

Provincial Legislation

On public works to determine what officers shall be paid, and also to fix their salaries. Let him remember that these powers are to be given to a Council over whom the rate-payers—

control, as they were to have no voice in their election. With their Secretary Treasurer, and their County Surveyor, their Sargent-at-Arms, whose duties no one knew, the people would be afraid to trust themselves in their hands; and no wonder; they would be a complete Board of Works; a House of Assembly in every County, armed with supreme powers! The people would say: "What is all this to end in? The latter state of this Province was worse than the first." He would ask would the House place itself over whom the rate-payers would have no control? The system, in his opinion, should be carried out in the parishes as well as counties. Supporting a County contained two rich parishes and four poor ones; under the provisions of this Bill the four poor parishes might, and probably would, decide in favour of some great public works and the people in the two wealthy parishes would be obliged to pay most of the cost. He was opposed to the appointment of two great officers, and endorsing the Municipal Corporation with unlimited powers, while none but the occupiers of the land would be consulted. Why call an officer Warden, and another Secretary Treasurer? People were apt to entertain vague notions of the importance of officers with high-sounding titles. Why not constitute the Clerk of the Peace Chairman of the Municipality? That was an office (Clerk of the Peace) which the Bill would not abolish, and of course he must still be paid, although the Bill would reduce his present duties. Something had been said about personalities, and reference to the local affairs of the counties, and he did think yesterday that his learned friend from Northumberland (Mr. Johnson) had said that he would be little concerned with the conduct of the Municipal magistrates. He had come to a different conclusion to do, however, for he had fallen in with a petition sent to this House a few years ago by Mr. Wilson, an attorney for Northumberland, involving in bitter terms against those magistrates of whom he was yesterday the apostle, and praying for their dismissal! (Laughter.) He had found the petition on the table of the House, and by permission of the House he would now read it. (The hon. member then read the petition, much to the laughter of all parts of the House.) The Committee would of course appreciate the hon. gentleman's consistency, and subscribe to a proper course his motives, when he rose in his place yesterday, and repelled in the most indignant manner any reflection upon the ability and integrity of the Northumberland magistrates, and the hon. member who had set down in his petition as everything bad, and unfit to hold their M-jesty's commission! (Much laughter.) To read the Bill, it was exceedingly well drawn, and differed with him on this point, and therefore he did not blame the Government for not making the Bill imperative. He differed with the hon. member for Carleton who had spoken the words of the debate yesterday (Mr. English); he had been generally pleased with that hon. member's shrewd remarks, but he was wrong when he justified the Government in bringing down a Bill with the details of the different counties, and he would have preferred the House to correct or alter them. The Government should, in submitting such an important measure as this, have given the matter the most serious deliberation possible, and not hurriedly introduced it down the House, saying "There is our bill, and we will stand or fall by it." He did not mean to say that the House should not have taken the details of a Government Bill to certain extent, but they should not alter the principles, or they should not be deemed a Government Bill; and if they did this, many of the hon. members would be obliged to vote in different sections. He admitted that it was possible for the Government to have been in earnest in reference to this measure—that they may have the bill in hand, but from the circumstances of the case he should draw a contrary conclusion. If he must judge from the past—if he must judge from what had transpired that very morning, would the hon. leader of the Government (Mr. Street), and an hon. member of the Government (Mr. Johnson) were found in a minority of six voting against the principle of the people electing their own officers, and against that reform which he considered most essential to the improvement of the country, would he be able to judge from this he was bound to believe that at least two members of the Government were adverse to the principle of the people managing their own affairs. He (Mr. Ritchie) would not go for the postponement of the bill, but when they came to the details he should be prepared to move several important alterations; and if they were not carried he would then oppose the passing of the bill for the present. Now here was a principle involved, just as much as though the Government had said every tax-payer shall vote; they must have deliberated upon this, before they came to such a conclusion. It was one of those deliberate acts, principles of Responsible Government which the Government should be held responsible. And what was their proposition? Why, it was to take a step backward. Some had freewillingly done so, annually, or twice of five pounds annually, could vote! I proposed to disfranchise the rate-payers holding no such property, who, under the Consolidation Act of last year are empowered, to elect their own parish officers. This was no accidental circumstance: this was nothing done hastily and submitted to the revision of the House; but it was a deep scheme which the Government could not but have considered in all its bearings. He (Mr. R.) was determined to divide the House upon it, and also upon the principle of adopting the practice of vote by ballot. He also objected to the 15th section. That section empowered the Council to appoint a Secretary Treasurer, a County Surveyor, Commissioners of Highways, Fence-Viewers, Pound-Keepers, and other public officers. He (Mr. R.) did not like these high-sounding names; they generally tend to long pay. What did they mean by a Secretary Treasurer? What did they mean by a County Surveyor? What did they mean by Commissioners of Highways, Fence-Viewers, Pound-Keepers, and other public officers. He (Mr. R.) did not like these high-sounding names; they generally tend to long pay. What did they mean by a Secretary Treasurer? What did they mean by a County Surveyor? What did they mean by Commissioners of Highways, Fence-Viewers, Pound-Keepers, and other public officers.

He thought that the qualification of voters should be based upon taxation, and rate-payers should have a right to vote. These institutions were political schools, and would lead to the diffusion of general information. They would lead to a better system of education, and finally to the re-education of the people. He believed that the foundation of a system which would give us an intelligent and highly-educated population. He loved them because they were English; they originated with our Saxon ancestors. England had flourished under them, and they had followed the English across the Atlantic to the United States, where they were again planted and caused the country to flourish as they hear. It is he concluded that the principle is good, he would not object to the bill because it was not compulsory, although he would rather it had been so; he was for getting all the good he could, and not for rejecting a good principle because it was not compulsory. He hoped, however, that in going through the details they would be enabled to make some alterations for the better.

Mr. Boscawen said he could not agree with some hon. members who had stated that the details of the bill amounted to principles; he considered them two distinct things. The principle involved was first, whether it was requisite to have the Council govern the parishes, and secondly, whether it was requisite to have the Council govern the counties. He was in favour of the former; he had seen it in operation in other countries, and he flourished under it, therefore he was willing it should be adopted here. The second principle involved was, shall the measure be imperative, or left to the option of the people. He believed it should be optional. Were they to try to force it upon the people, they would not succeed. It might be carried by the use of force, but it would not be carried by the use of force. He believed that the measure would be carried by the use of force, but it would not be carried by the use of force. He believed that the measure would be carried by the use of force, but it would not be carried by the use of force.

Mr. Gray said he differed from his hon. friend the Speaker in his view of the bill, but he was very glad to see the whole country crying out for it. He gave the hon. Attorney General credit for bringing forward the bill, and he was very glad to see it strengthened the Government, and that was a thing all governments should endeavour to do. He was very glad to see the hon. Attorney General in the mode of assisting the hon. member who had introduced the bill. He was very glad to see the hon. Attorney General in the mode of assisting the hon. member who had introduced the bill. He was very glad to see the hon. Attorney General in the mode of assisting the hon. member who had introduced the bill.

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