

numerous comprehensive, and valuable measures which Her Majesty's Administration have prepared for our deliberation and approval.

HON. ATTORNEY GENERAL moved that the system of Franking adopted at the last Session be continued. Passed *nem con*.

HON. ATTORNEY GENERAL said it was in the knowledge of the House that the gentleman who had previously occupied the position of Chairman of the Committee of Supply had been removed during the recess by death. He would suggest, therefore, to the Hon. leader of the opposition that he should nominate some member to supply his place, as it was usual to appoint Chairmen of the Standing Committees from diverse sides of the House.

At the suggestion of the Hon. Mr. Young the consideration of that question was postponed until Friday.

The House then adjourned until three o'clock to-day.

FRIDAY, February 4.

The House opened at three o'clock.

On motion of Mr. Ruggles the House proceeded to consider the Address.

Mr. Martin J. Wilkins said,—I do not rise, Sir, for the purpose or with the intention of raising any objections in a formal manner to the Address, my object being merely to keep myself right in reference to certain expressions contained in the second and third clauses of His Excellency's speech.

The hon. member here read the second clause as follows:—"I am happy to inform you that your address to Her Majesty on the Inter-colonial Railway was very graciously received."

On reading this it would be supposed that the address to the Queen, on the subject referred to had been acquiesced in. Her Majesty is as superior to all others in politeness, amiability and the virtues which adorn the human character as she is in majesty and dignity, and therefore, Sir, she never returns a direct negative to the humble petitions of her loyal subjects, but invariably puts them off as she has done on this occasion. When her ministers advise acquiescence in the prayer of a petition they convey the answer in direct terms—and distinctly enunciate the course which she intends to pursue. Of this mode of procedure we have had many recent examples, therefore we are not to infer from the expressions I have just quoted from the despatch in answer to the address, that at the time it was written her Majesty's ministers had in any way altered their minds in respect of the Inter-colonial Railway or intended to deviate from the course pointed out in their despatch of the 15th January, 1858—wherein they, with reluctance inform the Colonies that such was the condition of the finances of the Empire that it was impossible her Majesty's government could recommend it to Parliament.

The third clause reads as follows:—"The correspondence with the Imperial Government, Canada and New Brunswick, which induced me to send a Delegation to England, will be submitted, with the Report of the Delegates, for your information." On this clause I will at present make no observation, but I shall content myself with simply stating that I do not concur in its accuracy.

I merely refer to this to put myself in a position to prove hereafter that I have not acquiesced to it.

This is all I have to say as regards the speech, but while on my feet I shall ask the indulgence of the House, if they will favor me with the opportunity, briefly to explain my present political position. It is known to all the senior members of this Assembly that I was born in the very Camp of Conservatism, and if not actually born there, that I have borne arms in the ranks of the Conservative army ever since I was able to shoulder a musket, and therefore it is not likely I would be found deserting from its standard at this day. In view of my present position and the state of parties in this country, I am satisfied that nothing would justify me in so doing; but that on the contrary I should be guilty of baseness were I to leave my own party and unite myself with those to whom I have always been opposed. Having followed the standard of Conservatism thus far, I would no more think of abandoning it than would a grenadier of Napoleon's old guard of deserting the Eagle of his regiment. Therefore, Sir, I remain what I have always been—a consistent Conservative. I have always expressed myself violently opposed to political tergiversation of every description; and it cannot be supposed that a man having reached my mature age would rashly, or hastily pass over from the one side to the other; the parties in this house are too nearly assimilated on political questions to permit this without discredit and disgrace. It seems rather paradoxical, but is nevertheless quiet true, that the nearer two political parties approach each other in sentiment and opinion, the more difficult, or rather impossible is it for any member to change sides, without ruin to his political reputation. There are occasions I admit, when secession from a party may be justified, but it can only be when important political measures, involving the welfare of the nation, state or people, divide the parties, and the individual who secedes is sincerely and conscientiously convinced that the party he was acting with has been in error in matters of such vital importance, it then becomes not only his privilege, but his duty, on discovering his error, instantaneously to unite with the other party whose views he has discovered to be consonant to the true interests of the public. In such a case a public man is not only justified in leaving his party, but is bound to do so as a man of honor and a patriot. In illustration of this view history affords us several examples; this we all know—that Sir Robert Peel, who for 30 years led up the great Protectionist party in England, having at last become convinced by the persevering arguments of the advocates of free trade, and his own experience of the manufacturing and producing interests of the nation and its general commerce—that his views were erroneous, abandoned his party and lent his aid and co-operation to the introduction and establishment of the principles of Free Trade. As another instance when in this country the great question of Railroads was first introduced by the present Opposition, several individuals of that party being conscientiously of opinion that the immense expenditure required for their construction would create a burdensome and unmanageable public debt, refused to act with their then political allies, and with great