

Mr. LANGEVIN. The only communication received by my department on this subject is one from the Department of Marine, calling attention of the Minister of Public Works to this case. It appears that for many years the Hudson's Bay Company have maintained a bridge at that point in order to communicate with their different posts. The present structure is built on piles and completely obstructs the passage of steamers above Port Ellice, to which point they now ply from Winnipeg. If this bridge were removed or a draw provided, the upper part of the Assiniboine might be navigated. As it stands, the bridge is an obstruction to the navigation of the Assiniboine; there is no doubt about that. The only question that arises is, whether the Dominion Government or the Hudson's Bay Company should do the work; and that question is now under consideration.

INSOLVENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Mr. McCUAIG moved the second reading of Bill (No. 39) to amend the Insolvent Act of 1875, and amending Acts.

Bill read the second time, considered in Committee, read the third time and passed.

SUPREME AND EXCHEQUER COURT ACT.

Mr. LANDRY, in moving the second reading of Bill (No. 4) to repeal the Supreme and Exchequer Court Act and the Acts amending the same, said: There are many objections to the Supreme Court, especially in the Province of Quebec. Last year a promise was made by some Minister, that some change would be made in regard to this Court, in order to do justice to the Province of Quebec. A year has elapsed, and we are still awaiting some amendment in this direction. Nothing has been done, however, and I think, under these circumstances, it is our duty as representatives of this Province, acting in the interests of our constituents, to bring forward this Bill this year. We see every day judgments of the Court of Queen's Bench, Court of Appeals and other Courts reversed by, practically, two Judges of the Supreme Court, only two knowing our civil law, and their colleagues being obliged to accept their advice and opinions. So the judgments of five Judges in our Superior Courts are liable to be set aside by only two Supreme Court Judges, and when the two Judges do not agree, such judgments are really reversed by only one of them, the other Supreme Court Judges being on his side. Another fact well known to every Quebec member is, that all our provincial rights have been impaired by the judgments of this Court. I was glad, the other day, to hear the President of the Privy Council speaking in approval of judicial decentralization; but one of the greatest obstacles to the full realization of this reform is the maintenance of the Supreme Court. In a few years, should its judgments resemble those of the past, we shall see all our provincial rights diminished, and the administration of justice in our Province impaired to a great extent. I think, therefore, it is the duty of Quebec members to support this Bill. I hope the Minister of Justice will do me the justice to support it, and if he is willing, I shall gladly leave it in his hands.

Mr. McDONALD (Pictou). I regret that the hon. member should have thought it his duty to ask the House to read this Bill the second time. I regret it all the more, because I think it is always a matter of regret, that in the High Court of Parliament of this country, a great institution like the Supreme Court should on any occasion be made the object of criticism, which tends in some degree to disparage the character and standing of that Court in the country, and to lessen its authority and dignity. I am proud to think that a large majority in this House, and a large majority in the country, do not concur with the hon. gentleman in believing that it would be desirable in the

interests of Canada that this Bill should pass, and that the Supreme Court should be abolished. I do not intend at this time to go into a discussion as to the position of the Supreme Court, or the mode in which it discharges its high functions in relation to the several Provinces of the Dominion. I am quite well aware that in Quebec, as in perhaps one or two other Provinces, there are occasions when there is some friction, and when the decisions of the Court are not quite so readily accepted as we hope by-and-bye they will be. But I am quite satisfied—I think it is universally recognized that, year by year, as the Court grows in familiarity with the institutions of the various Provinces, as the Court has an opportunity of showing to the people of this country the zeal, energy and industry with which it discharges its high functions—I say and think it will be admitted that as the time passes by, the Court will become more satisfactory to all the Provinces, and I hope I need not except the great Province of Quebec. I am quite well aware that the peculiarity of the institutions of that Province may make the distinction greater, with reference to the authority of the Supreme Court in that Province, than in the others, but I think from the number of cases brought before the Supreme Court, from the character and nature of the question then raised, and from the general acceptance with which the decisions of that Court, at any rate those of late years, have been accepted by the Bar and the general community of that Province as well as of the rest of the Dominion, that my hon. friend will see that he will only have to wait a short time to find the decisions of the Supreme Court of the Dominion received even in Quebec with such authority and such acceptances as those of the eminent Courts of that Province, more especially adapted perhaps to its institutions. Before sitting down I ought, perhaps, to remark upon an observation made in one of the public papers—an influential newspaper of the day—some time ago, with reference to the Court itself. And I do so because I am quite certain that that influential paper would not willingly—would not without information which, however, I know to be unfounded—have given utterance to reflections upon an institution that, at any rate, deserves fair consideration and fair dealing from the press, as well as from the Parliament of this country. It was stated in the *Montreal Gazette*, a week or two ago, that the Supreme Court deserved the reprehension of the country, owing to the delays which occur in that Court. I have not the memorandum beside me just now, which I obtained on that occasion from the gentleman who presides over that Court, but I am able to say, from memory, that up to the time at which I obtained that memorandum—before the Court met, to-day, to render judgments and reduce the number of cases then standing for argument—up to that time there was not a single case standing for judgment, excepting those which had been argued at the last November and February terms of the Court. Now, I think anyone who understands how important it is that the judgments of that Court should be of a character to command confidence—whether they received that confidence or not—will admit that the Judges of that Court ought at any rate to have ample time for deliberation and consideration. I think every lawyer will feel, and every layman who understands at all the work of our institutions will acknowledge, that a Court which has kept its arrears up to within three months of the time of delivering its judgments is discharging its functions in that respect at any rate in a manner that ought to be satisfactory to the country. I may say that the labor of this Court is of a very serious character. The Judges in considering their judgments have to consider an enormous mass of testimony taken in the Courts from which appeals come; they have to consider the arguments of those Courts of high standing in the several Provinces and the labor and consideration necessarily