

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, Feb. 29, 1860.

POST OFFICE BILL.

On motion of the Hon. Mr. Haviland, the House resolved itself into a Committee of the whole on the Bill to amend the Act for the transfer of the inland posts of this Island, and also on the despatch in reference thereto.

Mr. McNEILL in the chair. Hon. Mr. COLES—The Bill contemplates an arrangement which the late Government were willing to effect. But the Bill of last Session took a wider range; it contemplated the introduction of a system adopted in the neighbouring provinces, besides providing for the prepayment of postage on letters passing between this Colony and the United Kingdom, as recommended by the Postmaster General of England. This recommendation of the late Government were willing to carry out. The subject was referred to the then Postmaster General, Mr. Davis, who reported that the proposed arrangement would facilitate the business of the office. But the present Government last year introduced a Bill quite different from the one under consideration. It was designed to assimilate our postal arrangements to those of the neighbouring Colonies, thus providing that all unpaid letters should be detained; yet its rejection by the Legislative Council was styled by the majority of the House as the result of factional opposition, as may be seen from this paragraph of the Address to Her Majesty—

"The House of Assembly feel constrained to complain to Your Majesty that the refusal to pass this Bill was based more upon a factious opposition to the Assembly, than a due regard to the unpopularity of their functions as a branch of the Legislature, the Bill being thrown out by the influence of two of its members who were members of Your Majesty's late Government of this Colony, when the following special report was agreed to, and by the unanimous opinion of the Government was then constituted."

Now, notwithstanding unworthy motives are here attributed to members of the Council, in the despatch before the House on which the present Bill is founded, there is nothing like a threat of annulling that body for the independent course it took in rejecting the Bill. The despatch says—

"It would, certainly, be most convenient that the system should be adopted and brought into operation, purely and simply as proposed by Her Majesty's Government. But, on the other hand, you will understand that, if the Legislature wish, in some measure, to qualify the compulsory nature of the arrangement with respect to letters sent to this country, there would be no objection on the part of the General Post Office to waive the detention of letters for non-payment, provided that all unpaid and insufficiently paid letters should be charged with the amount of deficient postage, together with the rate of 6d., in addition, as a fine."

This is yielding a point, for it would be very hard, as was argued last Session, that a letter should be returned simply because the postage was not prepaid. But now the Home Government is willing to waive the detention of letters for non-payment, provided the unpaid postage, and a fine of 6d. stg. be charged, the penalty to be equally divided between the Mother Country and the Colony. I think we should thank the Legislative Council for having rejected the Bill of last year. The declaration of hon. members on the opposite side, that the Council were "men of straw," now goes for nothing. As regards the objection that they were men of no property and no education, it has not been removed. I believe that the nominees of the late Government are possessed of as much property as those of the present. And have they appointed gentlemen of better education? They have not. Mr. Palmer may be as well educated as others who have a seat at that board, but not more so. Besides, what have they done? They have appointed a rejected candidate to that body notwithstanding all their complaints against the late Government in this respect. But they say he was not rejected since the introduction of Responsible Government. So it is with others now in the Council. Col. Swabey has not been rejected since Responsible Government was granted. Last Session the cry was, Prince County is not fairly represented in that body; but where is poor Prince County now? One of the Councilors from that County lately resigned, and an individual residing in Queen's County has been appointed to the vacant seat. I am not opposed to the Bill under consideration, but was to the one introduced last Session; and I must say that I feel proud that the British Government did not even rebuke the Legislative Council for expressing an independent opinion in reference to its provisions.

Mr. COOPER—I wish simply to make a remark. The Council could not amend the Bill because it related to the payment of money; and as they felt they could not pass the Bill, they had no other alternative than to reject it altogether.

Hon. Mr. LONGWORTH—We have heard a very lengthy speech from the leader of the Opposition. His object is very apparent; it is to vent a little feeling in reference to the dispute with the Legislative Council last Session. This dispute has nothing to do with the question under consideration. It seems to be his endeavour to lose no opportunity of rendering the proceedings of this House ridiculous in the eyes of the people. It becomes him that to speak, as it appears he does not intend to oppose the Bill; but is only launching out a tirade against certain individuals. The address of this House to the Queen was not for the purpose of imputing unworthy motives to members of the Council, but to prevent dissenting views from going before Her Majesty's Government. It did not go so far as the address drawn up by the Council. They had no cause for passing their address; it was only got up for the purpose of bringing the two Houses into collision. The House of Assembly last year deemed it a duty to pass a Bill to meet the wishes of the British Government in regard to the postal arrangements between the two countries. The hon. member, however, appears to think that Prince Edward Island will now enjoy a privilege which the other Colonies do not hold. But this Island is not more deserving of favour than the other Provinces, besides Nova Scotia and New Brunswick enjoy the privilege mentioned in the despatch. There is only a very slight difference between the Bill under consideration and the one introduced last Session; yet the hon. member states he is not opposed to the present Bill. What then is the reason that he raises objections? Simply because the House passed an address last year respecting the Legislative Council. He alluded to some expressions of hon. members regarding the Council in the discussion on that address. Statements no doubt were hastily made in the heat of debate, but no discourteous language was employed. The hon. member then went into a comparison between the former members of the Council and those appointed by the present Government, and stated that Mr. Simpson was a rejected candidate of the same stamp as Col. Swabey. But the comparison will not hold good. Mr. Swabey was appointed to the Council long before the introduction of Responsible Government. He resigned his seat in that body, and endeavoured to obtain a constituency, but failed, and was immediately after reappointed to the Council. He therefore may be considered as having received his reappointment because he was rejected, for if he had been elected he could not have been reappointed. But Mr. Simpson's case is altogether different. He had never been a member of the Council previous to his rejection, and he did not receive his appointment under the old regime. Nor will the comparison hold good between Mr. Simpson and Mr. Aldous; the former was not rejected under constitutional Government, but the latter was, and should not have been appointed to a seat in the Council.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—Who gave him an office? Hon. Mr. LONGWORTH—He was appointed to an office by the present Government because he is a fit person—the right man in the right place. The hon. member, Mr. Coles, appears to think that the Legislative Council deserves praise for rejecting the Bill of last Session; but there is nothing in the despatch before the House to warrant what he has stated to be the result of the independent action or expression of opinion on the part of the Legislative Council. That body gave no reasons for rejecting the Bill.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—What did Dr. Johnson do? Hon. Mr. LONGWORTH—He followed suit. Colnel Swabey gave his veto to the Bill without assigning any reason. Dr. Johnson being only a short time a member of that body, and not fully acquainted with the subject, was silent.

Hon. Col. GRAY—A great amount of extraneous matter has been introduced into this debate. I do not understand what all the discussion about rejected candidates and the Legislative Council has to do with the Bill. But I will offer a remark respecting the appointments to that body. I have heard no objection in the country to rejected candidates being appointed to the Council. Unless they obtain some

of the public offices, I think the people are indifferent on the subject. Under the late Government the complaint was that if one of their friends happened to be rejected, he was almost immediately appointed to office. With respect to the question under consideration, I may say that I approve of the principle of the Bill. I believe the people of this Island are far better able to pay postage than the poorer classes in Britain, because money can be more easily earned here than in the old country. I have been told by an intimate acquaintance connected with the Post Office at home, that thousands of letters were lying in the office for the simple reason that the persons had not the money to pay the postage. We ought to be ashamed to say that we are unable to prepay our letters. I think we ought to have adopted the suggestion of the Postmaster General of England, and made our postal arrangements the same as they are in the other Colonies. I entertained the hope that this Island would have taken the lead in this matter as it has acted in doing away with Departmental Government, on account of which we have received praise from the Canadian newspapers. There is one provision in the Bill that I think ought to have been omitted, which is that if a letter be sent to Britain on paid, a fine is to be exacted. In my opinion it would be better to have a double postage. I hope, however, that the time is not far distant when an ocean penny postage will be established. Almost every improvement is objected to at first. The steam engine, the electric telegraph, railroads, and free trade met with opposition. But as this is an age of progress, I feel confident that we will soon see an ocean postage numbered among the improvements of the day.

Hon. Mr. COLES—I thought the hon. member was going to introduce a proposal for the establishment of a penny postage; when he does so he shall have my support. I do not see that telegraphs and railroads have any closer connection with the question before the House than the Legislative Council. The hon. member, Mr. Longworth, displayed his talent for special pleading in vindicating the actions of the Government, but his arguments were not very weighty. I have yet to learn that Col. Swabey gave a silent vote on the Bill of last Session. I understand that at least one member of the Council gave reasons freely for opposing the bill, and that his arguments were the means of convincing Dr. Johnson that it was objectionable. The hon. member labored hard to show the difference between Col. Swabey and Mr. Simpson as rejected candidates. They were both rejected, he admits, before the introduction of Responsible Government, but Mr. Swabey, he says, was appointed to the Council under the old regime, and Mr. Simpson under constitutional Government. This is a very slight difference, and does not justify the appointment of Mr. Simpson after all that they have said against the nomination of rejected candidates to that body. But the great reflection cast upon Col. Swabey last year was, that he held thirteen or fourteen offices. Now, though he filled some ten or twelve, he was only receiving emoluments for one or two; and the Government have done themselves no honor by turning him out of certain of these situations, such as member of the Board of Education, Trustee of the Central Academy, and Trustee of the Lunatic Asylum. The late Government never dismissed any one from these offices because opposed to their own political principles. The hon. member in the course of his remarks said that they had appointed Mr. Aldous to office because he was a fit person. This is not very complimentary to his own party, for it is equal to saying that they had not another individual qualified for the situation. But as Mr. Aldous was actually dismissed from office on the change of Government, it is evident he was only re-appointed on condition that he would resign his seat in the Legislative Council. I may again say that I did not rise to oppose the Bill, but only to correct some misstatements.

Mr. DAVIES—This discussion has taken a wide range. I think the Bill will be a general benefit; it at least cannot prove any great inconvenience, as merchants and men in business almost always prepay their letters, and others generally do so out of courtesy. I hope, with the hon. member for Belfast, that a penny postage will soon be established.

Hon. Mr. McAULAY—It appears that the necessity of the Bill has been altogether overlooked in the discussion. The postal arrangements of Britain are like a great piece of machinery, when one small wheel goes out of place the whole is deranged. As the other Colonies have adopted the system recommended by the Imperial Government, we should pass this Bill to prevent the trouble which a variety of Colonial post office regulations must occasion in the department at home. I am at a loss to know what a discussion about rejected candidates has to do with the subject under consideration. To be defeated in running an election is no disgrace; even the great Lord Macaulay was rejected by perhaps the most enlightened constituency in the world, namely, that of Edinburgh.

Hon. Mr. HAVILAND—As a member of the Government I feel sorry that I have been unable, on account of ill health, to defend the Bill; but hon. members have wandered so far from the subject, and said so little in reference to the measure, that defence has been unnecessary. I do not think we will either gain or lose by the Bill, for those who write letters generally receive letters in return, and seldom pay postage both ways. The leader of the Opposition attempts to justify the Council for rejecting the Bill of last Session because it was different from the one now before the House; but in my opinion that Bill was better than this. The Bill of last year authorized the Government to raise the postage on letters according to the requirements of the public service, as is the law in the neighbouring Provinces; but under the present Bill no alteration can be made when the House is not in session.

Mr. HOWAT—Before the question is put I would offer a remark. The provisions of this Bill appear to be similar to those of the one introduced last Session, but notwithstanding this the leader of the Opposition seems to be willing to support the present measure. The Bill was rejected by the Council last year because they were in a position to do as they pleased. Now, in my opinion, the hon. member is only in favor of this Bill because he believes there is some infernal machine at hand which can be brought to bear upon the Council if they oppose the measure.

Mr. DAVIES—I consider we are treated unjustly by the Home Government. They bring the mails to the other Colonies; but here we have to pay for their transmission from Nova Scotia to the Island. I would ask the leader of the Opposition a question on this point.

Hon. Mr. COLES—Several representations were sent Home by the late Government in reference to this subject, but the British Government absolutely refused to alter the existing arrangement. This Colony is allowed one penny on each letter, or one-sixth of the postage, which the Home Government considers sufficient to pay for carrying the mails from Pictou. With regard to this infernal machine, I suppose the hon. member from Tryon alludes to some despatch in reference to the Legislative Council. He is endeavouring to make his constituents believe he is all right, but they will be calling him to account some of these days. The Bill was reported agreed to without amendment. House adjourned.

D. LAIRD, Reporter.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, Feb. 29.

Hon. Col. GRAY, by command, presented the following Message from His Excellency the Lieutenant Governor:—

GEORGE DENNIS, Lieutenant Governor. The Lieutenant Governor has received from His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, an acknowledgment of the Address from the House of Assembly to Her Majesty, praying for a re-constitution of the Legislative Council, which was transmitted by Sir Dominick Daly to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, late principal Secretary of State for the Colonies.

While acquainting the House that their address was duly laid at the foot of the Throne, the Lieutenant Governor does not feel himself at liberty, at present, to make public the correspondence which ensued upon the subject, and he therefore trusts that the House of Assembly will be satisfied with the assurance that their Address has received the anxious consideration of Her Majesty's Secretary of State, who, while relying on the spirit of mutual forbearance to promote concord between the Upper and Lower House, has yet placed in the hands of the Lieut. Governor the power of making such an alteration in the Legislative Council as will ensure the harmonious working together of the two branches of the Legislature.

Hon. Mr. COLES considered that the Message was so extraordinary that he had never, in his public experience, seen any official communication like it. His Excellency stated that he had received powers necessary to insure the harmonious working of the Council and the House; what, then, was the use of the Message if the Despatches were not transmitted with it? The instructions referred to should have been sent down, as they were caused by an address of the House, last session. He moved to refer the Message to a committee of the whole House.

Hon. Col. GRAY, was compelled, as a loyal subject, to recognize the prerogative of the Crown in submitting or withholding Despatches. If the Lieutenant Governor was

bound to send down all such documents, there would be little need of such an office. Although responsible Government had been granted, it was not prepared to regard the Queen's representative as a mere automaton.

Hon. Mr. COLES, without yielding to the hon. member in respect of loyalty, was not disposed to submit passively to whatever course the Government might choose to adopt. The message should be referred to committee, and the subject matter of it there discussed.

Hon. Mr. HAVILAND regretted that he was disqualified, by indisposition, from answering, at length, the hon. member. When any alteration in the constitution of the Council should take place, it would be time enough to discuss the subject; at present, it would be premature to enter into it. Hon. Mr. LONGWORTH did not consider that the hon. Mr. Coles intended to press his motion. He had merely moved for the committee, in consequence of the Speaker having stated that there was no motion before the House. No necessity for the committee had been alleged. The message was plain and explicit. It stated that the Lieut. Governor had received certain powers.

Hon. Mr. RHONNAN—Suppose the message stated that instructions had been received to alter the constitution of the House, would it not have the right to know the nature of them? The Council were equally a branch of the Legislature, and the House was entitled to know what the instructions were.

Hon. Mr. COLES asked what were the object and intention of the message, if it was not to be taken into consideration? When it was recollected that the leader of the Government could make public reference, before his late Charlotteville constituents, to the nature of the instructions, the whole correspondence on the subject should be laid before the House. That correspondence had been elicited by an address of the House, taken, although the Government might seek to hoodwink the country, and endeavour to shut the mouths of the minority, he would make his sentiments known. The despatches were on a subject of public importance, and the public should be in possession of them, and the members of the majority should assist in obtaining them.

Mr. HOLM was of opinion that the constitution of the Legislative Council was a matter of royal prerogative, and, if the Lieutenant Governor had received instructions to alter the constitution, he should have done so in co-operation between that body and the House, he did not think that there was any occasion to call for the despatches in which they were embodied.

Mr. DAVIES—The non-production of despatches was not altogether unprecedented in the history of the Island. In the time of Sir Alexander Bannerman, despatches had been withheld. In the case before the House, the Lieutenant Governor had stated that it was not convenient to the public business to produce the correspondence. Such ground of objection was usually taken and rejected.

Mr. BEER thought hon. members need not manifest such anxiety on the subject of the constitution of the Legislative Council, the members of which were nominees of the Crown. It might be desirable, when any alteration in the Council should have been made, to ask for the despatches under which it had been effected, and then to go into committee on the subject.

Hon. Mr. MACAULAY would be second to none in vindicating the rights of the House, if he saw any attempts to infringe them. But in the message he could only recognize an act of condescension on the part of the Lieutenant Governor, who had given the House information on a subject which had been matter of discussion, and on which the House had passed an address to the Crown, last Session. He would recommend to the hon. member Mr. Coles, the study of the relations between prerogative and popular rights.

Mr. SINCLAIR—A short time ago, the favorite topic with the majority was the privileges of the people, now all their interest was manifested in favor of the rights of the Crown. In the celebrated three days' parliament, the majority manifested no lack of discourtesy to the then representative of the Sovereign; now, the same party tells the House that they must be content to remain in ignorance of an important part of the despatches which they had demanded with keeping despatches secret, but we now had a greater degree of darkness than before; for not only were the despatches withheld, but the question of the Legislative Council had not even been alluded to in the speech. The House was told that the correspondence would be produced, when the proper time should arrive. It appeared that it was to be kept back until a time when the Council might oppose the Government, when the matter would be animated by the sudden explosion of the "infernal machine" alluded to by the hon. member Mr. Howat. The action of the Government in this matter was based on the old tyrannical principles under which the government of the Island had been formerly carried on.

Hon. Mr. WHELAN—No objection to the late Government had been so incessantly brought upon, as the allegation that they had withheld despatches. Loud were the declamations against them at the Temperance Hall, before the elections, on that alleged misconduct, and the people were assured that, under the present Government, no such thing would be done. But now, the Lieutenant Governor was made to ask the House to forbear—not to make him divulge the communications he may have received on a subject, the important nature of which is admitted by all. We had been told in the journal which is the organ of the Government, that his Excellency had received power to alter the constitution of the Council, so as to prevent the exercise of any position in the House, as far as any change in the House having been effected, the Government was in this extraordinary and unnamable position, that they screened themselves behind the assertion of the prerogative, and made the Governor ask, as a favor, that the House be silent on the subject, and we were virtually told that the correspondence could not be safely entrusted to our consideration. By those remarks, it is intended to prevent the exercise of his Excellency's duty, his advisers responsible, as they were, and, constitutionally, should be. The message informed the House that the address of last year had received the anxious consideration of Her Majesty's Secretary of State, who, while relying on the spirit of mutual forbearance to promote concord between the upper and lower House, has yet placed in the hands of the Lieut. Governor the power of making such an alteration in the Legislative Council as will ensure the harmonious working together of the two branches of the Legislature. Why not told whether the principles asserted in the address had been affirmed, or, if denied, why should the House not be in possession of the reasons of the failure? Besides the present case, the Government had inserted in the Speech a paragraph to the effect, that the address on the subject of the Legislative Council had been graciously received, and that the details were nearly completed. But what did the despatches, submitted to the House, disclose, in corroboration of that statement? Why, that, so far from having been graciously received, the address had not even been presented to Her Majesty! Nay, more, that the details were such as prevented its presentation, therefore, it could not have been presented to the Navigation laws, which were the correspondence were, that, in October last, Sir Samuel Cunard had been applied to by a subordinate in the Colonial Office, and there was no evidence that Sir Samuel Cunard had ever replied to the communication. The assurance in the Speech that the Commission would be speedily arranged, was not justified by the correspondence before the House. How then was any reliance to be placed on the details of the correspondence, which were proved to have willfully misstated facts?

Hon. Mr. HAVILAND and Col. Wray rose to order. Such language should not be tolerated. The Government had been charged with having used willful misstatements. The words having been taken down by the Clerk—

Mr. BEER moved that the hon. member have leave to withdraw them. Hon. Mr. WHELAN did not, for a moment, intend to charge his Excellency with having misstated facts, he repeated the imputation against his advisers. If he had used the epithet "willful," he withdrew it. Hon. Col. GRAY, as a member of the Executive, was satisfied with the disclaimer. Mr. COOPER—The message was, indeed, a strange document of its kind. Last Session the Legislative Council had been stigmatized in terms actually disgraceful; and now the Government make use of the Lieut. Governor as a cat's-paw, with which to whitewash themselves.

Mr. HOWAT—I had been stated that the Council was a branch of the Legislature, as represented by the House. That was true, but each body was so in its own order. The Council was constituted by the Crown—the House emanated from the people. Why, then, had not the Crown as much right to control, or reconstruct, the Council, as the people had to remodel the popular branch? The Lieut. Governor stated that he was investigated with powers to ensure the harmonious working of the two bodies. While he (Mr. H.) would oppose any encroachments upon the rights of the people, or the privileges of the Council, he would not interfere with the constitution; exercise of the prerogative of the Crown. It was no concern of theirs in what manner the Crown exercised its authority; enough to know that power to effect changes had been given.

The motion of Hon. Mr. Coles, that the Message be referred to Committee, was then put, and lost on the following division:—

YEAS—Messrs. Coles, Conroy, Cooper, Duvie, Kelly, Perry, Sinclair, Sutherland, Thurston, Whelan, Wightman. —11.

NAYS—Messrs. Beers, Davies, Douse, Gray, Haviland, Holm, Howat, Laird, Longworth, McAulay, McNeill, Moutgomery, Owen, Pope, Ransay, Hon. Mr. Yeo.—16.

AMERICAN FISHING VESSELS' BILL.

The Committee on the Bill to license Fishing Vessels built on the Island by Americans, was then resumed.

Mr. McNEILL—I am opposed to the Bill, for I consider that the Americans have, at present, more privileges than ourselves, and the Bill proposes to make further concessions to them, without stipulating that we are to receive anything in return. I have no idea of yielding the rights of our own people to foreigners, without something which might be considered as an equivalent. The Americans always contrive to get the best of the bargain in any international arrangement. The amendment of the Hon. Mr. Coles will, at any rate, obtain something for us.

Hon. Mr. WIGHTMAN—Having already expressed my disapproval of the Bill, it is unnecessary that I should reiterate the objections I previously expressed. The Americans have already the right to trade in our harbors, they can carry their business from one of our ports to another. They are to be allowed, in the same privilege. Last year we gave them the right to hold 200 acres of land in the Island, on the same terms as British subjects. If this Bill passes, the Americans will come here for three or four years, when, having cut away the small remainder of our forests, they will bid us good-bye. I would be among the readiest to support the Bill, if they would reciprocate the privileges we have conferred upon them, by allowing Colonial built ships to obtain an American registry, and admitting us to a participation in their coasting trade. The Bill asks nothing from them, but freely offers a boon—which we should not tender before seeking an equivalent.

Mr. BEER—As to the objection that the Bill will have an effect injurious to our ship-building interests, I cannot see much force in it, for it is well known that, for years past, it has been a losing, and, in several instances, a ruinous business to those engaged in it, so that the sooner it is abandoned the better. I can see no reason why the Americans should not employ our labor; and if they lose by doing so, it will be their business, and not ours, for they will be the sufferers, and our people the gainers.

Hon. Col. GRAY—I agree with the hon. member who has just sat down, that the Bill will be beneficial to the Island; but I think that he has taken a very limited view of the benefits which would accrue to us from its enactment. I highly approve of the Alien Land Bill, as being one step in the right direction. The present measure, I regard as an improvement on the class of vessels, the building of which it contemplates, would not require for their construction wood of the large or medium sizes which are employed in the building of quality ships. The large number of American fishermen who frequent our shores would, under the Bill, be enabled to take double the number of fares that they now do—for, by the completion of the Railroad from Shediac to St. John, which will be completed in the summer, the distance, and length of time of the long passage through the Gut of Canso, or North about by St. Paul's, will be obviated. I observed that, at a meeting recently held at Princeton, the opinion was expressed that Prince County would soon rival, if it did not surpass, Queen's, in prosperity. The time, I trust, is not remote when the increasing fisheries may induce the construction of a railway from Princeton to Summerside, which would carry the fish to the latter place, already within a few hours sail of the terminus of the railway to St. John. The freight by railway and steamer would be far less than at present, besides the saving of loss of life and time attendant upon the present mode. [The hon. member here read the rates of freights on several of the American lines of railways in the United States—in proof of his assertions as to the difference of cost of transit.] The Bill would have a very beneficial effect in this respect. The Americans would come here, spend their money in purchasing our timber, and employ our young men in building the vessels, and in fishing during the summer season. In the winter they would be profitably employed in providing for the next year's employment, by making the necessary barrels. This latter business would afford steady and remunerative labor to a large class of our people during a period of, at present, almost total and compulsory inactivity. We require, not annexation to the States, but the most enlarged intercourse with them. I will meet the complaint of the hon. member, Mr. Wightman, as to the non-recognition of American registers, and the American coasting trade to our vessels, by asking, why the Government, of which he was a member, did not do so, or those privileges, when they passed the Reciprocity Bill? They should not have let the favorable moment pass unimproved. I feel convinced that the opponents of the measure, if they had any consideration for the good of the Bill, which I repeat will, in my opinion, be productive of great benefit to the Island.

Hon. Mr. POPE—I was opposed to the Bill when it was before the House, and since it has been in Committee, I have heard nothing to induce me to change my opinion. We have been told that the ship-builders on the Island have all been ruined, and, I suppose, it is deemed beneficial to allow the Americans to follow suit in the profitable business. If it did not pay, hon. members are desirous that Americans may spend their money here to their own disadvantage. The opinion has been expressed that the opponents of the Bill are actuated by interested motives. I can tell them, however, that the Island ship-builders have no cause, on their own account, to fear the operation of the Bill, for ship-building can, of course, be most advantageously prosecuted, in yards already established and equipped; and our merchants engaged in that business, would find an increased demand for the various articles of ship-chandlery, which they have on hand, from Americans who would be disposed to build fishing vessels here. We can build more cheaply than strangers. The Americans at present build and own vessels here, not in their own name, it is true, but the registers are taken out in the names of their partners and friends, who are British subjects; and they not only employ these vessels in fishing, but after the season is over, they take cargoes of produce to the States and the neighboring Colonies, which they could not do with the vessels built under the Bill. If we, by employing our vessels six months in the year, can hardly make them pay, how can the Americans do so, by using theirs only three? There was an inconsistency in the reasoning of the hon. member, Mr. Beer. He said that we would be benefited in the employment of our people by the Americans, in fishing and building vessels; but, in the same breath, he said that it would be better, if they were farmers. True it is, that the Bill will not interfere with our carrying trade with England, but the Americans already have a participation in that. When we are told that our farmers now get four or five shillings a bushel for their barley, because it is admitted to the American market free of duty, I answer, that if the British Government had given up all our privileges to the Americans, they would have continued the duty on our produce. I am in favor of reciprocity, as much as any member, and if the Americans would open to us their coasting trade, and allow our vessels an American registry, I would cheerfully give them all they want; but I will not consent to make them a present of our remaining privileges without receiving something which may be considered as an equivalent.

Mr. COOPER—I would have no objection to the Bill if I thought it would be acted upon in the manner, and to the extent, its advocates allege that it would. It would, in such case, prove beneficial to the people of the Island; but it is in violation of the Navigation laws, which are an alteration in which it cannot be sanctioned by the Imperial Government. At present the Fishermen who frequent our coasts are glad to land their salt and stores, and take freights. The vessels to be constructed and employed under the provisions of the Bill could not do so. They would have to be laid up during the winter season, when the frost would so affect the hulls by forcing the oakum from the seams, that they would be in a far worse state than if they had never been steadily employed; and if their sails and rigging were stowed on board, they would be liable to great injury from rats and mice.

Hon. Mr. HAVILAND—The present debate is the most irregular that I have ever witnessed since I have been in the House. The principle of the Bill was discussed and affirmed before it went into Committee. The hon. member, Mr. Wightman, was the first to violate the rule of parliamentary debate. He replied to a speech made last week, instead of confining himself to the details of the measure. The hon. Mr. Pope, also, was present when the principle of the Bill was under consideration. He says that the Bill will cause a loss; but, on the contrary, be productive of advantage, to shipbuilders. How is it, then, that we find the shipbuilders the only opponents of it? The hon. Mr. Wightman also says that the Bill will do no harm—that the timber of the Island is of so inferior a quality, that the Americans will not use it;—that the Bill will be a mere dead letter on the Statute Book. Whence, then, his opposition? Did my voice permit, I could easily show that the Bill will be a general benefit to the Island—that land with timber on it will be enhanced in value, for the greater competition will increase the price. Hon. members who oppose the Bill profess great admiration for the theory of Free Trade; but when they think it is about to press upon their own coasts, they evince a very uneasy sensibility.

Hon. Mr. LONGWORTH—When the principle of the Bill was before the House, I stated the reasons which induced me to support it. I shall not, therefore, recapitulate them; but I think that the arguments of the hon. Messrs. Wightman and Pope against it are fallacious, and based upon a misconception of the facts. The hon. member who has just sat down, has shown the inconsistency of their opposing a measure which, they say, will not inflict an injury on the people. And I maintain if any idea that Island ship-builders will suffer from the Bill, is entertained on the minds of those hon. members, they are labouring under an erroneous impression. The Bill will not affect the interests of our shipbuilders—it but allows Americans to build vessels of a particular class, into the construction of which but little, if any, of the wood used in constructing large vessels would be used. As to the success which would

attend American builders under this Bill, we know that whether they could build their small vessels to advantage, they are very successful fishermen; and I believe that the Bill would be beneficial to the Island in so far as it would habituate our mechanics to an improved style of model and construction of our small craft, which, at present, it will not be denied, are inferior to those of our sister States in this respect. The Bill, however, does not afford our fishermen the means of obtaining valuable information on the subject of making the Fisheries more lucrative to them than they are at present. If Americans can prosecute a successful business, 500 or 600 miles from home, our own people, living in the immediate vicinity of the Fishing grounds once acquainted with the mode pursued by the strangers, would find the fishing more lucrative to them than their rivals. It has been said that the Americans would not avail themselves of the Bill; that may be so, but if they should, they must bring money or goods with them, for without them they cannot build vessels. I agree with the hon. Mr. Pope that no disadvantage will accrue to the local merchant or shipbuilder, for their markets for ship-chandlery and materials of various kinds will be enlarged. So far are the supporters of the Bill from having any say in the rights of the people, that they will not even give the Americans a chance to come and build on the Island without employing labor and circulating money.

Hon. Mr. YEO—I am decidedly opposed to the Bill, and I cannot understand how any one who has the interests of the country at heart, can support it. The Americans would bring their own supplies, as they do at present. They may be seen every season lying off and on about Essex Point and North Cape, trading with the people, and supplying them with articles which we do not produce. In Great Britain, it has been found, that foreigners are tending the greater portion of the carrying trade, to the serious injury of Imperial shipping interests.

Mr. CONROY—As I suppose the allusion to the alleged illicit traffic at the North Cape was intended for me as Collector of Import in that district, I may say that I am not aware that Americans are greater violators of the Revenue Laws than some others. I may have heard of a poor man exchanging a bushel of potatoes for half a pound of tea, and a small part of the cargo of the fishing vessels. I support the Bill for one reason, among others, that it will provide for the farmer a better market for his timber than he has at present. Since I came to Charlottetown, I have ascertained, that birch timber is here worth about forty-eight shillings per ton. This price is three times as high as in the District which I represent. I trust that if the Bill should induce Americans to come along us, the farmer who has timber will get a good price for it.

Mr. SINCLAIR—I expressed myself so fully on this subject on the second reading of the Bill, that I do not intend to occupy much of the time of the Committee. When I first spoke on the Bill, I was only afraid that the advantages anticipated from the Bill would not be realized—that Americans would not avail themselves of it; but now, when I perceive that the opponents of the Bill are nearly all merchants and shipbuilders, I think I might as well result public the many misstatements which I have made, as the fear that Americans will understand them. The arguments against the Bill are, in my opinion, entitled to no weight. There is but one which I consider worth answering. It is said we should not give privileges to the Americans, because they do not reciprocate; but, when we consider that practically we are about to receive great benefits ourselves, the refusal to avail ourselves of them for such a trifling result as a par with the case of a man who would not give his name to occupy much of the time of the Committee. When I first spoke on the Bill, I was only afraid that the advantages anticipated from the Bill would not be realized—that Americans would not avail themselves of it; but now, when I perceive that the opponents of the Bill are nearly all merchants and shipbuilders, I think I might as well result public the many misstatements which I have made, as the fear that Americans will understand them. The arguments against the Bill are, in my opinion, entitled to no weight. There is but one which I consider worth answering. 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