

that measure. I would like to ask my hon. friend if he does not believe that the best way to improve the Franchise Act would be to improve it out of existence? I put the question to him in all earnestness. For twenty years, from the year 1867 to the year 1887, the elections of this House were carried on under the provincial lists, and so far as my memory goes, there never was a single complaint as to the working of that system. But, Sir, ever since we have had the Franchise Act not an election has passed but injustices of the most aggravated character have been complained of in some part of the country. Even at this very moment the member-elect for L'Islet, Mr. Tarte, is deprived of his seat by reason of the cumbersome working of that Act. Now, Sir, I submit to the hon. gentleman whether, after all, the best system practically, the best system theoretically, the best system according to our representative institutions, is not a return to the provincial lists. But, Sir, the Speech which we have before us is not a remarkable document for what is in it; it is more remarkable for what is not in it. For instance, I see no reference this year, any more than last year, to the famous commission which was appointed, now very near two years ago, to inquire into the liquor trade—a subject as to which at one time my hon. friend, the Minister of Finance, had clear ideas, but as to which he is now at sea. It is not charitable to the hon. gentleman to leave him so many years in doubt. It is not charitable to him that the commission has not yet reported. It took six months to prepare the instructions, it has taken a year to obtain the evidence, and Heaven knows how long it will take to prepare the report. I fear we may not see it this session, but the Government will in the meantime have some respite from a troublesome question. Neither do I see any reference in the Speech to another commission which was appointed by Parliament last year, one to investigate the conduct of a minister of the Crown. This was a most unusual proceeding, but I thought we would be informed in the Speech from the Throne whether we are to have the report of that commission or not. There is another matter to which no reference is made, and as to which I expected there would be some explanation; I mean the Manitoba school question. The hon. Minister of Justice made a report to Council some time ago on that question. That report was communicated to the press. I will not discuss at this time whether it was in conformity with the dignity of Parliament that a State paper should be communicated to the press before it was laid before Parliament. I will not stand on the question of dignity; but I will say that it would be a breach of the law of Parliament if that report were not immediately laid on the Table of the House, and all the more so because of the extraordinary doctrine maintained in that report. The hon. gentleman there assumed that he and his colleagues were sitting as a court of justice dealing with this question. I will not say anything as to the manner in

which they dealt with it; I say honestly that I do not wish to embarrass them. But I wish to express my dissent from the doctrine that in this matter the Government act, not as a Government, but as a court of justice. It is a doctrine to which for my part I cannot be reconciled. But of all the omissions to be found in the Speech from the Throne the greatest is, that it holds out no hope for changes in the tariff. This omission, I am sure, will spread disappointment all over the land. The ministers have been speaking recently on that subject, and in different parts of the country they have held out the hope that they would at least, to use their own language, lop off some of the mouldering branches. It looks as if they had changed their minds, and that the mouldering branches had been suddenly converted into green boughs. But, Sir, the country expected some declaration upon this question; and now that the Government have failed to speak, it becomes the duty of the House to speak, and to speak in no uncertain sound. Therefore, I will conclude by proposing, in amendment:

That the following words be added to the address:—“We feel bound to represent to Your Excellency that in the present condition of the people of Canada substantial reduction should be made in taxation, which presses so heavily upon the great mass of the community, and we regret that in the Speech graciously delivered from the Throne, Your Excellency was not advised to hold out promises of reductions in the oppressive duties now imposed.”

Sir JOHN THOMPSON. I am sure there can be but one opinion in the House in regard to the manner in which the new members have spoken to-day and have discharged their duty. It is a matter of great gratification to us all that that duty should have been so gracefully done—in a manner which did credit to the gentlemen themselves and added to the dignity of the House. We welcome the new members, whom these gentlemen represent, as by no means a small acquisition to the talent of this assembly. I am grateful to the hon. gentleman who leads the Opposition for the terms in which he has alluded to my predecessor in office. It is a matter of most profound regret to the members on this side, and to none more than to myself, that the career of Sir John Abbott, at a time it gave promise of the greatest usefulness to his country, was cut short by the hand of disease. Sir John Abbott carries with him, as the hon. gentleman has said, the regret of the whole country, but he carries with him also the profoundest sympathy of the party with which he has co-operated so long and which sits on this side of this assembly. I am grateful to the hon. gentleman also for the graceful, although somewhat sarcastic, compliments which he has bestowed upon me. The hon. gentleman gave me credit for flights of fancy and gifts of imagination which he had hitherto apparently regarded as a monopoly of his own, but in the possession of which he has been good enough to credit me with a share of this afternoon. He took away, however, my laurels completely by occupying three-quarters