

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE MILITIA.

Honorable Gentlemen—

Although it is not usual to explain a Bill at its first reading, I hope the House will permit me to enter into some of the details of this measure now, inasmuch as I do not intend to proceed further with it during the present Session.

That is all very well, some one may perhaps say to me; but did you not, while you were in opposition, find fault with the present law, if not as to its principle at any rate as to its details, most of which you last year represented as unjust, impracticable, &c. &c.? Having found fault with the details of your predecessors' measure, why do you at once press for the adoption of your own?

I answer that there is a very great difference between my position and that of my predecessors. They found the field clear. I find it occupied by a law, the operation of which has hardly begun. It is one thing to build on clear ground, and quite another thing to take down and then build up again. I wish to give the law passed at the instance of the late administration all the advantage of a fair and thorough trial.

But, apart from these motives, there is an objection to immediate legislation on the subject of the militia which I feel it to be my duty to bring forward. For nearly two years past the lists of officers of the Sedentary Militia have been neglected, and have not been kept up to their full complement; and as the law I have in contemplation cannot be put into operation without the concurrence of the officers of the Sedentary Militia, it will be absolutely necessary to wait until the requisite appointments have been made. Therefore, if the present law works but imperfectly, as is most probable, very little time will be lost by waiting until next Session and employing the intervening period in completing the organization of the Sedentary Militia.

And now I must say that if it be true that this bill is founded upon the compulsory principle, it is also true that the same principle is to be found in the present law, and that to an infinitely greater degree and in a much more severe form. Nothing can be easier to prove than this, and I will prove it to you in a moment. By my bill no men will be ballotted for in any Company if there are found in that Company a sufficient number of Service men who are already enrolled in the Volunteer Force, or if a sufficient number of such men in that Company come forward of their own accord and offer to be enrolled in the Service Militia; and in no case will more men be drawn by

