment of the amount so obtained in Island Currency, shall be held to be a legal tender or payment of all such rents. The Hon. G. Coles seconded the motion. The hon. the Speaker, Mr. Rae, and other hon. members admitted the propriety and justice of the principle of the resolution; but were of opinion that the object it was designed to effect, would be best attained by a separate Bill. The debate was then prosecuted with increasing warmth until, at length, the general excitement rose to such a pitch as seemed to destroy all probability of the Committee's being able, at that time, further practically to proceed with the consideration of the business before them. On motion, therefore, the hon. Speaker resumed the Chair, the Chairman reported progress, and asked for and obtained leave to sit again; and then, at 8 o'clock, the House adjourned till tomorrow.

SATURDAY, March 25.

Elections Law.—The House in Committee were engaged, during the whole of the morning, on the Bill to amend the Election Laws; and, in the afternoon they sat in supply. In both cases, the Committee reported progress, and asked leave to sit again. Nothing occurred to cause a debate.

MONDAY, March 27.

Statute Labour.—On motion of Mr. F. Longworth, the Bill to amend the Statute Labour Act with respect to Charlottetown and Royalty, was read a second time, submitted to a Committee of the whole House, reported agreed to, and ordered to be engrossed.

Destitute State of the Country.—The hon. Mr. Coles, by command of the Lieut. Governor, laid before the House, a letter addressed to His Excellency by the Rev. W. H. Cooper, A. B., of Port Hill, apprizing his Excellency of the completely destitute state of the settlers in that neighbourhood. The letter having been read, the hon. gentleman moved for a Committee of the whole House to consider the same to-morrow.

Mr. Thornton thought that, as a notice of a motion for the increase of the appropriation for roads and bridges stood on the Order Book, it would be advisable to go into Supply at once, and take up both questions.

This suggestion receiving general support, the House went into committee accordingly.

Mr. H. McDonald said he had been induced, by the general and increasing complaints of distress, to give notice of his intention to move for a further grant of £1500 to the Road Service, in order to afford that relief to the people which he was sure was greatly needed.

Mr. Rae said, of late years the revenue had been resorted to several times for the relief of the people, in one way or the other; and yet the proprietors, who exercised much influence in the Island, and drew largely from it, contributed nothing for the relief of general distress, but reaped the advantage of the public appropriations for its alleviation. An appeal ought to be made to them on behalf of the destitute; and should it appear that they would not afford any voluntary relief, the House ought then to devise some measure that would compel them to contribute to that end.

The hon. Speaker said, however unpleasant might be the task, and whatever odium might attach to it, he contended it was absolutely necessary to put a stop to the legislative system of relieving distress. He truly sympathized with the really destitute, but the matter ought to be thoroughly sifted. The people ought not to be led to believe that they can fasten themselves on the Government at all times. The system afforded no encouragement to the industrious and the really deserving. He knew that much of the existing distress arose from laziness, and an unwillingness to work, unless at rates too high to be paid. As the hon. member (Mr. Rae) had just remarked, a solemn obligation rested with the proprietors, and if they would not come forward voluntarily to discharge it, it would be necessary to compel them to do so; for they were the parties who, in the end, reaped the advantage of the general relief afforded by the Government.

Mr. Macintosh knew full well how much distress existed, and he was of opinion that something ought to be done to relieve it. If one family were poor, their neighbours, who might be better off, relieved them,—and they also became poor. He had made enquiries on this subject, and he was pleased to say that the information which he had received led him to believe that the distress did not prevail to so alarming an extent as had been represented. He was, therefore, of opinion, that an increase of £100 to the appropriation for each county would suffice.

Mr. N. Conroy was acquainted with the district alluded to in the letter just read. He also had received a letter from Mr. McIntyre, a gentleman who had greater intercourse with the people than the Rev. Mr. Cooper, and he (Rev. Mr. McIntyre) says, that although in some settlements the people are not scantily enough provided, yet he thinks they will get through the winter in a tolerable way.

Mr. Mooney said, it was too true that many who sowed last year, did not reap. It was also true that many could not sow from the want of seed. He had spoken, on Saturday, to a man who had a good farm, and who had been in the country a long time, and who had no complaints to make against his landlord, but who, nevertheless, last year had not had sufficient seed; and the consequence was that the family had to go to bed supperless. He (Mr. M.) believed that before the summer many more would be similarly situated.

Mr. Le Lacheur had all along insisted that the amount of distress was greater and more alarming than the House were willing to believe; yet, till within the last few days he did not himself imagine the calamity to be so great as it really was. The poor people, he continued, who now look to the Legislature for relief in their distress, were those who subdued the forest—what was formerly of little value they have made very valuable—but, unfortunately, their labour has been of little advantage to themselves. They have worn out their energies to benefit and enrich others, and they are now destitute. The proprietors are those who have gained by the industry of the people, and they ought to be told that it is their duty to assist in alleviating the destitution.

Mr. D. McLean did not think that an addition of 100l. to each of the County appropriations for Roads and Bridges would afford the desired or intended relief. But he hoped something would, before long, be attempted and accomplished for the improvement of the general condition of the Tenantry.

Mr. Douse knew the man who had been alluded to by Mr. Mooney, and he afforded him relief on Saturday last. Want of proper management, forethought, and industrious habits, occasioned the poverty of many. Such persons got into debt at the small stores in the country, even before the crop was put into the ground; and then if it failed it was easy to determine the result. As the agent of Lord Selkirk, he could only speak for him. As his agent he had relieved his tenants in former times of scarcity, and he should do so again.

The hon. Speaker was of opinion that the best way of proceeding, with reference to the distress existing among the people, would be to appoint a special committee to enquire into its extent and origin; and then, as had been observed by the hon. member for Queen's County (Mr. D. Maclean), its real cause might be discovered. If the proprietors would not come to the assistance of their tenants, they (the tenants) would not be able to continue upon their lands; and it would be best to tell them (the proprietors) at once that relief could not be afforded, year after year, from the public purse.

The Hon. Mr. Coles said, there could be very little doubt that great scarcity existed, in consequence of the failure in the potato crop, and the short produce of grain. He did not believe that want of industry on the part of the people, was any material cause of the existing distress. There might be, it was true, some more