Quebec, where the common law is found to answer the purpose very well. But it is exceedingly desirable that the law should be uniform from one end of the Dominion to the other. It is objectionable that a discharge cannot be given under the provincial Act, as has been stated by the honou able gentleman from Ottawa. The object in view in every insolvency law should be to see that the assets of the insolvent are equally and equitably distributed among all the creditors. It is my opinion, also, that the insolvency law should apply to all debtors so that all should participate in the advantages, or the disadvantages, if there are any. If there are any penalties for wrong-doing they should be imposed upon one class as well as upon another. Any other law would, in my opinion, be wrong. This insolvency bill is a step in the right direction, and when it goes into committee of the whole, amendments can be considered more fully then than they can be at the second reading.

Hon. Mr. McCLELAN—I am very glad that some attention is to be given to this measure. The course pursued last year seemed to place those who did not agree with the principle of an insolvency law in an unfortunate position, because, although the bill was brought in by the government it was referred to a committee, and the committee, after considering the details, reported the bill. The argument was then used that the committee having reported upon the measure it was wrong to throw it out, or even to discuss its principle. I think the bill is a step in the wrong direction ; it would be a step in the right direction to throw it out now. The basis of legislation hitherto in the British colonies and, in fact, all civilized countries, has been, as far as possible, never to impair contracts which have been legitimately made under existing laws. To a certain extent this general rule would apply in opposition to the principle of an Insolvency Act, but that general rule, like all general rules, should admit of exceptions, and the question now is whether sufficient exceptions exi t in the present state of the country to justify the government in passing a general Insolvency Act. The remarkable business depression now apparent has doubtless influenced the government in submitting this bill as a possible remedy. Just as in 1875, the government was actuated when the country was undergoing a similar period of commercial trouble, but I am unwilling to believe that an insolvency law is justifiable or will provide an adequate remedy. I am forced to this conclusion more particularly from a slight retrospect of the history of the past. During the history of confederation, we have had on the statute-book for a year or two one insolvency law. Now, permanency is necessary to ensure the usefulness of a law of this kind and we know very well, looking at the history of legislation in this direction in Canada and elsewhere, that permanency is not an element in insolvency laws. During the last century in the neighbouring republic—where surely with the amount of business they are transacting there would be as much necessity for moving in this line as in any other country—they have, on only one or two occasions, enacted a temporary insolvency law, which lasted a very short time on each occasion. At the present time throughout the union they are discussing two bills, one a general bankruptcy law under federal auspices to apply to the whole union, and another, and shorter act, to confer upon the different states the power to legislate in accordance with the conditions and requirements of each particular state. Then if we look to the mother land, England, what do we find there? We find there that they have had since the reign of Henry VIII. a bankruptcy law, or rather they have had a law for the relief of insolvent debtors. It would be more properly entitled a bill for the punishment of debtors. In the early history of that country debtors were imprisoned for debt and it became very important that these men, who were subject to long terms of imprisonment, should be relieved from unmerciful and exacting creditors. That is the foundation of the English system of insolvency, which has frequently changed, but we know very well that the conditions of countries differ, and when we undertake to draw a parallel between countries, we should look into their relative conditions. In Great Britain the area is small, 70,000 odd square miles, with population of about 40,000,000. They are peculiarly a commercial people within that confined and restricted area, and not only that, but the British Government is not a dual government as ours is. In this country, with its extensive area and scattered people, we know the difficulty of meeting the