

PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MARCH 27.—PICTOU ACADEMY BILL.

From the Novascotian.

THE Rev. Mr Fraser retired from the bar, and Mr A. P. Ross was called to it, as the representative of the opposite party.

Mr Ross addressed the house to the following effect. He was the bearer of a petition to the house on the subject then under consideration. He had been induced to attend in Halifax, that some one might be on the spot to rebut any charges that might be made,—as it was understood that parties had left Pictou to oppose the Bill. He laboured under disadvantages in appearing to answer the speech of the talented gentleman who had left the bar; but he came to speak the truth, and that was an easy task. He would explain how the pledges made at the bar of the House of Assembly, and at the bar of that House, and recorded in that House, had not been redeemed; and would answer some of the statements that had been advanced by them who took opposite views of the subject before the house. Mr Ross here read from a petition of Doctor McCulloch, and remarked that, Doctor McCulloch did not make any charges in that document, but stated that the hopes of the Legislature had not been realized. (Mr Ross read again, from a memorial on the subject of Dr. McCulloch's petition.) Members of the house were aware that for years previous to 1832, when the grant from the legislature was withheld, the friends of the Academy came forward and supported the Rev. Principal, and kept up the course of instruction, as well as they could. It was true that Doctor McCulloch lectured in Miramichi and other places since 1832, but it was also true, that he invariably had one or two of his sons as assistants at his experiments; he, Mr R. was aware that the Doctor injured his hand, and that he had not the same facility in performing experiments that he formerly had. In 1832, when the Bill was under discussion, Doctor McCulloch distinctly intimated to the Speaker of the House of Assembly and other friends, that he had maimed his hand, and his duties were too great, and he could not teach the branches of Natural Philosophy without an assistant. That was understood by those parties, and no doubt his assertion would be corroborated now if the house desired it. (Mr Ross read again.) He was not aware of any misstatements in the petition of the Academy party, and if there were why did not their opponents point them out? It was incorrect to state that the debt occasioned by Mr Blanchard's mission was paid from the funds of the Institution, the friends of the establishment had entered into a subscription to defray that charge; it was incurred in an endeavour to interest the Governor in behalf of the Institution. Towards this sum there had been paid by private subscriptions £111,—Glasgow Society contributed £113 and £100 in addition, £150 was appropriated out of the £400 granted in 1832 to pay the debts of the Institution, and £190 was specifically granted by the legislature for that object. It had been said by the Rev. Mr Fraser, that the payment of that debt had never been sanctioned, but he, Mr R. held a document, which distinctly proved that its payment had been sanctioned by some of the Kirk party. The memorial asserted that it had never been sanctioned, but the order of the Treasurer in his hand had the signature of one of the new trustees, who made this assertion, and which showed that it had been sanctioned. Respecting the refusal to collect funds for the Academy jointly, an agreement was made to collect in that manner, but the friends of Mr McKinlay declined to acquiesce, and said that the other party should redeem the pledges made, and go among their friends and collect independent of any further subscriptions from those who had given so much, and who would still collect pound for pound, but who did not wish that their old opponents should get the credit of doing more than they really did perform. At the meeting of the board of trustees, Mr McKinlay explained the cause of the refusal, and Mr McKenzie acknowledged that his reasons were satisfactory, and that he should not have gone in opposition to his congregation. In answer to a charge against Doctor McCulloch, of not attending the Board of Trustees, he affirmed that Mr McKenzie repeatedly used harsh and insulting language to Doctor McCulloch. Some of the former students of the Doctor, now in Halifax, could prove this. Mr McKenzie told the Doctor, in the presence of the students, that the Academy was a fine milch cow to him, and that he, Mr McK. did not know how some people contrived to get money so easily. Ho, Mr Ross, did not know what the nature of the language charged against the Doctor was,—the Doctor might have said that he did not believe certain assertions made, and that the object of the Kirk party was to crush the Academy. This might have been paid under the influence of warm feelings.

In reference to the falling off in pupils, the opposition which had been raised by those who cited that falling off, occasioned it,—but he doubted that there were at any time only four students there. Nor four years previous to the year 1832, the opposition to the Academy did all in their power to injure the Institution, and endeavoured by petitions and otherwise to have the legislative grant withdrawn. The natural effect of this would be, to make parents uncertain whether the system would continue, and of course to make them refrain from sending their children. The charge of Mr McCulloch's absencing himself could be easily explained; that individual was justified in leaving his classes, he was a creditor to the Institution for a considerable amount, and there appeared no prospect of payment at that time; at one period, a sum of £300 was due to him, for two year's salary, and he was forced to purchase land which he did not want, as the only way of receiving payment, he did agree to return at one time in consideration of a half year's salary being guaranteed to him. That arrangement was not for six months, but for half a year, and the half yearly term of the Academy was only four months—the terms in the classes did not commence at the one time, and when Dr. McCulloch had completed his four months, Mr M. McCulloch had only got to the end of his third month—he offered to continue the month and teach the students, but they declined stopping, so he had no one to teach and there was no use in his continuing at the Academy. had he gone back at the commencement of the next term to make up six months, according to the views of the trustees, he would in that case have served 12 months, or a year, instead of half a year. There was a feeling in the eastern section of the Province, to see Dr. McCulloch provided for in his old age, but there was also a strong feeling on education, and the people were not at all inclined to consider the Doctor's interests alone in this matter; this feeling was proved by the large sums contributed for the support of education by private persons. The attempt to put Mr McCulloch into the situation in opposition to Mr McDonald, was wrong and it was prevented; some of the old friends of the Academy exerted themselves to prevent it.

It had been stated distinctly at the bar, that immediately on the commencement of the grammar school in opposition to that connected with the Academy, all the children of the Anti-burgher party were taken from the latter, and placed at the former; in contradiction to what was implied by that, he, Mr R. held an affidavit from the teacher of the opposition school, who was a young man of unexceptionable moral character. The affidavit stated, that an advertisement had been published respecting the situation of teacher at the Pictou Grammar School, that the deponent had been anxious to obtain the situation, that after repeated applications he failed in receiving satisfactory answers from the Trustees, and resolved to relinquish the attempt, and to commence a school on his own account; that he took this step without solicitation from the old Trustees or their connection—on the contrary that he met with some discouragement from that party, and that the school at the Academy did not go into operation until six weeks after he commenced. Respecting the fees, Mr Ross stated, that at Mr Christie's school they were, for English reading and writing 9s. a quarter, at the Academy 10s.—for grammar, geography, &c. 12s 6d. at each school, and for Latin and Greek, 15s at each; the difference which had been mentioned, as an object, was only one shilling. (After reading from another document, Mr Ross remarked,) the reason of the absence of Doctor McCulloch from the Board of Trustees, was, that Mr McKenzie had made it unpleasant for him to attend, but that when it was thought necessary that he should attend to form a quorum, he always did so. He Mr Ross, did not see the cause of the party feeling which existed; he had been brought up in the church of Scotland, and was taught to believe it the best in the world; while he was at the Academy he never saw any distinction made between the pupils, they were of various sects—every one who had been reared there felt attached to the Reverend Principal, and if they were appealed to, would express the sentiments which he felt on the subject. The information respecting the bill before the house, took the friends of the Academy by as much surprise as it did the opposite party. The plan had been spoken of by the Speaker in 1832, but it was forgotten; he, Mr Ross, heard of the measure on last Thursday, and in speaking of it then to Doctor McCulloch and others, he remarked the Doctor's interest was a secondary consideration, compared with the interests of the people and the Academy. The Doctor answered, that his wish was to live and die in the district, but that the Institution was acknowledgedly useless, and the public money worse than wasted, and there was no prospect of change for the better; therefore, he thought he was acting in a proper spirit, by endeavouring to make himself useful elsewhere. Feeling the force of these remarks, he, Mr R. changed his views, and persons proceeded to obtain signatures

to the petition; those who were requested to sign were asked whether they would deprive others of the use of the grant when they could do no good with it themselves. It appeared monstrous to seek for the wasting of £400 a year. Those who said that the Institution might do as much good as before 1832, if it were allowed to go on, should recollect that was in effect saying that it might do no good,—for previous to that it was described as being any thing but what it ought to be. Mr McDonald, the teacher of the lower branches, complained that he would be disappointed in his means of support if the bill passed, but he did not go to Pictou under any promises, there were other candidates, he was free to leave the situation at any time, or the Trustees were free to dispense with his services. The amount raised by the friends of the Academy since its commencement was £2596 6 8,—since 1832 £281. Others pledged themselves to raise respectable sums, and they redeemed their pledge by raising to the amount of £3. He had thus hastily gone through the statements before the house,—if he had erred in any thing, it was not intentional, his desire was to tell the truth, and not to treat any person with disrespect.

Mr Ross was interrogated by members of the house. In answer to Mr Wilkins, he stated—he belonged to the Established Church of Scotland, and if a Clergyman of that Church stopped in the town, whose ministry he approved of, he would attend on it. Nineteen twentys of the seceders of the district would be in favor of the passage of the bill, if the choice was, either to let the Institution continue as it was, or to take the Bill. He thought that the Institution might be made efficient if the £400 were given to those who were really the friends of it; but, as it was, no good was the result, why then should they wish to retain the money instead of allowing it to go where it would be of service? If £200 of the £400 were allowed to remain he believed that a large subscription would be made to establish a good Grammar School there,—but he doubted that it would be one for all parties. To place that sum under the control of one party would not give satisfaction,—it would be difficult to light on any mode which would conciliate all in that district. Many of those opposed to the Academy were Highlandmen; they were religious people, but they knew little of politics; many of them could neither read nor speak the English language, and those who were influential among them, could direct them any way either for good or evil. The Rev. Mr Fraser said that he could have procured thousands of signatures against the Bill,—he, Mr R. believed that he could, and that if he brought a petition for the removal of George's Island to Pictou Harbour that he could procure signatures for it. He did not think that many not interested from party feelings would complain of the bill. There were many men of information among the Highlandmen; he said this, lest it might be thought that he made no exceptions when he spoke of the want of English learning among them.—A large portion of the people in Pictou would desire this measure which was to take £200 from that district and apply it to Dalhousie College.

(In answer to Mr Johnston.)

He meant that a larger proportion of the intelligent people would prefer that £200 should be applied in that way, than that £400 should be wasted as it was.

(In answer to Mr Stewart.)

If the Legislature gave the £200 asked for Mr McCulloch, in Dalhousie College, and £200 to each of the parties in Pictou, he believed it would have the effect of quieting opposition to a certain extent. It would be very unreasonable for Dr McCulloch's friends to make any objection to such an arrangement.

(In answer to Mr Wilkins.)

If the trustees were appointed who would endeavour to act impartially, and who did not belong to that part of the country, they might mitigate the dissensions which existed.

(In answer to Doctor Almon.)

A specific grant of 190 was appropriated to defray the expense of Mr Blanchard's mission, and £150 was voted by the trustees, out of the sum placed at their disposal in 1832.

(In answer to Mr Johnston.)

The old trustees were liable for most of the old debts, they did not ask the new trustees to become responsible.

(In answer to Mr Stewart.)

If the Bill passed it might have the effect of giving the control to the Anti-burgher party; much would depend on the trust.

(In answer to Mr Uniacke.)

If a competent teacher of the Kirk party held the school, he believed the Anti-burghers would send their children. If an Anti-burgher were appointed as teacher, some of the other side would send their children to him. It would not matter to the friends of the Academy what religion or country the trustees were of, so that they did their duty.