THE LEGISLATURE.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATES.

Mr. Ross.—I would like to say a few words in reference to this Bill. In the first place I may say that a Bill to lessen the expenses of legislation by reducing the number of representatives is one of which I cordially approve. Such an Act should have been passed years ago, there was no necessity for having such a large number of representatives. Our revenue is not very large, and about two-thirds of it is appropriated by statute, leaving only one-third to legislate upon. Now it appears absurd to have forty-three men to appropriate about $100,000. At the same time I cannot support the Bill owing to the promise I made to the electors in my district. I promised I would not vote for any Bill altering the Constitution, and affecting the rights of my Constituents until such time as I would receive authority from them to do so, I cannot vote for the Bill unless there is a clause added to it, to submit it to the electors of the Province for there approval. I will keep my pledge to the electors, let the consequences be what they will, and I hope there will not be many Annaniases in this House. Any members who have pledged themselves to uphold this House should stick to their pledges. The Leader of the Government said it was necessity owing to large expenditure of the late Government, but I say the present Government has spent a large amount of the revenue of the Province by giving such a large discount to people owing the Land Office. The Assets of the Province have been made smaller by over $100,000 during the reign of the present Government. This amount has been squandered and wasted by the present party—they received $72,000, and gave a discount of nearly $50,000 in order to get the $72,000. The accounts of the Land Office have been demanded in the House of Assembly and the Government will not produce them. They say the Assets of the Province were squandered by the late Government, but that statement is not correct, for under the Conservative Government our revenue from the Dominion has increased from $153,000 to $183,000, showing a large increase in our assets. The late Government received a considerable amount in refund from the Dominion, although the hon. gentlemen at present holding the reins of power said they did not receive half what they should have, but now when they are in power they have made no attempt to get the other half. They say everything is depressed on account of the National Policy, but if it were not for the National Policy where would we be today. Who were the men who first agreed that this Island should join the Dominion? Those celebrated Liberal reformers, and they opposed the Conservatives getting $30,000 additional subsidy. They contend that the National Policy is the cause of such low prices for farm products, but I do not think there are any better prices in any country. Take the United States, potatoes are nearly as cheap there today as they are here, and oats are cheaper. They are selling in Chicago for twenty-seven to twenty-eight cents a bushel, which means that the farmers there do not receive over twenty-two cents, while our farmers are getting from thirty-two to thirty-three cents, and last fall they received forty cents a bushel. Then look at the price of pork and beef in the United States, it is lower than with us. We send them a few eggs, and when they are scarce the Americans have to pay the duty, and when they are plentiful they are cheap everywhere. The McKinlay Bill affected this country, but a committee have applied to Congress to have the twenty cents additional duty taken off barley because the barley was dearer there when they had to pay the duty. The consumer has to pay the duty. The hon. member from St. Peter's said many young men went to the United States and sent home money to their people in Prince Edward Island. Now the United States is a highly protected country, and Great Britain is a free trade country, yet how many are working in the United States and sending money to their relatives in Great Britain. How do the advocates of free trade account for that? The Liberal party have gone on praising up the United States until every Conservative who joined their ranks is leaving them, and every honest Liberal is also deserting the party in the Dominion, and it will be the same in the Island in a short time. At the next election you will see every honest Liberal leaving them to their fate.

Mr. Mackenzie.—This is a very important measure, as it is going to dispense with this chamber, although not with the power vested in the men who sit here. A great deal has been said about this measure, and the causes which led up to it; but if we go back to the time Sir John Macdonald resided in Charlottetown for part of a summer, we can trace the misfortunes which made this Bill necessary. Sir John at that time concocted a scheme to cripple this country and get us into confederation. The scheming of Sir John Macdonald, aided by the Tory party here, caused the railroad to be built, and eventually brought about the present condition of affairs The hon. member who just sat down says he cannot support the Bill before the House, because his supporters requested him to retain the Council. The hon. member never gave a vote which would be more popular than voting for this Bill, for it provides retaining the full power of the Council, while effecting a saving of something like $5,000 a year, which, if capitalized at 4 per cent, is equal to $125,000. They have taken away our revenue, and now we are paying a tax of about a million dollars a year. This is not all paid into the revenue, but part to the manufacturers of the Dominion. If we pay one dollar and fifty cents per head to the manufacturers, that would amount to over $150,000 a year, or $7,000,000 or $8,000,000 for the people of the Dominion. When I ran my election I was asked to protect the property holders of this Island, and I would not support a Bill which would not give them all the protection required. By this Bill we are placing the property holders and the franchise voters in the same relative position they have been in for many years. The property holders have had four votes, and the franchise voters two; and under the new order of things the property holders will have two votes and the franchise voters one vote. This will retain the influence of all parties, and will effect a saving of $5,000 a year. The hon. member tells us that potatoes are as cheap in the United States as in this Province; but they are worth, at the present time, 50 cents a bushel in Boston, and in spite of the high tariff some are finding their way there as there is no sale for them in Halifax. The Dominion Government have by their actions caused the United States ports to be closed against us. Then they commenced fighting with the people of Newfoundland and what is the result today? They have closed that market against us also, a market from which we received hundreds of thousands of dollars. This is the position we are in on account of the actions of the imbecile Government at Ottawa, and hon. members around this Board will try to cloak over their doings and try to make the electors believe they are their friends. The honorable Leader of the Opposition says he will vote for this Bill, but it is rather strange that he will do so now when he would not before at the time he was in power. They would not vote then for anything except what they could get by tyrannizing and domineering over this House. They would not allow any protection to property holders at all, and refused every Bill which the Council framed having that object in view. I doubt very much whether the hon. member would vote for this Bill only that he knows it will be popular with the country. He knows if he kicks against it that the people would kick him out. Those hon. members who are going to vote against this Bill will receive from their constituents the treatment they deserve.

Mr. Poole.—When I ran my election two years ago, I promised the people I would vote for retaining this house. A Legislative Assembly composed of fifteen men elected by the property holders and fifteen by the franchise voters would make a very poor house. The first bill proposed for the abolition of this house would have been just as good and had it been carried at that time there would have been a saving of $50,000 or $60,000

Mr. Nicholson.—I was just waiting to see if any of the supporters of the Government would get up first as there are so few members on this side of the house. I am very much gratified to see this bill come before the house, to see the cause which I have been so long advocating taken up by the men who opposed it. I must express my surprise at the wonderful change which has taken place in the opinions of those hon. gentlemen. There has come over some of them a complete transformation as can be easily seen by turning to their speeches delivered on former occasions. The present Leader of the Government, Hon. Mr. Laird, in 1880, spoke as follows:—

"Supposing this house had never prevented injurious legislation or had never assisted in perfecting beneficial measures, would that be a sufficient reason for acting in opposition to the history of the world and abolishing one half of the Legislature. History had shown clearly and unmistakeably that a one house system of legislation was dangerous to any country and had not been successful in the past. * * The French tried the one house system, but they have retraced their steps and adopted the two house system, There was now no nation of Europe governed by a one house legislature. It might be objected that this was all very well for the nations of Europe, but among them there was no country which had a federal system of government. Consequently it was necessary to cross the Atlantic and go to the United States for an example under a federal government; and in that country, rigidly economical as they were, they had adopted the two house system in every State and Territory of the Union. Of late years the Americans have been in great straits for money, but they never thought of changing their Constitution and abolishing one branch of their State Legislatures in order to retrench their expenditure. The one house system had been a failure everywhere and he (Mr. Laird) would caution hon. members from being led to do that which tended towards a system from which all men should shrink, of vesting the power in one head; and it was only a step from one house to one man—a power which was despised and hated by every Anglo-Saxon."

Here was the opinion of this hon. gentleman twelve years ago, but there has been a wonderful change in his views since that time. It is remarkable the effect it has on men to get on the Treasury benches. It is the soothing influence of being in power that has caused those gentlemen to change their opinions and to adopt the opinions of their opponents. I may say in reference to this House that I never saw any of its usefulness, I never saw any Bill injurious to the country burked by this Branch of the Legislature. Some hon. members have been saying hard things against Confederation, and they say that the building of the Railroad was the cause of getting us into Confederation, but the Railway Act found willing supporters in this Branch of the Legislature. My opinion is, the day this House became elective it lost its independence—a nominative House such as the Senate, is more independent. Thus again at the time of Confederation, this House passed a Resolution approving of the Terms first agreed upon, while the delegates were negotiating the better terms, which give this Island $30,000 a year additional. When the Delegates for the better Terms reached Ottawa, they found that Resolution there before them, and possibly it was the means of depriving us of a good deal more of annual subsidy which might have been obtained. Since that time many measures have been passed which, had this House opposed, a great deal of money would have been saved to the country. Some hon. members make a great outcry about the late Government drawing from our capital at Ottawa, but they could never have done so, had not this House voted for it. At the same time I maintain that money went to good use, the Island got the benefit of every dollar of it. The late Government had a right to draw that money as they succeeded in getting a large amount placed to our credit. But how is it with the present Government? This House passed a measure to allow them to draw from capital, they allowed them to make large discounts in the Land Office—discounts which have amounted during the past year to over $17,000, and this was given to men who were either too dilatory or too dishonest to pay their lawful debts.

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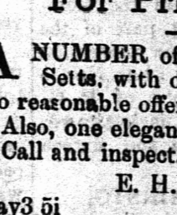

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