

Let me refer to a few cases here in Canada. Sir Francis Hincks, many years ago, when he was at the head of the Government of this country, was found fault with by some of his friends because he did not, at an earlier day than he did, submit a measure for the secularization of the Clergy Reserves. When the hon. gentleman appeared before his constituents he defended himself from the accusation, and informed them that a certain measure—I think it was the extension of the franchise, or an increase in the number of the members of Parliament—had been carried previously to this, and the Governor informed the First Minister, that he was not willing that so important a measure as the secularization of the Clergy Reserves should be carried through by that House, although it had been elected partially for that purpose, for, he said, until an election had been held with special reference to those important measures, under the new law, Government was not warranted in carrying them through to completion. Lord Elgin, it is generally supposed, was sufficiently conversant with the English system of government not to advise a line of policy at variance with its principle or spirit. We find that, in 1868, when the Bill for the separation of Church and State in Ireland was about to be submitted, Mr. Disraeli, then leader of the Conservative party, laid down the general doctrine that no important measure on which the public verdict had not been pronounced ought to be carried through Parliament—that no important change in the constitution of the country should be carried out without the people having had an opportunity of pronouncing upon it. This same doctrine was laid down by Mr. Plunket at the time that the Irish Union was under discussion. He was an eminent member of the Irish Parliament, and was also a distinguished member of the Parliament of the United Kingdom subsequently, and he may certainly be considered as fairly understanding the system of Government under which he lived and which he assisted in administering. He says with regard to the proposition to bring about a union between Great Britain and Ireland without reference to the people:

"Sir, I, in the most express terms, deny the competency of this Parliament so to act. I warn you, do not dare to lay your hands on the Constitution. I tell you that, if, circumstanced as you are, you pass this Act, it will be a nullity and no man in Ireland will be bound to obey it."

I know that hon. gentlemen pressed forward Confederation to completion without giving the people any opportunity of pronouncing upon it. But, while they adopted that course, I do not think it is desirable that it should be persisted in. The course suggested by the hon. member for West Durham was not that there should be a formal dissolution and election had upon this measure. He did not go so far. He said that this agreement between the Syndicate and the Government ought to have been disclosed, and that the people ought to have had an opportunity of informing themselves in regard to it; if the people are competent to pronounce on any question, they are competent to pronounce on this. The hon. gentleman sits here as leader of the House in virtue of having announced a certain platform with regard to the tariff, and of having gone to the country upon that platform. He took the opinion of the people upon it in every part of Canada, and having done so, he would have betrayed his trust if he had not adopted it. If the people are competent to pronounce on a question of that sort they are equally competent to pronounce on this; and there is no more impropriety in making known the terms and conditions of this agreement than there was in asking them to say whether they approved or disapproved of a protective tariff. The hon. gentleman has himself, over and over again, when he has introduced measures into this House, or when measures were submitted by others, asked for delay in order that persons specially affected by them might have an opportunity of expressing their opinion upon them. The hon. gentleman did that with regard to the Insolvency Act which was formerly

Mr. MILLS.

upon the Statute Book, at his instance. The hon. gentleman said this measure or that affects a particular class of the population, and we are anxious to know their views with respect to it. The measure now proposed by him affects the entire population of this country, and my hon. friend insists that the entire population should have an opportunity of knowing its terms and conditions, in order that the representatives of the people in this House may be informed of their views upon this question. I say there is nothing inconsistent with a Parliamentary Government or with the representative character of this House in the people being informed upon questions of this character; and it is of the utmost consequence to this country, seeing that the measure adopted will be a contract binding not merely upon this Government and Parliament, but on future Governments and future Parliaments, that the utmost consideration should be given to the question, and that the whole country should have an opportunity of knowing its exact character.

Mr. ANGLIN. I feel very fully the force of the position of the leader of the Government when he says it has been a wise custom in years past, both in the Imperial Parliament and the Dominion Parliament, to abstain from long discussions upon the motion for an Address in answer to the Speech from the Throne. But, I think, I would be wanting in my duty to my constituents if I did not join in a protest against the manner in which the people of this country have been treated by the present Administration. I have the highest regard, the most profound respect, for the rights and privileges and dignity of Parliament, but I have also a deep respect and profound regard for the rights and liberties of the people of this country; and I do believe that in the manner and way in which they have been treated with regard to this question, their rights have been disregarded. I do not think it would derogate from our position as representatives of the people, enjoying all the rights of members of Parliament, if we had had an opportunity of consulting with our constituents for the purpose of ascertaining their views upon a measure of this kind. As has been stated by the hon. gentleman who has just preceded me, the instances are almost innumerable in Great Britain in which the Ministers of the Crown have chosen to take the people into their confidence when Parliament was not assembled. But a few days ago the present Prime Minister of Great Britain told the people at the Guildhall banquet how his Government intended to deal with the Irish question and the great Eastern question—not very plainly, perhaps, with regard to the latter, but distinctly with regard to the former. And so, from time to time, the Premiers of Great Britain have found it expedient and desirable to put themselves, in communication with the people; and it has never been asserted that, in doing so, they have offended the dignity of Parliament in the slightest degree. We do not know the terms of this agreement. It may be that when they are submitted we may approve of them, and it may be that we will have to take exception to some of the terms. I think that the people of this whole country will hold that the terms of the bargain should have been submitted long before this for their consideration. Various statements have appeared in organs which are supposed to enjoy the entire confidence of hon. gentlemen opposite with regard to the character and conditions of this bargain. We have been told that the Government are to hand over to the Syndicate all the sections of the road now under contract, after they have been completed at the expense of the country. We are told that they are to get \$25,000,000 in cash and 25,000,000 acres of land, to be selected where they please, of the best lands in the North-West. If these statements are correct, they must have been made at the instance of hon. gentlemen opposite. Some of the Ministers themselves have from time to time given us some hints as to some of the features of this bargain. They have told us some things with regard to the project.