

From the *Novascotian*.

## PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT.

## ROADS AND BRIDGES.

This morning (Monday, Feb. 20) the House went into a Committee of the whole to take into consideration the order of the day. Mr Stewart introduced a motion that £10,000 should be appropriated to the service of the Roads and Bridges of the Province. He stated that besides the sum named in the resolution, there was a residue of £50,000 for the other purposes of the Province, and he thought that, for the present year, we might well spare the amount he had named, for the important purposes mentioned in the resolution. He was aware that some persons were of opinion, that under the present circumstances of the Province, no more money should be laid out on Roads and Bridges, than just a sufficiency to keep them passable; — and that all the rest should be applied to the reduction of our debt, but, he looked upon the Province as a large estate, with our necessary revenue; and he thought it would be more wise to develop its resources by liberal expenditures, than by an ill-judged economy, hamper and confine it in its progressive improvement. Though the roads in some Counties were better than they were in others, he did not think that all the money should be devoted to those; all parts of the Province should have a share; — he had named the sum he thought the Province could spare, and he expected that the observations on it would at least elicit the opinions of gentlemen all around him.

Mr *Huntingdon* moved, that the resolution should be amended, by striking out *ten* in the *ten thousand* and inserting *six* in its room. He thought that, if the House should adopt the amount named by the learned gentleman, it would add at least £3,000 to the debt of the Country, and if we went on year after year absorbing the revenue in that manner, the Province would soon terminate in Bankruptcy. He thought that the sum he named was quite as much as the Province could spare, provided no retrenchments were made in the expenses of the civil establishment, and if such retrenchments should be made, the House could dispose of the available fund thus put in their power, at any subsequent period of their session, thus swelling his proposed £6,000 to any amount which the Province should be able to afford.

Mr *G. Smith* stated that, from the opportunity which he had, as Chairman of the Committee of public accounts, to examine into the state of the Provincial Revenue, he felt persuaded that the House would be justified in appropriating the amount named in the resolution of the learned gent. from Cumberland. — From the state of the fund he was convinced that, not only might that appropriation be made, but also a payment upon the public debt. The only data on which the Committee could found their report, were the accounts and securities which had been laid before them. The payments from the Treasury in 1836, had been less by nearly £3,000 than in 1835, while the produce of the securities payable in that year exceeded the calculation of the Committee of last year, by nearly an equal amount, and the securities at the Exchequer alone in 1836 exceeded those of the preceding year, by £5,000. He, therefore, felt himself justified in anticipating an increase in the same proportion, and had no hesitation in assuring the Committee that unless the House should run wild in the appropriations for this year, they would have from eight to ten thousand pounds in the chest, after the ordinary expenses, and the road and bridge service were provided for. He thought, too, that as this was the only part of the revenue which found its way to the doors of the poor

settler, and as the failure of the potatoe crop for the last season, had been the means of spreading a good deal of distress over the country, it was the duty of the House to go as far as the circumstances of the Province would permit, in relieving the distress of the poorer part of the population; and, as the amount proposed by the learned member from Cumberland, could be spared without any risk of embarrassing the Treasury, or running the Province into debt, he would give his support to that gent's resolution.

Mr *Umacke* thought that the sum proposed was not by any means above our resources. The receipts of the last year had much exceeded those of the year before, and he did not see why we could not anticipate at least an equal amount for the year to come. At the same time the charges of the Civil List were less; the death of the associate judge threw £400 more into our disposable fund, while the report of the Committee appointed to revise the militia laws might be the means of taking another large item from the Provincial expenses. He went on to state, that he conceived the peculiar state of the Island of C. Breton gave it particular claims upon the bounty of the House, and members from the Island would feel themselves called upon to test the liberality which characterised the present House, by bringing forward a separate claim, whatever might be the fate of the application. That Island had been annexed to this Province against the wishes of the Inhabitants, it had come into the union without a shilling of public debt, and had been made jointly responsible for the whole of the large amount of debt chargeable upon this Province, for monies expended on itself. Yet, what was the way in which the people of the Island were treated? three fourths of the Island had not a road, and the other fourth had what was called roads, but which were perfectly impassable. A gentleman might ride in his chaise with ease, from the Capital till he got to the Gut of Canso—the moment he reached the soil of Cape Breton he was obliged to mount his horse, and he might think himself peculiarly lucky, if he did not soon find himself dismounted again. And yet, that Island was annually contributing to the funds of the Country, a greater amount than any other County of the Province, with the exception of Halifax alone. He hoped, under these circumstances, not only that his constituency would get the benefit of a share of the sum originally proposed, but that the House would not be inclined to turn a deaf ear to the claims which his constituency had upon the Province, for a further contribution.

The hon. and learned *Speaker* addressed the Committee at considerable length. The following is an outline of his observations: He was of opinion that the largest sum named, £10,000 should be adopted as the grant for the road service; and if, at any subsequent period of the session, it should be found that other sums should be placed at the disposal of the House, these sums likewise might be appropriated to the same service. The learned *Speaker* said that there was much misrepresentation and consequent misunderstanding abroad, as to the true state of the Province, and the causes of alleged embarrassment. Statements, most injurious to our public character, had been made at various times on the floor of the House, and without its walls, that the Province was declining in wealth and resources, and that we were accumulating a debt from year to year for the ordinary services of the country. Such statements, continued the *Speaker*, have done much to discourage persons of enterprise and capital who were strangers to us, and to drive them from our shores. The reports of our proceedings in this House have been read in other countries, and had a most pernicious tendency

in this way; but, Sir from an examination of the state of our public affairs, our trade, our commerce, our revenue, and the increasing industry of the country, I venture to affirm that at no period since I have had a seat within these walls, has this country been in so prosperous a condition. The revenue actually paid into the Treasury, is equal to, if not better than in the years we gave such large and extravagant grants for the road service.

I venture to affirm, Sir, that in no country under the sun was a revenue ever raised to such an extent that was so little felt, particularly by the great population of the country who derive a benefit from it. Taking this view, in connection with the state of the Province, I am of opinion the House ought not to pause in appropriating the largest sum named, if it can be done without increasing the public debt. I do not wish to increase that debt, nor do I consider it necessary in order to make out the £10,000. It is true that in late years a great falling off has occurred in several branches of the Revenue, but from causes which every man who has the good of the country at heart, will never regret. It arose, in the first place, from increased habits of industry in domestic manufactures, which have reduced the duty of five per cent, on the several articles that are now manufactured, and likewise from the moral improvement of the country, in the disuse of ardent spirits, upon which formerly a great revenue was received. Habits of temperance will do more for the present benefit of the country, than all the revenue which could be raised from the use of them—and nothing is likely to benefit the country to such an extent as the disuse of ardent spirits. But, sir, we provided for the falling off, by increasing the duties on the luxuries of life, where it always ought to be laid, and not on those articles which are necessary for the consumption of the farmer, the mechanic and the common yeomanry of the country; one of these articles is wine, the duty on which was increased during the last session one third, which has added much to our revenue of this year; another article of luxury is loaf sugar, upon which the duty was very high, and which is not in common use in the country. It is by this mode of taxation that the revenue has been increased, and in this way it was borne lightly on the general inhabitants of the Country. We were told last Session that the Revenue would not yield a sum in any degree equal to the appropriation which we made. I was then of a different opinion. My opinion was formed upon the increase that had been made to the duty on wine, and articles which I have mentioned; that was not the opinion of the majority, and a law passed to enable the Governor to borrow £10,000, which its alleged motion would be necessary to meet the appropriation; the £10,000 were borrowed, and at four per cent, but it was found unnecessary to apply any part of it to the payment of the appropriations, and it was applied by his Excellency to pay off £10,000 of the old debt, which was bearing a much higher rate of interest. The loan, therefore, did not add to the debt, but diminished in fact the responsibility of the Province by the reduction of the higher rate of interest.

On inspecting the specific accounts, it will appear that the bonded revenue of the Province during the last year exceeds that of the year before by £5,000, and this will furnish much more than was appropriated last year for the Saving's Bank, in aid of the revenue. The new system of revenue will come more fully into operation in this year than in the last, in as much as the bonds of 1835 were in payment the last year, and those of 1836 upon the increased system will fall to be paid in this. One important feature in the state of the Province was the revival of trade, not upon uncer-