

Mr. BLAKE. I was quite prepared if any hon. member had called for a division to have given him an opportunity of recording his vote; but when no division was called for by any hon. member I allowed the motion to go.

Mr. WHITE (Hastings). The hon. member for South Simcoe said in my hearing "carried on a division"—that was the remark he made, and I sat beside him. There were eight or ten members who asked for a division. We wish the motion to be entered as carried on a division, and it will not hurt any one if that is done. I hope the motion will be so recorded, because the hon. member for South Simcoe and the hon. member for East Durham both insisted that it should be carried on a division.

Mr. SPEAKER. I did not hear any such remark, and I waited long enough to give an opportunity to every member to express his opinion by his voice. If such a remark were uttered, it was said in such a low tone of voice that I did not hear it. I am afraid it is too late to alter the record now.

ORDER OF BUSINESS.

Mr. CHARLTON. Before proceeding with the Orders of the Day, I wish to call the attention of the Government to the fact that Bill (No. 25) to amend the Criminal Laws and extend the provisions of the Act respecting offences against the person by providing for the punishment of adultery, seduction, &c., stands at the head of the list of Public Bills on the Order Paper, and, in all probability, will not be reached this Session in the regular course. The hon. the First Minister was kind enough to promise me that an opportunity would be given to have the Bill taken into consideration, and I take the liberty of asking the Government at what time this promise of the hon. the First Minister will be redeemed.

Sir LEONARD TILLEY. If the hon. leader of the Government said an opportunity would be afforded the hon. member, he may depend upon it that it will be given.

RE-DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS' BILL.

Mr. BLAKE. Before the Orders of the Day are called, I desire to direct the attention of the Government to the fact that we are yet without the Bill for the re-distribution of Seats, which was promised in the Speech from the Throne, and which was repeatedly promised to be brought down early. The last occasion on which I asked the hon. leader of the House as to the intentions of the Government was just before the Easter recess, on which occasion he told us that it would be brought down immediately after the Easter recess, and it is quite indefensible that the Bill has not been laid before the House before this stage of the Session.

Sir LEONARD TILLEY. If the hon. leader of the Government were in his place, I think he would be able to state that the Bill will be down in a day or two.

COMMERCIAL TREATIES.

Sir LEONARD TILLEY moved that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair for the House to go again into Committee of Supply.

Mr. BLAKE. Before this motion is adopted, I desire to call the attention of the House to a subject which appears to me to be of great and growing importance. I should have been glad to have taken this step earlier and in another form; but the circumstance to which allusion has been so frequently made this Session, that papers moved for are brought down late or not at all, has compelled me, in the first instance, to delay; in the second, to proceed in this form, which is the only form available; and, in the third, to proceed in the absence of papers which were ordered by the House at an

Mr. WHITE (Hastings).

early day; but which have not been brought down—I refer to the papers on the subject of our commercial relations with other countries. My belief is that such advances have taken place, such information has been obtained from other sources than those authentic papers to which I have referred, that the time has arrived for a definition of what the views of the representatives of the people of this country are on this subject; and for a definition, as I hope and trust, in the sense of a step in advance. Our constitution, as I ventured to observe to the House the other day, is in many of its features the British constitution. Some portions of that constitution which are embodied in our own are unwritten; and I repeat that with the disadvantages—disadvantages of vagueness, of uncertainty, of the absence of accurate definition—which are inseparable from an unwritten constitution, there are great, practical, countervailing advantages which we have experienced ourselves, and which the people of the United Kingdom have experienced, in the unwritten form of the constitution. The capacity for beneficial change, for development, for progress, without the difficulty which is involved in the change of something so rigid, so cast-iron as a written paper, is an important advantage, and one which has been made available on many occasions with the best results. There has been, as I have said before, and as I repeat, in reference to the British constitution in its application to the people of the United Kingdom itself, an almost continuous growth and development. The underlying principle and spirit of the constitution has been the development of the popular principle of government; and this has been continuously enforced and realized, to a greater and greater extent, as there existed and were made apparent, greater capacity in the people to exercise the powers of self-government, greater knowledge, greater information, greater training on the part of the people to take a larger share in their own government; and what applies to the constitution as it exists with reference to the internal organization of the United Kingdom, applies in quite as marked a manner, in later years, to the relations of the Empire to the colonies and to the political condition of the various dependencies of the Empire. There was a time in the early history of many of these dependencies when they were supposed to be governed by the prerogative of the sovereign, and not by the power of the Parliament. The Parliament absorbed that share of the kingly prerogative, and I am not at all certain that that absorption was an unmixed good, because my belief is that had the Executive power and Government continued in that which was even at that time the weaker branch of the Government of the whole country, many things would have been left undone, which the greater and more sovereign power of the Parliament dared to do; and the measure of self-government and freedom to which the colonies attained, would have been attained at an earlier day, and events on this side of the water, which we are all familiar with, could not have occurred. But, Sir, so it is, that at home and abroad, and particularly with regard to the relations of the Empire to the colonies, while there is no system, while our whole arrangements are full of anomalies, while you cannot discern any particular plan or system out of which you can logically evolve a series of propositions, you perceive a principle of growth, of vitality, of development, and of progress. It would be impossible that it should be otherwise, so vast are the dominions of the Empire, and so variously composed—composed of small military posts, of Crown colonies, of small dependencies inhabited by populations, scanty in number and untrained in representative government, of enormous dependencies also inhabited by persons wholly untrained and unfit for representative government, and also composed of those colonies which, in varying numbers, are filled with a population from the three Kingdoms, and from other countries instructed and trained in self-government, and to whom has been