

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 24, 1848.

[No. 38.]

THE LEGISLATURE.

Legislative Council.

BILL TO AMEND THE ACT TO PREVENT ACCIDENTS BY FIRE.

The Hon. Mr. YOUNG in introducing the Bill, said, the principal object of it was to amend the original Act, because it had been found impracticable to get a meeting of the Fire Wardens, four or five of them being generally absent on business, so that it is but rarely the number required by the Act can be got together,—the consequence was, they but met and adjourned, without doing any business; therefore, to remedy these defects he had drafted a Bill, which would enable five Fire Wardens who do meet to nominate a Chairman and Clerk, and to empower such meeting to make and put into execution any rules or regulations they might deem necessary, that were not repugnant to the Act. He should move, therefore, that the Bill be now read a first time.

The Hon. Mr. YOUNG presented a Petition of the Inhabitants of Charlottetown, praying for an Embargo.

A Message from the House of Assembly, with a Bill to enable the Government to ascertain the population. &c.—Read a first time. And also with a Bill to regulate the Currency—which was also read a first time, and ordered to be printed—on this,

THE CURRENCY BILL.

The Hon. Mr. HENSLEY said, he was aware that it was not usual to make observations upon a Bill in the present stage of the proceedings, but he might, perhaps, be permitted to congratulate their honors upon the fact of their having at length before them a Bill which ostensibly proposes to remedy some of the ills under which this Colony has long suffered, by the changing value of its circulation. It was pleasant to think, that their efforts to this end were at last producing good fruit—that they might look forward with hope to the time when they might enter into the great Commonwealth of Commerce, upon equal terms with others, sufficiently provided with a circulating medium, possessing exchangeable value—and able to back their pretensions to credit, by the substantial testimony of an adequate reserve of the precious metals—that wisely discarding their baseless circulation, they are preparing to soar aloft, sustained by a credit whose wings are silver wings, and the feathers of yellow gold. It was satisfactory to be able to believe, that they had been in any way instrumental in bringing the general mind upon this subject to a nearer approach to sound views, and he should long retain a deep sense of their Honors' impartial and independent demeanor upon the discussion of this question, upon former occasions. He was glad to see, by this Bill, that the vain idea of working onward with an unexchangeable paper, is proposed to be abandoned; and although he might disagree with some of the details of the Bill, that there was no difference between them as to the object which it professes to have in view—the abolition of the inconvertible circulation. He would trust, therefore, their Honors would excuse his apostrophising the departing enemy in language similar to that which the Poet uses upon a subject equally averse to realization.—To-morrow:—

—Inconvertible paper,

'Tis a sharper who stakes his penny
Against thy plenty—who takes thy ready cash
And pays thee nought but wishes, hopes and promises;
The Currency of Idiots—injurious bankrupt
That gulls the easy Creditor.

Inconvertible paper,

Commerce disclaims the thing—nor loves to deal
With those who use it—No, my Horatio,
'Tis Faucy's child, and Folly is its Father;
Wrought of such stuff as dreams are made of,
And as baseless as the fantastic visions of the Enemy.

A Bill to repeal certain parts of the Act regulating Statute Labour for Charlottetown, its Common and Royalty—passed.

A Message from the House of Assembly, with a Bill to consolidate and improve the Laws for the election of Members to serve in the General Assembly—read a first time.

CENSUS BILL.

The Hon. Mr. YOUNG moved that the Census Bill be read a second time.

The Hon. Mr. SWABEY was, for several reasons, not content that it should. He thought they should, as much as lay in their power, prevent the expenditure of the public money until the finances of the country would justify the outlay that would be necessary to accomplish the object of the Bill—more particularly as it was rumoured that the House of Assembly intended to take action in two measures that would entail a permanent annual charge on the country, the one of 500*l.* and the

other of 300*l.* He was certainly not prepared, at the present time, to give his opinion with regard to those charges, although he did not contemplate that he would offer any opposition. A very conclusive reason, however, could be adduced why they should not saddle the country with an expenditure on account of the Census, for it was not founded on any necessity. They should remember it was taken only 7 years ago, and to carry it into effect now, would cost the country 320*l.* at least. When money matters were concerned, he would unhesitatingly admit that those in the other House were more particularly the guardians of the public purse than they were, but it was proper, nevertheless, that this House should interfere, to prevent an outlay which the country could not afford; nor should it be forgot, that it was not long since it had advanced a claim to vote even separately on each item—there was no use now, perhaps, to advert to this, because the right had not been conceded to it, and the question, he supposed, must therefore be looked upon as settled. He did not think they were warranted in incurring any additional expenditure—so far from this, he was sure that at this time more than at any other, it was their imperative duty to economise—but to go to add the 320*l.* to the 500*l.* and 300*l.*—in all 1120*l.*, and 800*l.* of this a contemplated annual charge, and such unparalleled distress existing throughout the country, would manifest a prodigality and recklessness, altogether inexcusable. The Government would unquestionably be called upon to alleviate that distress during the course of the Summer, but it was impossible for them to say to what extent. If there was a surplus revenue, he would not oppose the wishes of the Assembly on the subject of a Census, and would most probably vote for it, for none could be more sensible of its numerous advantages than he was, but they all knew they could not afford the expense at the present time. While fully admitting, therefore, the value of statistical information, on the one hand, it was as necessary for them on the other, to bear in mind there would be a great falling off this year in the revenue, and it was extremely questionable whether the Merchants would import so much as they did last year—in fact they had no right to expect it, because the shipping trade, which was the branch from which they derived the most returns, was in so very depressed a state. He did not think it probable, that the manufactured goods which would be imported this year, would much increase our revenue. The increase last year was from a temporary cause—from a consolidation of the Customs and Excise. If they duly considered and looked properly into the matter, they had no right whatever, as he had said before, to expect great importations this year, and therefore they should not saddle the country with an extra-expenditure. He begged to assure their Honors it was only the urgency of the case—the peculiar state of the country—that could have induced him to have taken the stand he did, on this occasion, for he really felt much disinclined to interfere in money matters. We shall, as every body knows, have cases of necessity sufficient in number, and necessarily involving great expense to discharge, without involving ourselves further. The present was certainly the most unfitting time that could possibly have been selected for undertaking the Census, on account of the very heavy expense attending it; and if the rumours he alluded to were correct, as to the additional 800*l.* a year, it would be worse than folly to think of it, even for a single moment. He should, therefore, move that the Bill be read this day six months.

The Hon. Mr. PETERS could not think there would be any difference of opinion as to the necessity of having a Census taken, but if the majority thought it should not be read a second time to-day, he would of course defer to their wishes. He agreed with regard to the propriety of their being careful not to expend unnecessarily the public money. The hon. gentleman says it is unnecessary to have the Census taken. It was surely proper to procure statistical information, for how could the state of the country be known without it, and proper too, that the Legislature should have it, for how otherwise could its wants be known? But, he says, it was only 7 years since it was taken.—Now, for his part, he must say, he thought 7 years was a very proper term—and that it would be desirable to take it steadily at the expiration of this interval of time, in order to see the increase of the population, and its ever varying wants. He defied any Legislature, without statistical accounts, to legislate wisely and judiciously, and therefore on that ground alone, if on no other, it was a most necessary measure. He says also, that however necessary it may be, they cannot afford to incur the expense that would attend it, at this particular time—he thus acknowledges its necessity, and is opposed to it solely on account of its trifling expense. His hon. friend had expressed his conviction there would be a deficiency o

the revenue this year, but that, they all knew, would be only temporary, and they should bear in mind that no country, however wealthy, had altogether escaped feeling the effects of the late commercial depression in England; but fortunate it was for them—and for this they should be thankful—they could afford a little decrease. His hon. friend had also accounted for the increase of last year's revenue, by a consolidation of the Customs and Excise; but as he could not clearly comprehend what he meant, he would be pardoned if he did not conjecture it—his hon. friend certainly did get a little mystified here—but does not the money, in whatever way it has been collected or accounted for, find its way to the Treasury? Most undoubtedly it does. He did not however, forget, that when his friend gets on a certain theory—when he mounts his Pegasus—it is apt, very apt, to run away with him. The increase of the revenue arose from no such cause, and he had no doubt if an enquiry were made, it would be ascertained that none of our Storekeepers had added even a single pound more to their orders last year for goods, than what they thought there would be a demand for. It was all stuff, that they had imported a greater quantity than what they wanted, merely to take the advantage of the bonded system—it was not the fact, that they had imported six months' more supplies on this account. It would have been a most singular thing if they had, for they could have saved nothing by it, as the inconvenience resulting from an outlay of money for extra goods, would far more than counterbalance any trifling advantage of duty. He certainly thought too—and it was rather odd how frequently he differed in opinion with his hon. friend—that he entertained more gloomy apprehensions than there was any occasion for. It was true—and no man regretted it more than he did—there had been a failure in the crops last year, but what of that? There was enough, in his opinion, both for food and seed, in the country, with the exception, it may be, of potatoes. A failure in an overpopulous country was no doubt a great calamity; but the circumstances here were widely different—this was a new country, with young blood in its veins, and whose inherent energy would cause it to spring up with a buoyancy and force, altogether unknown in the old, worn out, and exhausted countries of Europe. Such was the vigor and youthful elasticity of all new countries—and such, he was happy to say, was the steady increase and in proof of this Island of late years, that so far from entering into such gloomy apprehensions, he had no doubt it would go on advancing in prosperity, and steadily progressing in wealth. There may be a little falling off this year, in consequence of the late commercial suffering in other countries, but our trade and population are increasing, and the country is settling up, much faster than his hon. friend expected, and which a Census, if it were now taken, would satisfactorily establish. He would again call their attention to this subject—he thought they would all admit, that it was most material in legislating for a country, to ascertain its wants and circumstances, and if this were admitted, it was clear these could be obtained in no other way than by a Census. It would act as a Polar star, to guide the Legislature in their deliberations, and it did seem unwise to stop it, for the paltry sum of three, four, or even five hundred pounds. It is what every other country considers necessary. That this country is improving, admitted not of a doubt, for every one that travels through it must have observed a decided change for the better in the circumstances of the people, particularly within the last few years—rapidly extending clearances were every where to be seen—the log huts of the woodsmen were fast disappearing, and in their places were rising in every direction, as if by magic, new and commodious dwellings, in which were to be found all the substantial comforts of life—and improvements, the result of a better system of Agriculture, were observable in every settlement, and following each other in quick succession—these are the infallible indices that mark and prove its onward progress and prosperity. In all countries it was necessary to have a Census taken occasionally, but in new countries, it was much more peculiarly necessary, for how are they to be known without statistical data—and is it at all likely that men of sense or wealth would come to a country of which no such information is to be had, except what may now be considered as antiquated, and far below their present standard? The statistics of a country, above all other things, induce the description of people he has mentioned to resort to it. Have you a right to expect eligible settlers to come here without such? No, you cannot expect it. If a person wishes to go abroad, they are the very first thing he enquires for and examines with the greatest care and attention, and his determination to leave his country and seek another, is formed, in nine cases out of ten, from these statistics. He himself had frequently questions put to him, when