

present staff of clerks could not with priority be reduced. He (Mr. Sandfield Macdonald) had also filled that Chair, and was prepared to take issue with its present occupant and to say that the work of this House might be performed by half the present number of employees. When he took office in 1862, he found in the Militia Department ten or twelve excellent clerks who were not required. In one day, he walked them all out and though the business of the department increased three fold from the time he took hold of it till he went out, not one man was put in the place of those who were dismissed; and yet the work was well done. He went on to narrate the results of the inquiry instituted to ascertain the state of the Customs Department throughout the country, and stated that there were some 60 or 70 whose only functions under the previous regime had been to draw their salaries. He repeated that there would be no efficient retrenchment either in the departments or in the House, unless the Government assumed the responsibility. It was now in their power to carry out a system of retrenchment, and to initiate it by adopting this report; and if the report failed, he desired to fasten on them the responsibility of its failure. The country, he believed, would hold them responsible. If the report failed, the cause of Confederation would receive a sad blow. As to the sister Province, he had nothing to say. The gentlemen who administered its Government must judge how they could best discharge their duties to their constituents; but he did think they must have a precious large income to justify their proceedings when he and his colleagues in Upper Canada found retrenchment to be so necessary that they intended to carry it still further than they had hitherto done.

Hon. Mr. Smith asked what justice was there in saddling the people of the Maritime Provinces with pensions for employees of the old Province of Canada, as was proposed to the amendment. It might be a painful duty to discharge any of these employees, but in a matter of this sort the public interest should be paramount to personal sympathies. He was satisfied that the staff of officers was too large. It had been said that the clerks were now fully occupied, but this was an exceptional business. In future sessions, there would not be anything like the same amount of business. Retrenchment should also be carried out in the departments, not only at the seat of Government, but throughout the Dominion. In the Lower Provinces the railway

[Mr. J. S. Macdonald (Cornwall).]

employees, and those in the Post Office and Customs Departments had been increased in number, and their salaries raised on the eve of Confederation. A career of extravagance had been entered on with Confederation, and it was time that a check should be put upon it.

Hon. Mr. Huntington expressed himself strongly in favour of economy and retrenchment, but thought that injustice should not be done to old servants of the public. What he particularly objected to was the reduction of 12½ per cent from all salaries. Were this reduction carried out, it was certain that a number of valuable officers would be underpaid. He would suggest to the Chairman of the Contingencies Committee a modification of the report by striking out the 7th clause proposing the reduction of salaries over \$800 by 12½ per cent. If this were agreed to, he believed the rest of the report would be allowed to pass.

Mr. Scatcherd expressed his surprise that the member for Shefford, who had been a member of a Liberal Administration, should have made such a proposition, which was altogether in favour of the rich and well paid officers, while the honourable gentleman had no sympathies for the poor. He would not allow 12½ per cent to be taken from the large salaries, but he had no objection to the poor messengers being cut down from eight hundred to six hundred dollars, which was a reduction of more than 12½ per cent. He hoped the Chairman would not agree to any such proposition. If he did, he might as well withdraw the whole report at once.

Mr. Gibbs hoped the Chairman would accept the very reasonable proposition of the member for Shefford. He would strike out the 7th clause, and allow the Committee to deal with each case on its own merits. He was as much desirous of retrenchment as any member could be. The feeling of the country was against extravagance and responded most heartily to the admirable sentiments uttered by the member for York at the beginning of the session, in moving the address in reply to the speech from the throne; but he hoped retrenchment would not stop here. Let it be appointed to all. He believed a very cursory examination of the public accounts would show opportunities for retrenchment to an amount compared with which the reduction which had been proposed to-night were exceedingly trivial.